

Council

MONTHLY MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Monday, 3rd February, 2020
at 6.00 o'clock p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Lyons and Pankhurst.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Long pointed out that his wife was the Assembly's Justice Minister and that, should any matters of a pecuniary nature be raised which fell within the remit of the Department of Justice, he would leave the Chamber. However, as no matters were raised, he was not required to do so.

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading "Council Response to the Liquor Licensing Laws in Northern Ireland Consultation Document", on the basis that he was associated with a brewing company, and left the Chamber whilst the item was under discussion.

The following Members declared an interest in respect of the item contained within the minutes of the People and Communities Committee minute of 14th January, under the heading "Community Development Funding Programme – Recommended Allocation", in that they worked for or were associated with the organisations listed, but remained in the Chamber as the matter did not become the subject of discussion:

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- Councillor Beattie - Blackie River Community Group;
- Councillor Black - Grosvenor Community Centre;
- Councillor Canavan - Blackie River Community Group;
- Councillor Corr - Falls Community Council;
- Councillor Donnelly - Upper Springfield Development Trust;
- Councillor Dorrian - Ballymac Friendship Trust;
- Councillor Gormley - Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group;
- Councillor Groves - Upper Andersonstown Community Forum;
- Councillor Hutchinson - Mount Vernon Community Development Forum;
- Councillor Kyle - Lagan Village Youth And Community Group;
- Councillor Newton - Lagan Village Youth And Community Group; and
- Councillor Verner - Greater Shankill Partnership.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the motion on the establishment of a Drug Task Force, insofar as it was relevant to the work of his employer, and left the Chamber whilst it was being debated.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Baker),
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 6th January be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, welcomed Councillor Gormley, who had replaced former Councillor Hargey, to the meeting.

At the request of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds), the Lord Mayor extended his condolences to Mr. Christopher Burns, Tours and Collections Officer, on the recent death of his father.

Alderman Kingston welcomed the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and congratulated those former Members who had been appointed to Ministerial or other prominent posts.

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Requests to Address the Council

Drug Task Force

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received from Mr. C. Rintoul of Extern's Drugs and Alcohol Consultancy Service to address the Council in advance of the motion on a Drug Task Force being proposed by Councillor McCusker.

The Council acceded to the request and Mr. Rintoul was welcomed by the Lord Mayor.

Mr. Rintoul informed the Council that Extern's Drugs and Alcohol Consultancy Service was responsible primarily for delivering specialist training to individuals wishing to gain awareness of drug and alcohol misuse. He reviewed the types of drugs which were now most prevalent and confirmed that, in 2018, the number of drug-related deaths in Northern Ireland per 100,000 of the population had exceeded both England and Wales. He pointed out that the Belfast Agenda had, encouragingly, within its vision for 2035, made reference to everyone in Belfast experiencing good health and wellbeing and he stressed that a commitment to helping people who were most vulnerable, including those who used drugs in a harmful way, was central to achieving that outcome. He highlighted the success of initiatives such as the Council's sharps disposal scheme and the importance of continued partnership working and concluded by urging the Council to support Councillor McCusker's call for the establishment of a Drug Task Force to address the ongoing challenges around drugs misuse.

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

**Sections 43A and 43B of the Building
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012**

The Council was informed that a request had been received from Dr. S. Colclough of the Ulster University to address the Council in advance of Councillor Heading's motion on Sections 43A and 43B of the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

The Council approved the request and Dr. Colclough was welcomed to the meeting.

Dr. Colclough informed the Council that the Passive House standard was regarded as being the world's leading standard in energy efficient construction. The standard focused upon providing good indoor air quality, comfort and low energy consumption and contributed to improving health outcomes, alleviating fuel poverty through energy savings and reducing the impact of climate change. Whilst the standard had been widely adopted, including in a number of cities in Great Britain, it had yet to be implemented in Northern Ireland. It was essential, therefore, to ensure that the Passive House standard was included within the revisions to Northern Ireland's building regulations being proposed currently.

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Dr. Colclough concluded by commending the Council on its ongoing work around climate change and by calling upon it to support Councillor Heading's motion.

The Lord Mayor thanked Dr. Colclough for his presentation, following which the Council noted the information which had been provided.

Change of Membership on Committees and Outside Bodies

Committee Membership

The Chief Executive reported that notification has been received from the following Political Parties of changes to membership of Committees:

DUP

- Councillor Pankhurst to replace Alderman McCoubrey on the Planning Committee.

Sinn Féin

- Councillor Gormley to replace Councillor Walsh on the City Growth and Regeneration Committee; and
- Councillor Gormley to replace Councillor McLaughlin on the People and Communities Committee.

The Council approve the changes.

Position of Responsibility – arc21 Joint Committee

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that it held three seats on the arc21 Joint Committee, which were appointed at the Annual meeting of the Council on the basis of d'Hondt.

She explained that one of the seats had been held by the DUP. However, its nominating officer had indicated that his Party had vacated the seat and that it would not be filling the position.

In accordance with the d'Hondt order of choices, the vacancy had been offered to the next Party on the list, namely, the Alliance Party, whose nominating officer had advised that his Party would be filling the vacancy and had nominated the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds) for the position.

The Council noted the appointment.

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Minutes of Active Belfast Limited Board

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Matt Collins,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th January, under the heading "Minutes of Active Belfast Limited Board", insofar as it relates to the Schedule of Charges for 2020/21, be rejected and accordingly the matter be referred back to the Board with a request that it reconsider the proposed price increases.

On a vote by show of hands thirty-four Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared carried.

Family Membership Scheme

The Chief Executive confirmed, in response to a Member, that a one-year pilot family membership scheme, which had been operating for six months in the Olympia Leisure Centre, would from 1st March be extended to all centres and that staff would be appraised accordingly.

**Request for a Matter to be Taken
Back for Further Consideration**

Asset Management

At the request of Councillor McKeown, the Council agreed that that portion of the minute under the heading "Asset Management", relating to the renewal of the lease for Ormeau Golf Club, Park Road, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment and omission, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

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People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Michael Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Kyle,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th and 14th January be approved and adopted.

**Invitation to Compete in Britain in Bloom Awards 2020
and Ireland's Best Kept Awards Competition 2020**

At the request of Councillor McLaughlin, the Council agreed to amend the minute of the meeting of 14th January, under the above mentioned heading, to provide that the report to be presented to the Committee on recent awards and ceremonies which the Council had entered and the forthcoming competitions which it intended to enter would include details of the associated costs.

**Football for All – Request for the
use of Belfast Playing Fields (Mallusk)**

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed to recommend to the Irish Football Association that the Belfast Braves LGBT football team be included in the Football for All Festival.

At the request of Alderman Rodgers, the Council agreed that a further invitation be extended to the President and the Chief Executive of the Irish Football Association to meet with the People and Communities Committee to discuss Members' concerns around the Association's proposals for the restructuring of Intermediate league football.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment and additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th and 14th January were approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 15th January be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor S. Baker,
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 22nd January, omitting matters in respect of which the

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Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 21st and 23rd January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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

Moved by Councillor Mulholland,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 20th January be approved and adopted.

Brexit Committee

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 9th January be approved and adopted.

Notices of Motion

Menopause Aware

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor M. Kelly proposed:

“This Council resolves to work with organisations to ensure that Belfast City Council and its staff are Menopause Aware and have an understanding of the support available should they be concerned over symptoms which they might be experiencing.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Long.

At the request of Councillor Ferguson, the proposer agreed to amend her motion to read as follows:

“This Council resolves to work with organisations, such as Trade Unions, to ensure that Belfast City Council and its staff are Menopause Aware, have an understanding of the support available should they be concerned over symptoms which they might be experiencing, and recognises menopause as a workplace issue.”

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

Support for People with a Gambling Addiction

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Kyle proposed:

“This Council notes the outdated and deeply flawed nature of the current law on gambling in Northern Ireland and the need for urgent root and branch reform of gambling legislation. It welcomes the announcement by the Department for Communities of a consultation on gambling law and policy.

The Council notes also with concern the report on problem gambling published by the Northern Ireland Office (September 2019) which states that ‘no gambling specific services are commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board for individuals suffering from gambling addiction’ and the negligible financial contribution from the gambling industry for these services.

The Council calls for an urgent review to be conducted by the Department of Health into the support provided for people with a gambling addiction and calls upon the gambling industry to significantly increase the financial support which it provides for problem gambling services.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to reflect that the Council would write to Baroness Morgan, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and to Ofcom, enquiring if they had any further plans for the regulation of both broadcast and online advertising by gambling companies.

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

Cycle Lanes

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Black proposed:

“Safe cycling is paramount to developing a carbon-neutral city.

This Council, therefore, agrees to seek a meeting with the Minister for Infrastructure to discuss previously agreed motions on safe cycle networks throughout the City.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Donnelly.

At the request of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds), the proposer agreed to amend her motion to provide for the addition of the following wording at the end of the final paragraph:

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“to secure her commitment towards the delivery of new cycle networks across the City and around schools; improvements to an understaffed and overburdened Cycling Unit; an update on the Belfast Cycle Network consulted on in 2017 and her Department’s progress against the performance indicators and budgetary targets set out within the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland; and the creation of an independent steering group for active travel delivery.”

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the meeting and passed:

“Safe cycling is paramount to developing a carbon-neutral city.

This Council, therefore, agrees to seek a meeting with the Minister for Infrastructure to discuss previously agreed motions on safe cycle networks throughout the City, to secure her commitment towards the delivery of new cycle networks across the City and around schools; improvements to an understaffed and overburdened Cycling Unit; an update on the Belfast Cycle Network consulted on in 2017 and her Department’s progress against the performance indicators and budgetary targets set out within the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland; and the creation of an independent steering group for active travel delivery.”

Drug Task Force

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McCusker proposed:

“This Council calls upon the Ministers for Health, Justice and Communities to establish a drug task force to respond to the increase in deaths. The figure is 40% higher than 2017 and has more than doubled over the last 10 years.

The primary role of the taskforce will be to co-ordinate and drive action to improve the health outcomes for people who use drugs, reducing the risk of harm and death.

Safe injection rooms, prevention, quicker access to services, including crisis intervention, with an urgent review of current provision is required to deal with an increase in drug and alcohol related deaths.

The Council agrees, therefore, to write to the aforementioned Ministers calling for the establishment of a drug task force to be prioritised as a matter of urgency. We can no longer wait and watch the devastation being witnessed in every community.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Smyth.

At the request of Councillor Black, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to provide for the addition of the following wording at the end of the second paragraph:

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“The taskforce will target actions or localities where the reverberations of drug use are felt more acutely and will consider recommendations of contemporary research initiatives, including but not limited to, the West Belfast Drugs Panel.”

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the meeting and passed:

“This Council calls upon the Ministers for Health, Justice and Communities to establish a drug task force to respond to the increase in deaths. The figure is 40% higher than 2017 and has more than doubled over the last 10 years.

The primary role of the taskforce will be to co-ordinate and drive action to improve the health outcomes for people who use drugs, reducing the risk of harm and death. The taskforce will target actions or localities where the reverberations of drug use are felt more acutely and will consider recommendations of contemporary research initiatives, including but not limited to, the West Belfast Drugs Panel.

Safe injection rooms, prevention, quicker access to services, including crisis intervention, with an urgent review of current provision is required to deal with an increase in drug and alcohol related deaths.

The Council agrees, therefore, to write to the aforementioned Ministers calling for the establishment of a drug task force to be prioritised as a matter of urgency. We can no longer wait and watch the devastation being witnessed in every community.”

Public Sector Pay

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Matt Collins proposed:

“This Council notes that NIPSA civil service members are currently campaigning for fair pay, which included a recent strike campaign across Belfast and beyond. The Council notes the context of wage freezes and attacks on working conditions for public sector workers and believes that strike action is a measured response to the insufficient pay deal that was most recently offered to public sector workers.

The Council fully supports NIPSA in its campaign for better pay and better terms and conditions, including the strike action which continued after the re-establishment of the new Executive, which has the power to deliver fair pay.

To this end, the Council agrees to write to the Minister of Finance to implore him to immediately implement fair pay for civil servants, in line with NIPSA’s demands.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

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At the request of Councillor Murphy, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to provide for the addition of the words “as a result of Tory austerity” after the word “workers” in the first paragraph and of the words “and to the British Secretary of State, Julian Smyth, demanding that the British Government fully funds its commitments contained within the New Decade, New Approach agreement” at the end of the final paragraph.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the meeting and passed:

“This Council notes that NIPSA civil service members are currently campaigning for fair pay, which included a recent strike campaign across Belfast and beyond. The Council notes the context of wage freezes and attacks on working conditions for public sector workers, as a result of Tory austerity, and believes that strike action is a measured response to the insufficient pay deal that was most recently offered to public sector workers.

The Council fully supports NIPSA in its campaign for better pay and better terms and conditions, including the strike action which continued after the re-establishment of the new Executive, which has the power to deliver fair pay.

To this end, the Council agrees to write to the Minister of Finance to implore him to immediately implement fair pay for civil servants, in line with NIPSA’s demands and to the British Secretary of State, Julian Smyth, demanding that the British Government fully funds its commitments contained within the New Decade, New Approach agreement.”

Sections 43A and 43B of the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Heading proposed:

“This Council will be aware of Sections 43A and 43B of the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 outlining that new public building owned by public authorities from 2019 and all new buildings, including social and private housing developments, “must be a nearly zero energy buildings”, (NZEB43B) by 31st December, 2020.

The Council reaffirms its commitment to work with statutory and non-statutory agencies to end fuel poverty and the reduction of carbon emissions.

In addition, it acknowledges the evidence gathered by the World Health Organisation and environmental groups indicating the damage to both health and our climate from fuel poverty.

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Accordingly, the Council agrees to:

- i. write to the Minister of Finance in the NI Assembly seeking an update on how the Department will assist local councils in implementing Sections 43A 43B and enquiring if the Department has had an assurance from the building industry that they are prepared and their staff trained to meet this policy implementation;
- ii. seek a meeting with the Minister of Finance or his officials to consider the adoption of Passive House standard as an amendment to the 2012 Building regulations or in any new legislation reforming building regulations;
- iii. seek an all-Party meeting with the Northern Ireland Federation Housing Association and the Chartered Institute of Housing to discuss how their members will implement and adhere to Sections 43A and 43B and NZEB;
- iv. seek an all-Party meeting with the Minister for Communities or Department officials to discuss Passive House standard for all social housing developments, as a means of meeting current obligations set out in Sections 43A and 43B; and
- v. write to the Minister for Infrastructure to ascertain if there are any proposals for planning legislation to be amended or introduced to tackle fuel poverty.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kyle.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee

Graffiti

In the absence of Councillor Nicholl, in whose name the motion had been submitted, Councillor McDonough-Brown proposed:

“This Council notes that graffiti is an area of concern for many residents of Belfast. It spoils the local environment and can encourage other forms of anti-social behaviour.

The Council notes also that it can also be costly to remove graffiti and that it is not a service which it currently provides, but believes that it is an issue it should be taking responsibility for.

The Council will, therefore, review current practices in other councils to remove graffiti and will work through the Area Working Groups to develop

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an Anti-Graffiti Strategy, which will identify areas of partnership in order to creatively and proactively tackle this growing problem.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor M. Kelly.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

Market Gardens and Urban Farming

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor de Faoite proposed:

“This Council:

- i. notes the objectives of the Growing Communities Strategy 2012 – 2022, which include supporting environmental sustainability and the development of the social economy;
- ii. recognises that, as society continues to care more about how food is produced, processed and transported, market gardens and urban farming are increasingly popular alternatives for climate-conscious consumers;
- iii. further recognises that market gardens and urban farming align closely with the three pillars of sustainable development: they contribute to production; they boost social integration; and they improve our environment and general health;
- iv. acknowledges that market gardens and urban farming can play a positive role in supporting the development of environmental and agricultural education at all levels; and
- v. resolves to work with all relevant partners to establish an urban farm for community use and market garden development on an existing site within the Belfast City Council land bank, using revenue raised by the disposal of other sites.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McKeown.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Irish Language Street Signage Policy

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Walsh proposed:

“This Council has one of the most restrictive policies of any council in the North in regards to Irish Language Street Signage Policy.

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Currently, the policy is that you need a 1/3rd of the eligible electorate in a street to sign a petition which starts the process. Once the process has been initiated, a letter is sent to everyone in that street who is on the electoral register asking if they consent to have bilingual signage installed. The resident has three options, namely, Yes, No and Don't Care. For the process to come to a successful conclusion, 2/3rds of the total electorate in the street need to consent to yes. If a letter is not returned, it is considered by the Council as saying that they don't consent for the bilingual signage. Furthermore, where residents send the survey back saying 'Don't Care, this is also considered to be a negative response.

If we, as Elected Members were held to the same standard as this policy in the Local Government elections, not one Member would have been returned to serve on this Council, as we would not have met those restrictive parameters. The Council's Language Strategy refers to increasing the visibility of the Irish Language in our City. However, it is essential not to impose the Irish language on residents if the majority of them in a street do not consent to it.

Therefore, this Council will amend its Irish language street signage policy to the following:

- i. continue with the 1/3rd of the eligible electorate in the street to initiate the process;
- ii. change the policy to reflect that it will be the majority of respondents to the survey that will decide if the process has been successful. Therefore, it will be 50% +1 of respondents that will determine if the petition to erect bilingual signage has been successful. Non-respondents will not be considered as a negative response; and
- iii. those respondents who respond as 'Don't Care' are not considered to be a negative response and will be treated as a void vote."

The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

Growth Deal

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Beattie proposed:

"This Council agrees to task officers to prepare an initial report on developing a new growth deal for the city of Belfast.

The Belfast Agenda recognises and builds on our City's achievements. Our success in economic growth is making a vital contribution to the broader economy. We are a significant employer of people living in and

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outside the city. However, for Belfast to achieve its ambitions, it needs to work in partnership with the Executive.

One potential avenue for this growth deal could be the regional rate. If the Council was to work in conjunction with the Department of Finance and secure an additional 2% from the regional rate, it would derive an additional £30 million in revenue.

Two of the potential sectors to benefit from this additional growth fund could be in the building of much needed public housing or the renewable energy market in the form of an offshore wind farm. Currently, there are no offshore wind farms in the North of Ireland. These two potential options both conform to the Belfast Agenda and the draft Programme for Government. They are sustainable projects which would ensure a steady return to this Council over many years.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Garrett.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Belfast Zoo

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Maskey proposed:

“This Council agrees to an ambitious plan to transform Belfast Zoo into a world-class visitor attraction by 2025. The display of caged animals in enclosures is wrong and unethical, it doesn't mirror in any way their natural habitat and has no place in modern society.

The ratepayers of this City have to subsidise the Zoo to the sum of £2.5 million per year. The savings from the Zoo site could provide substantial funding for the much-needed regeneration of the City, create jobs, opportunities and attract more visitors. The five-year transitional period will enable the Council to safely return animals to their natural habitats in a carefully crafted phased approach.

Furthermore, the Council will retain on-site an animal conservation programme for indigenous animals. The five years will also enable the Council to consult with trade unions, staff and residents of the City through direct engagement and consultation. The Council will commit to securing all jobs currently on the Zoo site, with the options of retraining and redeployment. This will create an opportunity for the Council to develop the site, create jobs and to promote the City ethically.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

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Historic Graveyards

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McAteer proposed:

“This Council is deeply concerned about the serious neglect of two of our Belfast Historic Cemeteries, namely Balmoral and Clifton Street. In Balmoral Cemetery, many headstones and monuments are dilapidated and many of the Victorian iron surrounds have been damaged and suffer from rust. The railway and northern embankments at Balmoral are completely covered with undergrowth, making it impossible to locate the graves in these sections. Clifton Street Cemetery suffers from a similar set of conditions, the undergrowth along its perimeter walls is accelerating the deterioration of a number of headstones and tablets. Often, when environmental work is carried out, rubbish is left on graves near the entrance.

Given the historical importance and worth of these burial grounds to the narrative of our Belfast history, it is proposed that the Council organise a tour of the two cemeteries for Members; prepare a maintenance and conservation plan; provide a report on the plan and costs and set a timeframe for the completion of the required works.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Magee.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

Sustainable Transport

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Groogan proposed:

“This Council supports the promotion and expansion of sustainable transport in Belfast as a critical step in addressing the dangerous levels of air pollution and congestion across the City and in the context of our climate emergency.

With the appointment of a new Minister for Infrastructure, the Council should ensure that the Minister is clear about our commitment to sustainable transport options and the need for urgent action on climate.

Therefore, the Council agrees to write to the Minister to state that the Experimental Traffic Control Scheme Permitted (Taxis in Bus Lanes), which was proposed by her Department, does not have the Council's support and to urge her to not progress this further, instead focusing efforts on further measures to enhance the provision of public transport, cycle infrastructure and pedestrian priority in the City.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor O'Hara.

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In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

High Speed Rail Connection

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor S. Baker proposed:

“This Council welcomes the commitment in the ‘New Decade New Approach’ document which states that “The Irish Government is supportive of serious and detailed joint consideration through the NSMC of the feasibility of a high-speed rail connection between Belfast, Dublin and Cork, creating a spine of connectivity on the island.”

As this is also a Council priority, the Council will seek a meeting with Irish Government officials, Council officers and party group leaders to discuss this proposition further.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Garrett.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson