

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower, Bradley,
Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Maghie, Maskey,
McKeown, I. McLaughlin and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Bell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd December.

Declarations of Interest

Several Members, that being, Councillors Black, Bradley, M. Donnelly, I. McLaughlin and Verner, declared interests in respect of item 4a, 'Community Support Plan', in that they worked for organisations which were in receipt of revenue funding from the Council in this regard. However, since the report did not refer to any specific organisation and did not become subject to discussion or debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Abernethy declared an interest in respect of item 3b, 'GLL Single Parent Family Membership Category', in that he was the holder of such a membership. He did not take part in any discussion or decision-making in the matter.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in item 5c, 'Pitch Partnership Agreements', in that a relative was a member of Rosario FC. Since there was no discussion in the matter, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Presentations

Bryson Charitable Group

Further to its decision of 5th November, the Committee received a presentation from Ms. K. Fulton, Director of Recycling with Bryson Charitable Group, on the work which that organisation delivered throughout Belfast.

Ms. Fulton reported that the Bryson Recycling had been working with the Council since 2001 and had been awarded its first recycling contract in 2004. Currently the organisation oversaw 58,000 weekly collections and had been awarded a further recycling contract until 2029. That contract would enable the current kerbside box collection service to be replaced with the introduction of a more efficient 'wheelie box' bin service. In addition, Ms. Fulton outlined the social value which the organisation delivered through its work. She referred to several programmes that assisted young people to prepare for employment and other social value initiatives delivered within local communities. She added that the aim of the organisation was to make the greatest difference in those areas where there was the greatest need.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Ms. Fulton for attending the meeting and the Members noted the information which had been provided.

Houses in Multiple Occupancy - HMO Unit Presentation

Further to its decision of 5th November, the Chairperson welcomed Mr. K. Bloomfield, Northern Ireland Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager, based within the Council, who was in attendance to provide a presentation on the work of the HMO Unit.

Mr. Bloomfield outlined the role and remit of the HMO Unit. He provided the Committee with the current definition of a House in Multiple Occupation, insofar as it related to households and accommodation, as well as how that definition related to individuals and renting arrangements. He outlined the process by which the Council managed applications for properties to be considered as HMOs, which was in accordance with the Houses in Multiple Occupant Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. The Committee was informed of the terms and conditions that were applied in granting a HMO licence, as well as the planning controls applicable to both new and renewal applications. Mr. Bloomfield reviewed the criteria applied in determining an individual as a 'fit and proper person' to manage an HMO and gave details on the current number of HMO properties overseen by the Council in the Belfast area.

During discussion, Mr. Bloomfield clarified that there were two regulatory processes applied in the granting of HMOs, one of which was related to the planning process, with the other being the granting of an HMO licence by the Council. Should it be ascertained, he pointed out, that a property was operating as an HMO without authority under either of the regulations, then enforcement action would be undertaken by the Council.

A Member referred to the difficulty which was encountered by members of both the Planning and Licensing committees when considering applications for HMOs, particularly since a range of regulations, legislation and material considerations were applied from both a licensing and planning perspective. He suggested that it would be useful if a workshop, to which the members of the Licensing and Planning committees were invited, be held to receive a detailed

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overview of the legislative processes and material considerations which were pertinent throughout the full regulatory processes. Given that there existed separate legislative and regulatory processes, such a workshop, the Member added, would assist, particularly those Elected Members who served on both committees, to protect themselves from any suggestion of having expressed a pre-determined view when considering HMO applications.

The Director of Planning and Building Control clarified a number of matters raised and indicated that she was examining the feasibility of hosting a joint workshop, as outlined, for both the members of the Planning and Licencing committees in the new year.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Bloomfield for his presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Restricted Matters

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following items as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42 (4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Committee was advised that content of restricted reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as confidential information and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**GLL - Annual Schedule of Charges 2025/26 –
Family Membership Charge**

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Council on 4th November, it had been agreed that the minute of the Committee's meeting of 8th October, under the above-mentioned heading, be referred back to the Committee for further consideration. That request had been made in order to re-examine a proposed increase to the rate applied for a family membership package for the Leisure Transformation Programme (Phase 4) centres for 2025/26.

After discussion, the Committee affirmed its decision of 8th October, that being, to note the Schedule of Charges for the Council's Leisure Centres for 2025/26, subject to the proviso that, in respect of the increase in cost to the family membership for 2025/26, a 5% increase would be applied, as opposed to the proposed 10.4% increase.

GLL Single Parent Family Membership Category

Further to its meeting of 8th October, when the Committee had requested that officers would create a family membership' pricing category for single-adult families which would be set at a lower rate than the current package offering for two-adult families, the Committee considered

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a report in this regard which had been prepared by the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services.

The Committee noted the introduction of a single parent family membership category for 2025/26, under the terms requested at the meeting on 8th October.

Arising from discussion, it was noted that the Director of Neighbourhood Services would liaise with the Director of Property and Projects in respect of a presentation to the Committee on the planned future capital investment within the Council's leisure estate.

GLL Annual Leisure Customer Survey 2024

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 8th October, it had deferred consideration of the above-mentioned survey to enable a more detailed report to be submitted. It was noted that the updated report would provide additional detail on the survey outcomes, scoring matrixes and samples used. In addition, the report would include further demographic detail and also reflect user experience in a more qualitative and user-friendly manner; and would seek also to incorporate the views of those users who had not partaken in the survey electronically.

Accordingly, the Committee considered a further report and an associated appendix in this regard. The Strategic Director reported that the data contained therein contained additional information which had broadened the overall citywide survey feedback, together with centre-specific outcomes. The revised survey contained also a cross section of the service improvement plan based on the customer feedback received. He added that the survey had generated 2,983 responses across the leisure estate, with 1,632 qualitative comments recorded.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and welcomed the revised format in which the information had been provided.

Mr. Noel Munnis

Arising from discussion in the aforementioned matters, the Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. Noel Munnis, the Partnership Manager within the Department, would be retiring from the Council at the end of December. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, conveyed thanks to Mr. Munnis for his long-standing dedication and service to the Council and wished him well on his retirement. Several Members paid tribute to Mr. Munnis for his work with the Committee over the years.

Quarter 2 Finance Update

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services summarised the contents of the report which gave an overview of the Department's financial position as of quarter 2 of 2023/24.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the financial reporting pack.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Community Support Plan

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Community Support Plan to enable further examination and discussion to be undertaken between political parties and officers, particularly in respect of the viability of the funding model with a view that the matter be considered also within the wider rate-setting process for 2025/26.

**Ending Violence Against Women
and Girls – TEO Funding**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To present additional detail on the emerging proposals being brought forward by Officers in terms of the role of the Council in supporting the implementation of the recently published Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and The Executive Office’s associated two-year delivery plan.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That Members consider the following expanded proposals in relation to implementation of the EVAWG delivery plan in the city including:

- i. Make comments and agree allocation of £110,000 momentum funding to deliver an action plan across 9 thematic areas to support immediate in-year actions while the change fund is being established.**
- ii. Approve the open call of a small grants programme to the community and voluntary sector to deliver projects between April 2025 and March 2026.**
- iii. Agree to Administer funding which TEO assessed and is in the process of awarding eight leading CVS EVAWG expert organisations under the £1.2m Regional Change Fund to increase delivery and co-ordination of community, school and workplace based programmes and initiatives up to March 2026.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the SP&R Committee of 25th October 2024, the Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided details on the emerging proposals being brought forward by The Executive Office (TEO) in terms of the role of the Council in supporting the implementation of the recently published Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) and associated two-year delivery plan.

3.2 The Committee noted the proposal and agreed that Council adopt a lead role for the allocation of Strand 1 funding to support a Belfast wide programme of activities in-year and over 25/26 year; and agreed that the Council also adopt a lead role for the allocation of Strand 2 funding to support a regionally wide programme of activities.

3.3 **ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS – Belfast Change Fund**

The EVAWG Change Fund is an investment in community-based action over 15 months to March 2026 to support the Prevention Outcomes within the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls, which are:

3.4 There are two distinct strands to the Change Fund:

- Strand 1 – Equip community groups to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. This will be supported by a localised grant scheme (£255k) with calls opening in the New Year to support delivery of projects from April 2025 to March 2026.
- Strand 2 – Resource and mobilise regional community and voluntary sector to drive society wide action so that everyone understands what VAWG is and knows how to prevent it. A £1.2m fund to increase delivery and co-ordination of community, school and work place based programmes and initiatives by leading CVS EVAWG expert organisations.

3.5 While the Change Fund is being established, TEO have agreed to utilise a momentum fund to support immediate action. The Belfast fund of £110k will enable council to implement emergency responses in the period to March 2025 in order to raise awareness and build on the ground momentum.

3.6 The committee is asked to consider proposals under each of the 3 strands.

3.7 **MOMENTUM FUND**

Given the call for urgent action, TEO have offered £110,000 'momentum support' to allow expansion of existing good work by council and communities during the current financial year.

In response to a request from SP&R, TEO have confirmed that this money must be utilised in year and cannot be added to the small grant fund for utilisation into the next financial year.

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TEO indicate, while support must be community focused, council led programmes or commissioned services will be eligible.

- 3.8 Having sought advice from specialist sources and organisations, officers recommend the following initial menu of activity with a view to raising awareness for the EVAWG strategy, building capacity within our officer team in order to inform current and future service provision, build awareness and capacity within local community organisations to support applications to the Local Change Fund and to liaise with the cohort of expert regional organisations to maximise value for city based activity and programme support.
- 3.9 The Committee is asked to agree that Officers further develop and submit an action plan to TEO under the following themes:

	Theme	Indicative Budget
1	EVAWG Mobilisation Training Programme	£20,000
2	Work with Men and Boys	£30,000
3	Increasing Awareness & Visibility of EVAWG in Belfast	£15,000
4	Area Events	£20,000
5	Safety Awareness Sessions	£5,000
6	Support for those Working with Very Vulnerable Women	£5,000
7	Mobilising to Become Application Ready	£5,000
8	Mobilising in the Same Direction	£5,000
9	Creating Content	£5,000
	Total	£110,000

- 3.10 A full outline of the proposed Mobilisation Programme is attached at Appendix one. The intention is to build interest and awareness, improve capacity and knowledge and develop a strong foundation for service change and development and sector support. During the mobilisation programme Council will scope for gaps and explore the development of resources that may be useful with missed groups.
- 3.11 There is however a challenge as to what can usefully be achieved in the short timeframe. In order to maximise impact and fully utilise the available funds during the spend period to 31st March 2025, committee is asked to delegate authority to the Director to review progress and move or direct investment across the agreed themes
- 3.12 **STRAND 2 - LOCAL CHANGE FUND (£255,000)**

It is proposed that council launch an open call for small grant funding that will support community groups to deliver local events, projects or programmes of activity that deliver prevention, awareness raising,

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and early intervention initiatives aimed at EVAWG within the communities they support.

- 3.13 The Executive Office have instructed Council to award across 3 Tier's which are outlined below:

Tier 1 – Funding from £1,000 to £5,000

Tier 2 – Funding from £10,000 to £15,000

Tier 3 – Funding from £15,001 to £25,000

Organisations can only apply for one tier of funding.

- 3.14 The Executive Office requests that council ensures a balanced allocation across each of the 3 tiers and geographically pending the profile of applications received. They suggest that approximately 25% of funding be allocated to tier one and 25% to tier three applications.

Committee are therefore asked to agree the following indicative allocation model for the small grant programme.

Tier	Grant values	Allocation per Tier (indicative)	Minimum no of grants
Tier 1	£1,000 – £5,000	At least £65,000	13
Tier 2	£10,000 - £15,000	Approximately £90,000	6
Tier 3	£15,000 – £25,000	Up to £100,000	4
	Total	£255,000	

- 3.15 The table above outlines a preferred scenario but, given any final awards will be wholly dependent on the quantity and quality of application received, committee are asked that the Director of Neighbourhood Services is given delegated authority to amend the allocation per tier to enable a full committal of available grant resources within the agreed assessment timeframe.

- 3.16 As per previous committee approval, grants awards up to the value of £10,000 can be approved by the Director of Neighbourhood Services via delegated authority. Officers therefore propose that the Director can approve recommendations for Tier I grant awards (max £5k) up to the agreed ceiling (proposed as £65,000). All other grant recommendations will be tabled for committee consideration and approval.

Pending committee consideration, officers intend to proceed to an open call for applications in mid-January 2025. Support will be provided in the form of General Guidance booklets for applicants and information sessions in line with the open call.

3.17 STRAND 3 - REGIONAL CHANGE FUND

The Executive Office identified 8 organisations who were invited to provide proposals on ways their organisation might support delivery of the outcomes within the Prevention theme of the EVAWG Strategic Framework, using their existing EVAWG prevention programmes and initiatives:

- Barnardo's
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- Nexus NI
- Relate NI
- White Ribbon NI
- Women's Aid Federation NI (WAFNI)
- Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)
- Youth Action NI

3.18 All 8 organisations presented proposals to TEO for £150k (maximum individual award stated), totalling £1.2m. The EVAWG team have considered the proposals, carried out an in-depth review of how they align to the strategic outcomes and if they are value for money. While assessments are being finalised, it is the opinion of the EVAWG team in TEO that all eight proposals are suitable for funding. They address the urgent issue of helping to end violence against women and girls and demonstrate a strong commitment to implementing evidence-based strategies, innovative approaches, and sustainable resources that promise impactful results in this critical area.

3.19 To facilitate committee awareness of the full portfolio, a summary description of what each organisation has proposed is included in the Appendices, supported by a statistical summary in terms of deliverables.

3.20 TEO provide this information on a confidential basis with a caveat that it is still subject to the Executive Office and Department of Finance approvals including the following:

- Final panel approval, once final clarifications are agreed
- Senior Reporting Officer approval
- Business case approval

3.21 If successful, support for this collective body of expert EVAWG work will enable government to advance its commitment to ending violence against women and girls and build the capacity of the community and voluntary sector to make a meaningful difference. The collaboration both between these organisations, and with central and local government in delivery of the change fund will facilitate the whole of society approach needed.

3.22 **Belfast City Council will be informed when the successful organisations have been appointed and we will begin the administrative work of monitoring and voucher their outcomes and financial claim until March 2026.**

3.23 **Financial and Resource Implications**

The costs associated with the recommendations will be fully covered by the TEO letter of offer to the value of £1,565,000. Officers are continuing to negotiate an appropriate management fee to cover the costs associated with delivery.

3.24 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

The EVAWG Strategy has been subject to a full EQIA and Rural Needs Assessment.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations as set out within the report. In addition, given the urgency to ensure that the funding was allocated within the designated timescale, the Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to reallocate any underspends across the nine thematic areas as identified within the action plan.

Belfast City Youth Council – Recruitment

The Committee granted approval for the undertaking of a recruitment exercise to appoint a full complement of members of the Youth Council.

It was noted that any promotional information in this regard would outline the time commitments associated with serving on the Youth Council and that further utilisation of any reserve list of successful candidates would be examined. In response to a Member’s request, the Director of Neighbourhood Services undertook to circulate information regarding the recruitment exercise to Elected Members for their information as and when the trawl was due to commence.

Operational Issues

Resources and Fleet Waste – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

‘1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide an update to members on waste collections, management and performance.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report and to support the proposal to develop and introduce a HWRC Waste Access and Acceptance Policy.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Waste Performance & Recycling Rates

3.1 The most recent waste statistics published by the NIEA are the April to June 2024 quarterly statistics. The report is a snapshot of the first quarter of the 24/25 financial year versus the same period for the previous year.

3.2 The overall picture for NI was one of; an increasing quantity of waste collected (271,500 tonnes collected, up 1.5%), a static municipal reuse and recycling rate (53.8%) combined with a significant decrease in the landfill disposal rate, down to 15.4% the lowest quarterly landfill rate ever recorded.

3.3 An examination of the figures for Belfast City Council, indicates the following;

- **Municipal Waste Arisings** - the total tonnage of all types of waste collected by the Council was 42,566 tonnes. This is an increase of approximately 825 tonnes (2%) on the same quarter last year.
- **Municipal Waste Recycling Rate** – the percentage of all types of waste collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, increased by 2.8% to 41.5%. This increase was primarily due to increased organic tonnages.
- **Household Waste Recycling Rate**– the percentage of household waste only collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, increased by 3.6% to 44.9%.
- **Landfill Diversion Rate** – the percentage of all Council waste sent to landfill was 0.6%, down from 28% in the previous year.

For Q1 2024/25 the main contributors to the uplift in these figures were

- the increased tonnage of organic waste captured and
- the onboarding of the new arc21, interim residual waste treatment contract, resulting in significant quantities (10,800

tonnes) of waste being diverted from landfill to energy recovery.

- 3.4 As noted within this report and brought to the attention of Members through various consultation responses, there are a number of legislative, strategic and financial drivers which are going to shape future waste management arrangements. The full nature and implications of these policy drivers still remain somewhat unclear and in the absence of sufficient clarity, radical, systemic change aimed at delivering significant improvements in NI environmental targets is unlikely.

3.5 **Waste Framework Update**

At the People & Communities Committee meeting of June 2017, Members approved the Waste Framework document. It provides an overview of options on how waste could be managed within the city over the next decade. It was developed to align with the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and Resourceful Belfast (Circular Economy), designing out waste, improving the quantity and quality of recycling and supporting local jobs.

3.6 **Inner City Recycling Scheme Update**

On 1 August 2024, the new contract for the delivery of the kerbside recycling in the inner city commenced with service delivery carried out by Bryson Recycling. Officers continue to work with the contractor to ensure that the contract delivers according to the terms, conditions and service delivery plan. As a consequence of the new contract, the contractor has appointed a Customer Liaison Officer to deal with issues on the ground and answer customer complaints, new vehicles will be delivered and the contractor plans to install their own inCab technology solution to deliver improved customer service.

3.7 **Kerbside Glass**

As part of the 2024/25 revenue estimates setting process, Members committed to delivering phase one of this scheme which involves an expansion of kerbside glass to approximately 23,000 households. Internal funding and support funding from DAERA under the Household Recycling Collaboratives Change Programme has been secured to deliver phase 1 of the project. An update is provided in the accompanying report 'Resources and Fleet Pilot / Project Updates'

3.8 **Community Repaint Scheme**

The Service is planning for the implementation of a RePaint scheme at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). The scheme seeks to reduce the amount of paint sent for treatment and disposal by

diverting quality paint for resale to the public and to community groups via donation as community paint.

The Service has completed a procurement exercise for the RePaint service and is now working with the successful contractor, East Belfast Mission (EBM) to go live in early 2025.

3.9 Pre-loved Toys

The Service explored alternative delivery models for 2024 and issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) for partners interested in delivering this scheme. Following discussions with those organisations responding to the EOI it was evident that the single, lead operator model would again be the delivery model for 2024. As a result, East Belfast Mission were appointed as the lead delivery partner for 2024.

- 3.10 The pre-loved toys scheme will run at the four HWRCs from 11 November to 15 December 2024. EBM will be collecting the pre-loved toys at these sites and will then have the option to sell some of these at a competitive price through their retail outlets and at the same time will be gifting bundles of these toys to feeder community organisations to distribute before Christmas. The project has been promoted on social media and signage has also been erected at sites regarding the scheme.

(i) **Infrastructure**

Recycling Centres & Dargan Road WTS

- 3.11 Following SP&R approval for capital funding, the Service completed a procurement exercise for a multi-year, container provision contract. Orders have been placed for the new skips with the priority to replace those skips which are currently on hire. It is anticipated these will start to arrive on sites in December 2024. This will subsequently reduce the revenue costs associated with the rental of these skips.

Recycling Centres and Pedestrian Access

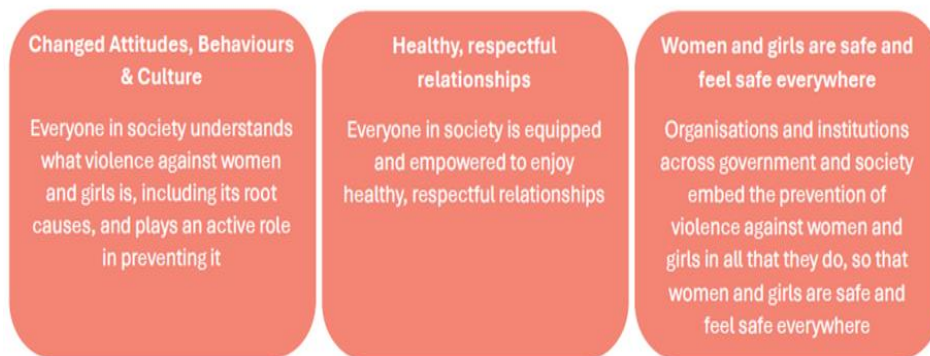
- 3.12 The pedestrian access gate at Alexandra Park, Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) has been completed and operational as of August 2024. The service has requested that colleagues in Property & Projects commission a feasibility study regarding pedestrian access for Palmerston Road and Blackstaff Way HWRC. Discussions with the consultant are ongoing and a programme for delivery of the study is expected soon.

Recycling Centres and Repair Works

- 3.13 Members will be aware that at the committee meeting of 8 October 2024, it was noted that Alexandra HWRC would have to undergo a temporary closure in order to carry out essential repair works to the service bay and simultaneously introduce changes to the layout of the site aimed at improving health and safety for site users. These works took just over 3 weeks to complete with the site re-opening to the public on 14th November.
- 3.14 Similar repair works to the service bays will be required at both Ormeau HWRC and Palmerston Road HWRC in 2025. Further details will be provided once a full works schedule has been compiled by Property & Projects.

arc21 Residual Waste Project and Interim Residual Waste arrangements

- 3.15 arc21 is awaiting the determination by the Stormont Executive regarding the planning decision on the proposed Residual Waste Treatment Project. Due to the prolonged timescales regarding the residual waste treatment facility at Hightown, arc21 initiated a procurement exercise to secure future services for the treatment and/or disposal of constituent councils' residual waste. This service was broken down into a number of lots to reflect the different time scales and material requirements of the constituent councils.
- 3.16 Arc21 awarded the Belfast City Council lot to ReGen and the contract was scheduled to commence on 1 July 2023. The Council's contractor at that time, River Ridge Recycling challenged this decision through the courts and sought an injunction. On the 26 June 2023, the court refused to grant an injunction to stop the implementation of the contract and the contract for services related to interim residual waste disposal for use by Belfast City Council commenced as planned on 1 July 2023. It should be noted that while the injunction to prevent commencement of services was not successful, there is



still a legal challenge by River Ridge against the award of this contract by arc21. The time frame for this case is likely to be Summer 2025.

- 3.17 As noted in the performance statistics above, this contract is delivering a step-change in diverting residual waste from landfill to energy recovery.

Connected Circular Economy - Shared Island Project

- 3.18 The Service has worked with colleagues in the Economic Development Unit and Climate Team along with Dublin City Council (DCC) to deliver a feasibility study into a 'Connected Circular Economy.' This report investigated how the two cities can share knowledge and good practice with the ambition for the development of hubs in Dublin and Belfast to support the growth of the circular economy across the island.
- 3.19 In collaboration with DCC as lead partner, a further funding request has been submitted to the Shared Island Fund seeking to progress the report's recommendations and develop more detailed business cases for the preferred option(s). No update on this funding application has been received from the Shared Island Fund to date.

(ii) Behaviour Change

Performance Pressures at HWRCs

- 3.20 During the course of 2023/24, the Service noted a general, downward trend in the recycling rates achieved by the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)¹. Anecdotal evidence suggested that neighbouring councils had introduced robust access and waste acceptance policies at their recycling centres which may have resulted in some residents either returning to their own Council area to deposit waste or indeed availing of alternative facilities which by

¹ Performance figures refer to both Household Waste Recycling Centres and Civic Amenity Sites (CAS) unless otherwise stated.

comparison lack access and acceptance policies. In essence, the sector may be witnessing a shift in the location of waste disposal across council boundaries

- 3.21 The Service, with the assistance of colleagues in the Performance Management Unit, decided to carry out a performance analysis of the Council's HWRCs to determine the validity of this argument. A comparison of the performance of the Council's HWRCs in 2023/24 versus the previous year is provided in the table below.
- 3.22 While the tonnage of recyclables captured increased slightly by 1.95%, the growth of the non-recyclable/residual waste at 5.95% has resulted in a fall in the overall recycling rate of the sites. It is notable that the recycling rate figure of 50.6% at the HWRCs is the lowest rate in the last 15 years (2009/10 = 50.1%). This is of particular concern as the HWRCs would always outperform other areas of Waste Collection within the council and would underpin the overall Household Recycling and Municipal Recycling Rates.
- 3.23 However, these figures disguise an underlying trend. In September 2023, in an effort to improve its recycling rate, Ards & North Down Borough Council (A&NDBC) introduced an online booking system for all users of their recycling centres. An analysis of the data from the Council's HWRCs for the period September to March 23/24, the period immediately post A&NDBC scheme, compared with the previous year, shows a much more significant impact on the recycling centre performance and financial impact.
- 3.24 As highlighted in table 2 below, an examination of the residual waste since the introduction of the A&NDBC online booking system indicates a 12% increase rather than the 6% annual figure above, which covers the first five months of the year when no such booking system was in place. In addition, while the increase across all sites is 12%, there are marked increases in particular at Palmerston HWRC, which sits in close proximity to Holywood CA site operated by A&NDBC.
- 3.25 This growth rate of residual waste at the sites is stark and without doubt has played a significant part in the decline in the overall recycling rate at the centres. Applying the growth rate for these 7 months to the full year and adjusting for the normal overall waste growth rate (+1.5%) gives a scenario of an additional 1,300 tonnes of residual/non-recyclable waste accepted at the Council's sites over the course of a year, with an estimated additional cost of handling and treatment of £194,000.
- 3.26 The Council operates an online booking system for light goods vehicles/vans seeking to access the recycling centres. This data was analysed over the same period (Sep'23- Mar'24 versus Sep'22 -

Mar'23) in an effort to identify potential sources of increased residual tonnage. As demonstrated in table three the sites have witnessed on average a 13% increase in the number of van bookings during this period and again of particular note is the 25% increase witnessed by Palmerston.

3.27 Table 3: Number of Van bookings to BCC HWRCs

Van Bookings					
No. of visits	Alexandra	Blackstaff	Palmerston	Ormeau	Total
Sep'22 - Mar '23	5,141	7,870	5,082	7,190	25,283
Sep'23 - Mar '24	5,606	8,324	6,352	8,164	28,446
Variance visits	465	454	1,270	974	3,163
Variance %	9%	6%	25%	14%	13%

3.28 This increase in residual tonnage and van bookings coincides with the introduction of the new access and acceptance policies in neighbouring councils. Indeed, shortly after the introduction of the A&NDBC booking system, media channels noted the emerging phenomenon of 'waste tourism' – residents crossing Council boundaries to deposit waste at recycling centres.

3.29 A further analysis of the van booking system for the period Jan-Mar'24 was conducted. The purpose was to identify usage patterns which would be considerably greater than the average household and which may identify opportunistic individuals or organisations availing of the recycling centres to dispose of their commercial waste and thereby avoid paying for its disposal but rather placing this burden on the Belfast rate payer.

3.30 All accounts which booked 14 times or more during this period i.e. used the site more than once per week, greater usage than the average householder, were examined in terms of their total number of visits to the sites.

3.31 Over this three-month period, 156 accounts placed 6,868 bookings. These 156 accounts represented around 56% of total bookings. The range in the number of bookings was 14 – 246. Of these 156 accounts, the average number of bookings over this 13-week period was 44 occasions. These figures would suggest that the lack of formal waste acceptance policies may be leaving the recycling centres vulnerable to commercial waste abuse.

3.32 Council officers have met with their counterparts in A&NDBC to discuss their policies and to view a demonstration of their online booking system. An online demonstration was also provided by the company behind alternative software, the 'Booking Lab' which is in use at over 70 councils across the UK. Both systems were more

suitable to the waste environment than the current system in place at the Council to manage van bookings which was installed as an off the shelf solution to manage visitor numbers in the context of the Covid-19 Public Health Regulations and social distancing.

- 3.33 The project also examined the performance of A&NDBC recycling centres over the same period to ascertain if their new booking system had in fact delivered the anticipated benefits. Despite the initial reservations expressed on various media channels, the introduction of the booking system and supporting policies has enabled A&NDBC to reverse the trend of declining recycling performance at the sites and at the same time generate efficiency savings. For the period Oct'23-Mar'24 versus the same period the previous year, the sites achieved an overall uplift in the recycling rate of 7%. This improved performance also resulted in significant avoided costs of landfill disposal.
- 3.34 Through desk research and interviews with neighbouring Councils and industry sources, Council officers noted that neighbouring councils have varying policies with regard to waste access and acceptance at HWRCs, ranging from simple proof of residency within the council catchment area to online booking systems for all users and fair use policies. At present, the Council does not have any such policy. The Service is therefore extremely limited in the terms of the tools at its disposal to challenge suspect behaviour and drive improved recycling performance at the sites. A summary of the policies in place in neighbouring councils is contained in Appendix 1 – Waste Access & Acceptance Policies.
- 3.35 The absence of a Waste Access & Acceptance policy means the Council is the path of least resistance for those who may wish to exploit this opportunity. As outlined above, this is having a detrimental impact on the recycling centre recycling performance and financial position.
- 3.36 Taking the above into consideration, it is recommended that an action plan is developed to tackle this issue in an effort to drive improved performance at the sites, and subject to members approval, develop and introduce a HWRC Waste Access and Acceptance Policy, designed to run in parallel with the current Waste and Recycling Collection Operational Policy which is in use for Waste Collections. The Service is exploring options which might be considered as components of an action plan for recycling centres and will provide a report to Committee in due course.

(iii) Information Technology

In-Cab Technology

- 3.37 The in-Cab technology project has been advancing through the procurement process.

A preferred supplier has been identified by the evaluation team and a Final Business case will be presented to the Financial Oversight Board before going through Council Governance. On passage, it is hoped to award the contract in January 2025.

- 3.38 Focus for the project team and project board will now switch to focus on a detailed implementation plan, with a phased roll out of the solution to take place throughout the 2025/26 financial year.

3.39 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

3.40 **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments**

There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.'

The Committee noted the information provided and agreed to support, in principle, the proposal to develop and introduce a Household Waste Recycling Centres - Waste Access and Acceptance Policy, subject to the hosting of a workshop to examine, in conjunction with a range of other agencies, bodies and local authorities, a full range of options in this regard.

Resources and Fleet Pilot/Project – Update

(Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress made to date in the planning and launch of three initiatives to improve the service delivery and recycling performance of Waste Collections within Resources and Fleet. These initiatives are

- Small Streets Pilot with PSNI/DFI (Park With Us in Mind)
- Introduction of Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets
- Expansion of Separate Glass Collection Services.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report, in particular

- The status of the collaborative work with PSNI/DFI
- the phased introduction of small vehicle routes to difficult to access streets commencing 12th August 2024
- the update and proposed rollout timelines and streets for Phase 1 of expanded glass collections

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Small Streets Pilot in collaboration with PSNI and DFI.

3.2 Members will be aware that this pilot was launched on 6th May 2024, with the first area identified as the side streets from the Stranmillis Road in the University area. The plan was envisaged to run as follows. The overall scheme envisages three ‘cycles’ in these areas over a period of approximately 18 months. The first cycle is complete, and the second cycle will take place as follows, each to cover a period of 6 weeks.

Area	Start Date
Stranmillis Rd Area	21/10/2024
Donegall Road / Village Area	18/11/2024
Cregagh / Loopland Area	16/12/2024
Springfield Road Area	13/01/2025
Lower Ormeau Road/ Park Road Area	10/02/2025
Iveagh / Broadway Area	10/03/2025

3.3 Officers are now in a position to provide some analysis and data to compare both crew reports and customer contact levels covering the 6 weeks prior to intervention compared to the 6 weeks of the intervention period for each of the areas. The data comes from two sources

- Operational crew reports of not being able to access streets or blocked alleyway entrances etc
- Customer contact data in relation to residents in the relevant streets reporting non collections

Table 1 summarises the data from both sources and is illustrated in Chart 1 and Chart 2

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3.4 Table 1 Reported instances by crews and Customers

Area	Crews via Report it App				Customer Contact			
	Pre Pilot	Pilot	% change		Pre Pilot	Pilot	%i change	
Stranmillis	29	21	28%	ê	6	8	-33%	é
Donegall Rd / Village	10	7	30%	ê	3	2	33%	ê
Cregagh / Loopland	13	6	54%	ê	38	13	66%	ê
Springfield Road	9	4	56%	ê	13	7	46%	ê
Lower Ormeau /Park Road	9	2	78%	ê	20	1	95%	ê
Iveagh / Broadway	3	7	-133%	é	13	17	-31%	é
Totals	73	47	36%	ê	93	48	48%	ê

3.5 Chart 1 Reports by Crews by target area

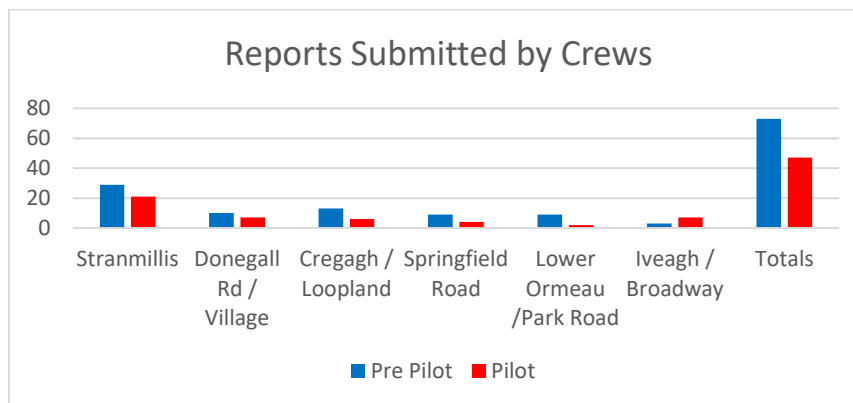
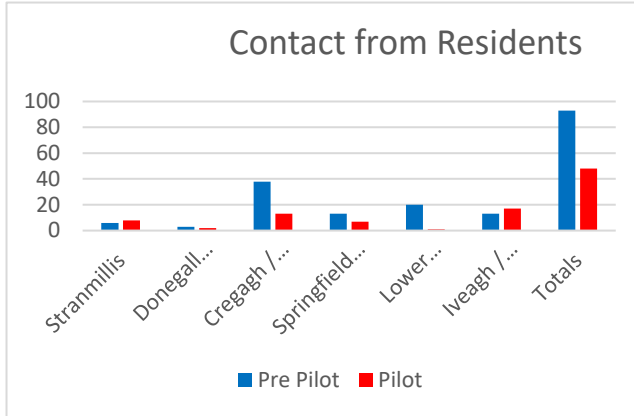


Chart 2 Customer contacts from residents for missed collections

- 3.7 From this initial set of data it would seem that there has been some improvements in accessing most areas more frequently.



- In 5 of the 6 areas crew have reported less instances of non-access with an overall reduction of 36% compared to the 6 week period prior to each intervention. The exception to this was in the Iveagh / Broadway area where crews reported more often.
- In 4 of the six areas there was a reduction of customer contacts with an encouraging overall reduction of reports by 48%. The exceptions to this are in the Stranmillis and Iveagh / Broadway area.

An officer review meeting with BCC and DFI officers took place at the end of November to discuss the data and to see if any improvements can be introduced to improve on the first cycle.

Introduction of Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets

- 3.8 Members will be aware that the pilot for this initiative, consisting of two leased 18 tonnes Dennis Eagle Refuse Collection Vehicles and temporary crews, commenced collection in identified and agreed difficult to access streets on 12th August 2024. At the time of writing, the pilot continues to be rolled out and in operation for three months.
- 3.9 It was originally envisaged that all three waste streams would have been allocated and routed to these vehicles by November 4th. There have, however, been some operational delays but progress is still ongoing. Table 2 outlines progress to date

3.10 Table 2 Transfer of targeted streets to smaller vehicles

Bin Type	Streets with Bin Type	transferred to smaller vehicle
Black/Grey Non recyclable	126	126 (100%)
Brown Food/ Garden Compostables	85	85 (100%)
Blue Dry Mixed Recyclables	79	55 (70%)

3.11 The main reason behind the delay is related to the amount of dry mixed recycle the vehicle can carry. Other waste streams can be measured by weight, but it is more difficult to assign routes based on volumes as the dry mixed recycling is very bulky with relatively little weight and therefore creating routes is a complex and iterative process. It is likely that the majority of outstanding 'blue' streets will be transferred to smaller vehicles in December but the process may be paused to allow for effective Christmas waste collections and will be finalised in January 2024.

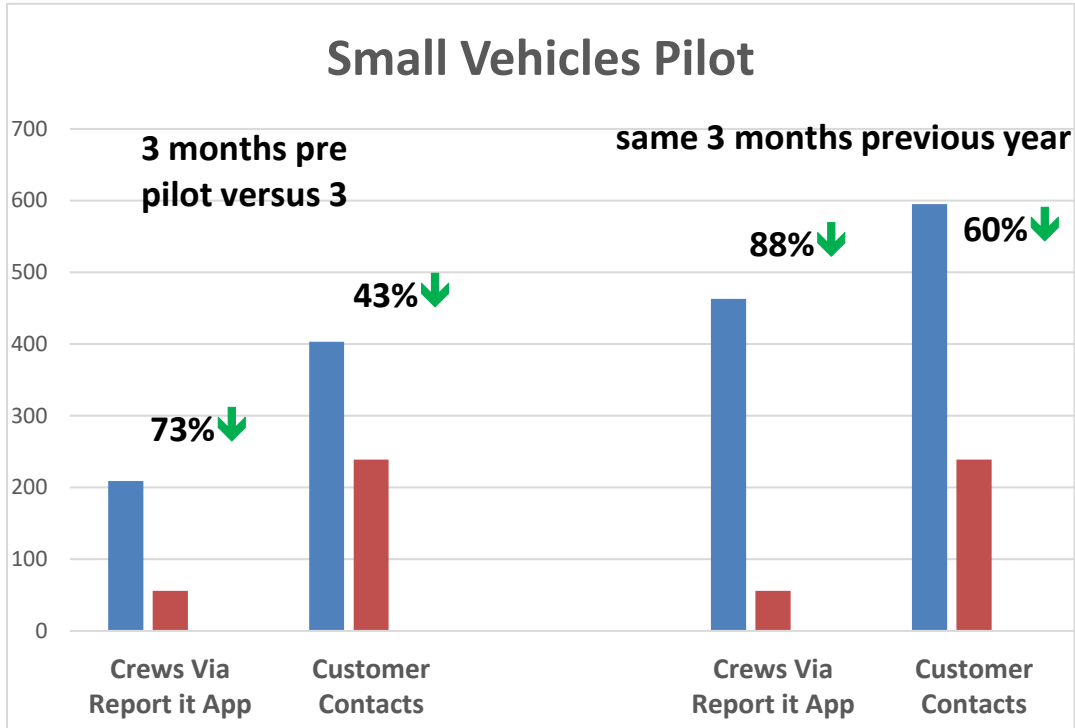
3.12 That said, the first set of data covering the first three months of operation is very encouraging. Two comparisons have been made in Table 3 and Chart 3. Data has been produced comparing the amount of crew reports and customer contacts in relation to missed collections as follows

- The first three months of small vehicles in operation against the three months immediately prior to their introduction
- The first three months in operation against the same period the previous year

3.13 Table 3 - Reported incidents 3 months prior and three months same time last year

	1st 3 months of pilot	3 months pre pilot	% reduction		1st 3 months of pilot	same 3 months last year	% reduction	
Crews Via Report it App	56	209	73%	ê	56	463	88%	ê
Customer Contacts	239	403	41%	ê	239	595	60%	ê

3.14 Chart 3 - Reported incidents 3 months prior and three months same time last year



3.15 A list of streets being changed to smaller collection vehicle routes from 12th August is attached at Appendix 1 - Streets moving to 18 Tonnes vehicle collections from 12th August, 2024

3.16 Expansion of Separate Glass Collection Services

As previously reported, Resources and Fleet submitted an application to DAERA under the Household Waste Collaborative Change Programme for financial assistance with regard to capital funding for the expansion of segregated glass collections for remaining households across the Council area.. Having received a Letter of Offer from DAERA on 25th July, the Council's has approved approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning, amongst other things, capital funding on a 50/50 basis and the first Phase is in the process of being implemented.

3.17 Planning continues in preparation for rolling this scheme out during January to March 2025. The Implementation phase involves the recruitment of collection crews, procurement of containers for both individual households and apartment blocks, initial leasing of vehicles prior to the procurement of new vehicles, communication of the scheme to the selected households, assessment of apartments (if

any within the selected areas) and finally delivery of containers followed by first collections.

- 3.18 The scheme roll-out commences with a letter drop to households within the agreed phase one catchment area. This letter will outline the key aspects of the initiative along with practical information such as collection day, frequency, accepted materials and start date. Within seven days of receiving the letter, households will be issued with a kerbside box and lid for the presentation of their glass containers at the kerbside. An information leaflet will also be included within the kerbside boxes reminding residents on the salient points of the scheme. Kerbside collections will then commence within 11 days of receiving the kerbside box.
- 3.19 Given the lead times associated with a number of these activities, in particular the purchase and receipt of containers, and mindful of the potential clash with collections arrangements for the Xmas season, it is now estimated that the main activities will be rolled out as per Table 4, subject to deliveries of containers arriving as per the agreed schedule from the supplier. It is envisaged that the implementation phase will start in January and will be completed by March 2025
- 3.20 Table 4 – Estimated timetable for project commencement

Year 1 Rollout	
23000 households approx.	
Letters to residents	27th January – 21st February 2025
Containers Delivered to households	30th January – 27th February, 2025,
Phased Collections roll out	10th February – 7th March 2025
Regular Collection Schedule in place	10th March 2025 onwards

- 3.21 Detailed route planning is still being finalised but a proposed list of streets to be serviced under Phase 1 has now been agreed with the Operations Team and can be found at Appendix 2 – Phase 1 Streets to receive Glass Collections

The Service will continue to keep Members apprised of the progress of the scheme through the Council's usual governance procedures.

3.22 Financial and Resource Implications

In relation to the expansion of glass collections, DAERA will 50/50 match fund the agreed capital requirements as agreed in their Letter of Offer.

**3.23 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

None.”

In response to several Members’ queries, the City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) undertook to provide information, if requested, in respect of figures related to parking enforcement measures by the statutory bodies and agencies.

The Committee noted the information as set out within the report and specifically the information as outlined within the recommendation.

Pitch Partnership Agreements

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 This report is to provide an update on progress on implementation of Pitch Partner Agreements for 1 April 2024 – 31 October 2024.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Committee are asked to note the progress to date at Partner Agreement sites and that partner agreements have been extended until 31 March 2025 or until new arrangements are put in place following completion of the Community Asset Transfer Pilot.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Legal Agreements

Council agreed to enter into Partner Agreements at the following sites with the clubs identified below. The Agreements are for a period of 5 years with option to extend for up to a further two years. The department has extended all of the Agreements beyond the initial 5-year period and up to 31 March 2024.

3.2 Agreement Extension

On 12 March 2024, Committee agreed to extend existing Pitch Partner Agreements until 31 March 2025.

3.3 Partner Agreement Sites

Location	Partner
Dixon Playing Fields	Sirocco Works FC
Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park	East Belfast FC

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Woodlands Playing Fields	Co. Antrim Board GAA
Loughside Playing Fields	Loughside FC
Shore Road Playing Fields	Grove United FC
Orangefield Playing Fields	Bloomfield FC
Ulidia Playing Fields	Rosario FC

3.4 Regular checks on the necessary Insurance, Health and Safety and Governance have been completed at all sites. The reporting documents were amended in accordance with audit requirements and sent to partners one month in advance of reporting deadlines. All partners are compliant on these matters.

3.5 **Financial Support to deliver Sports Development Plans**

All partners submitted their plans in early 2024 to improve sports development outcomes at each site in the 2024 – 2025 financial year.

Funding of up to £20,000 per annum has been available for each partner to deliver a programme supporting their Sports Development Plan. Letters of offer to all partners are based on approved sports development plans for the financial year. Partners must submit Sports Development plans annually which are aligned to the financial planning calendar for the incoming year.

3.6 **Monitoring**

Quarterly monitoring meetings with our delivery partners continue to take place. These meetings include updates on site management and bookings, health and safety, finance and their sports development plan. Action plans are reviewed and agreed with the partners during these discussions to ensure that planned outcomes are achieved, and improvements identified where required.

3.7 **Sports Development Impact**

In line with Council objectives, the diversification of use and improved sports development impact are priorities at the partner agreement sites. Programme delivery continues to achieve positive achievements across the sites.

3.8 The table below indicates outputs at the sites as reported by the 7 partners for Quarters 1 & 2 (April-October 2024).

<u>A. Participation type</u>	
1. Members of different codes	5154
2. People with a Disability	420
3. People from a minority ethnic background	4772
	5018

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4. Females	4127
5. Older people	27
6. Schools / youth organisations	
<u>B. Participation usage</u>	
Number of full pitch/adult matches on site	581
Number of full pitch/adult match participations	18762
Number of small sided/youth matches on site	781
Number of youth match participations	30168
Number of training sessions held on site	1963
Number of training session participants	48055
Number of other bookings / activities on site	174
Number of other bookings/activity participants on site	12435
<u>C. Partnership working</u>	
1. Working with Belfast City Council	14
2. Sport's Governing Bodies	54
3. Other teams / groups in your sport	56
4. Other teams / groups in different sports	15
5. Community / voluntary groups	23
<u>D. Social value</u>	
1. Young people at risk	1026
2. Encourage participation of under-represented groups	12960
3. Promote positive cross community relations	939
4. Promote health and wellbeing in socially deprived communities	12714
5. Promote Volunteering skills	531
6. Develop skills that will improve employability	222

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

A total of £140,000 per annum is available within revenue estimates to support annual Sports Development Plans at the Partner Agreement sites.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

The Committee noted the progress which had been achieved at the partner agreement sites and that those agreements had been extended until the end of the financial year, or until new arrangements had been put in place, following the completion of the Community Asset Transfer Pilot.

Advice Outreach

At its meeting on 5th November, the Committee had requested that a report be submitted which would contain additional detail in relation to the provision of advice services offered by the Council, particularly in respect of the extent of outreach services available across the city.

Accordingly, the Committee considered a report in this regard which had been prepared by the Director of Neighbourhood Services, together with an associated appendix which outlined the location of advice provision services across Belfast.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and its associated appendix.

Air Quality Schools' Project – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Committee will recall that at its meeting of 9th January 2024, it considered a paper concerning monitoring of ambient air quality in the vicinity of a number of primary schools across the city to help to inform Action 22 of the 2021-2026 Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan concerning a pilot scheme for the designation of ‘school streets’.**
- 1.2 A ‘School Street’ is a road or street outside of a school where a temporary restriction on motorised traffic is applied at am ‘*drop-off*’ and pm ‘*pick-up*’ times during the school day, resulting in a safer and environmentally improved local environment. The restriction is typically applied to both school and through traffic. This Action Plan measure has been proposed jointly by Sustrans and the Department for Infrastructure.**
- 1.3 The Committee was advised in the 9th January 2024 report that council Air Quality Officers had liaised with Sustrans in order to identify a selection of primary schools situated throughout the city where transport related ambient air quality monitoring in their localities might be undertaken to help inform the designation of School Streets. Selection criteria applied in the identification of suitable schools included: ● Is there much traffic congestion at the school gates? ● Does the infrastructure / road layout around the school seem suitable for a future intervention such as School Streets? ● Is the school keen to increase active travel among pupils? ● Is the school in the Active School Travel programme?**
- 1.4 Accordingly, eight primary schools were initially suggested by Sustrans, which were then subsequently surveyed by the council officers to identify suitable monitoring and mounting locations, resulting in the council agreeing to install Earthsense Zephyr ambient air quality monitors initially in the vicinity of the following four**

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primary schools; Rosetta Primary School, Knockbreda Rd; Belvoir Park Primary School, Belvoir Drive; Holy Rosary Primary School, Sunnyside Crescent and; Holy Evangelists' Primary School and Nursery Unit, Glasvey Drive, Dunmurry.

- 1.5 The air quality monitors were variously installed from mid-March 2024 onwards and for the purposes of this project, monitoring data has been considered until the end of July 2024, to obtain nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) air pollution measurements and trends whilst the schools were in operation and by way of comparator, during the July holiday period.
- 1.6 This paper provides for the Committee's consideration of summary monitoring data for nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter for the four primary schools, expressed as hourly and monthly means, and weekday and weekend diurnal (24-hour profile) nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) means. The paper also considers exceedances of relevant air quality objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}).
- 2.0 **Main Report**
- 2.1 The Committee is advised that council air quality officers installed solar powered Earthsense Zephyr small sensor air quality monitors in the vicinity of the above-mentioned four primary schools from mid-March 2024 onwards. The monitors were installed at locations to target adjacent public roads and transport routes to and from the schools so that there was no impact on school operations or pupils as a consequence of the ambient air quality monitoring.
- 2.2 Monitoring data has been resolved into hourly mean concentrations to enable comparison with the 200 µgm⁻³ 1- hour mean objective for nitrogen dioxide and longer term 24-hour mean objective for particulate matter (PM₁₀). The Committee will appreciate that the 1-hour mean objective is applied at locations where members of the public might reasonably be expected to spend one hour or more and therefore typically includes kerbside locations such as pavements of busy roads or streets, such as in the vicinity of schools during morning '*drop off*' and afternoon '*pick up*' periods. The 24-hour mean particulate matter objective would not normally apply at a roadside or kerbside location, where public exposure is considered to be short-term.
- 2.3 The Committee is advised that no exceedances of the 200 µgm⁻³ 1-hour mean objective for nitrogen dioxide or the longer term 50 µgm⁻³ 24-hour mean objective (not to be exceeded more than 35 times per annum) for particulate matter (PM₁₀) were recorded throughout the monitoring periods. Accordingly, it is considered that there are no requirements to amend the council's existing Air Quality Management

areas or to declare any new Air Quality Management Areas as a consequence of the school streets monitoring. Moreover, the outworkings of the school streets monitoring are in broad accordance with the conclusions of the council's 2023 Detailed Assessment for Ambient Air Quality.

- 2.4 Particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is not presently in regulation for the purposes of local air quality management by councils, although a 25 µgm⁻³ annual mean target has been established, together with a 15% cut in urban background exposure, also assessed as an annual mean. As previously, the Committee is advised that annual mean targets for PM_{2.5} would not apply at roadside or kerbside monitoring locations, where public exposure is short-term. Monthly mean monitoring data for particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) have nevertheless been presented for each of the four schools within Appendix Sections 4.2 – 4.5 of this report for additional information. Monitored monthly mean PM_{2.5} concentrations were all substantially below the 25 µgm⁻³ target level throughout the March – July 2024 monitoring period.
- 2.5 Council air quality officers have shared the summary monitoring data with Sustrans and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Air and Environmental Quality Unit. The Committee will be aware that DAERA funded the purchase of two Zephyr air quality monitors through the 2023-2024 Local Air Quality Management grant process in specific support of this schools' streets project. It will now be for Sustrans and DfI to consider how they may wish to utilise the monitoring data generated through this project to help inform the designation of 'school streets' in accordance with Action 22 of the 2021-2026 Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan. It is however noted that the diurnal (24-hour profile) nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) mean graphs (Appendix Sections 4.2 - 4.5) demonstrate modest increases in nitrogen dioxide concentrations during the weekday peak morning travel period when compared to the equivalent weekend period during the March – June 2024 monitoring period, and to a lesser extent during the July 2024 monitoring period.
- 2.6 In consideration of the monitoring data to date, it has been agreed with Sustrans to maintain two of the air quality monitors in their current locations to determine if there are any increases in traffic related ambient air pollution in the vicinity of Rosetta Primary School or Holy Rosary Primary School throughout the winter period when school users and the local community may more frequently choose to commute by motor vehicle.
- 2.7 Sustrans have additionally agreed that the air quality monitors at Belvoir Park Primary School, and Holy Evangelists' Primary School and Nursery Unit may be redeployed to Nettlefield Primary School, Randor Drive, and Strandtown Primary School, North Road, subject to suitable lampposts / street furniture mounting locations in

those monitoring locations being identified, to help inform the potential designation of 'school streets' in those areas.

- 2.8 Council air quality officers have also proposed to Sustrans that the Zephyr air quality monitor currently located adjacent to the A12 Westlink corridor at Henry Place and Carlisle Road be relocated to a more southerly location along the A12 Westlink to undertake monitoring in the vicinity of St. Mary's Primary School, Barrack Street, located adjacent to the A12 Westlink and Divis Street; again subject to a suitable mounting and monitoring location being identified. St. Mary's Primary School, Barrack Street was considered as a sensitive receptor within the council's 2023 Detailed Assessment of Ambient Air Quality for the city.

2.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no immediate financial or resource implications associated with this report. Operation of the Zephyr small sensor air quality monitors is supported via the DAERA 2024-2025 Local Air Quality Management grant process. The 'school streets' monitoring project is being undertaken from within existing Scientific Unit air quality staff resources.

2.10 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment.**

None."

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that the small sensor air quality monitors be maintained at Rosetta Primary School and Holy Rosary Primary School.

In addition, the Committee agreed to the following:

- that the air quality monitors at Nettlefield Primary School, Randor Drive, and Strandtown Primary School be redeployed to North Road, subject to suitable to the identification of suitable mounting locations to help inform potential school streets designations in those areas; and
- that the air quality monitor located at Henry Place and Carlisle Road, adjacent the A12 Westlink, be relocated to a more southerly point on the Westlink corridor to enable air quality monitoring to be undertaken in the vicinity of St. Mary's Primary School, Barrack Street, to subject to a more suitable location being identified.

Air Quality Updating and Screening Assessment 2024

The Director of City Services reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 10th September, it had noted the contents of the Council's 2024 Updating and Screening Assessment (USA) and had agreed that it be submitted to the Department of Agriculture,

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Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for independent consideration and appraisal. However, at that meeting, the Committee had agreed, in principle, not to move to revoke the Ormeau Road and Upper Newtownards Road Air Quality Management Areas – which had been recommended by DEARA – but to await DEARA’s independent assessment of the Council’s 2024 report.

Accordingly, the Committee considered a report, the portion of which in respect of the above matter is set out hereunder:

- “1.3 The council has now received a Bureau Veritas technical assessors’ report from DAERA concerning the appraisal of its 2024 USA, which, in addition to accepting the report and publishing it on the DAERA NI Air website recommends that the council should now progress revocation of AQMA No. 3 - Upper Newtownards Road and AQMA No. 4 – Ormeau Road.**

- 1.4 Bureau Veritas have also suggested that the council should liaise with DAERA to consider additionally revoking the Cormac Street and Albertbridge Road AQMA and revoking the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor AQMA for exceedances of the 1-hour mean objective for nitrogen dioxide.**

- 1.5 DAERA have asked that Belfast City Council reverts to the Air and Environmental Quality Unit with a timescale for revocation of the AQMAs and any associated planned public communications so that the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister may be briefed accordingly.**

- 1.6 The formal process for revoking an AQMA is detailed from section ‘3.53 Amendment and Revocation of AQMAs’ of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance LAQM.TG(22) and within Article 12 Designation of air quality management areas of The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002.**

- 1.7 DAERA and Bureau Veritas have commented that the council’s 2024 USA report has been completed to a high standard, with additional appropriate appendices to show the further work that the Council is undertaking to improve air quality within its area of jurisdiction.”**

A Member outlined his opposition to the recommendation by DEARA that the Council should move to revoke the current Air Quality Management Areas at the Upper Newtownards Road and the Ormeau Road. He pointed out that air quality standards had improved significantly in those two areas and had been sustained over several years. He added that DEARA’s recommendations to revoke the monitors had been based on the fact that both areas now met the UK’s air quality standards. However, he suggested that the Council should continue to monitor the two areas in an attempt to meet the standards for air quality management as recommended by the World Health Organisation, which, it was suggested, was the benchmark which the Council should be working towards.

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The Committee noted the contents of the report and the independent assessment of the Council's 2024 Update and Screening Assessment. However, the Committee agreed not to revoke the two Air Quality Management Areas, that being at the Upper Newtownards Road and the Ormeau Road for the reasons outlined previously.

**George Best Belfast City Airport –
Request re: Rook Nests at Victoria Park**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 9th January, 2024, it had agreed to enter into a legal agreement with the George Best Belfast City Airport to permit access to Victoria Park to facilitate the management of rook nests. The management of the nests was one of the obligations under the airport's Wildlife Hazard Assessment and Civil Aviation Authority Licence, which required the airport to identify potential sources of risk to aircrafts using the airport. The Committee was advised that a further request had been submitted by the airport authorities seeking to extend the current agreement to address a reported increase in the number of rooks nesting in the vicinity of Victoria Park. The work, he pointed out, which would include the removal of old nests and the undertaking of nesting site discouragement, was required to be completed by mid-January 2025.

Accordingly, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services indicated that, if approved, he would exercise his delegated authority to for the Council to enter into a legal agreement with the airport authorities under the terms as agreed previously.

The Committee approved the course of action outlined by the Strategic Director and acceded to the request from the George Best Belfast City Airport to grant access under licence to facilitate rook nest management within Victoria Park.

Request for the Use of Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion

The Committee considered a request which had been received from a Ms. Sophie Lusby seeking permission to host a 'Preloved Sale for Gaza' in the Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion on Saturday, 1st February, 2025.

The Committee granted authority for the hosting of the event, subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the following conditions, that the organisers:

- resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- meet all statutory requirements, including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and
- consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.

The Committee noted that the above decision was taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing to a more structured framework and policy for events, which was currently being considered in conjunction with the Council's commercial team.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplates in Irish at Newington Street, Chichester Road, Deerpark Road, Kerrykeel Gardens, Glenties Drive, Ashton Park, Newforge Grange, Ashley Grove, Lagmore Meadows, Riverdale Park West, Credenhill Park, Brooke Drive, Riverdale Park North, Ardmore Park South, Stewartstown Road, Wolfhill Drive and Kansas Avenue.

Proposal to Name a New Street

The Committee approved to the naming of a new street in the city as Lagmore Way.

Matters Raised in Advance by Members

**Biodiversity in Council Parks and
Open Spaces – Request for Update**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Flynn reminded the Committee that, on 5th February, 2024, it had considered a notice of motion which he had submitted to the Council under the heading 'Biodiversity in Council Parks and Open Spaces'. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed officers would submit a report to a future meeting to consider how the Council could commission a survey of parks and green spaces to create a list of priority habitats and species therein.

It was noted that a report in this regard would be submitted for the Committee's consideration at its meeting in January.

Chairperson