

Council

MONTHLY MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Monday, 2nd September, 2019
at 6.40 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Black, Hanvey, Howard, Mulholland and Newton.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in Item 14c, namely Soft Opt-Out Organ Donation, in that he worked for the Public Health Agency and he was involved in promoting organ donation in line with Department of Health policy, and he left the room for the duration of the discussion.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Finucane),
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of 1st July and of the Special meetings of 1st July and 2nd August be taken as read and signed as correct.

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**Extract of Minutes of Special Meeting of
1st July, 2019**

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that, at a special meeting on 1st July, it had passed the following motion in relation to the Removal of Banners and Paramilitary Flags:

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

This Council is alarmed at the increasing number of offensive displays of banners and paramilitary flags across Belfast.

Paramilitary flags and banners supporting British regiments are being used to divide, offend and cause hurt to victims.

The British Ministry of Defence and the Parachute Regiment do not endorse these flags or banners and have stated they should only be displayed in certain circumstances.

Re-traumatising victims with offensive displays is wrong and should have no place in our society.

Standing by and allowing our citizens to be divided and hurt is no longer an option.

This Council agrees to take legal action against the Department for Infrastructure enforcing it to remove:

1. all Paramilitary flags, unless permission is granted by the Department for Infrastructure with protocols that protect citizens; and
2. all banners without planning permission on Department for Infrastructure property, unless permission is granted with protocols that protect citizens.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor D. Baker.”

She advised the Council that the decision had subsequently been called-in and that an external legal opinion had been sought.

A copy of the Barrister's legal opinion had been tabled to all Members at the meeting.

After discussion, the Council agreed to refer the decision back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider the legal advice.

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Changes to Committees

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received of the following changes to Committees:

Democratic Unionist Party

- Alderman McCoubrey to replace Councillor Pankhurst on the Planning Committee; and
- Councillor Dorrian to replace Alderman McCoubrey on the Licensing Committee.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

- Councillor McCusker to replace Councillor Heading on the Licensing Committee.

Alliance Party

- Councillor McAllister to replace Councillor Nicholl on the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Council approved the changes.

Official Announcements

Expressions of Sympathy

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended his condolences to Councillor D. Baker on the death of his mother, Edna.

A Member paid tribute to Mr. Ciaran McKeown, a founding member of the Peace People, a journalist and a civil rights activist, who had passed away at the weekend.

A number of Members paid tribute to the late Mr. Tommy Breslin, a former player and Manager of Cliftonville Football Club. At the request of Alderman Rodgers, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter to Mr. Breslin's partner conveying the Council's condolences.

Congratulations

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended his congratulations to Alderman Spence on the occasion of his engagement.

He also passed on his best wishes to Councillor O'Hara, on the occasion of his upcoming Civil Partnership.

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The Lord Mayor, at the request of Councillor Magennis, agreed to send a letter of congratulations to the local boxer, Mr. James Tennyson, regarding his recent victory against Mr. Atif Shafiq.

Councillor Brooks, amongst other Members, congratulated Linfield Football Club on their recent success, having narrowly missed out on the group stages of the Europa League, and wished the team success for the rest of the season.

A number of Members congratulated the North Belfast Harriers, who had recently won the Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for services to the community, and who had been instrumental in bringing parkrun to Belfast.

Announcement

A Member advised the Council that Tuesday, 3rd September, was Merchant Navy Day in the U.K., Australia and New Zealand and that Belfast City Hall would be one of around 1,000 venues in the U.K. to fly the Red Ensign to mark the day.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Dorrian

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 3rd, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th July, and of 23rd August, be approved and adopted.

Innovation and Growth Commission

At the request of Councillor Hargey, it was agreed that the name of the Commission would be changed to the "Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission".

Adoption of Minutes

Subject the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 3rd, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th July, and of 23rd August, were thereupon approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Michael Collins,
Seconded by Councillor D. Baker,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th August be approved and adopted.

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Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston
Seconded by Councillor Dorrian

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 6th August under the heading "Air Quality in Belfast" be amended to provide that the second bullet point, in relation to Eco Belfast's Campaign, be removed and accordingly the Council does not support it.

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

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th August were thereupon approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Hargey,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th August be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor S. Baker,
Seconded by Councillor Hutchinson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 14th August, 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 Garrett,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 2nd July and 13th August, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

A Member requested that the City Solicitor would refer a Planning Application back to the Committee for further consideration. The Chief Executive reminded the Council

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that, as the item had been dealt with under delegated authority, the item could not be referred back to the Committee.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 2nd July and 13th August were thereupon approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 19th and 23rd August be approved and adopted.

Brexit Committee

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor McKeown and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 22nd August be approved and adopted.

Notices of Motion

Equal Protection for Children Legislation

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

"This Council notes and welcomes the work of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's work in promoting positive parenting and Equal Protection for Children."

In recognition of this work by the NICCY and in support of other agencies such as the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, this Council will write to Assembly Party Leaders, the Executive Office and other NI Councils to champion the inclusion of Equal Protection for Children legislation in the Programme for Government."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

The proposer agreed, at the request of Councillor Canavan, to the following addition to the last paragraph of the motion:

"which would remove the defence of reasonable chastisement for parents who physically punish their child and provide more support and guidance for parents to promote constructive and effective ways to encourage better behaviour and development for their children."

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

Climate Strikes

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

"This Council notes the global call made by young people, workers, environmental organisations and concerned citizens to mobilise "climate strikes", beginning on 20th September, 2019.

The Council wishes to see an immediate end to the age of fossil fuels and the implementation of urgent action to avoid climate breakdown and catastrophe.

Belfast City Council supports the climate strikes taking place in this city on 20th September, and pledges to help publicise, facilitate and lend practical support to climate activists taking to the streets on this historic day."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Smyth.

The proposer agreed, at the request of Councillor Baker, to the replacement of the second paragraph of the motion with the following:

"The Council wishes to see a transition to the end of fossil fuels and the implementation of urgent action to avoid climate breakdown and catastrophe."

Amendment

Moved by Councillor D. Baker
Seconded by Councillor Murphy

That an additional paragraph be added to the end of the motion, namely:

"This Council aims to be a leader on tackling climate change and, therefore, will carry out a scoping exercise to identify both Council and public land which would be suited towards the planting of trees and reforestation of our City and furthermore commits to making our own Council fleet carbon neutral by 2030, which is in line with our statutory agencies' ambitions."

The Chief Executive advised the Council that the additional paragraph, if agreed, would be required to be referred to the People and Communities Committee for its consideration.

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

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On a vote by show of hands, thirty-seven Members voted for the motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Soft Opt-Out Organ Donation

(Councillor McKeown declared an interest in the item and left the room for the duration of the discussion)

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

“This Council will support the introduction of soft opt-out organ donation legislation here in the North which will follow the example led by the introduction of the same legislation in Wales (2015), Scotland and England (2020) and the calls from the Minister of Health in the South of Ireland, Simon Harris TD, for the same to be introduced there”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hargey.

On a vote by show of hands, thirty-seven Members voted for the motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Rally for Choice

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

“Belfast City Council notes the recent Westminster amendment which will decriminalise abortion in Northern Ireland on 21st October, unless an Executive is formed before that date.

This Council also notes the trauma experienced by 20 women and pregnant people each week who have to leave our shores to avail of reproductive healthcare as we continue to criminalise them.

This Council therefore welcomes and supports the Rally for Choice on September 7th, 2019, as an expression of public protest against the current law and the need to ensure decriminalisation of abortion so that no other woman or healthcare professional faces the prospect of arrest and prosecution over the procurement of necessary reproductive healthcare services.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

On a recorded vote, thirty-four Members voted for the amendment, with fourteen against and 3 no votes, and it was declared carried.

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<u>For 34</u>	<u>Against 14</u>	<u>No Vote 3</u>
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Finucane); the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McReynolds); Councillors D. Baker, S. Baker, Beattie, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Groves, Hargey, Heading, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, McAteer, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, Nicholl, O'Hara, Smyth and Walsh.	The High Sheriff (Alderman Sandford); Aldermen Haire, Kingston, McCoubrey and Spence; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Dorrian, Graham, Hussey, T. Kelly, Pankhurst and Verner.	Aldermen Copeland and Rodgers; and Councillor Kyle.

Rewilding our Wards

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

"We commend this Council for the work and projects it undertakes across the city to enhance biodiversity and increase environmental protection.

Rewilding spaces in the heart of our communities not only enhances and adds to the good work already undertaken to protect the environment; but also confirms our commitment as a Council to challenge the climate emergency we have already recognised is upon us.

We call on this Council in each of our city's 60 electoral wards to rewild, as a minimum, 1 extra space each year outside of what is already planned or programmed.

We further call on this Council to promote this initiative and working alongside members in each ward to identify achievable and appropriate sites, where working with the community we create rewilded spaces that local communities can feel part of challenging climate change."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Canavan.

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

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EuroPride

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

“This Council recognises the significant impact that Belfast Pride has on our City. It makes our City a more diverse and welcoming city for all.

We also recognise the economic impact that Belfast Pride creates within the city, generating income for business and creating employment.

This Council will task our officers to work with Belfast Pride and assist in their bid to bring EuroPride to our City.

EuroPride will have a huge economic and social impact to Belfast and showcase to the world on how progressive and open our City is.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

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

Play Facilities for Children with Disabilities

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Alderman McCoubrey proposed:

“This Council recognises the need to improve play facilities for those children with disabilities, and undertakes to engage with those in the sector who can best advise on making play facilities more accessible.

An audit should be undertaken of current facilities across the city and opportunities for disability improvements identified, work to be completed through the course of the current council term.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Smyth.

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

Desecration of Graves within Belfast City Cemetery

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Alderman Copeland proposed:

“That this Council:

Notes with grave concern and mounting anger the recent desecration of graves within Belfast City Cemetery, and resolves to renew and redouble its efforts to upgrade the facilities at the cemetery and to work with other

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partner agencies to ensure that such wanton rampage of destruction is never repeated, and that those responsible are brought before the courts.

This facility is for everyone, and we as a Council need to look after the needs of all the communities who are buried, visit and are bereaved.”

The motion was seconded by Alderman Rodgers.

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

Silver Poppies of Remembrance

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

“With the 75th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War approaching, this Council wishes to recognise the contribution of those who fought in that war from Belfast.

It notes that every year the number of surviving veterans is reducing and time to provide appropriate recognition is running out. The Council, therefore, should come together to provide all surviving veterans of WW2 (including those in the Merchant Navy) with a silver Poppy of Remembrance, to mark their service in the fight against Fascism and Nazism.

These poppies will be presented to all surviving veterans who live in the Belfast Council area week commencing 4th November 2019.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Graham.

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

Transgender Day of Visibility

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

“This council recognises the contribution that our Transgender community makes to the city of Belfast and Northern Ireland. This council notes that many within the Trans community still suffer discrimination and that visibility of the community is a hugely important part of raising awareness and overcoming discrimination.

As a statement of our solidarity with the Trans community, this Council agrees to illuminate the City Hall in the colours of the Trans flag to coincide with the Transgender Day of Visibility every year on 31st March; as a continuation of our solidarity with the community, this Council also agrees

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to fly the Transgender flag over the City Hall from dawn to dusk on 31st March every year to coincide with Transgender Day of Visibility.”

The motion was seconded by Alderman Copeland.

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

E-Petition Mechanism

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

“This Council supports the development of an e-petition mechanism for Belfast City Council.

E-petitions are an opportunity for citizens of the City to bring forward issues of concern over which this Council has authority. They widen access to the democratic process and bring governmental structures closer to the citizens we represent. Similar processes are in place across these islands and Europe at a variety of administrative levels. In the continuing absence of a local Assembly and the democratic deficit it creates, it is imperative that this Council does what it can to enhance and broaden access to the democratic process.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson.

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

**Citywide Multi-Agency Task Force on Mental Health
and Suicide**

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

“This Council notes with serious concern the growing number of people who have taken their own life over recent times and extends its deepest sympathy to all those effected. We call on the Lord Mayor to convene a citywide multi-agency task force to respond to the serious concerns regarding mental health and suicide in our City.

The task force, using all their collective resources, should map out an action plan of front facing initiatives such as the successful Multi agency ‘road safe road show’ to engage schools, youth organisations, businesses and citizens on our response to resilience, emotional well-being and positive mental health.

This Council needs to use every partner, every power and every strategy at its disposal to reach out to our citizens, let them know we care and we are there for them and that is ok not to be ok.”

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The motion was seconded by Councillor Magennis.

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

Economic Future Planning

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

“This Council recognises that economic future planning is crucial in the period ahead, particularly given the impending withdrawal from the European Union.

This Council should plan for, and bring forward an economic plan for the future of this Council area in the event of the north of Ireland retaining membership of the European Union, following a referendum on Irish Unity. The economic plan should draw on the numerous existing reports of an all-island economy, including, but not limited to; ‘Modelling Irish Unification’ by Dr Kurt Hubner, ‘The Economic Effects of an All Island Economy’, by Paul Gosling, ‘The Economic Case for Irish Unity’, by Michael Burke and the Joint Oireachtas Committee Report, ‘Brexit and the Future of Ireland – Uniting Ireland & Its People in Peace & Prosperity’.

This Council should be prudent in planning for the future to maximise our potential and secure future economic growth and to compete effectively with other Cities across the Island of Ireland.

The economic plan should examine how this Council would prepare for this scenario and how this Council area could position itself within this potential new constitutional arrangement, in order that Belfast maximizes all opportunities for city growth in this context.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hargey.

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

Community Impact of Needle Finds

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

“This Council notes with alarm the increased volume of needles found on streets in inner city surrounding communities, both used and otherwise. The safety ramifications for families who reside in such areas are extensive and obvious.

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This Council has a duty of care to the citizens of Belfast including assisting them in fulfilling their ambitions and striving towards the goals of the Belfast Agenda.

Urban inner city surrounding communities are lived in neighbourhoods, not fully part of the City Centre but neither are they suburbs. Such localities face problems associated to air pollution, high volumes of commuter car parking, dense housing developments, fractured infrastructure and historical failings associated to place and space planning.

One contemporary impact of such failings resides in limited usable green and natural safe play sites.

The evidenced needle finds across urban inner city surrounding communities are ordinarily in sites of overgrown shrubbery, vacant green sites, beside hedge rows and alongside well used play and walking areas.

This Council cannot and should not accept increased street needle finds as a natural and inevitable consequence of a growing City. Such an acceptance is a direct contradiction to the aims and visions of the Belfast Agenda. This neither supports those at risk of addiction or resident families.

Whilst we recognise the massive value of the work undertaken by the Council's Community Safety structures and the Sharp Removal Programme, this motion seeks a report focused on the immediate areas surrounding the city centre in the contemporary context, detailing the volume of finds, associated costs of removal, correlations if and where they exist, site contexts and recommendations moving forward based on good practice elsewhere.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Donnelly.

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

Lord Mayor
Chairperson