

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on
Tuesday, 1st February, 2022 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor;
(Councillor Nicholl) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey,
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, Hanvey, Howard, Hussey,
Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long, Lyons,
Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer,
McCabe, McCullough, McCusker,
McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin,
McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy,
Newton, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt, Verner
and Walsh.

Summons

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Heading and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pankhurst declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was a PhD student and a teaching assistant at Queen's University Belfast and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor Howard declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that she was employed by the Belfast Metropolitan College and that she would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor Spratt declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was an employee of the Northern Regional College and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor Hutchinson declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was on the Board of Governors of the Northern Regional College and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

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Councillor Hussey declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was a tutor at Queen’s University Belfast and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in Item 7, namely, “A City Imagining Cultural Strategy – Update on St. Patrick’s Day Programme”, in that she was an employee of Féile an Phobail, and if the issue arose that she would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Minutes of the Council Meeting

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Monthly meeting of the Council of 10th and 17th January be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Condolences

A number of Members expressed sympathy and condolences to Councillor Carson on the recent death of his mother.

Congratulations

A Member advised the Council that a contestant from Belfast, Blu Hydrangea, would be competing in the upcoming television series, RuPaul’s Drag Race: UK versus the World, and wished her all the best for the competition.

Sympathy

A Member advised the Council that, regretfully, another woman had lost her life in Poland due to the country’s strict abortion laws.

Councillor Magennis

A Member advised the Council that it was the last Council meeting for Councillor Magennis, who would be stepping down later in the month to take care of his family. A number of Members wished Councillor Magennis well.

Monthly Letter

The Lord Mayor read out a letter from Ms. Mollie-Rose McCartan Regan, a child who lived in Stranmillis and who had written to the Lord Mayor as she was concerned about a number of trees which had recently been cut down along a lane in the Stranmillis area.

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Minutes of Committee Meetings

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Groogan
Seconded by Councillor McAllister

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st January, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Flying of the Union Flag

Moved by Councillor McAllister
Seconded by Alderman Kingston and

Resolved - That the Council agrees not to fly the Union Flag on the City Hall on 19th February, 2022, to mark the birthday of Prince Andrew, and, instead, to fly the Union flag on 1st July, to mark the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Amendment

Motion - Playing Pitches in Belfast

A Member requested that the report which was to be submitted to a future meeting would include consideration of lighting at some of the pitches.

Amendment

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2022-23

Moved by Councillor Beattie
Seconded by Councillor McAllister and

Resolved – That the decision on the setting of the District Rate 2022-23 be deferred and, unless the People Before Profit Party offers proposals for striking the rate by 4th February, 2022, the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee shall stand ratified. If such proposals are made, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee shall be convened and, thereafter, a Special Meeting of the Council to consider the same.

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**Local Government Ability to Hold
Remote Meetings – Call for Evidence**

In response to a Member's comments, the City Solicitor confirmed that the consultation was open until 15th February and that a link to submit comments would be circulated to the Members.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st January were approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain
Seconded by Councillor Smyth

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 11th and 25th January, subject to the omission of the minute of 11th January, under the heading “Erection of Dual Language Street Sign at Clifton Street”, which was subject to a valid call-in requisition and was not before the Council for approval, be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy
Seconded by Councillor Maskey

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th January be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly
Seconded by T. Kelly,

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Hanvey

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Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 18th 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 McCabe
Seconded by Councillor McAteer

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster hall Shareholders' Committee of 24th January be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McCullough
Seconded by Councillor Black

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 6th and 27th January, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Motion to be Debated by the Council

Proposed Cuts in Higher Education

(Councillors Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, Pankhurst and Spratt, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting for the duration)

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

“This Council notes with alarm the budget cut proposals put forward by the Department for the Economy to reduce university places, massively increase tuition fees, slash student financial support, cut the number of apprentices, and reduce or end the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

The Council supports an end to tuition fees and an increase in EMA and student financial support. Therefore, the Council agrees that these proposed actions and cuts are completely unacceptable, especially at a time when students across the city are already struggling to make ends meet. As noted by the NUS-USI, these cuts ‘have the potential to decimate the hopes and opportunities of an entire generation’ and could take away ‘their ability to survive day to day, and many will simply drop out of education’.

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Therefore, the Council considers the proposals to constitute an unacceptable attack on students, young people, their futures and our education provision; and stands in solidarity with demands from the NUS-USI to oppose these cuts.

The Council will write to the Economy Minister to express our anger and opposition to these proposals and to encourage the Minister to abandon them. In that letter, the Council will invite the Minister to a meeting with Councillors and representatives of the student population, in order to fully understand and appreciate the breadth of our concerns and the danger his proposals present.

The Council calls on the wider Stormont Executive to refuse to give consent to these proposals and cuts and to take all necessary action to defend student places, student financial assistance, apprenticeships, the EMA and to oppose any increase in the cost of student tuition. Accordingly, the Council will write to each Executive Minister to this effect.

The Council also calls on the Finance Minister to work with the Minister for the Economy to find a sustainable solution to funding issues within the higher and further education sectors. The Council considers it utterly unacceptable that young people in our city should be made to pay the price for budgetary pressures and include in our letter to the Minister for Finance a demand that funding is found to secure the future for young people.

Finally, the Council recognises the role of Westminster budgets in creating difficulties for public spending locally and agrees to write to the treasury on behalf of local students to demand increased budgetary funding to stave off these proposals.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston
Seconded by Councillor Brooks

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins be amended, whereby the entire wording of the original motion is replaced with:

“This Council notes with alarm the draft budget settlement; notes the severe impact it could have on many Departments across the Executive, and in particular notes with concern the impact this is likely to have on young people in university, apprenticeships and training; and calls on the Finance Minister to recalibrate the budget settlement in order to focus on both health and skills of our young people.”

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The proposer of the motion did not accept the amendment and the Council therefore proceeded to vote on it. Fourteen Members voted for the amendment, twenty-eight against and with nine no votes it was declared lost.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Beattie

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins be amended to insert the following between the final 2 paragraphs:

“This Council recognises that many of these proposed budget cuts are as a result of the loss of EU funds due to Brexit.”

Therefore, the motion, as amended, would read:

“This Council notes with alarm the budget cut proposals put forward by the Department for the Economy to reduce university places, massively increase tuition fees, slash student financial support, cut the number of apprentices, and reduce or end the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

The Council supports an end to tuition fees and an increase in EMA and student financial support. Therefore, the Council agrees that these proposed actions and cuts are completely unacceptable, especially at a time when students across the city are already struggling to make ends meet. As noted by the NUS-USI, these cuts ‘have the potential to decimate the hopes and opportunities of an entire generation’ and could take away ‘their ability to survive day to day, and many will simply drop out of education’.

Therefore, the Council considers the proposals to constitute an unacceptable attack on students, young people, their futures and our education provision; and stands in solidarity with demands from the NUS-USI to oppose these cuts.

The Council will write to the Economy Minister to express our anger and opposition to these proposals and to encourage the Minister to abandon them. In that letter, the Council will invite the Minister to a meeting with Councillors and representatives of the student population, in order to fully understand and appreciate the breadth of our concerns and the danger his proposals present.

The Council calls on the wider Stormont Executive to refuse to give consent to these proposals and cuts and to take all necessary action to defend student places, student financial assistance, apprenticeships, the

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EMA and to oppose any increase in the cost of student tuition. Accordingly, the Council will write to each Executive Minister to this effect.

The Council also calls on the Finance Minister to work with the Minister for the Economy to find a sustainable solution to funding issues within the higher and further education sectors. The Council considers it utterly unacceptable that young people in our city should be made to pay the price for budgetary pressures and include in our letter to the Minister for Finance a demand that funding is found to secure the future for young people.

This Council recognises that many of these proposed budget cuts are as a result of the loss of EU funds due to Brexit.

Finally, the Council recognises the role of Westminster budgets in creating difficulties for public spending locally and agrees to write to the treasury on behalf of local students to demand increased budgetary funding to stave off these proposals.”

The proposer agreed to accept the amendment. The Council voted on the motion as amended by Councillor McLaughlin, which was now the substantive motion. On a recorded vote, thirty-seven Members voted for it, thirteen against and with one no vote, it was declared carried.

<u>For 37</u>	<u>Against 13</u>	<u>No Vote 1</u>
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl); Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, O’Hara, Smyth and Walsh.	The Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Haire; Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, T. Kelly, McCullough, Newton and Verner.	Councillor Kyle.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson