

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,
on Monday, 2nd December, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor S. Douglas;
and Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors
Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, Doherty,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Kelly, Long, Lyons, Maghie, Maskey,
McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCusker,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson, Nic Bhranair,
O'Neill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Magee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to 'Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25', within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that she was employed by Forward South Partnership. In addition, she declared an interest under 'PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan - Update', in that her employer had applied for funding under the programme.

Councillors R.M. Donnelly, Duffy, McCabe and Verner declared interests under 'PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update', within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that they were employed by organisations which had applied for funding under the programme.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in the item 'Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25', within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that she was a member of the board of Forward South Partnership.

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Councillor McCabe declared an interest in the minutes of the People and Communities Committee, in that she was employed by Féile an Phobail, should any matter within those minutes relating to the work of that organisation come under consideration.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray),
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 4th November, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor, together with representatives of the several political parties, extended sympathy to Mr. Philip Purdy of the Lord Mayor's Unit, on the passing of his mother, Mrs. Millé Purdy.

Councillor Doran congratulated the Westland Community Group on their receipt of an award of £1.6 million in grant-aid funding and requested that the Lord Mayor write to the group to extend congratulations on behalf of the Council.

The Deputy Lord Mayor referred to a recent visit he had undertaken to Greater Shankill Alternatives where he met representatives of 'Push4Change' programme. The Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated those individuals who had been instrumental in developing the programme, which sought to raise awareness in the community about the issues faced by people with disabilities.

Councillor McCullough referred to the recent election of Mr. Donald J. Trump as the 47th President of the United States and requested that the Lord Mayor consider forwarding a letter of congratulations. The Lord Mayor referred the matter to the Deputy Lord Mayor for consideration.

Councillor Abernethy expressed concerns relating to the prevalence of vaping amongst young people and commended Council officers for the enforcement work which they had undertaken in addressing the issue.

Councillor Nelson expressed condolences to the family of Mr. Gary McMahon, who had died in a cycling accident in Clifton Street on 21st November.

Councillor R. Brooks referred to a recent visit to the City Hall by young people from the Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club as part of the Democracy Works Foundation programme. She expressed her thanks to all those who had helped to make the evening a success.

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Councillor Maghie referred to the recent passing of the former south Belfast M.L.A., Ms. Anna Lo, and requested that the Lord Mayor write to her family to convey condolences on behalf of the Council.

Councillor I. McLaughlin paid tribute to those individuals who had been awarded bursaries as part of the Baroness May Blood Education Bursaries Initiative at a recent event at the Ulster University.

Councillor McCabe encouraged Members to sign the White Ribbon Charter Pledge, which was on display in the Robing Room, which was a pledge in opposition to violence against women and a commitment to support anyone who had been a victim of, or affected by, domestic violence.

Councillor Doran congratulated those who had been involved in the organisation of the Ulster-Scots Agency's Belfast Tartan Day, which had taken place on Saturday, 30th November.

Change of Membership on an Outside Body

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from Sinn Fein that Councillor O' Neill would replace Councillor Nic Bhranair on the Visit Belfast Board

The Council noted the change of membership.

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received on behalf of traders from Sandy Row who wished to outline their concerns in relation to the impact which the closure of the Boyne Bridge had had on businesses within the area. It was noted that a notice of motion in this regard, entitled 'Retail Business in Sandy Row', which had been proposed by Councillor Kelly and seconded by Councillor R. Brooks, had been referred, in the first instance, by the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st November, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Council acceded to the request and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Ms. S. McCusker, Mr. B. Allen and Mr. C.J. McDowell, who were representing traders from the Sandy Row area.

Ms. McCusker, who operated a dog grooming business in the area, explained that local traders had been impacted upon by the closure of the Boyne Bridge and stated that some traders had reported a drop in trade of between 30 and 40 per cent. She advised that traffic disruption had meant that customers had been unable to keep appointments and she had had to change the operating hours to address the traffic problems. She added that between 4.00pm and 6.00pm traffic in the area was at a standstill and if measures to alleviate the situation were not introduced, she may be forced to close her business.

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Mr. B. Allen, who operated Allen's Tours and T.A. Allen Furniture Shop, informed the Council that the traffic problems had limited the accessibility of clients to his businesses. That situation had impacted also on staff getting to and leaving work, as well as tourists arriving for coach tours. He suggested that that Council should introduce a parking scheme, similar to that which was in operation in the Donegall Pass area, whereby parking was free for the first hour, which would help alleviate customer accessibility.

The Council was then addressed by Mr. C.J. McDowell, who was representing Kirks Home Bakery. He advised the Chamber that the closure of the Boyne Bridge had created a downturn in business due to a lack of access to and from Sandy Row from the Grosvenor Road direction. He outlined the affect that this road closure had had on the wider Sandy Row/Donegall Road community and suggested that alternative arrangements should have been explored to minimise the impact caused by the closure of the Boyne Bridge.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, thanked the deputation for attending the meeting.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 22nd and 29th November, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

At the request of Councillor McLaughlin, the Council agreed that the minute of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 22nd November, under the heading 'Heritage Assets Update', be amended to reflect the addition of the gate lodge at the Falls Park within those sites identified for consideration within the expression of interest process.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McDowell,
Seconded by Alderman McCormick,

That the minute of the meeting of 22nd November under the heading 'Notice of Motion – NILGOSC – Disposal of Government Bonds' be rejected and, accordingly, that the Council agrees, in the first instance, to write to NILGOSC to ascertain if the decision to divest the government bonds which had been purchased from the Israeli government had been as a result of political pressure.

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On a recorded vote, seventeen Members voted for the amendment with thirty-nine against and it was declared lost.

For (17)	Against (39)
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick); The High Sheriff (Councillor S. Douglas); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, Ferguson, Kelly, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray); and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, Canavan, Carson, Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Harvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson, Nic Bhranair and O'Neill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment to the minutes of the meeting of 22nd November under the heading 'Heritage Assets Update' the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 22nd and 29th November were approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Kelly and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 5th November, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 6th and 27th November, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough and

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Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 20th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 12th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Climate and City Resilience

Moved by Councillor R.M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 7th November be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 21st November be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.
Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Shareholders' Committee of 18th, 25th and 29th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor O'Neill,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

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Resolved – that the decision of the Committee of 25th November, under the heading ‘Chief Executive Recruitment’, be amended to provide that, specifically under the third point of that decision, the Council agrees not to grant delegated authority to the Committee to take any such decision, or decisions, in relation to that issue.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Shareholders’ Committee of 18th, 25th and 29th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson