



Belfast City Council

Report to: Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Subject: **Notice of Motion – New Psychoactive Substances**

Date: 21st March, 2014

Reporting Officer: Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager, ext. 6314

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Committee will recall that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd February, passed unanimously the undernoted notice of motion, which had been moved by Alderman Robinson and seconded by Councillor Hargey:
1.2	<p data-bbox="373 1043 1313 1144"><i>“This Council notes with concern that the sale and use of Novel Psychoactive Substances, so called ‘legal highs,’ is becoming increasingly problematic in the City;</i></p> <ul data-bbox="373 1182 1313 1626" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="373 1182 1313 1317">• <i>it commends the gallant efforts of many charities and voluntary organisations, such as Opportunity Youth, Ascertainment, FASA and the Falls Community Council, which are working hard to support those individuals affected, whilst shining a light on this recent scourge;</i><li data-bbox="373 1355 1313 1489">• <i>it notes the good work being led by the South Belfast DPCSP, which convened recently a meeting of a multi-agency working group to examine this issue and its impact, with a follow-up meeting to take place later this month; and</i><li data-bbox="373 1527 1313 1626">• <i>it agrees to write to the Health Minister with a view to supporting his engagement with the Home Office to review the legislative controls and potential classification.”</i>

2	Key Issues
2.1	A response (copy herewith) has been received from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr. Edwin Poots, MLA.
2.2	In his correspondence, the Minister has acknowledged the “real harm” which New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) – or so-called ‘legal highs’ – cause in terms of health and well-being, together with the associated issues of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

2.3	He has welcomed the work which the Council has undertaken, in conjunction with the PSNI, to address the availability of NPS, and has requested that he be kept informed in this regard.
2.4	The Minister adds also that he had raised the concerns regarding NPS with the Home Secretary, Ms. Teresa May MP. At that meeting, he had requested that a more “robust” approach be adopted to address the issue. Subsequently, he points out, the Home Office has announced a review of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which will examine if the legislation could be enhanced to introduce new measures which would address the problem of NPSs.
2.4	The Minister concludes his response by welcoming the steps taken to highlight the issue and looks forward to the Council’s continuing support.

3	Resource Implications
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3.1	None
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4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
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4.1	None
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5	Recommendations
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5.1	The Committee is requested to consider the Minister’s response and take such action thereon which may be determined.
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6	Decision Tracking
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Democratic Services Section will follow up on any decision taken.	
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