

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Friday, 11th October, 2019
at the hour of 4.00 o'clock 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 Haire, Kingston, McCoubrey, Rodgers and Spence; and Councillors D. Baker, S. Baker, Beattie, Black, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Dorrian, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Graham, Groogan, Harvey, Hargey, Heading, Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, McAteer, McCusker, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, Newton, Pankhurst, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillors Groves, Howard, Kyle, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, Mulholland, Nicholl and O'Hara.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received from Mr. Conchúr Ó Muadaigh, Advocacy Manager, Conradh na Gaeilge, to address the Council in advance of the motion on Dual-Language Signage to be considered later in the meeting.

The Council approved the request and Mr. Ó Muadaigh was welcomed by the Lord Mayor.

Mr. Ó Muadaigh explained that Conradh na Gaeilge worked on behalf of the Irish-speaking community to promote the Irish language both nationally and internationally. He outlined the background to the ongoing campaign for a stand-alone Irish Language Act and stressed that, if introduced, it would enrich the lives of Irish speakers and visitors to the City.

He drew the Council's attention to the obligations placed upon public bodies, through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to recognise and preserve the Irish language, and commended the Council for the positive work which it

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had undertaken since Local Government Reform, including the adoption of a Language Strategy, the appointment of an Irish Language Officer and the passing of a motion in support of an Irish Language Act. However, Conradh na Gaelige was calling upon the Council to build upon that work by erecting bilingual signage in the new Andersonstown and Brook Leisure Centres, which were located in areas where the use of the Irish language was prevalent, and by developing a City-wide bilingualism policy. This, he pointed out, would fulfil its various obligations and bring it into line with Mid Ulster and Newry, Mourne and Down District Councils, which were regarded as being models of best practice, in terms of the visibility and promotion of the Irish language.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Ó Muadaigh, following which the Council noted the information which had been provided.

Notice of Motion

Dual-Language Signage

Prior to the motion on the agenda being presented, Councillor Beattie sought and was granted approval by the Council to replace it with the following motion, which he duly proposed:

“The Council’s policy on Linguistic Diversity was subject to a public consultation in 2017. This policy has at its core the need to embrace diversity in our ambition for Belfast to be a welcoming and inclusive city for all. The opening of the Council’s new leisure centres provides a unique opportunity to live the principles of diversity contained in the Language Strategy.

Based on the principles of equality and linguistic diversity, this Council agrees the following:

1. to engage in a citywide consultation in respect of bilingual and multilingual naming and the type of signage to be used in the centres designed to have a citywide catchment, together with local consultation. The process referred to will commence after agreement of a framework for the consultation, which will be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 25th October, with that Committee having delegated authority to approve the framework referred to. Agreement on the framework to be reached at that meeting;
2. to apply the Council policy on bilingual naming of local facilities in respect of Brook Leisure Centre and to agree to the principle of the installation of bilingual signage, subject to review at the close of the consultation period;
3. notwithstanding that the citywide consultation process will not have closed, to grant delegated authority to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee permitting it to authorise the bilingual and such other signage to be procured and installed for the opening of Andersonstown Leisure Centre (the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to meet no later than week

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commencing 26th January, 2020). In taking this decision, the Committee will consider the consultation response received up to the date of that meeting.

4. that the consultation response will be used to review and inform decisions in respect of bilingual and multilingual naming and signage in each citywide centre and that regard will be had to the language needs of all citizens, as reflected in the consultation response; and
5. to the installation of multilingual welcome signs in all its leisure centres with immediate effect.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Long.

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

The Council agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (2) (c), that the decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson