

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 1st June, 2021
at 7.45 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor;
(Councillor Nicholl) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey,
Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker,
Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan,
Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr,
De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett,
Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading, Howard,
Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons,
Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer,
McCabe, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McKeown,
McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland,
Murphy, Newton, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt,
Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor McCullough.

Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Haire, declared an interest in relation to item 4. b), Chief Executive's Decisions taken under Delegated Authority for the People and Communities Committee, under the heading Request for use of premises - Barnett Demesne, in that he was a Trustee of the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast.

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from Ms. Sue Pentel and Mr. Mohammed Samaana in relation to the motion on the UK and Irish Governments' expulsion of Israeli Ambassadors which would be proposed by Councillor Ferguson later in the meeting.

The Council acceded to the request and, accordingly, Ms. Pentel and Mr. Samaana joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams and were welcomed by the Lord Mayor.

Mr. Samaana explained to the Members that he was born and raised in Palestine and that, during that period he lived in Jerusalem working as a nurse. He

reported that, whilst in Jerusalem, he witnessed ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by the Israeli Council by means of denial of planning permission for housing, denial of spousal residency for Palestinians and the removal of residential status resulting in Palestinians living in a disused buildings with no doors, windows or hygiene facilities.

He pointed out that continuous attacks, intimidation, and denial of attendance at places of worship were all used as means of persecution and that most of the attacks were on civilian areas.

He concluded by adding that it was important to support the motion as boycott and sanctions were non-violent means of resistance and change and that it was important that the world take action only for the sake of peace

Ms. Pentel thanked Mr. Samaana for his contribution and explained that she was a representative of Jewish Voice for Just Peace and the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. She informed the Council that she was part of a diverse group of Jews living in Ireland who support the Palestinian struggle for human rights and justice, a struggle that resonated with the Irish journey towards peace.

She reported that antisemitism was increasing and that the fight against it should be joined with racism and xenophobia.

She stated that she felt strongly that it should oppose the actions of Israeli Government and called for support for the motion

The Lord Mayor thanked the representatives for their attendance, and they retired from the meeting.

The Council noted the information which had been provided and that Members would, later in the meeting, have an opportunity to discuss the matter.

Decisions of the Chief Executive taken under Delegated Authority

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie, and

Resolved – That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, and the minute of the meeting of the Members of the Committee of 21st May, be approved and adopted.

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Council agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, to provide an update on the potential to work with deaf people and the Department for Communities, to promote and roll out classes or training to local community and voluntary groups and businesses, to train staff in basic sign language.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst,

That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the People and Communities Committee and the minute of the meeting of the Members of the Committee, of 11th May be approved and adopted.

Amendment

**Resources and Fleet Update –
(Waste Collections and Management)**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved – “That the minute of the meeting of the Members of the People and Communities Committee of 11th May, under the heading “Resources and Fleet Update –(Waste Collections and Management)” be amended to reflect that Belfast City Council supports the implementation of a full bottle deposit return scheme as opposed to an "on the go" scheme.”

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the People and Communities Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the People and Communities Committee of 11th May, were approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, the minute of the meeting of the Members of the Committee of 12th May, and the minute of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 28th April, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Sustainable Travel - Notice of Motion Update

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Kyle,

That the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, under the heading “Sustainable Travel – Notice of Motion Update” be rejected and, the associated minute of the meeting of the Members of the Committee of 12th May, be amended to reflect that:

“This Council agrees to write to the Minister of Infrastructure to state that the Experimental Traffic Control Scheme Permitted (Taxis in Bus Lanes), which was proposed by her Department, no longer has this Council’s support and to urge her to not progress this further. Instead we will outline our commitment to sustainable transport modes given the dangerous levels of air pollution and congestion across the city and in the context of our climate emergency, focusing efforts on further measures to enhance the provision of public transport, safe and segregated cycle infrastructure, pedestrian priority and a package of measures to support taxi drivers to transition to electric vehicles, in line with the principles of a just transition.’

On a recorded vote, twenty-four Members voted for the amendment and thirty-two against, with three no votes, and it was declared lost.

<u>For 24</u>	<u>Against 32</u>	<u>No Vote 3</u>
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl); and The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and Aldermen Copeland and Rodgers; and Councillors de Faoite, Flynn, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons, McAllister, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, O’Hara, Smyth and Whyte.	The Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman Haire); and Aldermen Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Corr, Donnelly, Garrett, Gormley, Hussey, T. Kelly, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McCabe, McAteer, McLaughlin, Murphy, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt, Verner and Walsh.	Councillors Matt Collins, Michael Collins and Ferguson.

Adoption of Minutes

The decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Committee of 11th May, were approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe, and

Resolved – That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Licensing Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Licensing Committee of 19th May, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Planning Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Planning Committee of 18th and 20th May, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Stakeholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor McCabe,
Seconded by The Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman Haire) and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 17th May, be approved and adopted.

Brexit Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Brexit Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Brexit Committee of 13th May, be approved and adopted.

Motions

**Private Members Bill to provide Safe Access Zones
around all facilities providing sexual and reproductive
health care services and information**

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Groogan proposed:

“This Council notes the increasing occurrence of harassment outside healthcare facilities in Belfast, Newry and across Northern Ireland at healthcare premises that offer reproductive and family planning services. This often includes the display of traumatising graphic anti-choice imagery, which this Council has already undertaken to seek to regulate, and attempt to interfere with the ability of patients and staff to access healthcare.

This Council condemns all forms of harassment and intimidation directed at patients and staff within our Health Service.

This Council reaffirms its belief in the right of all individuals to have safe access to healthcare, free from attempts to harass, frighten and intimidate and supports Clare Bailey MLA's Private Members Bill to introduce safe access zones around all facilities providing sexual and reproductive health care services and information.”

The motion was seconded by Alderman Copeland.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

The Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Lyons proposed:

“That this Council notes with alarm the growing number of employers, especially in the retail, hospitality and aviation sectors, who are making employees redundant before re-employing them on less-favourable terms and conditions; believes that these employers should instead be focused on supporting their employees through this pandemic; agrees with Unite the union and others that this fire-and-rehire practice makes a mockery of workers' rights.

This Council therefore calls on the Department for Economy to close this legal loophole as a matter of urgency, for example by amending The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 to specify that such redundancies should automatically be regarded as unfair dismissals.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

**Request to the Irish Government and the UK
Government to expel from office Israeli Ambassadors**

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Ferguson proposed:

“The Council notes:

That Palestinians have endured the longest ongoing refugee crisis in the world, and respects the right of return as enshrined in international law;

That the current escalation of violence was instigated by the attempt to evict 28 Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem as part of an ongoing and systematic campaign of illegal Israeli settlements and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land;

That Israel’s military operation in Gaza amounts to the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and illegal settlement expansion, represents flagrant breaches of international law;

That a growing list of human rights organisations have determined that Israel’s action amount to apartheid, including the latest report by Human Rights Watch;

That normal co-operation with the Israeli state is therefore untenable in these circumstances.

The Council recognises the rich history of solidarity and activism in this city from all communities for Palestine, including very recently when a huge demonstration called for an end to Israeli mistreatment of the Palestinians; and that such solidarity on the part of our citizens can be an important tool in dismantling support for Israel’s actions.

The Council therefore condemns the actions of the Israeli state, as listed above, and agrees to write to the Irish Government and the UK Government, urging them to expel from office Israeli ambassadors, with immediate effect.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McAllister,
Seconded by Councillor Mulholland,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins be amended as follows:

To delete the concluding paragraph from: “The Council therefore condemns the actions of the Israeli state, as listed above, and agrees to write to the Irish Government and the UK Government, urging them to expel from office Israeli ambassadors, with immediate effect” and replace it with the following: **“This Council calls on the UK and Irish governments to make clear to their Israeli counterpart that relations cannot continue as normal while Israel persists with its illegal settlement policy and disproportionate use of force, and stresses that both governments must consider all economic and diplomatic measures to ensure Israel upholds international law.”**

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“The Council notes:

That Palestinians have endured the longest ongoing refugee crisis in the world, and respects the right of return as enshrined in international law;

That the current escalation of violence was instigated by the attempt to evict 28 Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem as part of an ongoing and systematic campaign of illegal Israeli settlements and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land;

That Israel’s military operation in Gaza amounts to the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and illegal settlement expansion, represents flagrant breaches of international law;

That a growing list of human rights organisations have determined that Israel’s action amount to apartheid, including the latest report by Human Rights Watch;

That normal co-operation with the Israeli state is therefore untenable in these circumstances.

The Council recognises the rich history of solidarity and activism in this city from all communities for Palestine, including very recently when a huge demonstration called for an end to Israeli mistreatment of the Palestinians; and that such solidarity on the part of our citizens can be an important tool in dismantling support for Israel’s actions.

This Council calls on the UK and Irish governments to make clear to their Israeli counterpart that relations cannot continue as normal while Israel persists with its illegal settlement policy and disproportionate use of force, and stresses that both governments must consider all economic and diplomatic measures to ensure Israel upholds international law.”

On a recorded vote, ten Members voted for the proposal, as amended, and forty-nine against, and it was declared lost.

<u>For 10</u>	<u>Against 49</u>
The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl); and The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and Councillors Hanvey, Howard, M. Kelly, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McMullan, McReynolds and Mulholland	The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire); and Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Heading, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCusker, McKeown, McLaughlin, Murphy, Newton, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

The original motion, as proposed by Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins, was thereupon put to the meeting and, on a recorded vote, thirty-one Members voted for the motion and twenty-eight against and it was declared carried.

<u>For 31</u>	<u>Against 28</u>
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Heading, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCusker, McKeown, McLaughlin, Murphy O'Hara, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl); and The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire); and Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Hanvey, Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt, and Verner.

Ballymurphy Massacre

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Corr proposed:

“That this Council commends the Ballymurphy families on their long campaign to vindicate the memory of their loved ones murdered by the British Army in 1971; welcomes the findings of the Coroner that all deceased were entirely innocent of any wrongdoing and acknowledges

her criticism of the British State's shocking and abject failing to investigate what happened as further evidence of its ongoing attempts to frustrate truth and justice for bereaved families; reaffirms the Council's support for the full and immediate implementation of the Stormont House Agreement legacy mechanisms in a human rights compliant manner; and rejects any attempt by the British Government to introduce an amnesty or statute of limitations in relation to the conflict."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Donnelly.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Corr and seconded by Councillor Donnelly be amended as follows:

"That this Council commends the Ballymurphy families on their long campaign to vindicate the memory of their loved ones killed by the British Army in 1971; welcomes the findings of the Coroner that all deceased were entirely innocent of any wrongdoing and rejects any attempt by the Government to advance proposals without the agreement of the Northern Ireland political parties."

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when fifteen Members voted for the motion and forty-one against, with two no votes, and it was declared lost.

The original motion, as proposed by Councillor Corr and seconded by Councillor Donnelly, was thereupon put to the meeting and passed.

Local Government Pension Scheme – Responsible Investment Strategy

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Murphy proposed:

"This council notes that recent weeks have seen the most serious escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory since 2014, with a tragic impact on innocent civilians and loss of life, including the deaths of over 60 children. Condemns the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations and infrastructure, and the disproportionate impact this has had, particularly in the Gaza strip.

This council recognises that the displacement of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank, and the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, undermines the prospect of peace – not just in recent weeks but over decades – and represents a flagrant violation of international law.

Therefore, this council will write to the Local Government Pension Scheme to seek as part of its responsible investment strategy that it will begin the process of divesting from any Israeli State owned company or private company involved in the occupation and the violation of Palestinian human rights. This will include any companies listed by the United Nations as operating in these illegal Israeli settlements within the occupied Palestinian territories.

We will also ask that NILGOSC carry out its own due diligence into any other companies which are not included on this list but are known to be involved in or with these illegal settlements.

Finally, this council will ask that the divestment process is time bound to a period of 12 months from when NILGOSC makes those companies involved first aware of the complaint and intention to divest.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Walsh.

The Council agreed to vote on the motion, when forty-one Members voted for the motion and sixteen against, and it was declared carried.

End Child Poverty

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Heading proposed:

“This Council notes the recent report commissioned by the End Child Poverty coalition into levels of child poverty.

This Council further notes from the report one in four children are growing up in poverty with two thirds growing up in families where parents are in work.

The Council therefore calls on the NI Executive to adopt the following:

1. To expedite the recommendations on child poverty by an expert panel to the Department of Communities
2. Strengthen the welfare mitigations and drop the two child limit within Universal Credit
3. Support the £20 uplift in Tax Credits and Universal Credit by lobbying the Chancellor to continue this increase beyond September 2021.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McCusker.

The motion was put to the meeting and passed.

PEACE IV to PEACE PLUS Programmes

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Kyle proposed:

“This Council calls for and supports the seamless transition of the current PEACE 4 to PEACE Plus programmes, currently administered under SEUPB. In particular, in light of the projected gap in funding of 18 months, it calls for the continuation of the vital youth provision within Belfast under the peace4youth STRIVE Programme.

The Council will write to the Executive Office and SEUPB asking that the necessary funds are made available to ensure the transition is, as promised, seamless.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

The motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson