

Council

ANNUAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 5th June, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Black) (Chairperson); and

Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Bower, Bradley, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, Copeland, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Kelly, Lawlor, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McCoubrey, McCullough, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Rodgers, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Black)
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the special meeting and the monthly meeting of the Council of 2nd May be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, together with a number of Members, extended her condolences to Councillor de Faoite on the death of his grandmother.

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The Lord Mayor referred to the recent death of Mr. David Stevenson, a member of the Business Support Unit in the Building Control Service and extended her sympathy to his family.

The Lord Mayor, together with several Members, referred to the success of the recent event to confer the Freedom of the City upon Dáithí Mac Gabhann and wished him and his family well for the future.

Councillor Doran extended his best wishes to Reverend Colin Morrison, Minister of Eglantine Presbyterian Church, who was due to retire on 25th June after forty years of ministry.

Councillor Bunting paid tribute to those former Members of the Democratic Unionist Party who had either retired at the end of the previous Council term or not been re-elected and welcomed Councillors R. Brooks, D. Douglas, Ferguson, Lawlor, I. McLaughlin and McCormick to their first meeting.

Councillors Ferguson, Long and Smyth extended their best wishes to former Alderman Sandford who had retired at the end of the previous Council term.

Councillor Smyth paid tribute to former Councillor O'Hara who had failed to be re-elected and highlighted the significant contribution which he had made to the Council and the City over the past four years.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Miss Zara Thompson and her fellow pupils of St. Anne's Primary School on the success of their fundraising activities to provide aid to Cambodia.

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received for a representative of Unite the Union to address the Council in relation to the industrial action being undertaken currently by workers in the Survitec survival technology company based in Dunmurry.

The Council approved the request and, accordingly, Mr. N. Moore, Regional Officer, Unite the Union, together with Mr. D. Magee and Ms. A. Faulkner, two employees of the company, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Magee informed the Council that Survitec was a world leader in the production of life saving equipment and highlighted the importance of the Dunmurry plant to the local manufacturing sector and economy. He highlighted the significant role which staff at the plant had played in ensuring the overall survival of the company during the Covid-19 pandemic and stressed that the lack of appreciation from management had left them feeling disrespected and disillusioned, with morale being at an all-time low. Approximately one hundred staff employed in the plant in Dunmurry were currently engaged in industrial action, with the aim of securing a pay rise in line with the rate of inflation, which, he stressed, was long-awaited and fully deserved.

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Ms. Faulkner explained that, since 2018, staff employed in the Survitec plant in Dunmurry had seen their basic pay increase by a mere seventy-eight pence and highlighted the challenges which many were facing during the current cost-of-living crisis. She pointed out that the management of the company had failed to engage with the Trades Unions and urged the Council to support the employees' demand for a pay rise equal to the rate of inflation, which was not deemed to be excessive in the context of the overall profits being made by the company.

Mr. Moore compared the average rate of pay of the Directors of Survitec with that of the workers and pointed out that increasing operational and material costs were continually being met at the expense of workers' pay. He confirmed that the rate of inflation, as measured by the Retail Price Index, currently stood at 11.5% and pointed out that, should the company accede to the workers' pay demand and also award all its workers across the United Kingdom and Ireland a similar pay increase, it would equate to only 3.3% of sales revenue. He concluded by stressing that the current industrial action was being widely supported by the various Trades Unions and urged the Council to also lend its support.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for its contribution, following which the Council noted the information which had been provided.

Request to Film Proceedings

The Chief Executive reported that requests had been received from the BBC and UTV to film the installation of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor.

The Council approved the requests.

Appointment of Positions of Responsibility for 2023 – 2027

The Chief Executive drew the Council's attention to a report providing information on the following Positions of Responsibility which had been selected by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party for the four-year Council term:

Internal Positions of Responsibility	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Lord Mayor	SF	ALL	DUP	SF
Deputy Lord Mayor	GREEN	DUP	SDLP	ALL
Chair - SP and R Committee	SF	SF	SF	DUP
Deputy Chair – SP and R Committee	DUP	SDLP	ALL	SF
Chair - City Growth and Regeneration	SF	ALL	DUP	SF
Deputy Chair - City Growth and Regeneration	TUV	DUP	SF	ALL
Chair - People and Communities	ALL	DUP	DUP	ALL
Deputy Chair - People and Communities	SF	SF	DUP	SF
Chair – Licensing Committee	SDLP	UUP	DUP	ALL
Deputy Chair – Licensing Committee	SF	GREEN	SF	SF

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Chair – Planning Committee	SF	SF	SF	SF
Deputy Chair – Planning Committee	SDLP	ALL	DUP	SF

Chair - Climate and City Resilience	SF	SF	SF	SDLP
Deputy Chair - Climate and City Resilience	PBPA	SF	DUP	SF

Chair - Standards and Business Committee	ALL	DUP	GREEN	DUP
Deputy Chair - Standards and Business	UUP	SF	DUP	SDLP

Chair – Waterfront and Ulster Hall	ALL	DUP	ALL	ALL
Deputy Chair - Waterfront and Ulster Hall	SF	ALL	DUP	SF

Outside Positions of Responsibility	Held for the 4-Year Term
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arc21	GREEN	DUP	ALL
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Partnership Panel	SF
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NI Housing Council	IND
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Reserve Forces and Cadets Association	DUP
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The Council approved the Positions of Responsibility for the four-year Council term, as set out above.

Year 1 Positions of Responsibility - 2023/2027

The Chief Executive drew the Council’s attention to a report providing information on the persons who had been selected by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to hold Positions of Responsibility in Year 1 of the current Council term:

Internal Positions of Responsibility	Year 1	Councillor
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Lord Mayor	SF	Councillor Murphy
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Deputy Lord Mayor	GREEN	Councillor Groogan
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Chair – SP and R Committee	SF	Councillor Black
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Deputy Chair – S P and R Committee	DUP	Alderman McCoubrey
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Chair - City Growth and Regeneration Committee	SF	Councillor Nic Bhranair
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Deputy Chair City Growth and Regeneration Committee	TUV	Councillor McDowell
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Chair - People and Communities Committee	ALLIANCE	Councillor Murray
Deputy Chair - People and Communities Committee	SF	Councillor Micheal Donnelly

Chair – Licensing Committee	SDLP	Councillor McKeown
Deputy Chair – Licensing Committee	SF	Councillor McCabe

Chair – Planning Committee	SF	Councillor Garrett
Deputy Chair - Planning	SDLP	Councillor Whyte

Chair Climate and City Resilience	SF	Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly
Deputy Chair Climate and City Resilience	PBPA	Councillor Collins

Chair Standards and Business	ALLIANCE	Councillor McDonough-Brown
Deputy Chair Standards and Business	UUP	Alderman Copeland

Chair Waterfront and Ulster Hall	ALLIANCE	Councillor Bower
Deputy Chair Waterfront and Ulster Hall	SF	Councillor Gormley

Outside Positions of Responsibility	Held for the 4-Year Term		
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arc21	GREEN PARTY (Member to be confirmed)	DUP – Councillor Kelly	ALLIANCE (Member to be confirmed)
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Partnership Panel	Councillor Duffy
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NI Housing Council	INDEPENDENT Councillor McCusker
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Reserve Forces and Cadets Association	DUP Councillor Lawlor
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The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the positions of responsibility for Year 1 of the 2023/2027 Council term, as set out above.

Expression of Thanks

Prior to the installation of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor, the outgoing Lord Mayor provided a brief overview of her year in office and stressed that it had been a privilege to serve as the First Citizen of Belfast. She went on to thank her Political Party, her family, former Councillor and Deputy Lord Mayor, Michelle Kelly, the High Sheriff, other Members and staff from across the Council for the valuable support which they had provided. She also paid tribute to her chosen charities and pointed out that meeting with various organisations/groups and with people generally had been a highlight. She concluded by wishing the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor every success over the forthcoming year.

Representatives of a number of Political Parties then paid tribute to the Lord Mayor and to former Councillor and Deputy Lord Mayor, Michelle Kelly, for the manner in which they had fulfilled their duties during their year in office.

Installation of Lord Mayor

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that it had, earlier in the meeting, approved the Positions of Responsibility for 2023/24 and that Councillor Murphy had been nominated to serve as Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Murphy was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2024 and he subscribed to the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Lord Mayor congratulated his predecessor, Councillor Black, on the success of her term in office and thanked his Political Party for nominating him to serve as Lord Mayor, as well as his family and the people of the Oldpark District Electoral Area. He stressed that he was fully committed to demonstrating positive leadership across all communities and that he would work to address the challenges being faced currently by workers and families across the City and to ensure that all opportunities to transform the City and increase investment, employment and prosperity were availed of.

(The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murphy, in the Chair.)

Installation of Deputy Lord Mayor

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that it had, earlier in the meeting, approved the Positions of Responsibility for 2023/24 and that Councillor Groogan had been nominated to serve as Deputy Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Groogan was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2024 and she subscribed to the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

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Councillor Groogan began by stating that she was honoured to become the first Member of the Green Party to hold the position of either Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor in Northern Ireland.

She paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor, Councillor Black, and to former Councillor and Deputy Lord Mayor, Michelle Kelly and stated that she was looking forward to working with the new Lord Mayor, Councillor Murphy, over the coming year.

She went on to thank the current and former Members of the Green Party on the Council and the people of the Botanic District Electoral Area for their support. She then highlighted the need for the Council, as a civic leader, to continue to demonstrate that Belfast was a welcoming place for asylum seekers, refugees and marginalised groups and, in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive, to be at the forefront in addressing issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, budget cuts, the climate crisis and the destruction of the built heritage.

Appointment of Members to Standing Committees for 2023/24

The Council approved the following table providing details of the number of places available on each Standing Committee per Political Party and noted that the names of those Members who had been nominated for Year 1 would be circulated in due course:

Political Party	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	City Growth and Regeneration Committee	People and Communities Committee	Licensing Committee	Planning Committee	Climate and City Resilience Committee	Standards and Business Committee	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Shareholders' Committee
SF	8	8	7	7	8	7	7	7
DUP	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4
ALL	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3
SDLP	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1
Green	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
UUP	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
PBPA	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
TUV	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
IND	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20

Appointment of Aldermen

The Chief Executive advised that the Local Government (Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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permitted the Council, in an election year, to designate up to a maximum of fifteen Councillors to serve as Aldermen for the duration of the Council term.

Accordingly, the Council agreed that Councillors Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers be appointed to the office of Alderman for the current Council term.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson