

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th February, 2022

## MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Groogan (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and  
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,  
Heading, Long, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown,  
McLaughlin, McReynolds, Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director  
of Finance and Resources;  
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;  
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational  
Strategy;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Alderman Haire declared an interest in respect of agenda item 7b – Request from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, on the basis that he was a member of that organisation and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

### **Presentation – Draft Amenity Bye Laws**

The City Solicitor informed the Members that he had received a request for a deputation consisting of representatives of local retailers to address the Committee on the proposed Draft Amenity Bye Laws, which were due to be considered later in the meeting.

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The Committee agreed to hear from the deputation and, accordingly, Ms. G. Duggan, City Centre Manager, Belfast City Centre Management Company, together with Mr. J. Clark, Gordons Chemists, Mr. P. Connan, McDonald's, Ms. B. Hunter, Linenhall Library and Ms. B. McMaster, Starbucks, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Clark informed the Members that persistent disruptive on-street activity, in the form of protests, street entertainers, preaching and lobbying and often involving the use of amplifiers, was increasingly creating difficulties for retailers and businesses operating in the general area of Cornmarket. The level of noise nuisance, general disorder and interference was such that retailers were often unable to, for example, leave their doors open, keep the area in front of their premises free from bystanders or conduct confidential customer consultations. Staff also felt intimidated, which was having a detrimental impact upon their mental health and general wellbeing. Potential customers tended to avoid the area and its tourism potential was not being fully realised. He went on to state that the high buildings around Cornmarket amplified noise even further and called upon the Council to designate an area where the activities listed above could take place with minimal impact. He concluded by welcoming the bye laws being proposed by the Council.

Ms. McMaster provided further examples of the level of disruption alluded to by Mr. Clark and welcomed the approach being taken by the Council to address the issue.

Ms. Duggan pointed out that business impact statements which had, over the past twelve months, been collated by the Belfast City Centre Management Company and the Police Service of Northern Ireland reinforced the need for effective regulations to be put in place and also welcomed the Council's approach.

The Chairperson thanked the deputation, following which the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Restricted Items**

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

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

**Financial Reporting – Quarter 3 2021/22**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 3 and year-end forecast for 2021/22, based upon the five step Finance Strategy which had been approved in June, 2020.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 3, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £3,875,109 (3.5%), which included absorbing Covid expenditure

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and income losses of £6,532,725. The key contributory factors continued to be savings from the under occupancy of office buildings, underspends in employee budgets and additional expenditure controls which had helped to offset incomes losses. The Quarter 3 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £261,513, representing 0.2% of the net expenditure budget.

He went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves position, rates finalisation and the overall Investment Programme and, in terms of reallocations, confirmed that Members would, at the year-end, be in a position to consider the use of the Covid-19 reserve to cover a proportion of Covid costs and income losses. That would, in turn, free up unused Departmental budgets for re-allocation, on a non-recurrent basis, to other priorities.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the financial position for Quarter 3 and year-end forecast for 2021/22;
- ii. agreed that the use of the Covid-19 reserve and reallocations of forecast underspends would be considered as part of year-end reporting;
- iii. agreed that Party Briefings be held in advance of the report on the year-end financial position for 2021/22 being presented to the meeting in June; and
- iv. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the number of current vacancies for permanent staff across the Council, on a Departmental and Unit basis.

**Annual Leave 2022/23**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources informed the Committee that he had received communication from the Trades Unions requesting that all staff be granted an additional day's leave for 2022/23, in recognition of their contribution over the course of the pandemic. He outlined the estimated cost to the Council and recommended that the Committee consider the request.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. granted approval for permanent and temporary staff to be awarded an additional day's leave in 2022/23;
- ii. noted that the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources would examine the feasibility of also awarding an additional day's leave to agency staff; and

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- iii. agreed that the Council would examine a way of officially recognising, in due course, the contribution made by all staff during the Covid-19 period.

**Update on Draft Amenity Bye Laws**

The City Solicitor drew the Committee's attention to significant issues which had, over a number of months, been raised, including earlier in the meeting, around the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City centre, primarily within the retail core. Those activities included the use of amplification equipment and the display of offensive images.

He reported that Council officers had, upon reviewing the existing powers, highlighted the need for additional measures to be put in place to regulate these activities, which were regarded as having an unacceptable impact upon visitors, workers and businesses generally. With that in mind, he submitted for the Committee's consideration new draft bye laws, which included provisions around the regulation of noise in streets, the confiscation of intoxicating liquor and psychoactive substances, the display of images in public places which may be deemed to be offensive and street preaching deliberately targeting/engaging with members of the public on account of their perceived sexuality.

He pointed out that the bye laws were not intended to prevent street preaching or public interest causes being promoted in streets in the district but rather to avoid the unacceptable nuisance which was being caused by the cumulative impact of these various activities.

He went on to explain that the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972, required bye laws to be approved by the Department for Communities before being adopted. Officers were of the view that it would be prudent to carry out some informal consultation with that Department and with other relevant statutory agencies, in advance of the bye laws being issued for wider consultation and he recommended accordingly.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,  
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst,

That the Committee agrees to defer the matter to allow Party Group briefings to be held to consider the draft bye laws in greater detail.

On a vote, six Members voted for the proposal and thirteen against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the draft bye laws be submitted to the Department for Communities and other relevant statutory agencies for initial consultation.

### **Update on Physical Programme**

#### **Proposed Movement on the Capital Programme: New Cemetery (Move to Stage 2: Uncommitted)**

- The Committee noted the update on the project and agreed that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) for the next phase of the project be progressed in order to inform the development of a preferred option.

#### **Proposed Movement on the Capital Programme: IT Programme – Building Control Replacement System (Move to Stage 3 – Committed)**

- The Committee noted that a satisfactory tender return had now been achieved and agreed that a maximum budget of £250,000 be allocated to this project. (The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.)

#### **Capital Programme: North Foreshore – Development Sites Infrastructure Works (Stage 3 – Committed)**

- The Committee noted that a satisfactory tender return had now been achieved for North Foreshore Storm Drainage Infrastructure Installation at the North Foreshore site and that it was within the overall budget already allocated to this project. (The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.)

#### **Forth Meadow Community Greenway**

- The Committee noted the potential negative impact of any delay on this project.

#### **Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

- The Committee agreed that the eligibility criteria for the fund be amended to include co-operatives and social enterprises and that it now read; *'the project proposer must not be an individual, sole trader or profit-making organisation unless registered as a co-operative or social enterprise'* and noted the launch activities which were underway in relation to the new fund.

#### **Alleygating Scheme – Phase 5**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th March 2021, it had agreed a budget of £500K for Phase 5 of the Council's alleygating scheme, with the funding to be divided equally between North, South, East and West. The Committee had,

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at its meeting on 21st May, 2021, agreed a framework to be used to identify potential locations for alleygates.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that Council officers had been developing data analysis to support the aforementioned framework and had invited Members to nominate streets for consideration. He drew the Committee's attention to a 'long list' of potential locations which had subsequently been produced for each quadrant of the City and pointed out that each location had been ranked in order of need, to reflect the outcome of the data analysis. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee:

- i. approve the identified 'long list' of possible alleygate locations for North, South, East and West, based upon the framework agreed by the Committee on 21st May 2021; and
- ii. agree to refer each 'long list' of possible alleygate locations to the relevant Area Working Group for prioritisation, based on the available budget of £125,000 for each quadrant of the City.

During discussion, several Members pointed out that a number of locations which they had suggested had been omitted from the lists presented to the Committee, including some from the previous phase.

In response, the Director of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that only those areas which had been assessed and ranked against the previously agreed framework had been included on the long list, given the need for the Area Working Groups to further refine and shortlist suitable locations within the agreed budget.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to allow for a full list of location requests to be circulated to Members and a comprehensive list of potential locations to be drafted and agreed. It agreed also that the next report should include details of the scoring matrix used in the assessment process.

### **Bonfire Management**

#### **Restricted Minute**

*In accordance with the Council's Bonfire Governance Arrangements, this decision is to be regarded as confidential and sensitive and must not be disclosed, unless the Committee has agreed that it may be put into the public domain. Any disclosure of information or of decisions not agreed by the Committee may be considered as a Code of Conduct issue.*

*In addition, as the Committee has full delegated powers in the matter, the decision is not subject to ratification by the Council.*

### **City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress**

The Committee noted a report providing an update on the progress being made across each of the operational areas in implementing the City Hall re-opening and recovery plan.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Motion – Unauthorised Clothing Banks**

The City Solicitor informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 27th January, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Alderman Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Brooks, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration:

“This Council will introduce appropriate regulations to prohibit the siting of unauthorised ‘clothing banks’ on its land and will work with other public landowners to present a united approach.

Registered charities operate professional collection and retail operations, incurring significant costs, with their profits going on to support many worthy causes. In contrast, many ‘clothing banks’ appear overnight, with no permission and with minimal signage. This is unfair and many worthy causes lose out as a result.

If the operator is legitimate, they will have no difficulty in properly registering their collection banks in a managed site. Thus, a level playing field is created”.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the motion and agreed that the report to be submitted to a future meeting should include the potential for establishing a licensing scheme for the operation of clothing banks and engaging with other statutory agencies.

**Governance**

**Local Government Boundary Commissioner –  
Revised Recommendations**

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Boundary Commissioner’s Revised Recommendations which were published on 18th January and to seek approval of the draft Council response to the revised recommendations.**

**The Commissioner has asked for written feedback to be submitted by 1st March 2022.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to note the Local Government Boundary Commissioner’s Revised Recommendations and approve the Council response outlined in paragraph 3.4 below.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

On 27th July 2021, the Local Government Boundary Commissioner published the Provisional Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland.

The Council provided a detailed written response to the Provisional Recommendations in relation to the district boundary and Political Parties were encouraged to respond individually with respect to the provisional ward boundary recommendations. Council officials reiterated the position outlined in the written response during the public hearing in the Belfast council area which was facilitated by an Assistant Commissioner on 5th October 2021. A copy of that response has been circulated.

**Summary of BCC Response to the Provisional Recommendations**

In its response to the Provisional Recommendations, Belfast City Council indicated that it did not agree with paragraph 7.3.1 of the Provisional Recommendations report, which states that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.

The Council highlighted the fact that, following the previous Local Government Boundary review in 2008, the Final Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commissioner (Dick Mackenzie) had a recommendation to place the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building within the new Belfast district boundary.

However, the Council noted that the NI Executive had, subsequently, made amendments to the Final Recommendations which resulted in Forestside and the adjacent Castlereagh Council Civic HQs remaining within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh council area.

The Council referred to the following two issues in relation to the district boundary:

**Galwally Area (including Forestside)**

The Council requested that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the 'Final Recommendations' report and the 'Report of the Assistant

Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district' which made clear recommendations that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.

The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

#### Harbour Area

The Council also wishes to highlight the issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary.

The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.

### 3.2 Revised Recommendations – District Boundary

The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.

#### Galwally Area (including Forestside)

The following excerpt outlines the Commissioner's findings in relation to the Galwally area:

*'I note the submissions on this issue and the analysis of the Assistant Commissioner. I am in agreement with the rationale of the Assistant Commissioner on the importance of the fact that the boundary line at this point was mandated by a process of the Northern Ireland Assembly following the last Review in 2008/09. It is true to say that the boundary line at this area does not correspond to the recommendations made by my predecessor in the 2008/09 Review, however, it is the line which was passed into law after consideration and amendment by the legislature during the passage of the 2012 Act.*

*My approach in this Review is one of minimum intervention where possible. In the absence of a compelling reason, I am not persuaded to interfere with existing District boundary lines. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that the submission made by Belfast City Council (BCC) does not constitute a*

*compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary between the District of Belfast City and the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh.*

*I also note that there was another submission to alter the same District line at the area around Drumkeen to bring a small number of houses into Belfast from the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that there is no compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary line on this basis’.*

#### **Harbour Area**

The following excerpt outlines the Commissioner’s findings in relation to the Harbour area:

*‘I note the findings of the Assistant Commissioner and I am in agreement that the submission of Belfast City Council raises a compelling reason to realign the District Boundary at Duncairn and Sydenham wards on the grounds of defacement. As stated by the Assistant Commissioner:*

*I believe that there is defacement to the existing district line between the District of Belfast City and Belfast Lough. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.*

*I have addressed this issue and the realignment of the District boundary at this point can be seen in the attached map’.*

### **3.3 Revised Recommendations – Wards**

The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that Belfast district should remain comprised of 60 wards.

There is a total of 230,236 electors within the district which averages at 3,837 electors per ward and my Revised Recommendations balance the electorate across the 60 wards. The revised ward and district boundaries changes that have been proposed can be viewed at the following link. [Belfast Wards](#)

### **3.4 Belfast City Council Response**

#### **District Boundary**

#### **Galwally Area**

The Council would argue that any independent review into the placement of any district boundary line should be based on

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the Schedule 4, Part III 'Rules in accordance which recommendations of a commissioner are to be made', the first of which is:

**'Regard shall be had to the desirability of determining district and ward boundaries which are readily identifiable'.**

The Council would reiterate that those features which the Local Government Boundary Commissioner correctly determined in 2008 to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

The Council recognise that all of the extant district and ward boundaries for all 11 councils, including those in relation to Belfast, were mandated by a political process of the NI Assembly following the last review in 2008/9. The Council would argue that this fact does not exempt any of the boundaries from future review as this would negate the requirement for any future review and would render the rules set out in Schedule 4, Part III of The Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 redundant.

The Council would, therefore, recommend again that the Commissioner refers to the principles upon which the 2008 Final Recommendations were made and the Schedule 4, Part III Rules including the first rule which places prominence on the desirability of determining district boundaries which are readily identifiable.

The reason put forth by the Council, therefore, appeals directly to the first rule in Schedule 4, Part III which defines the rules in accordance which a Commissioner will make recommendations, therefore ensuring that such a reason is not only valid but is a material consideration.

Any argument that Belfast's district boundary was 'mandated by a political process' or reference to 'the fact that the boundary was a decision made by the NI Assembly which is historically agreed' will equally apply to all district boundaries which are subject to the review. As such, the Council do not agree that this is a valid argument for determining that such reasons as those which directly relate to legislated Rules such as Schedule 4, Part III (14) are not compelling.

The Council would note that no other argument, other than previous political agreement has been presented against the suggested change to the district boundary.

**Harbour Area**

The Council welcomes the revised recommendation in respect of the Harbour area and the proposed suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.

**Wards**

In line with previous decisions in relation to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland, responses to the Commissioners recommendations in relation to ward boundaries will be left to individual parties. Parties are encouraged to review the map accessible via the link in paragraph para 3.3 above.

**3.5 Financial and Resource Implications**

No financial implications attached this report

**3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications**

None”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Council Improvement Objectives for 2022-23**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 To present the draft corporate improvement objectives for 2022-23 and to seek Committee approval to issue these for public consultation in line with our statutory performance duty obligations.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the draft improvement objectives for 2022-23 and approve their issue for public consultation in line with statutory guidance. The proposed improvement objectives for 2022-23 are as follows:**

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<b>Our Services</b>
We will continue to adapt and improve our services
<b>Our Communities</b>
We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
<b>Our Economy</b>
We will work collaboratively to support businesses, jobs and inclusive growth
<b>Our Environment</b>
We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
<b>Our City</b>
We will continue to support our city to recover and innovate in a safe, inclusive and sustainable way

**3.0 Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan by 30th June each year. The Improvement plan does not represent everything that council plans to do, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. Normally, we align our improvement objectives to the key priorities within our corporate plan and the Belfast Agenda. However, last year we realigned the improvement plan to the recovery plan and, due to the covid restrictions in place, had to adjust or refocus our improvement actions. This year as we transition from the impacts of the pandemic, we have once again adapted our improvement objectives so that they provide an appropriate balance between our corporate planning and recovery work.**

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- 3.2** The strategic structure used in 2021-22 to explain our improvement objectives appeared to be well received by residents. Therefore, we have retained this format for 2022–23 as it allows us to incorporate Covid-19 considerations and articulate council specific improvement in a meaningful way for the public. However, rather than retain our digital innovation as an improvement objective on its own, we have amalgamated this work into the ‘Our City’ objective. Whilst digital innovation is a significant programme of work, this brings it into line with other similar programmes (such as leisure transformation and customer focus) and improves strategic focus. The proposed improvement objectives for 2022-23 have been circulated, including how they align to our corporate plan and the emerging Belfast Agenda refresh, and the indicative improvement actions that we propose to deliver during the coming year.

**Next Steps**

- 3.3** Councils are legally required to consult on their improvement objectives and to publish an Improvement Plan by 30th June each year. Subject to approval, we will issue the improvement objectives for public consultation via our on-line engagement platform for a period of 8 weeks. During this time, we will work with departments to develop detailed actions, milestones and performance indicators and update as needed based on public feedback. This improvement activity will be reflected within the corporate plan, committee plans or other strategic programmes, thereby ensuring that improvement is embedded within our planning and delivery processes. A final report and draft improvement plan will be brought to the Committee for ratification and publication in June.

<b>SP and R – Draft Improvement Objectives for consultation</b>	<b>18th Feb 2022</b>
<b>Improvement Objectives: 8 week consultation</b>	<b>Mar - Apr 2022</b>
<b>Services refine actions and PIs</b>	<b>Mar - May 2022</b>
<b>SP and R approves Improvement Plan for online publication</b>	<b>June 2022</b>
<b>Publish Improvement Plan</b>	<b>By 30th June 2022</b>

**3.4 Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial implications.

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

There are no equality or rural need implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on Customer Focus Programme**

(Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 Members are reminded that, in October 2021, the Committee was provided with updates on the Customer Focus Programme, which included updates on the new Customer Hub function which has been operational from 29th March 2021. The Committee was advised that an independent health check was being commissioned to review the operational set up of the Customer Hub and to assess future capacity needs.**

**1.2 This report provides the Committee with an update on:**

- the health check of the Customer Hub function;
- the approach to development of facilities for Elected Members; and
- the Customer Focus programme approach to onboarding services and phase 2 planning.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to note:**

1. the in-depth review of the Customer Hub operation and supporting infrastructure carried out by Navigation Partners in November 2021;
2. the recommendations and planned improvements to further optimise the Customer Hub operation including proposed measures and KPIs;

3. the approach set out for transitioning and transformation of services and that further work is being undertaken to define how this approach may be implemented in line with the agreed approach to service design and in line with corporate priorities. This approach will inform the Phase 2 plan; and
4. the update on development of facilities for Elected Members.

### **3.0 Main Report**

#### **3.1 Summary of Recommendations and Findings from an Operational Review of the Customer Hub**

In March 2021, the Council launched a Customer Hub to manage customer communications and service requests. When the Customer Hub had been in operation for 6 months, Navigation Partners were appointed to complete an independent health check to assess how efficiently and effectively the Customer Hub is delivering this service. The objective of the work was to provide a review and subsequent report on where the operation is currently, where it should strive to be and to identify a blueprint for future onboarding of services.

The review highlighted that the Customer Hub benefits from a strong committed team with a dedicated management team. Despite challenging delivery timescales during unprecedented times, the service was delivered to schedule. Initially following implementation there was some service disruption however, the experience delivered to customers is improving and the service has now stabilised. Prior to the Christmas period the average call wait time for November and December was 90 seconds and average call handling time for the same period was 1 minute 50 seconds. These are within industry best practice standards.

The review identified a number of areas where there were quick wins to improve performance and areas where industry best practice could be employed. The review also recognised areas of good practice across the Customer Hubs technology and processes.

As the Customer Hub enters the next phase of implementation and gets ready for growth, the quick wins identified focus on ensuring the Customer Hub's success as it grows and additional services are added.

The Customer Focus Oversight Board and CMT considered the Navigation Partners report findings and agreed the recommendations. It was agreed that further discussion is required to refine the approach to transitioning and transformation of services in the context of service design and the corporate prioritisation process. Delivery of the improvements will be managed and monitored through the Customer Focus Delivery Board and Oversight Board.

**3.2 Summary of Findings and Recommendations:**

In considering the review, Navigation Partners used industry benchmarks and averages to measure the current delivery of the Customer Hub.

The review report acknowledges the achievements to date in establishing the Customer Hub within the agreed time scale and given the challenging environment created by Covid 19.

The review and the recommendations focus on delivering a balance of customer service while retaining a focus on value for money. Recommendations consider the aspirations for Customer Hub growth and the actions needed to support that. The review considers recommendations in each of the following areas:

- **Interactive Voice Response (IVR) – This is the call menu that is heard when contacting the Customer Hub – this report suggests changes and improvements that could be made to the IVR to improve its efficiency;**
- **Operations – Changes to the Customer Hub operation that could increase efficiency for the Customer Hub Assistants;**
- **Performance – Tools and measures to prepare the Customer Hub to manage resource requirements against future demand as that demand grows. Currently, there are no formalised operational performance measures in the Customer Hub. The aim is to have standard measures as used in other customer service environments. The reporting will assess the overall service delivered within the Customer Hub function and will aim to drive improved customer services by focussing on staff development and training requirements;**
- **Measures and Key Performance Indicators – reporting that would benefit the Customer Hub’s operation;**

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- **Process and prioritising change – how the base data collected within the Customer Hub can be used to quantify and make a case for future process improvements (service design);**
- **Onboarding process – a repeatable on-boarding process that ensures that all aspects of onboarding a new service are understood and delivered with minimal disruption including staffing requirements.**

Appendix 1, which has been circulated, sets out the recommendations for improvements in each of these areas.

Appendix 2, which has also been circulated, provides a high-level plan for implementing the report recommendations which will be overseen by the Customer Focus Delivery Board and Customer Focus Oversight Board. It is proposed that the majority of actions to optimise the Customer Hub operation will be completed by end of March, 2022.

**Performance Tools**

**3.2.1 As the Customer Hub grows and inbound demand increases (higher volumes of calls, emails, online forms and in the future face-to-face visits), a greater focus must be placed on demand volumes and arrival patterns.**

- **The use of forecasting and workforce management processes would aid the Customer Hub management in understanding and matching demand with resources required. This is particularly important as the Customer Hub takes on further services. Workforce management (WFM), otherwise known as scheduling tools, utilise all processes that are undertaken to ensure the right number of staff are available at the right time on the right contact channel – phone, email or webforms.**
- **This tool will be used on a day-to-day basis to ensure staff are allocated effectively to meet demand across customer channels and applied when assessing staffing levels and any revisions to the staffing model as part of the onboarding process.**

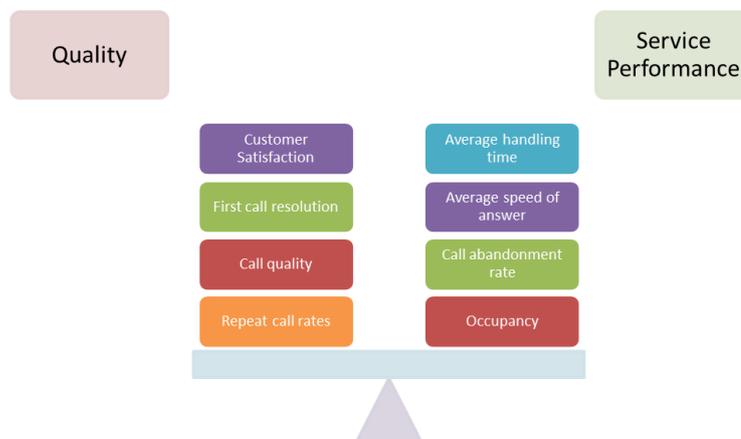
**There are two ways this can be addressed:**

- **The current Mitel licence includes workforce management and scheduling so this could be utilised. Some work would be required to implement this**

- An Erlang model is the most widely used tool across the industry to deliver resource planning and can provide an initial view of the demand. Erlang provides a mathematical formula that would allow the Customer Hub Co-ordinators to calculate the number of staff needed for a given number of calls and to achieve required service levels. Using such tools allows the development of Measures, that become the operational reporting that is done by Customer Hub Management and provides the data to assist in the day-to-day management of Hub activity.

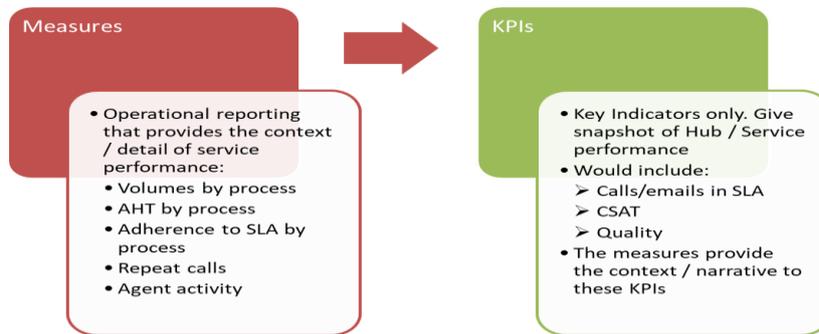
### KPIs and Measures

- 3.2.2 It is common to focus on performance metrics, however, to get the best service and value for money it is important to gain the right balance of quality and performance measures. Too much focus on performance could impact the customer service delivered and too much weighting on quality could be costly with limited pay back in efficiency.



KPIs are the performance indicators that give a snapshot of overall Customer Hub performance and have specific targets. As many of these are new targets and not currently measured, a target should be set to enable reporting to commence, be refined and any immediate improvement actions be taken. The split of measures and KPIs is shown in the diagram overleaf

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The proposed measures and KPIs for Customer Hub have been circulated.

### Prioritising Change

**3.2.3** The Customer Hub has been implemented as one element of a wider focus on Service transformation. The Customer Hub and the infrastructure implemented within it will act as a facilitator for this transformation. In particular, the metrics which are produced relating to process and service performance enable future process changes to be identified, quantified and delivered.

The current planned Service improvements and changes identified as part of future Service design activity will require prioritisation as resources are limited and the Council will be looking to achieve the best value for the investment made.

The metrics available once a Service has transitioned to the Customer Hub will enable the benefits to be quantified which gives a number of advantages:

- It enables the benefit of making process improvements to be quantified and prioritised – where do you focus resources?
- It enables benefits to be quantified and measured – so benefits realisation can be evidenced
- It avoids people reacting to problems and focusing resources on knee jerk requirements
- Improvements/development could be prioritised based on their impact on; customers/quality and efficiency (FTE/Cost)

In summary, this enables changes to be measured against three areas:

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### 3.2.4 Onboarding Process and Planning of Phase 2

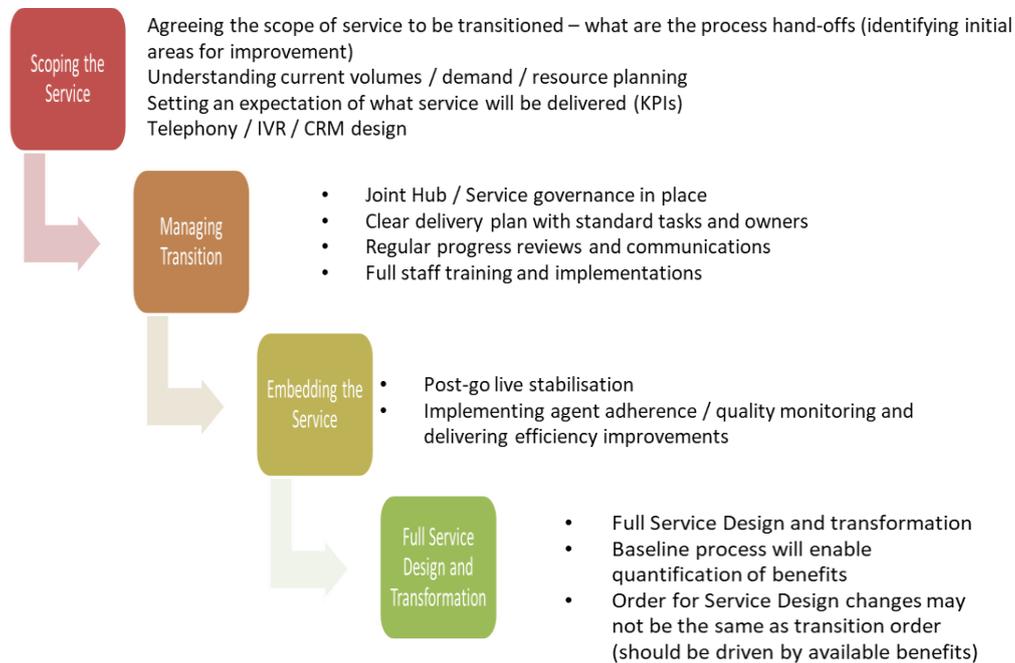
**This initial phase of the Customer Hub has delivered the infrastructure and processes to enable the Hub to meet the needs of more than the initial areas included in scope. The infrastructure and processes provide the capability to onboard additional services. In planning for future phases and new service on-boarding there is an opportunity to create a repeatable process that can be used to ensure that all areas are considered in any future service on-boarding.**

**The growth of the Customer Hub and the upcoming service design/transformations need to be considered in line to ensure that resources are employed most effectively.**

**To enable successful growth of the Customer Hub, whilst ensuring that there is minimum impact on business-as-usual operations the following phased approach is proposed. The phased approach enables up front work to be completed to understand the scope of the change and the impacts across the organisation. Full-service Design follows at a later stage when the performance data has been captured and potential savings areas can be quantified.**

**The approach to on boarding services as outlined below will be progressed as a pilot with the onboarding of Building Control. The plans for Phase 2 of the Customer Focus Programme are currently being formed with a key dependency being the award of contract for a new Building Control IT system which it is envisaged will be awarded by end of March 2022.**

### 3.2.5 Service Onboarding Approach



The activities required during each phase have been circulated. The benefit of this approach is that it ensures that the roll out of the Customer Hub can continue, and the benefits of transitioning new service areas into the Customer Hub be realised. Transitioning the services into the Customer Hub will allow the capture of additional baseline performance data on the processes which will support the service design activity. Where the full Service Design activity can also be prioritised and effort focused where the most benefits can be achieved.

### 3.2.6 Onboarding / Transition Vs Transformation (Full Service Design)

There are dependencies between the process improvements identified in transition, the full-service design activity required in transformation with the corporate change programme and clear alignment is required with key enablers. e.g. Digital Services and Digital Delivery.

Transition refers to the definition and transition of a new Service into the Hub. It does not require a full-Service design

- Scoping of service may identify immediate improvements that can be delivered, such as automation of online forms

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- Initial scoping may identify changes that should be delivered pre-transformation
- Benefits can be delivered by transition alone and so Service transition to the Customer Hub should be decoupled from transformation

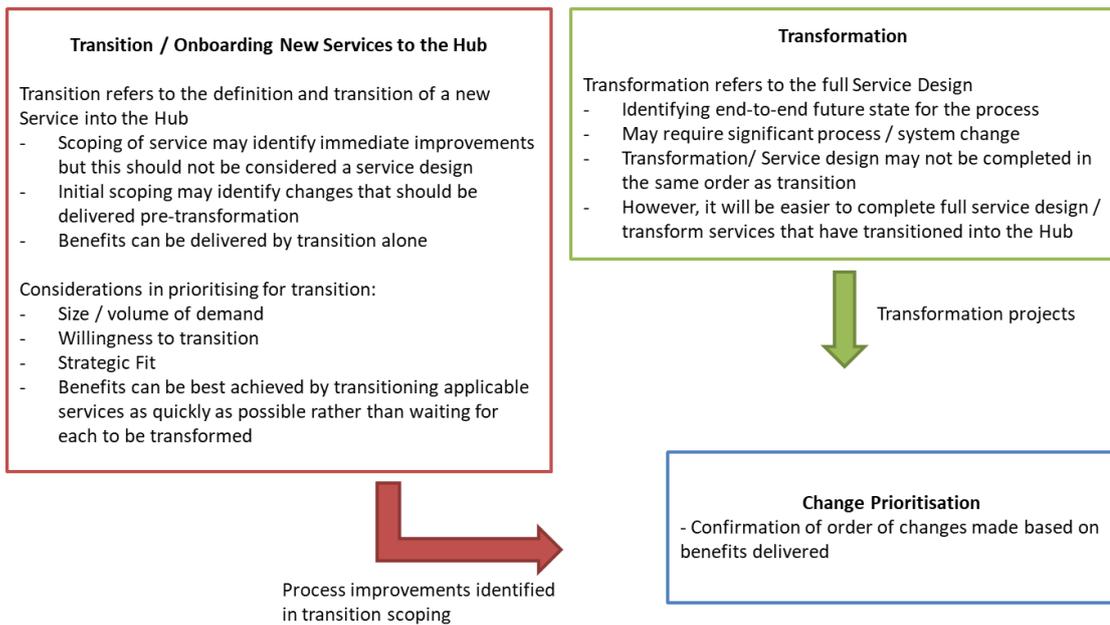
**Transformation refers to the full-Service design process**

- Identifying end-to-end future state for the process
- May require significant process / system change
- Transformation/ Service design may not be completed in the same order as transition
- However, it will be easier to complete full-Service design / transform services that have transitioned into the Hub.

**It is important to note that we have an agreed short term corporate change strategy where structural stabilisation is critical in areas being prioritised, with some resource focussed on full transformational service design. As we complete the urgent structural stabilisation more resource can be deployed on transformational service design. This will be governed through the Corporate Change Board.**

**It is recognised that both transition and full-Service design will identify initiatives that require allocation of limited resources (i.e. Digital, Continuous Improvement and HR teams). The readiness of the service itself needs to be considered as part of prioritisation, this includes having departmental subject matter experts available to contribute to design and management capacity to own delivery of change. Additionally, both transition and service design may result in potential changes to existing staffing structure. Any potential changes will be managed in line with CI and HR processes as part of the IR framework. As a result, there is a requirement to feed both needs into a corporate prioritisation process as outlined in the diagram below:**

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### **3.3 Approach to further Development of Facilities for Members**

Work to date has involved working with the Elected Members Task and Finish Working Group to develop a future blueprint. The first Phase of delivering the blueprint has delivered several contact channels for members and a members' app which had its second software release in July, 2021 to include additional features identified by members.

The next stage of development agreed with the Task and Finish Group will focus on information requirements. We will work with the Task and Finish group to understand what information members need at their fingertips to help in day-to-day work with constituents. The Task and Finish group have highlighted:

- Council Services and key people responsible for them
- Information regarding other relevant agencies, their responsibilities, and their contact details.

It is further proposed that we conduct a survey of Members to gather information requirements and feedback on use of the members' app with a view to identifying enhancements to the app and options to improve mobile access to information.

### **3.4 Financial and Resource Implications**

The Committee agreed, in November 2017, that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project. Resource requirements for operation of the Customer Hub are provided for within existing Budgets.

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

No implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on JobStart Scheme**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To bring to the Committee’s attention the Council’s participation in the Department for Communities JobStart Scheme.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to note the update on the Council’s participation in the Department for Communities JobStart Scheme.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware that for over twenty years, the Council has provided a variety of employability outreach activity, including work placements, job opportunities, the ring fencing of posts to the long term unemployed, delivery of pre-recruitment and training programmes and participation in government funded programmes such as Steps to Work and the Young Persons Employment Initiative. Many of these programmes support our work on Inclusive Growth by targeting those furthest removed from the labour market and they aim to help people get ‘job ready’ to apply for positions in the council and elsewhere as they become available. In July 2021, the Council was approached by the Department for Communities (DfC) to participate in a new initiative, the JobStart scheme

**Overview of the JobStart Scheme**

**3.2 JobStart is designed to support young people facing additional employment challenges due to the impact of Covid-19. It will help to create job opportunities for 16–24-year-olds by funding positions with employers across all sectors, for a period of six months, increasing to nine months for those who meet**

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additional criteria (i.e., for young people facing multiple barriers).

**3.3 The employer incentive scheme aims to develop employability skills for those at risk of long-term unemployment and to place young people in positions which align with their individual skills and interests. Participation on the scheme is voluntary. Employers will receive government funding for the temporary job opportunities they create.**

**3.4 To engage in the programme, the Council must ensure that:**

- **opportunities offered must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing employees, apprentices, or contractors to lose or reduce their employment;**
- **job opportunities must last for six months, with a possible extension to 9 months for those who meet certain criteria;**
- **job opportunities must offer at least 25 hours of employment per week; and**
- **employers must develop a training plan to assist participants to gain new occupational and employability skills.**

**(DfC will perform due diligence and financial checks on all employers)**

**3.5 To participate in the programme, the young person must be:**

- **16-24 years old and on benefits or,**
- **if not on benefits, they must fall into the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) category. (If a person falls within this category, they must be 18-24 years old).**

**3.6 Several other public sector employers are engaging in the scheme e.g., Department for Communities, Department for Health, Department of Justice, and the Executive Office. The JobStart scheme is aimed at supporting young people who face multiple barriers e.g., disabled people, those leaving the care system, those leaving the criminal justice system and those at risk of paramilitarism. The job opportunity can be extended to 9 months for young people who meet these criteria.**

3.7 Recruitment for the JobStart scheme placements is being managed through the Council's Youth Support Programme contracted provider, Workforce. Following engagement with Departments, the Council identified 12 JobStart scheme placements and these opportunities were advertised from 27th January to 17th February, which included targeted outreach to employability organisations in all parts of the City.

3.8 Young people participating in JobStart will be supported by Youth Work Coaches in the Department for Communities Resources are also available within the Youth Support Programme to support participants by providing access to mentoring and a range of wraparound supports, to ensure that post JobStart, they have the capabilities to remain in secure employment.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

For each job opportunity offered the DfC will provide:

- 100% of the relevant wage for 25 hours of work per week
- the associated employer National Insurance contributions
- employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions

3.10 While these paid placement opportunities are funded by the Department for Communities, the Council will be required to contribute a small proportion as participants will be working to Belfast City Council job evaluated job descriptions. In addition, there is £1,500 of funding available for each participant which can be claimed for any other startup costs after a period of two weeks and after a training plan has been agreed.

3.11 Corporate Human Resources staff have worked with departmental HR staff to identify 12 suitable job opportunities. Departmental staff will be required to develop training plans for the successful candidates and provide adequate supervision throughout.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Corporate HR will work closely with the Department for the Economy and Department for Communities, and other partners including the ECNI, to ensure equality of opportunity and alignment to our inclusive growth aspirations. Employability outreach will be targeted at young people who face multiple barriers to employment.”

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After discussion, the Committee noted the report and agreed that a further report be submitted:

- i. outlining any implications arising from a decision being taken that the Council would meet the difference between the National Living Wage, which participants would receive, and the Real Living Wage; and
- ii. identifying potential permanent employment opportunities for those participants who successfully completed their placement with the Council.

**Update on the Arrangements for dealing with Consultation Responses**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th December, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the current arrangements for dealing with consultations, in the context of an issue which had been raised by a Member around the need to ensure that Members were afforded the opportunity to view consultations and contribute to responses at an earlier stage in the process.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy explained that the Council's Strategy, Policy and Partnership team maintained a central record of all consultations, with these being identified primarily as follows:

- the consulting organisation sends a notification to the Chief Executive inviting the Council to make a response;
- the consulting organisation sends a notification to a specific officer or officers inviting the Council to make a response; and
- officers search Government websites and identify consultations which it would be appropriate for the Council to respond to.

He reported that the Strategy, Policy and Partnership team provided the Corporate Management Team with a weekly list of currently open consultations, which identified where responses were required and the Department which would take the lead in making that response. He pointed out that a process had been in place for a number of years for uploading this list to the Members' Portal on a weekly basis.

He reported further that the majority of Central Government consultations closed after eight weeks, which left a short time scale for drafting a response, seeking Members' comments and obtaining approval through the Committee system. Members were, therefore, advised that, should they wish to discuss an open consultation, they should refer to the current list on the Members' Portal and contact the nominated Lead Officer. He added that draft responses to consultations would, in line with normal practice, continue to be brought before the relevant Committee, when appropriate, for consideration and approval.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

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**Department of Education Consultation on Children  
and Young People's Strategy Initial 3-Year Delivery  
Plan 2021-2024 – Council Response**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the Northern Ireland Executive had, on 10th December, 2020, met its requirement under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 by approving the Children and Young People's Strategy. The Strategy, which had been published in January, 2021, identified eight outcomes for improving the wellbeing of children and young people and a Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan had been drafted for 2021-24, setting out the actions to be taken to deliver them. Those actions could, he pointed out, be subject to change, depending on new or emerging priorities, the affordability of the actions and the resources to be made available in the 2022–25 budget period.

He went on to report that the Department for Education had launched a consultation on the aforementioned Delivery Plan and recommended that the Committee approve the draft response for submission to the Department ([available here](#)).

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**UK - Republic of Korea Innovation Twins Programme**

(Mrs. D. Colville, City Innovation Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress on the 'UK-Republic of Korea Innovation Twins' programme, which is being delivered by the Connected Places Catapult to encourage SMEs to develop their capacity to sell innovative products and services both locally and internationally. Belfast and the South Korean city of Sejong were chosen to work together to explore options for bi-lateral trade and innovative collaboration.**
- 1.2 The report seeks Committee approval for the Lord Mayor (or her nominee) to attend the programme's virtual Innovation Demo Day on 30th March, where the Lord Mayor has been requested to sign a 'Statement of Intent' between both cities' local authorities.**
- 1.2 As the event is taking place during an Election period, the Committee is asked to agree that the Deputy Chief Executive attend the event in the Lord Mayor's place and provisionally agree a Statement of Intent subject to Committee approval. (The details of the signatory need to be confirmed with Connected Places Catapult by the end of February.)**

## 2.0 Recommendations

### 2.1 The Committee is asked:

1. to note progress on the UK-Republic of Korea Innovation Twins programme;
2. to agree that the Deputy Chief Executive will attend the event on the Lord Mayor's behalf and provisionally agree a Statement of Intent; and
3. to note that a further report will be presented to the Committee in March providing final details of the Demo Day and Statement.

## 3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the Committee meeting in November, Members were presented with details of the Council's participation in the '*UK-Republic of Korea Innovation Twins*' programme<sup>1</sup> which was set up by the Connected Places Catapult (CPC) and funded by BEIS and UKRI. The programme aims to build relationships between smart cities with high potential for accelerating long term R&I collaborations and generating opportunities for trade and FDI.

3.2 The programme has a number of phases with a first 'research and evidence gathering' phase now complete. The current phase is looking at improving the delivery of innovations in both cities and, at the local level, involves the Council's City Innovation Team, Enterprise and Business Growth unit, Invest NI, and Innovation City Belfast.

3.3 The work strands of the project (which are being supported by CPC and PA Consulting) include:

1. Ongoing high-level engagement between Belfast and Sejong working towards signing a Statement of Intent between both cities on 30 March 2022.

While not legally binding, this statement will support ongoing collaboration and discussions between both cities. And make it possible to unlock further funding from BEIS post March 2022. This statement will require ongoing commitment from Invest NI who are currently considering their level of support. They are in the process of developing a presence in South Korea.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cp.catapult.org.uk/project/uk-republic-of-korea-innovation-twins-programme>

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2. A £25,000 pilot with Belfast City Council to support a Litter Analytics solution. This will deploy IoT hardware and predictive algorithms to indicate when street bins need emptied. The pilot will inform how routes can be optimised for waste management and help understanding of future procurement of street bins including the need for recycling bins.
3. The delivery of a Belfast innovation competition which will provide seven local SMEs with £10,000 each to develop and show-case their most innovative product or service.

Selected by a panel made up of PA Consulting, Jacobs and Connected Places Catapult, the seven SMEs will showcase a range of products that relate to areas such as fitness hubs, virtual tourism, community rewards programmes, last mile delivery, safer cycling, and personal safety. The participating SMEs will also receive training in successfully engaging in challenge-led competitions with the public sector.

4. Training for council officers to build their capacity to define challenges and to engage with SMEs on collaborative innovation and procurement.
5. The development of an 'Innovative Procurement Playbook' which will capture the learning from the full programme and support local councils to find better ways to procure more innovative solutions and services.
6. The delivery of the international 'Demo Day' scheduled for 30 March 2022.

This virtual event will involve officers from both cities, BEIS, the Department of International Trade, Innovate UK, Connected Places Catapult, and The UK Embassy in South Korea. Full details to be confirmed at the Committee meeting in March.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

The programme requires officer time commitment from across the Departments.

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

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Assets Management**

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for Committee's consideration a report seeking approval in relation to the following asset related disposal, acquisition and estate matters:

**Forth Meadow Community Greenway -  
Service Level Agreement**

- The Committee granted approval to enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Ulster Wildlife Trust in relation to Section 4 of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway project.

**Percy Street Community Centre – Surrender of Lease**

- The Committee noted the surrender of the lease between the Council and the Lower Shankill Group Welfare Committee, which had been responsible for the management of the community centre.

**Cherryvale Playing Fields – Relocation of BT Pole**

- The Committee granted approval for a BT pole to be relocated onto Council lands at Cherryvale Playing Fields to facilitate a new pedestrian crossing across the Ravenhill Road.

**Whiterock Close– Temporary Licence of land to Glór na Móna**

- The Committee approved the granting of a temporary licence to Glór na Móna for a site adjoining its existing premises on Whiterock Close for the erection of a portacabin.

In addition, the Committee noted that a report on the outcome of an audit, which was currently assessing the condition of the Council's independently managed community centres, would be submitted to a future meeting.

**Update on Area Working Groups**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 3rd February, including the recommendation that match funding of up to £65,000 be allocated to the Braniel Church project from the uncommitted allocations within the East area, subject to the conditions stipulated within the minute being met by the church.

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**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Update on Contracts**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 3 below.

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short description of goods / services</b>
MTC for mechanical services	Up to 5 years	£3.5m	S. Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and minor works to mechanical services
The provision of Belfast Markets	Up to 5 years	£600,000 income	A. Reid	Contractor support for the planning, co-ordination and delivery of seasonal markets for BCC
Telephone service provision (Calls / Lines / Broadband / Support)	Up to 12 months	£83,810	R. Cregan	The corporate telephony solution requires that all devices and users have ongoing support
Provision of mobile phone service and mobile devices	Up to 3 years	£480,000	R. Cregan	Mobile phones are needed for Council staff working away from Council offices
Advice and support for improvement within the Council's financial management	Up to 2 years	£71,600	R. Cregan	The provision of ongoing advisory support tailored to individual mission-critical priorities, and access to research

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				covering the finance sector and roles
The implementation of a centralised Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS)	Up to 5 years	£40,453	R. Cregan	To protect IT equipment from power outages and spikes in the Cecil Ward Building.
Telephony support (T2247)	Up to 25 months	£88,159	R. Cregan	The corporate telephony solution requires that all devices and users have ongoing support. Approved Jan 2022 for up to 12 months £36,479, requesting increasing to a total of 25 months
Renewal of Server and Cloud Enrolment (SCE) agreement with Microsoft for the use of SQL Database products	Up to 36 months	£250,000	R. Cregan	Licensing agreement to allow the use of Microsoft SQL Database products (and any future releases) as well as entitling the Council to raise support calls if needed
Design, provision and management of a firework/pyrotechnic display at Halloween and other Council events	Up to 4 years	£160,000	S. Toland/ R. Black	Design, provision and management of a firework/pyrotechnic displays

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Total Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
Clockwise system	£59,146	R. Cregan	SoftWorks
Supply and delivery of frozen fish (herring)	£35,000	S. Toland/ R. Black	Elmore Fish

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**Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
MTC mechanical services	Up to 12 months	£650,000	S. Grimes	WJM Building Services Ltd
Seasonal waste removal	Up to 3 years	£709,300	S. Toland/ R. Black	Confidential

**Request from Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland**

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a request had been received from the Grand Secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland for funding of £15,000 towards the hosting in Belfast on 28th May of a major family event and parade. The event, which had been postponed in May, 2021 due to the pandemic, would bring the Centenary celebrations to a conclusion. The Council's contribution would be used specifically to enhance the experience of those attending, ease congestion, minimise inconvenience to residents and promote local shopping.

The Committee agreed to allocate £15,000 to the event.

**Equality and Good Relations**

**Gender Identity and Expression - Guidance and Information for Managers and Staff**

The Committee approved the 'Gender Identity and Expression – Guidance and Information for Managers and Staff' document ([available here](#)), which had been developed in consultation with transgender support groups and the Council's Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee.

**Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- i outline a proposed programme of events to be organised by Council to mark HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee; and**
- ii consider a request for funding for events to be organised by local communities across the city which was included in the Motion referred to the Committee following the July 2021 Council meeting.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- i approve the proposed programme of events to be organised by the Council over the bank holiday weekend of Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June 2022, inclusive;**
- ii approve costs in the region of £35,000- £40,000 to deliver this programme; and**
- iii agree funding of £50,000-£100,000 for events to take place in local communities across the city over the Platinum Jubilee weekend. This fund will be administered by the Community Foundation NI, with a maximum of £1,000 for any group.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1 Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend will take place from Thursday 2nd June to Sunday 5th June, inclusive. Members may wish to note that the May Bank Holiday weekend at the end of that month will be moved to Thursday 2nd June and that an additional bank holiday will be held on Friday 3rd June, culminating in a four-day weekend.**
- 3.2 There will be a number of main themes to mark the Platinum Jubilee, including a focus on community, inter-generational activity and new communities. A specially designed Jubilee emblem in purple has been selected from entries to be used for official events and across digital and social media.**

**Proposed Programme of Events**

**Thursday 2nd June**

- 3.3 Belfast City Council has been invited to join other local authorities, amongst others, in lighting a Jubilee Beacon. The Spring Market will be held in the grounds of City Hall during the Platinum Jubilee weekend and, therefore, an alternative location will be identified if the lighting of a beacon is approved.**

**Friday 3rd June**

- 3.4 Themed Tea Dances will be held in City Hall during the afternoon and one retro dance in the evening, reviving styles and fashion of the time.

**Saturday 4th June**

- 3.5 Create a programme entitled 'Belfast 1952' and transform the venue at 2 Royal Avenue into Belfast of the 1950's. This event will showcase some of city's best local talent through photography, film, fashion, songs, and storytelling by taking a creative look at how lives were lived during that period. The programme of activities will include:

- Tales of the city – inter-generational workshops and story-telling events related to families growing up in Belfast in the 1950's. The café menu will be adapted and take on a 1950's theme;
- Songs of the city - Workshops and performances on music in the 1950's;
- Photography Exhibition of the city in the 1950's; and
- A film reel telling the story of the city from 1950's through to the present day.

**Sunday 5th June**

- 3.6 Host a Big Community Lunch, which is a key element of the Platinum Jubilee weekend, with a focus on encouraging celebration of connections to bring the Jubilee into the heart of local communities. A Big Community Lunch could be hosted at City Hall with the guest list focussing on the main themes whilst encouraging communities in the city who wish to join in by holding their own events.

Illumination of City Hall in purple, as the chosen colour for the Jubilee emblem and programme of activities, bringing the weekend to a close.

Members are also advised that a service to mark HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be held in St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday, 5 June at 3.30 p.m.

**Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.7 All events will take equality and good relations implications into account.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.8 The cost of delivering the council's programme of events is estimated between £35,000-£40,000 and will be met from the existing civic hospitality budget if approved.

An additional budget of up to £100,000 would be required to fund events to take place in local communities across the City."

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the maximum amount to be made available to the groups referred to in point iii. being increased to £2,000.

**Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 7th February, including the recommendations:

**PEACE IV**

**Secretariat**

- to stand down the Thematic Steering Groups, with all operational matters to be considered by the PEACE IV Programme Board; and
- to note the concern of the Partnership Members at the lack of co-operation from the Special EU Programmes Body on the proposed project modifications and its lack of flexibility in terms of delivery and extensions.

**Shared Spaces and Services**

- to extend the Interpretative Panels contract with Mediation NI to June 2022 and agree delivery amendments;
- to agree, in principle, a further delivery modification request to increase the tolerance for contact hours to 60% (7 hours), to engage with participants in schools through a "self-directed learning" approach and field trips and facilitated walks, as necessary; and
- to note that the approvals will be subject to the agreement of the Special EU Programmes Body.

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**Building Positive Relations**

**BPR1 - NIHE**

- to diversify and extend the participant cohort for the South Belfast Network to include participants from the BAME and PUL communities; and
- to extend the recruitment areas across South and North Belfast to enhance participant uptake.

**BPR2 - Creative Communities**

- to condense delivery via residential activity facilitated by Corrymeela and the STA approach with Radius Housing subject, to Special EU Programmes Board approval.

**BPR4 - Belfast and the World**

- to realign the budget to enable extended delivery and staffing to April, 2022.

**BPR6 - St. Comgall's**

- to agree to receive a presentation on the digital and education resources associated with the St. Comgall's project by Copius and Redhead, its partner, and;
- to amend the Study Visit from Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland due to Covid 19 concerns and impacts, subject to Special EU Programmes Board approval.

**Good Relations**

- that the Good Relations Manager engage with the Youth Co-ordinator on their return, to explore ways in which the Partnership can engage with the Youth Council productively in the current context which will ensure the views of young people are taken on board;
- that a report be brought back to the Partnership on the outcome of those discussions;
- that the status of the nominations of Youth Champions from each Political Party be confirmed to ensure that the views of young people on good relations can be shared;

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- to approve the response to the consultation on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-26 produced by The Executive Office ([available here](#))
- to note that the response would be forwarded to The Executive Office in draft form, pending Council approval, to ensure that it would be received by the deadline of 20th February; and
- to note that the virtual briefing session on issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast, led by The Red Cross, would be held on 22nd February from 10 a.m. – 12 noon and that the relevant Council Officers will be invited to ensure maximum impact across the delivery of Council services.

**Extended Cultural Programme**

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- **Update Members following a discussion at Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum, after which officers were asked to formulate a proposed programme of events to be organised by Council in partnership with local organisations to celebrate the city's cultural heritage.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- i. **approve outline programme of events to be organised by Council over Spring-Summer 2022 and agree to receive a future report outlining allocation of funding to delivery partners; and**
- ii. **agree to allocate £200,000, as outlined in paragraph 3.7, to support the proposed programme of activity.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1 Members of the Committee will be aware that a number of Council's strategies in line with the Belfast Agenda, support increasing the cultural vibrancy of the city and promoting cultural expression. In recognition of the diversity of the city's cultural heritage and as part of an ongoing programme of enhancing support for participation in the cultural life of the**

city, an extended programme of activities is proposed for Spring – Summer 2022.

- 3.2 This will build on the recent success of 2 Royal Avenue that has demonstrated both a demand and need for such a facility including the number of community culture and arts organisations that have requested use of the building. This has included a breadth of activities such as music gigs, artisan markets, workshops, exhibitions and tea dances attracting a range of audiences. To date the model for delivery has been a combination of events programmed directly by Council as well as support for partnership organisations.
- 3.3 Given the success of this programme and to complement the activities planned for summer 2022, it is proposed that an extended programme would be delivered to include:
- Cultural engagement programmes with community participants;
  - Cultural showcases open to the wider public;
  - Cultural connections programme including events focussed on fusion and shared heritage;
  - Celebration of the city’s recent designation as a UNESCO City of Music through increasing opportunities to promote the city’s music heritage.
- 3.4 The venue at 2 Royal Avenue is an ideal location for these activities and benefits from levels of footfall and in turn this programme can support summertime animation of the city centre. However, there will also be an opportunity to deliver community-based programmes of engagement activities.
- 3.5 Similar to the existing programming model, whilst elements of the programme will be delivered directly by Council it is also envisaged that this opportunity should be opened up to partner organisations. Criteria will be developed by officers in the Culture Development Team working with colleagues in Good Relations. The outcome of this process will be presented to a future meeting of Committee for consideration and approval.
- 3.6 Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

All events will take equality and good relations implications into account and will be reflected in any agreements issued to partner organisations.

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**3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

The cost of delivering the programme of events is £200,000 to be allocated as follows:

- Traditional Irish groups and activities - £100,000
- BAME groups and activities - £50,000
- LGBTQ+ groups and activities - £50,000.”

After discussion, during which the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that the proposed programme would be financed through the Departmental underspend and that a percentage would be set aside for project management, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of Meeting of Party Group  
Leaders' Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 10th February.

**Requests for use of the City Hall and  
the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations made in respect of those applications received up to 7th February, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
<b>2022 Events</b>						
Dept for Communities and Eventful	7th June 2022	<b>Welcome Reception and entertainment showcase for Harkin Belfast 2022</b> –a globally significant International Disability Employment Event  Numbers attending - 150	A &B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

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Irish Legal History Society	6th July 2022	<b>Welcome Reception</b> for guests attending the 3-day Irish Legal History Society conference taking place in QUB.  Numbers attending - 150	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Church of Ireland Young Men's Society Rugby Football Club	26th November 2022	<b>Centenary dinner</b> to celebrate the last 100 years of the club, its history and contribution to sport and social life in the city.  Numbers attending – 250 - 400	C	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception <i>or £500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on tables</i>
<b>2023 Events</b>						
Belfast Solicitors Association	10th June 2023	<b>80th Anniversary Gala Dinner</b> to celebrate the BSA promoting highest standard of legal practice.  Numbers attending – 130	C	No (Voluntary/ NFP)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception <i>or £500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on tables</i>

*\*For all events noted above numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of each event.*

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**Request for use of the City Hall Grounds  
– Belfast Mela Festival Carnival**

The Committee acceded to a request from ArtsEkta, the organiser of the Belfast Mela, for the use of the City Hall grounds on 20th August to hold a Belfast Mela Festival Carnival, with an event management plan and risk assessments to be submitted by the organiser in advance of the event.

**Minutes of Meeting of Climate  
Crisis Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Crisis Working Group of 31st January.

**Minutes of Meeting of Customer Focus  
Task and Finish Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Task and Finish Working Group of 9th February.

**Addressing Period Poverty**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of possible interventions to address the issue of period poverty.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested:**

- i to approve the provision of free sanitary products in designated staff and public toilets;**
- ii to approve the provision of free sanitary products in identified leisure centres, city centre toilets and parks and open spaces; and**
- iii to note that work is ongoing with community and voluntary sector partners to address this issue as part of overall approaches to lessen the impact of poverty.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

**3.1 Members may be aware that the provision of free sanitary products has been a consideration for the Council over the last**

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few years. Officers have considered how best to address this issue within the Council area and brought a report to the Women's Steering group on 2nd December outlining options. Following consideration of available resources, it is recommended that the following actions should be undertaken by the Council;

- the provision of free sanitary products in designated staff and public toilets
- 3.2 Given the costs and anticipated level of use, it is recommended that the Council provides access to free sanitary products in two female bathrooms in both the Cecil Ward and 9 Adelaide buildings, as well as in one female staff bathroom in the City Hall and the accessible bathroom on the ground floor of the City Hall (6 in total). This would not require installation of a vending machine and facilities management staff would ensure stock replenishment.
- 3.3 There would be minimal cost associated with this element, which could be covered through existing budgets.
- Provide access to free sanitary products in identified leisure centres, city centre toilets and parks and open spaces that are the most appropriate locations to ensure availability of products for those in greatest need
- 3.4 Free to access products will be provided in identified locations for an initial one-year pilot. Officers have identified that providing access in a range of Council facilities (which can be accessed without charge) will allow those who are most in need to access free products. This approach will be reviewed to assess demand and emerging issues and officers will bring back further recommendations to the Committee on whether the scheme should be extended or reviewed, alongside an assessment of associated costs.
- 3.5 For a number of years and particularly as part of community responses to the Covid pandemic, community/voluntary and other organisations across the City have and are providing free sanitary products to those in need. This is usually through individual care packs which may include sanitary products, as well as underwear and hygiene products. These care packs are provided to different groups, including rough sleepers, refugees and asylum seekers, people who live in homeless hostels, teenagers living in poverty, people who depend on food banks and community/youth groups.

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- 3.6 The Council has allocated considerable resources to support this activity in this financial year and anticipates that further resources will be made available from DfC to support this work in the next financial year. In the past number of weeks, the Council has made another allocation of almost £250,000 to support the provision of food and essential supplies. Partners have reported that the cost of sanitary products mean that they are a key need that any response to poverty has to consider.**
- 3.7 In addition to the areas of work outlined above, the Community Awareness and Waste Education teams are currently developing a business case that will provide a pilot initiative that provides access to free or reduced cost reusable sanitary products. This project will raise awareness and encourage increased use of these products, which will reduce ongoing costs for individuals and also have a benefit to the environment by reducing the amount of sanitary waste that is produced.**
- 3.8 A further detailed report on this issue will be brought to the People and Communities committee for consideration. Given that this is a new concept, officers anticipate that there will be significant public interest.**

**Financial implications**

Costs for the initial pilots can be provided through existing budgets so there is no requirement for an additional financial resource at this stage. Further detail on ongoing costs will be provided following the review of the pilot.

**Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications**

Many of the individuals who would benefit from this project are from S75 groups, in designing the project, consideration will be given to ensuring access to all groups.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the scheme be extended to include the Council’s independently managed community centres.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Bloody Friday - 50th Anniversary Commemoration**

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

“This Council remembers with great sadness the horror of the events of 21st July 1972, which became known as ‘Bloody Friday’, when the Provisional IRA exploded over 20 bombs across this City within a period of 80 minutes, resulting in the deaths of 9 people and physical injuries to over 130 others. The Council commits to providing its citizens with the

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opportunity to engage in a programme of commemoration but also education, designed to build positive relationships for the future.

On this 50th anniversary year, the Council will reach out to survivors and family members of those killed or injured on 'Bloody Friday' through organisations such as the South East Fermanagh Foundation which have supported them, to organise acts of solemn remembrance for all victims and survivors of this atrocity, and to organise other suitable events which will capture our rejection of terrorism in this City, both during 'The Troubles' and in the future.

The proposal was seconded by Alderman Kingston.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin,

"This Council recognises the hurt and trauma of all victims, families and survivors from the past conflict here in the City of Belfast.

The Council notes that throughout the following years and decades there will be significant anniversaries for citizens of this City regarding the conflict on this part of the island.

The Council reiterates its commitment to doing everything in its power to ensure that violence is a thing of the past.

Belfast City Council will ensure that all those who were affected by our recent past are recognised equally.

That is why the Council will dedicate one day a year in which we remember the past and create a space for victims and survivors of all communities to commemorate and remember the past, while encouraging reconciliation between our communities.

Lastly, the Council will seek to erect a memorial for all those impacted by our past and will be dedicated to all victims, survivors, and families."

On a vote, eight Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared lost.

At the request of Councillor McAllister, Councillor Pankhurst agreed to amend his proposal to reflect that the Party Leaders would discuss the potential for holding a separate day of reflection to remember all of the victims of the Troubles in Belfast.

Accordingly, the original motion, as amended and set out below, was put to the meeting when twelve Members voted for and seven against and it was declared carried:

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On this 50th anniversary year, the Council will reach out to survivors and family members of those killed or injured on ‘Bloody Friday’ through organisations such as the South East Fermanagh Foundation which have supported them, to organise acts of solemn remembrance for all victims and survivors of this atrocity, and to organise other suitable events which will capture our rejection of terrorism in this City, both during ‘The Troubles’ and in the future.

In addition, the Party Leaders will discuss the potential for holding a separate day of reflection to remember all of the victims of the Troubles in Belfast.”

Chairperson