

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 2nd November, 2020
at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the following motions: item 8.b) Implementation of Care Partner arrangements in Nursing and Care homes, 8.c) Access to maternity wards for birthing partners, 8.e) Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, 8.i) Mental Health - Awareness and Support Campaign in that he was employed by the Public Health Agency;

Councillor Newton declared an interest in relation to item 7.a) Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading Update on Area Working, in that he was a Board Member of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre, and in relation to the motion 8.d) Closure of the Ulster Bank, he declared an interest in that his wife is a shareholder in the NatWest Group.

Councillor T. Kelly declared an interest in relation to the item 7.a) Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading Update on Area Working, in that her husband was a board member of the Belfast South Community Resources.

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Councillor McCullough declared an interest in relation to the motion 8.d) Closure of the Ulster Bank, he declared an interest in that a family member worked for the Ulster Bank.

Councillor Long declared an interest in respect of the motion 8.e) Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, in that he was a Health worker.

Councillor Kyle declared an interest in relation to item 7.a) Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading Update on Area Working, in that he was a Board Member of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey),
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st October be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Congratulations

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended congratulations to the following individuals for their awards in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List:

- Mrs, S. Toland, Director of City Services, on having been appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.);
- The High Sheriff, Councillor Verner on having been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM),
- Former Councillor, Mrs. A. Graham, on having been on having been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM);
- Ms. A. Barr, Project Manager, Women in Sport and Physical Activity on having been on having been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM); and
- Constable. A. Kerr on having been awarded a Queen's Police Medal.

At the request of Councillor Magennis, the Lord Mayor agreed to forward a letter of congratulations to Mr. T. McCarthy on defeating his opponent and having been crowned the European Boxing cruiserweight champion.

Welcome

Councillor Brooks referred to the recent acquisition of Bombardier's Belfast operation by Spirit Aero Systems and welcomed the recent announcement.

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Councillor O'Hara welcomed the new legislation which will allow couples in a civil partnership or marriage that was registered in Northern Ireland to change a same sex civil partnership to a marriage or an opposite sex marriage into a civil partnership from 7th December.

Requests to Address the Council

Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Initiative

The Chief Executive informed the Council that a request had been received from Ms. C. Laverty and Mr. S. Paul, Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Initiative, to address the Council in advance of Councillor Pankhurst's motion on a Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign.

The Council approved the request and Ms. Laverty, together with Mr. Paul, were welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Laverty explained the background to the Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign which had been set up to bring a message of hope and a positive outlook for those which needed help. She suggested that an accessible Mental Health Strategy at a Community Level would be beneficial for those in need, and collaboration across the appropriate sectors to discuss the formation of a response system to respond to those in need of urgent and direct help.

Mr. Paul advised that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation had deteriorated, in that it had become increasingly difficult for support groups to meet face to face. He explained that therapies were unable to be delivered due to the restrictions and they were unable to use the Council building in which they normally met as it also had restricted its opening hours. He advised that access to services were needed as soon as possible.

The representatives were thanked by the Lord Mayor.

The Council noted the information which had been provided.

Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements

The Council was informed that a request had been received from Ms. C. Austin and Mr. D. Fee, to address the Council in advance of Councillor McAteer's motion on Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements.

The Council approved the request and Ms. Austin and Mr. Fee were welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Austin described her families situation over the recent months of her Mother's suffering from Alzheimer's disease in a Nursing Home and the difficulties they have experienced in not being able to assist in the care of her Mother over lockdown. Ms. Austin praised the Care staff and highlighted the concerns of further decline in her Mother's health if she was not able to visit and help her.

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She explained how the Care Partner system could work and advised that it was already being operated in various countries. She welcomed the establishment of the designation of relatives or close friends as “Care Partners” by the Department of Health on 23rd September.

Mr. Fee described his situation in caring for his wife with dementia, who was also in a Nursing Home. He explained that he used to visit every day to assist with her care but since the Pandemic, he had been unable to.

He suggested that the Council endorse the idea and highlighted that implementing the arrangements as quickly as possible was very important.

Ms. Austin, together with Mr. Fee were thanked by the Lord Mayor.

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

Campaign for All-Ireland Health Service

The Chief Executive informed the Council that a request had been received from Ms. M. Holborrow, to address the Council in advance of the motion on the Campaign for All-Ireland Health Service being proposed by Councillor Ferguson

The Council acceded to the request and Ms. Holborrow was welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Holborrow explained the urgency in the campaign’s call for an All-Ireland National Health Service due to insufficient hospital bed capacity, too few nurses and healthcare workers, poor regulation in care homes and two separate health services on an island of just 6.6 million inhabitants. She highlighted that ICU beds have come under pressure both sides of the border.

She suggested that the pandemic had brought sharply into focus the need for radical change. She advised that there was a huge backlog of people waiting for non-Covid treatments and the impact of such delays.

She highlighted that profit should not drive healthcare and it should be a basic social right that everyone was entitled to and described the importance of cross-border collaboration in healthcare. She explained that Covid had changed everything for public health policy and healthcare provision and the campaign for an All-Ireland NHS was lobbying to develop existing cross-border cooperation into a unified public health service across this island.

The Lord Mayor thanked Ms. Holborrow for her presentation.

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

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Closure of Ulster Bank

The Chief Executive advised that a late request had been received from Mr. J.O'Connell, and Mr. B. McDowell, Financial Services Union, to address the Council in advance of the motion on the Closure of Ulster Bank being proposed by Councillor Heading

The Council acceded to the request and Mr. O'Connell was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. O'Connell explained that, in early October, a newspaper report signalled that Nat West would be undertaking a Strategic Review of its Business, and the possibility of the closure of Ulster Bank in the Republic of Ireland. He advised that this news had shocked the Ulster Bank employees, as the knock on effect would impact the 600 jobs situated in Belfast as they provided back office services ranging across the corporate sector.

He highlighted that the staff had maintained services and systems throughout the pandemic. He confirmed that they sought commitment to Ulster Bank from Nat West and suggested that they had questions regarding the Strategic Review, such as its Terms of Reference, a timeline, who was carrying it out, and its impact on concerned parties.

The Lord Mayor thanked the representatives for the presentation.

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

Minutes

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Alderman Kingston,

That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee and subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Bilingual Street Signage" which has been 'called-in', be approved and adopted.

Amendment 1

Finance Update

The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive provided an urgent update in relation to the staff who were reported to be impacted by the end of the Furlough Scheme in the Finance Report of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October. As the furlough scheme had now been extended by the Government until the end of

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November, the Chief Executive recommended that, in terms of casual workers, the minute be amended to take this extension into consideration:

“Option 2 - to make payments from **1st December, 2020** to 31st March, 2021 to those casual workers who would have been offered casual shifts which may now be reduced in number or cancelled due to Covid-19, with the payments to be calculated on the basis of their average earnings over the same period in the previous year”

The Council approved the amendment.

Standing Order 13(l)

The Chief Executive explained that correspondence had been received from ICC Belfast and Greenwich Leisure Limited requesting additional financial support for staff. The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the amount required and how this could be financed if the Council was minded to accede to the request.

The Lord Mayor, in consultation with the Chief Executive, ruled to enact Standing Order 13(l), insofar as that the Council could commit to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process in that the matter was one of emergency or of such urgency that it would be impractical to the Council’s interests to require compliance.

Amendment 2

Finance Update

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Alderman Dorrian,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, under the heading “Finance Update”, be amended to provide the following addition: The Council agrees to support Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall (BWUH) and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) with £50,000 to support the pay of casual workers at BWUH and up to £150,000 to support voluntary redundancy packages being offered to GLL staff at council leisure centres.”

Leisure Transformation Programme - Assets Update

At the request of Councillor Magennis, the Council agreed to amend the minute of the meeting of 23rd October, under the above mentioned heading, to provide that a report be submitted to the Committee in November, to consider a review process for the facilities at the independently managed centres at Sally Gardens, Grosvenor, Shaftesbury and Ballymacarrett.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, omitting matters in respect

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of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker,
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th and 20th October, 2020 be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th October, 2020 be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Magennis and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 14th October, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 13th and 15th October, 2020, 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 Alderman Haire,
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 19th October 2020 be approved and adopted.

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Brexit Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 8th October, 2020 be approved and adopted.

Motions

Nobel Peace Prize - Henry Reeve Medical Brigade

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

“This Council recommends Cuba’s Henry Reeve medical brigade for the Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of its efforts in the fight against the global COVID-19 Pandemic.

The international community is witnessing the solidarity of health professionals who leave their own country to provide emergency assistance to countries in crisis, they are serving on the frontline in the struggle against the outbreak, from Latin America, Africa, Asia and in the heart of Europe.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

The Council agreed to vote on the amendment, when twenty-five Members voted for and nineteen Members against and it was declared carried.

**Implementation of Care Partner arrangements in
Nursing and Care homes**

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

“This Council recognises the distress, confusion, physical and cognitive deterioration experienced by residents with dementia living in nursing homes, due to the lockdown in Spring 2020 and the subsequent curtailment of visits with relatives to one visit per week.

The Council also recognises the pain experienced by relatives of nursing home residents with dementia, many of whom - pre- COVID-19 – cared daily for their loved ones in nursing homes, assisting them with washing, dressing, eating, drinking and exercise and provided them with love and cognitive stimulation.

Whilst Council acknowledges the spread of the COVID-19 virus and adheres to the Executive guidelines on Council on public health, it also supports the “Regional Principles for Nursing and Residential Care homes

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in N Ireland” (published by the Department of Health on 23rd September, 2020), which establishes the designation of relatives or close friends as “Care Partners” and stipulates that care and nursing homes should facilitate Care Partner arrangements to enable relatives to assist with the communication, physical and emotional needs of their loved ones in care and nursing homes.

This Council calls on the Minister for Health to provide the necessary human, financial and technical resources to nursing and care homes to ensure the immediate practical implementation of safe and secure Care Partner arrangements which will underpin the rights of dementia patients in nursing homes and deliver improved health and well-being outcomes for them and their families.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groves,

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

Access to Maternity Wards for Birthing Partners

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor T. Kelly proposed the following amendment to her motion:

“Belfast City Council notes with concern the current restrictions placed around access to maternity wards for birthing partners due to COVID-19. Furthermore, it recognises the varying measures across the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area **and the additional availability of 15 minute COVID-19 testing**, agrees to write to the Health Minister asking that further consideration is given to a consistent approach thus allowing birthing partners to be afforded increased access to **antenatal**, maternity and neonatal services”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Bunting.

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

Closure of Ulster Bank

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

“We, the members of Belfast City Council, demand an urgent meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of Ulster Bank and the NatWest Bank Chairperson to discuss the recent revelations that NatWest is considering the complete closure of Ulster Bank, which could result in the loss of over 600 jobs based in Belfast, which directly service Ulster Bank in the Republic of Ireland.

The Council will therefore write to the Secretary of State, Branden Lewis MP, Shadow Secretary of State, Louise Haigh MP. and the four Belfast

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MPs requesting all-party meetings about NatWest's proposals. The Council will also write to the Minister for the Economy, Diane Dodds and the Chair of the Assembly's Economic Committee requesting they meet with representatives of the Financial Services Union."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

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

Campaign for All-Ireland Health Service

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

"The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented threat to public health. The scale of the crisis clearly demonstrates the critical role of a fully funded and protected public health service.

Council agrees that two divergent public health strategies to deal with a pandemic on the island of Ireland, North and South, is irrational, impractical and dangerous. Council calls on the Executive to begin developing a fully integrated all-Ireland public health strategy.

Council supports the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, to deliver an island-wide NHS, free at the point of delivery from the cradle to the grave."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Nicholl,
Seconded by Councillor McReynolds,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Heading be amended as **follows**:

"The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented threat to public health. The scale of the crisis clearly demonstrates the critical role of a fully funded and protected public health service.

Council pays tribute to the heroic efforts made by healthcare staff in the face of unprecedented challenges during this pandemic; recognises the importance of broad alignment of the public health strategy to deal with the pandemic across these islands and particularly the need for strong North-South cooperation; welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding between the respective Departments of Health and the commitment to ongoing close cooperation and coordination on a cross-border basis.

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Council calls on the Executive, the other UK devolved administrations and the UK and Irish Governments to work closely together: to develop a coordinated approach to tackling Covid-19; to provide the necessary resources and support for those sectors and individuals adversely impacted; and, to hold a summit of all 5 nations to develop consistent and coherent travel regulations to assist with safe movement within these islands particularly as we approach the Christmas and New Year holidays.

**Council notes the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, supports the call for health services across this island
Council notes the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, supports the call for health services across this island to be free at the point of delivery from the cradle to the grave and agrees to write to the Shared Island Unit to ask if they will consider this within their work streams."**

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when fourteen Members voted for the motion and thirty-nine against and it was declared lost.

The original proposer agreed, at the request of Councillor Groogan, to amend her proposal to provide for the addition of the following wording to the end of the final paragraph: **"and agrees to write to the Shared Island Unit to ask if they will consider this within their work streams."**

The proposed amended motion as set out hereunder, was put to the meeting:

"The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented threat to public health. The scale of the crisis clearly demonstrates the critical role of a fully funded and protected public health service.

Council agrees that two divergent public health strategies to deal with a pandemic on the island of Ireland, North and South, is irrational, impractical and dangerous. Council calls on the Executive to begin developing a fully integrated all-Ireland public health strategy.

Council supports the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, to deliver an island-wide NHS, free at the point of delivery from the cradle to the grave, and agrees to write to the Shared Island Unit to ask if they will consider this within their work streams."

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when twenty-seven Members voted for the motion and twenty-seven against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairman exercised his second and casting vote against the proposal and it was subsequently declared lost.

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Standing Order 23

During debate on the previous motion, the Council's attention was drawn to the fact that, in accordance with Standing Order 23, any meeting of the Council which has lasted continuously for five hours shall stand adjourned unless the Council shall by resolution decide to continue sitting.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and

Resolved – That the Council agrees to continue to sit until 12 midnight to consider the remaining business.

Sealing of the Records of Mother and Baby Homes

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

“This Council notes with deep concern the recent move by the Irish government to seal the records of mother and baby homes for up to 30 years; also notes the anguish and outcry from victims and survivors of the homes in response to the Dáil vote; resolves to write to the Irish government to express the Council's condemnation at their actions and to call on them to unseal the records; also resolves to write to the Stormont Executive to express dismay at their refusal to conduct an inquiry into near-identical institutions in the North, and to urgently call on them to conduct such an inquiry.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor O'Hara,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Michael Collins and seconded by Councillor Ferguson be amended as follows:

“This Council believes that all government actions around investigations into Mother and Baby Homes must put the interests of victims and survivors at the centre and notes with concern the anguish and outcry from victims and survivors of these homes in recent weeks caused by the Irish Government's handling of the issue of access to records.

This Council also notes the subsequent report by the Commission for Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes has been received by

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the Irish Government and welcomes that the Attorney General has clarified that GDPR will apply to the Archive for access to a person's own personal information, mindful that such a release should not adversely impact on the rights of another party, nor jeopardise the effective operation of commissions of investigation;

Notes that the Irish Government has committed to establishing on a formal, national basis an archive of records related to institutional trauma during the 20th century; this will include archiving relevant records and witness testimony by victims and survivors; to be designed in cooperation with professional archivists and historians, as well as with victims, survivors and their advocates;

and resolves to;

- write to the Irish Government to welcome this clarity encourage the Irish Government that any process or policy relating to this issue must centre victims and survivors and to work with the Stormont Executive to conduct all island research on the actions of these institutions, particularly in relation to cross-border trafficking of children.**
- This Council will also write to the Stormont Executive to request they conduct an inquiry into similar institutions in the North and which places victims and survivors at the heart of this process."**

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when twenty-five Members voted for the motion and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

The original proposer agreed, at the request of Councillor Mulholland, to amend her motion to read as follows:

"This Council notes with deep concern the recent move by the Irish government to seal the records of mother and baby homes for up to 30 years; notes the anguish and outcry from victims and survivors of the homes in response to the Dáil vote; also notes the clarification offered by the Attorney General that GDPR legislation will apply to the Archive information for access to one's own personal data.

This council resolves to:

- Write to the Irish government to express the Council's concern of the re-traumatisation of victims and survivors through recent events and to call on them to unseal the Archive and ensure the fullest information is made available to the victims is pertains to in a time sensitive manner.
- This council also resolves to write to the NI Executive to express dismay at their refusal to conduct a human rights compliant public

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inquiry into near-identical institutions in this jurisdiction, and to urgently call on them to conduct such an inquiry with victims and survivors at the heart of the process.”

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

Clean Air Strategy

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor O’Hara proposed:

“This Council recognises our failure to meet EU legal limits on air pollution values despite significant progress made over recent years. The World Health Organisation and the UK Government recognise that air pollution is the largest environmental health risk we face today. This Council recognises that air pollution leads to between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths each year in the UK. This Council also recognises that medical evidence is mounting around the dangerous link between Covid-19 and air pollution.

The Belfast Agenda aims for Belfast to be a city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable, where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing. In order to achieve that vision, we must address air pollution. This Council already supports adopting the more stringent World Health Organisation air pollution limits where appropriate and has moved ahead with the first detailed assessment of air pollution sources across this city since 2010 with the welcome support from the Department. Our ambition for Clean Air Zones in the city cannot be achieved without enabling legislation from the Assembly. This Council passed a motion supporting more stringent targets and ambition for Clean Air Zones in September 2019 and has included addressing air pollution in our corporate priorities. The Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has committed to bringing forward a ‘Clean Air Strategy discussion document’ which is a roll back from previous commitments in response to Assembly questions. Further delay will lead to continuing early deaths and ongoing breaches of the EU legal limits.

This Council agrees to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs requesting the immediate development of a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland rather than a discussion document which further delays progress on addressing harmful air pollution in the city.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

The proposer acceded to a request from Councillor Ferguson to include the following wording after the second paragraph of the motion: “**Council also recognises that deprived communities are more likely to suffer from the impact of air pollution, and accordingly also recognises this issue as a class issue, impacted by socioeconomic inequalities**”.

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After discussion, the following motion, as amended, was put to the Council:

“This Council recognises our failure to meet EU legal limits on air pollution values despite significant progress made over recent years. The World Health Organisation and the UK Government recognise that air pollution is the largest environmental health risk we face today. This Council recognises that air pollution leads to between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths each year in the UK. This Council also recognises that medical evidence is mounting around the dangerous link between Covid-19 and air pollution.

The Belfast Agenda aims for Belfast to be a city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable, where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing. In order to achieve that vision, we must address air pollution. This Council already supports adopting the more stringent World Health Organisation air pollution limits where appropriate and has moved ahead with the first detailed assessment of air pollution sources across this city since 2010 with the welcome support from the Department. Our ambition for Clean Air Zones in the city cannot be achieved without enabling legislation from the Assembly. This Council passed a motion supporting more stringent targets and ambition for Clean Air Zones in September 2019 and has included addressing air pollution in our corporate priorities. The Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has committed to bringing forward a ‘Clean Air Strategy discussion document’ which is a roll back from previous commitments in response to Assembly questions. Further delay will lead to continuing early deaths and ongoing breaches of the EU legal limits.

This Council also recognises that deprived communities are more likely to suffer from the impact of air pollution, and accordingly also recognises this issue as a class issue, impacted by socioeconomic inequalities.

This Council agrees to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs requesting the immediate development of a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland rather than a discussion document which further delays progress on addressing harmful air pollution in the city.”

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when thirty-eight Members voted for the motion and fifteen against and it was declared carried.

Standing Order 13(f)

During debate on the previous motion, the Council’s attention was drawn to the fact that the time was approaching midnight.

The Council agreed that the remainder of the Motions, as set out in the agenda, would be referred, without presentation or discussion to the Committee’s noted below, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f).

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Suspension of Standing Orders

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson

That the Council agrees to suspend Standing Order 13(f) to permit the motion on Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies to be debated by the Council rather than being referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Council agreed to vote on the proposal, when thirty-six Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against. As the number of Members voting in favour of the proposal was less than 80% of those present and voting, as set out within Standing Order 25, the proposal was lost.

Action on Avoidable Winter Deaths

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

“With the winter approaching, Belfast citizens will be increasingly susceptible to Avoidable Winter Deaths – particularly our citizens aged over 65 with underlying health conditions and vulnerable elderly people aged 85+.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, elderly and vulnerable citizens are already at high risk, it is therefore imperative that we redouble our efforts to prevent avoidable winter deaths from happening during the winter 20/21.

The increase in winter deaths is widely understood to be caused by the flu and spells of very cold weather - yet these deaths are avoidable. A combination of high energy prices, fuel poverty, ill health, low income and poor housing can make winter a dangerous time for many older people.

This Council has worked with statutory, community and voluntary partners to deliver the Belfast Warm and Well Project to tackle Avoidable Winter Deaths earlier this year. We call on Council to act decisively to implement a multi-sectoral targeted Avoidable Winter Deaths programme for the winter of 20/21.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

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

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Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign

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

“This Council agrees that Belfast is facing a mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Council agrees to launch an awareness and support campaign in the city centre, at strategic points throughout the city and on social media that targets those with poor mental health. The campaign will focus on posters offering support service details and general questions that have a positive psychological effect for those who read them.

Furthermore, this Council agrees to convene an urgent meeting between the Council, the Executive Office, the Department for Health and statutory agencies to discuss the formation of a community emergency response system that will allow local support services to respond to those in need of urgent and direct help.

Finally, this Council acknowledges and pays tribute to all those charities and services who offer invaluable help to our citizens that undoubtedly save lives on a daily and weekly basis.”

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.

Secured Serviced City Centre Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities

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

“The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to rethink how we live our lives. However, as we seek to build back better, it is essential that we do this in a safe, sustainable way.

Supporting cycling infrastructure in Belfast is key to this, enabling people to get around our city in a way which is good for health and good for the environment.

However, given the regular theft of bicycles in the city centre, it is important that we take steps to provide facilities to enable people to feel secure when they travel there by bicycle.

Therefore, council agrees to the creation of secured, serviced city centre civic bicycle parking facilities, and will reallocate car parking space or other appropriate property in the city centre for this purpose, and work with partners to enable this to happen.”

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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.

Installation of additional Parklets on arterial routes and in neighbourhood areas

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

“This Council recognises the importance of reimagining and reallocating community spaces as part of our recovery from COVID-19 for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

In line with our commitment in our ‘Our Recovery’ strategy, this Council will seek to install additional parklets on arterial routes and neighbourhood areas through the Department for Communities Revitalisation Programme, by setting out a specific fund for applications from businesses, institutions, community associations and other eligible applicants to be defined.

On the basis of these applications, Belfast City Council will act as the coordinating partner to lead and set out the process that will develop these physical projects from concept design and community engagement to delivery and monitoring and evaluation, working with the applicants as well as the key stakeholders (including but not exhaustive of the Department for Infrastructure, Imtac and the Department for Communities) in consultation with local residents.

Additionally, the Council agrees to engage with local businesses to improve and enhance a café culture across Belfast.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McReynolds.

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

Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies

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

“This Council notes with deep concern recent moves by GLL to cut jobs in Belfast leisure centres through proposed redundancies.

The Council greatly appreciates the role of all leisure workers who have made a positive contribution to our services and our community over many years, and the need for fully staffed and funded leisure centres as a vital resource for the physical and mental health of communities emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Therefore, the Council opposes the proposed job losses and calls on GLL to immediately cease any moves toward redundancies; tasks the Chief Executive and the Officer team to engage with relevant trade union representatives; seek an urgent meeting with GLL management to put firmly on the record the Council's opposition; and work toward a financial package that addresses the jobs under threat and ensures no leisure worker loses their job in the weeks and months ahead.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

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

Support for Young People and Students

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

“This Council notes the adverse effect COVID-19 has had on our city’s young people and students. Accordingly, we call upon the Council to facilitate an ad hoc meeting with key stakeholders to amplify the wide range issues and ensure a joined up approach is taken.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mulholland.

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

Belfast City Council Cycling Champion

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

“This Council agrees to introduce a Belfast City Council - Cycling Champion within the Council to support active travel and bicycle use; and, agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure calling on the publication of the Belfast Bicycle Network.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAllister.

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

Belfast Bikes - Pilot Scheme to use Rolloe

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

“Belfast bikes helps encourage citizens and visitors to our city to get around Belfast, while helping reduce our carbon footprint.

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Promoting cycling and investing in safe cycle lanes will be paramount in our fight against climate change.

What if we can also help clean the air as we cycle?

A new award winning design called Rolloe transforms the humble bike wheel into an air purifier that sucks in polluted air, filters out the pollutants and releases the clean air back out into the city.

Similar to a motion last year to investigate the potential of city trees, I call on this Council to explore a pilot scheme to use Rolloe on Belfast bikes with the view to use throughout the fleet if successful and help promote all cyclists to explore the usage of Rolloe on their own bikes.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin.

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

Chairperson