

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th January, 2020

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mrs. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17th December, omitting those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 6th January.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to item 8d – Response to the Liquor Licensing Laws in Northern Ireland Consultation Document in that he was associated with a brewing company and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 5 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 Committee meeting during discussion of these items

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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 (NI) 2014.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2020/21

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th December, 2019, it had agreed the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2020/21 and the recommended cash limits for the People and Communities, City Growth and Regeneration and Planning Committees, subject to consultation with the other Committees prior to this meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance and Resources reported that those Committees had now agreed their cash limits and accordingly he was seeking the Committee to confirm those and to agree the district rate for 2020/21.

The Committee:

1. Agreed that the following decisions should not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15 February 2020.
2. Confirmed the cash limits agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 17th December 2019 as follows:
 - a. A cash limit of £44,136,840 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2020/21, including £3,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £2,000,000 for City Deal.
 - b. A cash limit of £82,852,276 for the People and Communities Committee for 2020/21.
 - c. A cash limit of £17,267,724 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2020/21.
 - d. A cash limit of £1,289,467 for the Planning Committee for 2020/21.
 - e. A Capital Financing Budget of £21,774,021 for 2020/21
3. Agreed that the increase in the district rate for 2020/21 should be 1.99%, based on an estimated penny product of £6,456,100 meaning a non-domestic rate of 25.9166 and a domestic rate of 0.3394 and that the amount raised through the district rate in 2020/21 will be £162,028,153.
4. Noted the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources statement on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and the robustness of the revenue estimates as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
5. Noted the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011.

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Assets - Proposed Disposal

The Committee considered a report in relation to the disposal of a land strip to Choice and Radius Housing Association and an associated acquisition of Northern Ireland Housing Executive freehold land and accordingly the Committee:

- Glen Road – Approved the disposal of a 1 metre wide strip of Council land to Choice Housing Association and Radius Housing Association as tenants in common to facilitate the construction of 225 housing units on third party lands at Glen Road Heights. In order to ensure clear title to facilitate the disposal, the Committee noted that it would be necessary for the Council to acquire the freehold of the adjacent NIHE land at Glen Road which included the 1 metre wide strip which was held by the Council by way of 10,000 year lease; and
- Agreed that a report on capital receipts be submitted to a future meeting.

Department for Communities Consultation on the Regulation of Gambling

The Committee was advised that the Department for Communities (DfC) had launched a consultation on the Regulation of Gambling in Northern Ireland, in December, 2019. The closing date for responses was 20th February, 2020. The legislation principally concerned with the regulation of gaming was of some vintage, that is, Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (NI) Order 1985. The betting and gaming industry had moved on significantly with the development of technology and web-based online gaming platforms. With those significant changes and the passage of time, the consultation represented a very comprehensive document looking at all types of gaming/gambling. It also asked if some independent/government controlled regulator needed to be established rather than the current court based process that looked at regulation through a narrow legal lens of formulaic approvals.

After discussion the Committee:

- agreed to a corporate response being made to the DfC Consultation on the Regulation of Gambling; and
- that each of the Party Group Leaders nominate a Member to engage with officers to draw up the response.

Strategic Site Assessment Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd November, 2019, as part of the update on the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) works, it had agreed that the Council should explore the feasibility of taking ownership of a site in Corporation Street which was currently owned by the Department of Finance (DoF) given its proximity to the Council-owned Exchange Street car park site.

The Committee was reminded that this had been identified as being a site with the potential to provide mixed tenure, residential-led development opportunities. Accordingly, the

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Director of Physical Programmes submitted a report in relation to a proposed mechanism to facilitate the acquisition of the Corporation Street site.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the significant regeneration opportunity of aligning the Department of Finance Corporation Street site with the Council's existing Exchange Street site as part of the Dunbar link Strategic Site Assessment to provide an enhanced mixed tenure, residential-led development opportunity; and
- approved the acquisition of a site at 24/42 Corporation Street from the Department of Finance at a consideration of a sum not greater than £5.0 million to be financed through the capital receipt from the disposal of the head leasehold at James House within the Gasworks Estate to the Department of Finance, which was the current owners and occupiers of the building, at a consideration of not less than £3.75 million, with the remaining gap to be secured from the City Centre Investment Fund on terms to be agreed by the Estates Team and Legal Services.

**Report on Council decision to erect bilingual/
multilingual external naming and internal
directional signage in Andersonstown, Lisnasharragh,
Olympia and Templemore Leisure Centres**

The Committee was reminded that, at the special meeting of the Council on Friday, 11th October, 2019, it had been agreed to engage in the citywide consultation in respect of bilingual and/or multilingual naming and the type of signage to be used in the centres designed to have a citywide catchment, together with local consultation. Subsequently, it had been agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would be given delegated authority to approve the consultation framework. The consultation had been carried out under considerable time constraints in order to meet the deadline for ordering the signage for Andersonstown Leisure Centre, which was due to open to the public in April, 2020.

The public consultation had been undertaken from 5th November, 2019 to 10th January, 2020 on the Council decision to erect bilingual multilingual external naming and internal directional signage in the four citywide leisure centres which were being delivered as part of the first three phases of the Council's £105m Leisure Transformation Programme, that is, Andersonstown, Lisnasharragh, Olympia and Templemore. Each of those centres had been designed to provide state-of-the-art, specialised facilities for the benefit of users across the city and beyond.

The results of the consultation had been prepared by an independent consultant, Mr. John Kremer, and he was in attendance to provide the Committee with further information.

Mr. Kremer outlined the consultation methodology and provided details on a number of responses which had been received. He then proceeded to outline the findings and the conclusions arising from the consultation.

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After discussion, the Committee:

- agreed to proceed to erect bilingual external naming and internal directional signage in Andersonstown Leisure Centre;
- agreed to defer, until its next monthly meeting, consideration of bilingual / multilingual signage at Lisnasharragh, Olympia and Templemore and, in the meantime, agreed to hold discussions with relevant stakeholders to seek to get a resolution; and
- agreed that the decision in relation to the Andersonstown Leisure Centre should not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests.

Matters Referred Back from Council/Motions

**Motion - Support for Health and Social Care Workers –
Responses from Permanent Secretaries**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 2nd December, it had passed the following motion on Support for Health and Social Care Workers which had been proposed by Councillor McAteer and seconded by Councillor Groves:

“This Council supports the overwhelming result of the Royal College of Nurses’ ballot in favour of industrial action, supports the industrial action already being undertaken by UNISON and the decision of the other Health and Social Care (HSC) Trade Union, NIPSA, to ballot members on industrial action.

Health and social care workers are the system’s greatest assets and are entitled to fair pay and conditions, safe staffing levels and parity of pay with NHS colleagues.

Health and social care workers are taking action as they are no longer willing to see patients being denied the care to which they are entitled. There are currently over 7,000 non-medical vacancies, including 3,000 nursing posts, within the HSC system in the north of Ireland. These frontline vacancies are having a detrimental impact upon patient care and staffing, compromise the safety of staff and patients alike, contribute to long waiting lists and add enormous pressure to the existing HSC workforce, who are doing everything they can to care for patients.

This Council calls upon the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, to engage respectfully and meaningfully with Trades Union representatives on a pay deal. It calls also upon the Permanent Secretary, alongside his colleagues in the Department of Finance and the Head of the Civil Service, to secure the fu0nding that is needed to achieve pay parity for health workers.

Furthermore, the Council agrees to convene an all-Party meeting with those Trades Unions representing health and social care staff to hear directly the

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challenges which they are facing and to take such action thereon to support staff and patient care at this time.”

It was reported that responses had since been received from Ms. S. Gray, Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance, and Mr. R. Pengelly, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health. A response had yet to be received from the Head of the Civil Service. It was pointed out that the responses had been written prior to the recent restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the ensuing discussions between the Health Minister and Health Unions.

In her response, Ms. Gray had pointed out that Health and Social Care staff were central to the delivery of a vital public service and that she understood the deep sense of frustration felt by them at this time. She concluded by highlighting the challenging budgetary position being faced currently across the public sector by stressing her commitment to working with colleagues in the Department of Health and with the Head of the Civil Service and other parties to find a way forward.

Mr. Pengelly had referred to the work which the Department of Health had undertaken to date, in partnership with trade unions, to progress pay discussions and highlighted the significant constraints in terms of affordability and the inability in the absence of Ministers to achieve pay parity with other regions. He had explained that the decision to depart from pay parity had been taken at Ministerial level and it would be the responsibility of any incoming Minister to restore parity. He provided details of the Department of Health’s latest financial offer, affirmed its commitment to securing a resolution and stresses that continued industrial action could only exacerbate an already difficult situation. He concluded by confirming that the Health and Social Care Trust have developed contingency plans, with a view to minimising disruption for the wider public, and that they would work with unions at a local level to protect vital services.

The Committee noted the responses.

**Public Awareness Campaign on the
Responsible use of Fireworks**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22 November 2019, the following issue was raised by Councillor Long:

- **To actively promote a public awareness campaign on the responsible use of fireworks –including specific information on the legal consequence of misuse; the impact of fireworks on vulnerable people and animal welfare; and precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.**
- **To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays**

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- To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display
- 1.2 The Committee agreed that a report would be brought back before the Committee regarding a public awareness campaign on the responsible use of fireworks and how this could be facilitated, resourced and managed.
- 2.0 **Recommendations**
- 2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the following actions:
- Council officers to request a meeting with the Department of Justice with a view to asking it to lead on a high profile public awareness campaign in 2020 highlighting the impact of fireworks on vulnerable people and animals and promoting the use of low noise fireworks.
 - Council to write to the Office for Product Safety and Standards at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, requesting it to consider amending the current legislation to limit the noise level emitted by fireworks to 90db.
- 3.0 **Main report**
- Key Issues**
- 3.1 The House of Commons Petitions Committee recently published a report on fireworks (Appendix 1). The report highlighted evidence that petitions calling for greater restrictions on sales and use of fireworks had been motivated by justified concerns. It suggested in many cases there were substantial adverse effects, for example on people with a wide range of health conditions and disabilities. Also distressing effects on people with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and the report suggested animals could suffer serious and long-term effects.
- 3.2 The Petitions Committee looked closely at the proposal to ban sales and use of fireworks by the public but was not persuaded to recommend this course of action at this time. The Committee expressed concern that a ban could have consequences for competently-run, voluntary, community displays, which use fireworks to raise funds for local good causes. In many cases these community displays have widespread local support and increase community cohesion.
- 3.3 Some of the recommendations in the report are already in place in Northern Ireland as it has the strictest controls on fireworks in the

UK. The Department of Justice Firearms and Explosives Branch oversees the legislation. Currently in Northern Ireland possession of fireworks without a license (with the exception of indoor fireworks or sparklers) is an offence and the supply of licensed fireworks is age restricted to those over 18 years of age.

- 3.4 Council officers work on an agency basis with the Department of Justice to regulate the safe supply, use and storage of fireworks and to ensure that public fireworks displays in the city are safe to attend. Fireworks sold in Northern Ireland must comply with the requirements of the Pyrotechnic Articles Safety Regulations 2015. These regulations, which implement two EU Directives, set out the essential safety requirements which must be met before pyrotechnic articles can be placed on the UK market. The purpose of the legislation is to protect consumers and individuals from unsafe pyrotechnic articles and they limit the noise levels emitted by fireworks to 120 decibels. This is a European safety standard but given the concerns expressed in the Petition Committee report and by Cllr Long it is recommended that the Council writes to the Department for Business, Industry and Industrial Strategy, asking it to consider amending the regulations to reduce the maximum permissible noise limit emitted by fireworks to 90 decibels. By way of comparison a car door slamming is approximately 97 decibels; a thunderclap approximately 120 decibels and a shotgun firing approximately 150 decibels.**
- 3.5 There has been a move by some of the large supermarkets to sell low noise fireworks, concentrating on the colours and effects rather than the noise. However these supermarkets do not appear to sell fireworks from their stores in NI, possibly because of the requirement for the purchaser to have a licence and also the requirement for the company to be registered to sell explosives. Sainsbury's banned the sale of all fireworks from its stores across the UK in October last year.**
- 3.6 Over the years there have been a number of firework safety campaigns organised by various government departments and the emergency services, with key public messages being promoted in the run up to Halloween. Belfast City Council, through its Environmental Health Service has supported these campaigns and there has been a downward trend in complaints, with fewer fireworks complaints being reported to the Department of Justice during 2018-2019.**
- 3.7 Having said that, more can be done to raise public awareness of the negative impact caused by inconsiderate use and misuse of fireworks. Council officers will seek to meet with the Department of Justice to discuss the negative impact fireworks can have on vulnerable individuals and animals and to consider opportunities**

for a high profile public awareness campaign in 2020, promoting low noise fireworks and key messages for preventing misuse. Officers will also recommend that the firework safety code on nidirect (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/fireworks>) is updated to encourage the purchase of low noise fireworks. Officers will propose that the Department of Justice leads the public awareness campaign with support from local councils, the emergency services and other relevant stakeholders.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

The Council's contribution to any future public awareness campaign will be met within existing budgets.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update: Notice of Motion regarding
Domestic Violence**

The Committee considered the undernoted:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd August 2019, a Motion regarding Domestic Violence was passed. The Motion noted:

‘This Council is saddened at the levels of domestic violence in Belfast and recognises that this manifests in many different forms, including emotional and economic abuse.

Belfast needs to become a city that has zero tolerance towards domestic violence or abuse – a ‘Safe City’ which is proactive in supporting victims of domestic violence and challenging perpetrators. A Safe City recognises that domestic violence impacts upon many residents, regardless of age, religion, ethnic or cultural background.

This Council pledges to build on the work already achieved by engaging with relevant partners to support victims of domestic abuse and challenge perpetrators and to update the Belfast City Council Domestic Violence Strategy.’

This report outlines action being taken by the Council and its partners to support victims of domestic violence and identifies the

next steps in Belfast being designated as a Safe Borough / City, for Members consideration.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The committee is asked to:

- Note the content of the report;
- Agree to the Council progressing action to attain the Safe Borough / City accreditation; and
- Agree to support the White Pledge Charter, as set out within the requirements for a Safe City / Borough Accreditation.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace Policy

- 3.1 Members approved a revised policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd August 2019 and this was ratified by the Council on 2nd September 2019.**
- 3.2 The Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace policy applies to all Council employees (including casual and temporary staff) with the aim to support and assist employees experiencing domestic violence and abuse as well as providing guidance on managing situations where employees are perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse.**
- 3.3 Following the revision to the Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace policy, an additional 16 employees and 1 elected member have attended training with a further 7 employees completing the Trusted Colleague training, taking the total number of Trusted Colleagues within Council to 35. Further communication and awareness raising is planned to ensure all staff are fully aware of the Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace policy.**
- 3.4 The revised policy and subsequent rollout of related communication and training were key to Council's re-accreditation of the ONUS (a social enterprise organisation offering best practice advice and specialist training on domestic violence and abuse) Workplace Charter (Safe Place) at Platinum level. Accreditation for the ONUS Workplace Charter is on an annual basis with Council first being awarded at Platinum level in 2018. In October 2019, Council was successfully re-accredited at Platinum level.**

Safe Borough / City Accreditation

- 3.5 Additional to the Workplace Charter, officers have engaged with ONUS regarding the requirements for Belfast to be designated as a Safe Borough / City, which is defined by ONUS as a Borough / City that:
- promotes zero tolerance to domestic violence or abuse;
 - recognises that domestic violence or abuse impacts upon many people living or working there, regardless of age, religion, disability, ethnic or cultural background and while the majority of victims are female, domestic violence or abuse can be experienced by men and by people in same sex relationships; and
 - aims to provide an inclusive means of providing information on the range of organisations available to help anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse.
- 3.6 Safe Borough / City accreditation is linked to Council's Workplace Charter (Safe Place) accreditation at a Platinum level. It requires the Council to be an advocate for the message to never condone or stay silent about domestic violence and to work in partnership with ONUS and others to extend the message of Safe Place, raise awareness of anyone experiencing domestic violence and develop new means of rolling out 'participation pathways' to create safer workplaces, churches and communities.

The full list of requirements for Safe Borough / City accreditation can be found within Appendix 1.

Progress towards Belfast being recognised as a Safe Borough / City

- 3.7 Through engagement with ONUS and the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PSCP), the need for, and opportunity to collaborate on the roll out of an extensive programme of Safe Churches training was identified and agreed. The roll out will see the delivery of two Safe Churches training sessions in each quarter of the city and will be supported and promoted through a range of partners including the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).
- 3.8 Safe Churches is a bespoke pathway that enables Churches to recognise and respond to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse. Once accredited, the Churches can offer information on the wide range of support services available to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse and they possess a range of Safe Place resources to signpost individuals to the appropriate

assistance. Further information on Safe Churches can be found in Appendix 2.

- 3.9 Additionally, within the requirements for Safe City / Borough accreditation, is an action that 'Council management and elected members have signed and will display the White Ribbon Charter: a personal pledge to never commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence'. The White Ribbon Charter is part of the largest male-led Global campaign to end men's violence against women, with a presence in over 60 countries.
- 3.10 Annually the White Ribbon Campaign is marked with 16 Days of Action, which run between the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25th November) until Human Rights Day (10th December). Council have in previous years supported the White Ribbon Campaign by facilitating the display of a White Ribbon on the cobbled area in front of City Hall, on 25th November. Subject to approval from elected members, officers will undertake to include all associated actions with supporting the White Ribbon Campaign within Council's internal plan for Safe Place Platinum re-accreditation.
- 3.11 Members are asked to agree that annually the Lord Mayor will reaffirm Council's commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe Borough / City, by signing the White Ribbon Charter. Ongoing promotion of this initiative will further assist with awareness raising of Domestic Violence and Abuse, both internally and externally.

Further requirements for a Safe Borough / City

- 3.12 Parallel to advancing work listed above, the Council through the PCSP, continues to support a range of work linked to the Belfast Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership, including work to raise awareness of domestic violence and services available for those experiencing domestic violence; such as the series of 'Domestic Violence Raising Awareness Sessions', which took place throughout January in each quarter of the city. Council officers will continue to engage with partners and build on this work as part of our commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe Borough / City. It is envisaged that Safe Borough / City status can be achieved by Autumn 2020, as part of the annual re-accreditation of Council's Workplace Charter (Safe Place) at Platinum level.
- 3.13 **Financial & Resource Implications**

There are no Financial or Resource implications to the recommendations outlined above.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The work to raise awareness of Domestic Violence and Abuse, and support available, has been progressed through the Women's Steering Group as part of the Council's Gender Action Plan. The revision and development of the Council's Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace policy was undertaken with engagement and support from a number of Section 75 groups and supports the Council's wider equality agenda."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Motion: Soft Opt Out Organ Donation

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd September, had passed the following motion on Soft Opt Out Organ Donation, which had been proposed by Councillor Donnelly and seconded by former Councillor Hargey:

"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."

It was reported that a response had been received from Mr. R. Pengelly, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health.

Mr. Pengelly had advised that, following a detailed examination of all aspects of opt out systems, the Northern Ireland Assembly had decided, in 2016, not to proceed with specific legislation to introduce an opt out system. He explained that, however, the Assembly, in recognition of the importance of promoting organ donation, had passed legislation that placed a statutory duty on the Department of Health to promote transplantation and to increase awareness about transplantation and the donation of human organs.

That legislation also required that the Department would provide an annual report about transplantation each year, and every five years the report must include the Department's opinion, as to whether the legislation had been effective in promoting transplantation and any recommendations that it considered appropriate in amending the law so as to further promote transplantation.

In December 2018, the Department had also launched a Policy Statement giving effect to the requirement to promote organ donation and transplantation. He reported that work on implementing the Policy Statement had recently gotten underway, with the establishment of an Organ Donation Steering Group to oversee its implementation, with arrangements also being made to recruit a Regional Organ Donation Promotion Manager/Co-Ordinator, whose role would include working with local councils and to establish a sub-group for charities to further help to implement the Policy Statement.

The Committee noted the response.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Delivering a Smart Belfast

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The Smart Belfast programme established by the Council in 2017 fosters collaborative innovation between our universities, industry and the public sector. In doing so the Council seeks to develop innovative solutions to urban challenges, while at the same time supporting local business to prepare for the disruption that new technologies are expected to make across our economy.
- 1.2 The approach has informed the Digital Pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal and has been an important factor in securing these investments for the city.
- 1.3 In order to maximise the opportunities that digital investments represent, and to continue to grow Belfast’s reputation as a globally significant location for technological innovation, Smart Belfast has identified a number of critical foundations that the city needs to have in place going forward. This report seeks Members approval to proceed on these strands of work.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked:

1. To approve the development of an urban data framework for Belfast City Council which would be informed by an initial internal Data Maturity exercise, the recommendations from which would be presented to Members later in 2020.
2. To approve a contribution to support a doctoral student to work with Belfast City Council and its partners on the ethical and legal implications of a data-driven Smart Belfast.
3. To approve the commissioning of expert support for digital infrastructure ‘barrier-busting’.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 The ‘Smart Belfast’ framework fosters the conditions in which city partners can work together to exploit leading-edge technologies (such as AI, robotics, wireless networks, data science and industrial service design practices) to address urban challenges in more innovative ways. These conditions also provide a rich environment in which researchers, start-ups, business, and public

sector agencies, can innovate in the development of new products and services.

- 3.2 The value of the 'smart cities' market is estimated to be worth over £2 trillion within the next five years and Belfast is well-placed to position itself as a global location for digital innovation. The city has already begun to prove the value of the approach – successfully attracting co-investments and delivering joint projects with our universities and industry. The proposed £350 million of digital innovation pillar investments from the Belfast Region City Deal will be an important element in accelerating this success.
- 3.3 Each place has its own unique approach; however, there are a number of common foundations that a successful smart city needs to have in place and which Belfast's partners need to focus on:
- 3.4 A data-enabled city
- Data lies at the core of most modern urban services, whether public or private. This is a trend that is only likely to accelerate over the coming decade as technology continues to permeate most aspects of city life. This has implications for Belfast City Council not only as an organisation that designs and delivers its own data-driven services, but also in terms of our role and responsibilities as the civic leader of a 'smart city'. It is important that the Council continues to build its capabilities in this area and learns from the experience of other places.
- 3.5 Having a well-planned approach to urban data will also help make us a more attractive location for investing in innovation while at the same time making sure that our approach is citizen focused.
- 3.6 Other local authorities are already addressing their data challenges, improving their data maturity and implementing radical changes in their services and programmes. For example, Smart Cambridge (ie, a partnership of local councils, technology businesses, the University of Cambridge and other partner organisations) has built the council's own capabilities in this area; established data partnerships; and set up a 'data trust' to address key city challenges.
- 3.7 With this in mind it is proposed that the Council initiate the development of an urban data framework that will (i) seek to enhance the Council's own approach to generating and managing its data in relation to the delivery of its services and (ii) develop the organisation's capabilities as the lead partner in a data-driven Smart Belfast. The programme would begin with a Data Maturity exercise that would establish the organisation's current baseline

and help to identify action that would inform the design and delivery of a full data framework programme. These recommendations would be presented at a committee meeting later in 2020.

- 3.8 Complementing this approach, the Council has been engaging with Professor Daithí Mac Síthigh at the School of Law at Queen's University to develop an opportunity for a Phd researcher to support the Council to explore the legal and ethical implications of a data-driven Smart Belfast.
- 3.9 Prof MacSíthigh has applied for funding to the Collaborative Doctoral Awards scheme for a full time studentship and, if successful, is seeking a financial contribution from Belfast City Council of £2,000 pa for three years to support the work. If awarded this researcher would be able to draw on emerging thinking on these issues to assist Belfast City Council and its partners in the development of an ethical data model.
- 3.10 The City Innovation team has also been asked to contribute to the new Law & Technology Masters degree (LLM) which is being launched by Queen's University in September 2020. This Masters examines the legal work and practice on technological innovation and introduces students to the interplay of and interfaces between technology and law.
- 3.11 Digital infrastructure
- Alongside data, a digital innovation economy is also dependent on state-of-the-art digital connectivity. Much of the planned investment under the Digital Pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal is focused on ensuring Belfast and the region has the latest wireless and fibre connectivity to ensure that the city is capable of supporting the data-intensive services of the future (such as autonomous vehicles, remote bio-medical monitoring, energy management, etc.) Belfast City Council has also been successful in attracting substantial funding for Local Full Fibre deployment across its estate.
- 3.12 Members may also be aware that the national mobile telecoms operators (including EE, Vodafone, O2 and Three) have also pledged that Belfast will be at the forefront of future wireless investment.
- 3.13 These infrastructure investment projects are complex and have the potential to be disruptive if not well co-ordinated. Other places, such as Glasgow, Manchester, Dublin, Birmingham, etc, have established small 'barrier-busting' groups that brings together planners, regeneration and digital staff to ensure the positive

impact of such infrastructure investments for the city. They also seek to ensure that other capital urban regeneration projects (eg) road improvements, new builds, have digital embedded in their plans.

3.14 Drawing on advice from other cities, it is proposed that Belfast City Council establish a small infrastructure group that, with cooperation from relevant Government Departments and agencies, would work to ensure that a city level approach to digital infrastructure is adopted. In support of this ambition it is proposed that the group seek expert support in the following areas over a six month period:

- Assisting our planning services to identify efficiencies in working with the mobile network operators (MNOs) and smaller companies re planning application process.
- Support for the development of the city level ‘barrier-busting’ resource.
- Support for policy engagement at UK and Northern Ireland levels (eg, in terms of understanding how regional and national infrastructure policies will support the city’s Digital Innovation objectives.)
- Specific support in developing a wireless infrastructure model that supports local innovation at the proposed smart district level. This might include some form of shared infrastructure model.

3.15 In support of this ambition Members are asked to approve the commissioning of this expert support.

3.16 Financial & Resource Implications

The initial Data Maturity exercise will cost approximately £5,000 (excluding VAT) with an additional £8,400 (excluding VAT) at a later stage to provide training workshops with a cross section of staff from different functions for shared learning and to support the roll out of recommendations from the data maturity exercise. This has been identified within existing departmental budgets.

3.17 If the application to the Collaborative Doctoral Awards scheme is successful Belfast City Council would contribute £2,000 pa to a full-time Law and Technology Phd student working with Smart Belfast for three years. The council would also provide in-kind contributions (eg) access to staff; meetings; hot-desking facilities. The financial contribution for 2020/2021 has been identified within existing departmental budgets.

- 3.18 The commissioning of strategic support for digital infrastructure barrier busting is approximately £75,000. This has been identified within existing departmental budgets.
- 3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations

Customer Focus Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Members are reminded that in March 2019 the Committee considered proposals for the Customer Focus Programme following the Discovery phase and agreed the implementation approach, key milestones of the implementation plan, the programme workstreams and the resource requirements necessary to successfully take forward the programme of work.
- 1.2 Since March 2019 the programme team has worked with our Strategic Delivery Partner, PA Consulting, progressing through Discover and Develop phases of the programme, conducting a number of workshops with elected members and staff to develop a future blueprint for a customer hub and improved delivery of council services.
- 1.3 The Discover and Develop phases have endorsed our initial outline business case and draft blueprint approved in March 2019 which explained the need to improve our service to all our customers. This report provides an update on activity during the Develop phase providing an overview of the future blueprint for customer service and high level implementation plan for delivery.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. Note the Service design approach adopted as outlined at Appendix 1.
2. Note progress to date and the draft future blueprint at Appendix 2 and high level implementation plan attached at Appendix 3.
3. Note the update on services for Elected Members which have been progressed to outline design stage as part of the future blueprint.

4. Note that staff and Trade Unions have been engaged as part of the service design approach undertaken and will continue to be consulted as we move to delivery phase.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Service design approach

Since March 2019 a new service design approach for service reviews has been developed comprising 3 phases – Discover, Develop and Deliver. This approach has been used as the service design framework for the Customer Focus programme and has been adopted as the Council's approach to service design. The approach is outlined in more detail at Appendix 1.

The Discover and Develop phases included staff, resident and member engagement to understand current customer relationships and to highlight areas for improvement. The activity included ride-alongs with waste collection teams, shadowing calls, and focussed workshops with elected members and staff.

This new approach will ensure that we deliver:

- Optimised customer contact – professionalising resources and providing modern digital and telephony systems with access to real time data on contact performance
- Channel shift – moving where possible to digitally enabled self-serve solutions
- Customer centricity – designing our services around the needs of our customers.

3.2 Future Blueprint – what it will look like

The diagram attached at Appendix 2 sets out the draft future blueprint for the Customer hub. The blueprint puts our customers at the heart of everything we do and will ensure we provide a consistent and professional service affording our customers choice and convenience. This means improving and aligning all our access to service channels – telephone, face to face, website, social media. Furthermore it will clarify roles and responsibilities and improve relationships between the 'front and back' of the organisation building strong links between the customer hub, council services and continuous improvement. This will also result in increased capability through improved training and development and professionalisation of our customer function. A presentation will be provided at the meeting to take Members through the key elements of the new customer function.

3.3 Deliverables:

Given the complexity of the customer programme it will not be possible to implement all its elements at one time. It is anticipated that by September 2020 we will have the following in place.

3.3.1 Customer Hub

This new function will deal with customer contact for all departments and services, across all channels (online, mobile, telephone, face-to-face, email, and social media).

Initially the hub will manage all customer contact for cleansing/waste and calls currently through the main switchboard and corporate complaints numbers. There is further work planned to co-design processes including the handoff to services in other departments.

We expect the customer hub team to comprise approximately 20 staff, coming from across the Council, who will facilitate all customer contact channels, provide customer support for digital channels and build capability in service performance and analysis working with departments and the Continuous Improvement team to inform and shape service improvement.

There will be improvements to our telephony system and a Customer Relationship Management system which will manage and track customer contact to resolution.

Discussions on the location of the customer hub are at an early stage however it is anticipated that it will be in the Cecil Ward Building. Work has begun to look at the feasibility of options and, as part of the Physical Programme update report, members are being asked to agree to add the creation of a new Customer Hub as a Stage 1 Emerging project, under the Capital Programme.

3.3.2 Website

We will launch an improved website from May/June 2020. We are currently engaging with departments on refreshing content. This will improve how customers access information on services reducing unnecessary contact.

3.3.3 Elected Members

As part of the Develop phase a Task and Finish Working Group has been established with elected members who have participated in 3

workshops to date to identify and design solutions to support elected members in their constituency work.

3.3.4 We plan to have a dedicated contact channel for elected members within the Customer Hub. Additionally we will provide members with real time information on service delivery so they can be informed of issues earlier, enabling them to be responsive to constituents' queries. Members will also have the ability to track issues they have raised and will have visibility of issues emerging in their areas.

3.3.5 Bulky Waste

We will commence a specific service design project on improving our bulky waste service. This will be digitally enabled so that customers can book online. The service design will include addressing current problems with types of collections, timescales etc. and will result in better information to customers and improved use of our resources.

3.3.6 Missed Bins

Aligned to the overall Resources and Fleet transition and improvement programme, we will seek to address the issue of missed bin collections. We will focus specific resource on how we can address these issues including information flows between elected members, customers, staff and managers. An element of this project will centre on business intelligence and improved understanding of the cause of service failures and identifying interventions to improve service.

3.4 The plan for implementation and how we will do this

Attached at Appendix 3 is a high level plan setting out the key milestones for new Web services to be implemented in May/June 2020 and the Customer Hub which will be live from September 2020. Staff and customers have been involved in the programme to date and this will continue throughout the Deliver phase.

Integral to the overall delivery is the inclusion of staff and Trade Unions in understanding the impact of these changes on current posts and post holders and the transition to the new Customer Hub.

3.5 Financial & Resource Implications

SP&R agreed in November 2017 that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project.

Staff and Trade Unions have been engaged throughout the programme. As we move to Delivery, with Trade Union agreement we are establishing a sub group of JNCC to facilitate further engagement and consultation on staff implications of the programme in line with agreed HR policies and procedures.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Work on the EQIA for the Customer Focus Programme is in progress. Our *Putting you First* vision is live on our website for public consultation and a schedule of drop-in sessions are taking place to engage with customers and to gather feedback on our vision. The consultation period closes on 2 February 2020 and the information gathered will be used to complete the EQIA screening.”

The Chief Executive outlined the significance of this corporate programme and the Customer Focus Programme Director then provided a review of the customer vision, the prioritised areas of work for ‘day one’ implementation, the service design, the draft blueprint for the new customer function, details of the customer hub, the improved website which would be launched from May/June 2020, the role of Elected Members and the high level implementation roadmap.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Area Working Groups

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details on the proposed agendas for the forthcoming meetings of the Area working Groups, which would primarily focus on the development of Belfast City Council’s approach to neighbourhood regeneration.

Climate Commission

The Committee was reminded that, in March 2019, it had approved the Council’s membership of the ESRI-funded Place Based Climate Action Network. That decision had enabled the Council to work in partnership with Queen’s University, and alongside a range of other cities, to develop strategies and approaches to climate adaptation and mitigation. It was a unique project, and Belfast had been chosen to be one of three cities, alongside Edinburgh and Leeds, to establish a Climate Commission. It was reported that the Council was working to tackle climate breakdown and create a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy, with well-paid employment, innovation and creativity at its core and a thriving social economy and healthy communities. While some progress had been made towards achieving city-wide carbon reduction targets, many carbon reduction and climate resilience opportunities remained unrealised at a citywide level.

In the face of a challenging national policy context, the limitations on what the Council could achieve on its own, the declarations of a ‘Climate and Ecological Emergency’ by the UK and Irish parliaments, the value in bringing together key city partners to form a Commission to mirror the UK Committee on Climate Change, was recognised and the Belfast Climate Commission had been launched formally on 10th January, 2020.

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The Commission was based on the geographic area of Belfast City Council but also, where appropriate in its work, included the 5 adjacent local authority areas of the Belfast Region City Deal (Ards and North Down, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Mid and East Antrim, Newry Mourne and Down, and Antrim and Newtownabbey).

The Commission aimed to foster collaboration by bringing together public, private and civic sectors to promote, guide, monitor and review on-going climate and energy transitions. The Commission would also act as a forum for organisations and individuals to exchange ideas, research findings, information and best practice to help Belfast make positive choices on carbon reduction, energy transition and climate resilience.

The Commission would bring together different groups to develop a climate risk assessment and transition plan for the city/city region and for vulnerable communities and businesses within it. It would strengthen networks, build capacities, transfer good practice and explore ways of raising the investment needed while monitoring the progress of the city towards meeting its carbon reduction targets and recommend options to keep the city on track.

The Belfast Climate Commission had formally been established in November, 2019 and its first phase runs until December, 2020. Progress would then be reviewed and the second phase will run from January, 2021 to December, 2021. The key deliverables set for the Commission include:

- The collation of existing carbon reduction targets and measures for organisations across the city using an agreed methodology.
- Agreed strategic and shared priorities and opportunities for carbon reduction, low carbon energy transition and climate resilience across the city.
- To support Belfast, and Belfast Region City Deal, based organisations' understanding of the importance of energy and low carbon initiatives to their business. The aim was to facilitate the start of a pipeline of investable low carbon projects which would be supported by work to address perceived barriers to the availability of cost effective finance.
- Collaborations with other organisations to identify effective carbon reduction, low carbon energy transition and climate resilience measures, research and develop projects, and attract funding for project development and/or delivery.
- An annual report monitoring project delivery and evaluating progress across the city towards the city's climate reduction target and advising on future measures and updating data on emissions.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Inclusive Growth Strategy: Development of a Social Value Procurement Framework

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is provide an update on the development of a programme of work related to Social Value as part of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the work in relation to social value that is currently being undertaken
- Agree to the establishment of a task and finish Social Value Working Group for Members which would meet bi-monthly

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Members agreed a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Beattie in January 2019 on the development of a social value strategy to further social, environmental and economic goals of Belfast City Council and will be aware that work is continuing on the development of an Inclusive Growth Strategy as part of the Belfast Agenda.**
- 3.2 Social value is the additional benefit to the community from the commissioning or procurement process which is over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and works, including economic, environmental and social well-being or community benefits that can be delivered to a local area. It is about maximising the impact of public expenditure to get the best possible social outcome.**
- 3.3 This work builds on the approach taken by the Council since 2013 to integrate social clauses within relevant council procurements to provide ring-fenced employment and work placement opportunities and promote accessibility to small enterprises. Whilst these clauses represent a laudable effort to promote skills development and employment, impact has been limited by a narrow approach and outcomes difficult to discern in terms of measurement. In part it must be recognised that the current legal framework in N Ireland does not provide the same breadth of opportunity to promote social value as other jurisdictions. With the return of the Assembly one of the key actions will be to raise with ministers the issue of new enabling legislation and amendment or repeal of existing legislation which may inhibit the ambition held by the Council to use social value as a vehicle to drive inclusive growth.**
- 3.4 Much work has already been undertaken in terms of contract analysis and looking at themes, outcomes and measures that would contribute to a new social value/inclusive growth framework with strategic alignment to the themes in the Belfast Agenda. In**

that context there is a nexus with an ethical trading framework that should sit snugly with the social value framework and which will be developed in tandem, albeit that the ethical trading framework incorporating a rights based approach to trading, in addition to promoting sustainability and the environment, should have its own platform.

- 3.5 Members should also note that it was agreed at [People & Communities in December 2019](#) to broaden the remit of the officer social values working group to consider how to eradicate single-use items through more effective purchasing procedures, assessed against the waste hierarchy and the wider sustainable agenda.
- 3.6 Officers have also looked at other cities to learn from their experiences and to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by developing and implementing a social value framework. From the work undertaken to date the officers believe they are now in a position to progress the development of a framework for the Council.

Key Issues

- 3.7 In order to take this work forward, a work programme relating to procurement has been developed under the Inclusive Growth Strategy. An officer working group which meets monthly has been established comprising staff from each department and chaired by John Walsh, the City Solicitor, who has been appointed Senior Responsible Officer.
- 3.8 One of the key tasks is the establishment of a draft Social Value Procurement Framework governing how social value could be incorporated into the Council's procurement and contractual processes. This draft framework will have to be agreed through Committee before being issued for public consultation. This will be the central policy document establishing meaningful criteria sitting at the heart of contractual relations with third parties and which will have measurable/reportable outcomes.
- 3.9 It is proposed that a task and finish Social Value Procurement Member Working Group is established which would meet bi-monthly and make recommendations to Committee on the framework. Through this it is hoped that focused engagement will allow the Council to adopt the policy within the ambitious timeframe set out in the project plan.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

The work programme is being led by officers from Economic Development and Commercial and Procurement Services and involves officers from each department. A new Member Working Group would be resourced by Democratic Services.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Equality, good relations and rural needs implications will be considered in the development of the framework.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Policing and Council Service Delivery Coordinator

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to progress the secondment of a senior Police Officer (Chief Inspector level) to work alongside the City and Neighbourhood Services Department.

The post holder would be aligned with the work of City and Neighbourhood Services, and contribute to more effective joint planning and working across a range of operational and community safety issues affecting the city. The post holder would also enhance representation on a range of relevant public forums, including, for example, Community Planning, Shared City Partnership, City Centre ‘Clean, Green and Safe’ partnership, as well as attending relevant committees as an observer. It was believed that the secondment would help to develop a greater understanding across both organisations of the key issues affecting local communities in Belfast, improve communication between the Council and PSNI, and contribute to more effective joint problem solving.

The Committee approved the secondment of a senior Police Officer (Chief Inspector) to Belfast City Council, to be positioned within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department, and subject to review at six monthly intervals.

Proposal for Civic Visit to Nashville

In March 2019, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee had approved the International Relations Plan for the financial year 2019/2020. A key element of that activity involved the development of jointly-agreed work programmes for each of the Council’s Sister Cities (Boston, Nashville and Shenyang), focusing on areas of shared interest.

It was reported that, as part of the working relationship with Nashville, the Lord Mayor of Belfast had recently received an official invitation from the newly-appointed Mayor of Nashville, Councillor John Cooper, to travel to Nashville to attend the Music City Irish Festival which would take place from 15-17 March, 2020. The Lord Mayor was unavailable to travel at this time and consequently the Deputy Lord Mayor had agreed to travel on behalf of the city, pending the Committee’s approval.

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This year marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Belfast-Nashville Sister Cities agreement. This was the inaugural year of a new event for Nashville – the Music City Irish Festival – and the Council was keen to ensure Belfast’s involvement in the event, given the long-running ties between the cities and the importance of music as a common area of interest.

In addition to musical performances on each of the three days, Belfast had been asked to consider providing promotional materials for display at the event. Council officers were currently working with Visit Belfast to secure relevant materials. The event had a number of music-related sponsors and it was understood that Tourism Ireland were also considering involvement in the event.

While in Nashville, the Deputy Lord Mayor would undertake a programme of meetings with both universities, Vanderbilt and Belmont (linked to QUB and Ulster University), youth organisations linked to the Council’s Youth Forum and business organisations, including Invest NI, Nashville Chamber and the Nashville Healthcare Council. The conversations with the business organisations would focus on scoping out in further detail the plans for the proposed Belfast City Council/Invest NI business mission to Nashville in August 2020.

The cost of the proposed visit to Nashville would not exceed £6,000 and had been provided for within the agreed 2019/2020 International Relations budget.

The Committee approved the participation of the Deputy Lord Mayor and the Director of Economic Development (or nominee) on a civic mission to Nashville from 13th – 17th March 2020.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council’s Capital programme is a rolling programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council facilities. This seek approval to move projects to the next stage of project development process, as provides an update on other projects on the capital programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

Movements under the Capital Programme

- *Customer Focus Programme – Customer Hub location:* agree to add the creation of a new Customer Hub as a Stage 1 Emerging project, under the Capital Programme.**

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- **City Hall Statues Project** – agree to add the creation of new statues within the grounds of City Hall as a Stage 1 Emerging project, under the Capital Programme.

Further consideration and updates

- **Lord Mayor's Car** - note the outcome of further consideration of the replacement of the current car with a new hybrid model.
- **Leisure Transformation Programme** - note key visitor and membership figures for Lisnasharragh and Brook now they have been formally opened.

3.0 Main report

Proposed Movements – Capital Programme

3.1 Members have previously agreed that all capital projects must go through a 3 Stage process where decisions on which projects progress are taken by SP&R. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to agree to the following additions on the Capital Programme:

3.2

Project	Overview	Stage
City Hall Statues	New statues within grounds of City Hall arising from the EQIA on Memorabilia within the City Hall	Add as a Stage 1 – Emerging project
Customer Focus Programme – Customer Hub location	Create a new Customer Hub location (Cecil Ward Building) which has emerged as part of the Customer Focus Programme which has already been agreed by Members	Add as a Stage 1 – Emerging project

A Strategic Outline Caste (SOC) will now be worked up for both of above mentioned projects, and presented back through internal governance and Committee approval process.

Fleet Replacement Programme - Replacement of the Lord Mayor's Car

3.3 At SP&R Committee 17th December, members were advised that the current lease for the Lord Mayor's vehicle was due to expire in February 2020 and that the replacement car - a hybrid model

similar to size a model of current vehicle but with a combined 99mpg, and cleaner lower emission CO2 levels – would be sought under a 4 year lease arrangement. Following discussion it was agreed that further options including looking at sponsorship, other forms of transport and a full electric model and would be considered and brought back to Committee.

3.4 The key issue remains around acquiring a replacement vehicle that achieves value for money, offers reliability and fulfils the function of a civic vehicle for high profile Office (security of both Lord Mayor and Chain; wide ranging travel needs from short to long distance journeys), while balancing sustainable/green priorities for the Council. In looking at the options available the Fleet Unit engaged closely with the Lord Mayor's Unit to ensure that the requirements, duties and obligations of the Office of the Lord Mayor were taken into consideration and Members are asked to note the following –

- The option to acquire a sponsored or subsidised vehicle - this option has been investigated previously which highlighted significant challenges of finding appropriate sponsorship proposition given the neutrality of the Lord Mayor Office and political sensitives
- The option of non-vehicle means of travel (eg push bike) - the Lord Mayor requires the Lord Mayor's Chain on all public occasions; other means of safely and securely transportation of the Chain to any event will still need to be in place, thereby reducing any green sustainable credentials this option is seen to achieve. Climatic conditions and longer travel distances also make this option prohibitive.
- The option to purchase or lease a full electric vehicle – the purchase of a full electric vehicle is deemed not to represent value for money given the current high purchase costs of vehicles coupled with the current time and deliverability implications. A exercise was also undertaken in relation to analysing the current mileage of the Lord Mayor's Car and while the usage profile is mainly around the city there is a reasonably regular requirement for longer trips and as such one of the key requirements continues to be for a long wheel based format which will allow for comfort on longer journeys.

3.5 Given the above it is considered that the lease option of a similar, replacement model – with improved fuel efficiency and cleaner lower emissions of a hybrid vehicle – remains at present, the preferred option. This will provide continuity in terms of the standard of vehicle required balancing the requirements of duties of the Lord Mayor Office while reflecting a change and recognition

of more sustainable approach to travel. In addition, in the event of any problems with the vehicle, the reliability and quality of the after care service provided by the service provider is particularly important, an issue that has also been taken into consideration.

Members will however be aware that technological advancements are taking place quickly particularly in the car industry and that while the capital implications of a full electric vehicle are currently high that it is likely that these will reduce over the coming period of time. Members will also be aware that the Council is looking at options for the electrification of its wider fleet. Given this we have committed to looking breaks in the lease arrangements, to allow for arrangements for an all-electric vehicle, should the capital / costs implications become more favourable. In addition and in the interim, steps will be taken to look at the installation of a charging point within the grounds of the City Hall.

Leisure Transformation Programme – Lisnasharragh and Brook brief update

- 3.6 Lisnasharragh and Brook Leisure Centres were formally opened by the Lord Mayor on 8th and 17th January respectively, with these new facilities being met with a very positive response from GLL, key stakeholders and users.

In the first six weeks of operation both centres have seen unprecedented user numbers. To date the Lisnasharragh has had over 18,000 people through the doors and over 1,800 individuals have taken out new memberships. This membership figure, combined with the 1,000 members that transferred from Avoniel, means Lisnasharragh's current membership of 2,800 already represents the largest membership of any centre across the city. In the same period Brook has had over 3,000 people use the facility, and over 1,000 pre-paid memberships have now been sold, greatly exceeding pre-opening targets.

- 3.7 Employment- The creation of the three new leisure facilities will create up to 75 new permanent jobs and up to 100 casual positions for the city. To date GLL have recruited 64 permanent posts and 27 casual roles for Lisnasharragh and Brook. Three Leisure Academies have now been delivered in life-guarding and fitness training, and of the 28 individuals completing the accredited training 26 have accepted positions with GLL (93%).

In addition, the recruitment campaign for Andersonstown was launched in December at the Leisure Academy Graduation Event. To date all the management posts have been filled and the process for recruiting the remaining staff is currently underway, with:

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- A further three Leisure Employment Academies being delivered between January and March;
- Recruitment team and Service Managers for Andersonstown attending Andersonstown Jobs and Benefits Office on Tuesday 21st January to signpost re jobs and Academies.
- 4 employment roadshows being held at various venues across the city during January.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial —

- City Hall Statues and Customer Focus Hub – costs to be worked up
- Fleet Replacement Programme – Lease of the Lord Mayor’s Car – these costs are covered under the Fleet Replacement Programme

Resources – Officer time as required.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee considered each of the recommendations and agreed the following:

Customer Focus Programme – Customer Hub location

The Committee agreed to add the creation of a new Customer Hub as a Stage 1 Emerging project, under the Capital Programme.

City Hall Statues Project

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees not to add the creation of new statues within the grounds of City Hall as a Stage 1 Emerging project, under the Capital Programme until a report of the indicative costs had been submitted to the Committee.

On a vote by show of hands three members voted for the proposal and ten against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the City Hall Statues Project in relation to the creation of new statues within the grounds of the City Hall be added as a stage one emerging Project under the programme.

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Lord Mayor's Car

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the replacement of the current car to enable information to be provided on an electric vehicle.

Leisure Transformation Programme

The Committee noted the key visitor and membership figures for the Lisnasharragh and Brook Leisure Centres following the formal openings.

Asset Management

The Committee approved:

I. Ormeau Golf Club, Ormeau Park, Park Road – Lease Renewal

- the renewal of the lease of c. 137 acres of land at Park Road to the Trustees of Ormeau Golf Club for a term of 25 years from 1 July 2020 at a rent of £14,500 per annum with rent reviews every 5 years

II. Ballymacarrett Walkway

- the acquisition for a nominal sum and to enter into licence agreements to carry out works on following strips of land which are currently owned by Connswater Homes Ltd to facilitate the Ballymacarrett Walkway project on terms to be agreed by the Estates Unit and Legal Services:
 - Land to the rear of 11-29 Severn Street
 - Land to the rear of 37-65 Severn Street
 - Land to the rear of 67-89 Severn Street
- approve the completion of a Deed of Dedication to Urban Villages in respect of the works to be carried out as part of the Ballymacarrett Walkway project.

III. The Entries – Environmental Improvement Project

- agreements to be entered into between the Council and property owners within the Entries Environmental Improvement project area in the city centre for the purpose of erecting lighting, artwork and painting walls with terms to be agreed by the Estates Unit and Legal Services.

Finance, Resources and Procurement

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 1**).

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- Approved the award of single tender actions in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 2**).
- Approved the estimated expenditure of permitted excluded contracts as detailed in Financial Regulations K11 Appendix 1 (**Table 3**)

Table 1 – Publically Advertised Tenders

Title of Tender	Senior Responsible Officer	Proposed contract duration
(T2008) Provision of Office Supplies	Ronan Cregan	Up to 4 years
(T2045) Market Research Framework	John Walsh	Up to 4 years
(T2046) Brand Services Framework	John Walsh	Up to 4 years
(T2043) Provision of Specialist Property & Financial Advice	Alistair Reid	Up to 1 year
(T2050) Removal Storage and Retrieval of Office Records	John Walsh	Up to 10 years
(T2047) Video Production Framework	John Walsh	Up to 4 years
(T2049) Tender for Supply & Delivery of Tyres & Tubes	Nigel Grimshaw	Up to 5 years
(T2048) Tender for Hire of vehicles up to and over 7.5T & Glass Collection vehicles	Nigel Grimshaw	Up to 5 years
(T2037) Tender for the Collection & Recovery of Vehicles & Plant	Nigel Grimshaw	Up to 5 years
(T1978) Tender for the Supply & Delivery of Mechanical Sweeper Brushes	Nigel Grimshaw	Up to 5 years
(T2044) Tender for ambient air quality assessment within the Council boundary for PM2.5 and NO2 ambient pollutants.	Nigel Grimshaw	Up to 2 years
(T2041) Tender for the provision of temporary agency workers	John Tully	Up to 4 years

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Table 2 - Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Action)

Title of tender	Supplier	Annual estimate
Development of the DHPS as an option for the continuation of mitigations for Housing Benefit claimants impacted by SSSC and Benefit Cap.	Northgate	£97,750 (£77,750 implementation and £20,000 licences).

Table 3 – Excluded Service Contracts

Supplier *	Type of Service	Estimated expenditure FY 20/21
Sound House	Production of radio commercials	Circa £11k
Belfast Telegraph	Online advertisements	Circa £15k
Daily Mirror/ Belfast Live	Online advertisements	Circa £15k
ITV	Video on demand	Circa £3k
Cool FM	Radio commercials	Circa £66k
Northern Media Group	Radio commercials	Circa £47k
U105	Radio commercials	Circa £46k

* Supplier used may change depending on availability and business need.

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting
on 13th January 2020**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and the recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 13th January 2020.

**Equality and Diversity: Extending the Sign Language
Video Interpreting Service provision**

The Committee was reminded that a 12-month pilot using SignVideo, a remote video sign language interpreting service, had been launched in May, 2019. The service had been available on the Council's website, Cecil Ward Building, Belfast Zoo and Olympia Leisure Centre.

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The City Solicitor reported that a request for funding from the Department for Communities had been approved in December, 2019 for providing the SignVideo service at a further fourteen Council sites, including the Tropical Ravine, the City Hall and twelve leisure centres/community hubs. The funding would be used to purchase 14 iPads valued at £5,600 to support Sign Language users and front-line staff in accessing the SignVideo service.

Following an evaluation of the usage of the service during that period and the successful application for funding, he recommended that the service be continued and should become part of the Customer Focus Programme from May, 2020.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Operational Issues

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

The Committee approved the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 13th January, 2020, as set out in the undernoted appendix:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2020 EVENTS						
North Belfast Interface Network	13 March 2020	Exploring Cultural Identities Celebration – Event to celebrate the end of cross community training event and present certificates to participates. Numbers attending - 100	C&D	No (Charity)	Yes, Wine reception	Approve No charge Wine Reception
Women's Tec	13 March 2020	2020 Women's Tec Gala Awards - event will be a celebration of education and learning and will recognize student achievement.	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea, Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No charge Tea and Coffee Reception

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
		Numbers attending – 100				
Belfast Media Group	28 March 2020	Best of the West Awards 2020 – celebratory event for the services, businesses, products and people based in West Belfast and their contribution to West Belfast and the community. Numbers attending 400	B & C 1 in 3 rule	Yes - £825	No hospitality	Approve, 1 in 3 year basis Room charge No hospitality
Ulster University	10 September 2020	Collaborative European Research Conference Dinner – dinner linked to 3-day conference taking place in Belfast. Numbers attending –150 - 200	A & B	No <i>£300 waived due to links with Visit Belfast</i>	No Hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality
Northern Ireland Electricity	3 or 10 September 2020	NIE Networks Social Club 50th Anniversary Dinner – celebration dinner to mark 50 th anniversary of the Society. Numbers attending – 100 -150	C	Yes - £300	Yes, Wine Reception <i>(celebrating significant anniversary)</i>	Approve Room charge Wine Reception

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
Belfast Bible College	20 November 2020	Post-Graduation Reception – Reception event to make the graduation and achievements of the students at the college. Numbers attending – 250 - 300	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea, Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No charge, Tea and Coffee Reception
Common Purpose	7 December 2020	Meridian Award Ceremony – final day of the Meridian Programme to review progress made and present awards to participants of the course. Numbers attending – 40	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes – Tea, Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No charge, Tea and Coffee Reception
2021 EVENTS						
British Society of Animal Science	14 April 2021	BSAS Annual Conference Dinner – welcome dinner linked to 3 day conference taking place in Belfast. Numbers attending – 175-215	A & B	No <i>£300 waived due to links with Visit Belfast</i>	No Hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality

Request for use of City Hall for Trans Pride NI Festival

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of the City Hall were normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for his purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to

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place such a request directly before the Committee, and the following request fell into that category.

The Committee was advised that Trans Pride NI, was a charity organisation which campaigned for Gender Equality in Northern Ireland, for transgender, intersex, non-binary, gender questioning and all other people. The City Solicitor reported that Trans Pride NI wished to hold their Trans Pride Festival in the City Hall grounds on 6th June, 2020. The purpose of the festival was to celebrate gender diversity, raise awareness of transgender people and ensure gender equality. The festival would be free to all participants and the organisers estimate up to 500 people attending. The event would take place on the front lawn of the City Hall from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm, although access would be required earlier and later in the day for set ups and strip downs. Activities would be concentrated on the front lawns, as a consequence, areas such as the Titanic Memorial Garden and Cenotaph would remain open to the public. Access to City Hall building for tours, visitor exhibition, the Bobbin, function rooms would not be affected.

Activities at the festival would include a stage truck and sound system for rally and performers, inflatables, games, face painting, art exhibition and health fair stalls. The final details would be planned and approved by the City Hall Function Management Unit to ensure that the event ran smoothly. Trans Pride NI would provide all security, stewarding/marshalling staff, cleaners, first aiders and would comply with the usual conditions, including insurance, indemnities for damage and submission of a formal event-management plan for review and approval by the aforementioned Unit.

In terms of the main festival, there would be no costs to the Council as the organiser would bear any/all costs for stewarding/ equipment etc. themselves. The utilities costs on the day were of a very minor nature. There would be no concerns from an asset management point of view, although the organisers would be required to provide the usual insurances, indemnities and obligations.

The Committee:

1. authorised Trans Pride NI to use the City Hall grounds on 6th June 2020 for activities programmed as part of Trans Pride NI Festival; and
2. authorised the festival in line with similar events previously approved by the Council.

**Consultation response to the DAERA
Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 **Members are requested to note the proposed BCC response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland, as discussed and approved by the People and Communities Committee at its meeting on 14 January 2020.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- **Note the contents of the attached People and Communities Committee report of 14 January 2020, the draft BCC consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland, and to consider the inclusion of the amendments put forward by the Green Party, as well as factor in some developments as a result of restoration of the Executive referenced in 3.2-3.3 below. The Green Party's amendments are attached at Appendix 3.**
- **Note the request for an extension to the Response to DAERA was agreed and is the 5th February 2020**

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Amendments to the consultation response were tabled by Councillor Smyth on behalf of the Green Party at the aforementioned meeting. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would review the proposed changes put forward by Councillor Smyth, and submit any feedback to the City and Neighbourhood Services Department for compilation and onward submission to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to approve the final consultation response to DAERA. No responses have been received.**
- 3.2 However officers had advised at the People and Communities committee they could also review the comments in light of the 'The New Decade, New Approach Deal' as a result of the restoration of the Assembly. In light of this, the executive have now agreed to include a Climate Change Strategy and Act, to address immediate and longer term impacts of climate change. They have also committed to introduce legislation and targets for reducing carbon emissions in line with the Paris Climate Change Accord and this will be addressed through the programme for Government. A new Energy Strategy is to be developed that will set ambitious targets and actions for a fair and just transition to a zero carbon society. It is also acknowledged that these actions and interventions will be required across a wide range of areas in order to address the impacts of climate change in a fair and just way. The executive has also committed to the establishment of an Independent Environmental Protection Agency to oversee this work and ensure targets are met. Given that these are now Assembly positions, officers would propose adding into the formal response that these developments are strongly welcomed and supported by this Council.**

- 3.3 The key response for consideration is outlined in the attached People and Communities report, and this committee is asked to note the associated appendices. On the attached Appendix 3 officers have indicated where comments may be substantially covered off via the New Deal as referenced above. Members are also reminded that at the October meeting of this committee, agreement was reached and wording updated following a notice of motion on carbon emissions and therefore this could be the revised wording (as set put below) to be included in the response to the DAERA consultation. It is proposed to add to the response that's DAERA needs to consider more informed and ambitious targets.

'This Council has supported a motion to declare a Climate Emergency and in light of these, this Council commits to a more ambitious and more urgent target of net-zero emissions than 2050. This target will be informed by the work undertaken below [to produce a Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan] and will reflect the ambition of similar cities in the UK, who have carbon neutrality goals more ambitious than the 2050 target. Glasgow, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds have committed to 2030 and Manchester to 2038.'

3.4 **Finance & Resource Implications**

None.

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

None."

Moved by Councillor Garret,
Seconded by Councillor Carson,

That the Committee agrees that the Corporate Response as submitted to the People and Communities Committee on, 14th January, be approved as the Council's response to the the consultation.

On a vote by show of hands, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was declared carried.

Council response to the Liquor Licensing Laws in Northern Ireland Consultation Document

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the SP&R Committee to a Council response to the Department for Communities Consultation Document on 'Liquor Licencing Laws in Northern Ireland'.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- note and review the attached draft response to the Liquor Licensing Laws in Northern Ireland Consultation Document at Appendix 1.
- approve the draft council response subject to any amendments.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The Department for Communities has produced a consultation document entitled 'Liquor Licensing Laws in Northern Ireland'. The Department is seeking views on the effectiveness of the current liquor licensing laws rather than putting forward any policy proposals.

The last general review of Northern Ireland's liquor licensing laws took place in 2012 resulting in the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill 2016. This Bill included measures aimed at contributing towards a reduction in alcohol related harm and making the licensed trade more sustainable and attractive to tourists. The Bill was making its way through the Assembly's legislative process and when the Assembly collapsed in January 2017, it could no longer be progressed.

Given the passage of time since the last review, recent developments in other jurisdictions and growing public interest in licensing issues, the Department believes that it is appropriate to carry out a consultation on the current liquor licensing policy. The aim of the exercise is to determine public opinion on current licensing laws and views on whether changes could be made in future to ensure Northern Ireland has a more flexible and modern licensing framework to respond to changing expectations and lifestyles.

3.2 Draft Corporate Response

The consultation document seeks the views of interested parties across a number of general policy positions and principles. The Committee are asked to review the suggested Council response to each of the policy positions contained in the draft response at Appendix 1. A summary of the council response to each of the issues is included below.

Categories of licence

The Council agrees that local 'Micro' brewery type businesses should be allowed to sell their product directly to the public at markets or other special events. One solution would be to introduce a license to permit the brewery to sell at their own premises and also to sell for consumption off the main premises. Another would be to introduce an exemption scheme whereby such premises could apply for an exemption from the requirement to hold a license (restricted to those businesses which sell a certain amount of alcohol and only operating up to a certain time). A district council should be able to acquire a licence to host events showcasing local product permitting the sale of such product for consumption on or off the premises. Consideration should also be given to enable specific and streamlined licensing of tourist facilities and artisan markets owned or controlled by district councils.

Permitted hours

The Council believe that flexibility in opening hours is important in promoting tourism and the night time economy and welcomes the ability to apply for additional opening hours. However, the extension of 12 times per year does not go far enough to address the change in current demand and provide an alternative to home drinking and to visitors. This view is shared by the industry who consider that they should be able to have late extensions for the sale of alcohol until 2.00am twice a week. The Council agree that one hour, twice per week would be a moderate increase that would help deliver staggered closing and attract people out of home drinking and into licensed premises. This change could help facilitate a more gradual and steady dispersal of patrons, reducing the impact of 'spilling out' of customers en-masse from licensed premises.

Additional hours – small public houses

The Council agree that the number of occasions that police may authorise late opening hours in small pubs should be increased provided there is consideration given to location, other mixed-use services and infrastructure surrounding the business.

The Council strongly urge that provision is made within legislation that the police must consult with their local council prior to granting such occasional licences to ensure that no problems such as noise and nuisance behaviour have arisen, particularly in residential areas. In addition, a clear definition of what constitutes a small pub is required if the number of occasional licences are to be significantly increased. If not the implications are that some

larger pubs will relinquish their article 44 licence, apply for occasional licences and not provide entertainment or substantial refreshment at all.

Easter opening

The Council recognises the significance of the Easter period for many people. However that has to be balanced against those people who would wish to see a relaxation of the restrictive Easter opening hours at a time when they are likely to be off work and wish to socialise during that period. There is frustration in both the tourism and licensing industry that licensed premises are effectively closed during what could be a positive trading period.

In addition to the restricted opening hours, there is no retail activity available on Easter Sunday. The Council is concerned that the combination of these factors leads to tourists either staying away or not enjoying their visit and therefore being unlikely to return or recommend Belfast as a tourist destination. In light of all those considerations, it is the Council's view that the current hours are too restrictive.

Drinking up time

In 2016 the Council, on balance, welcomed the proposal for drinking up time being extended from 30mins to 1 hour. However there were some concerns that it might encourage binge and excessive drinking, as people will have more time to consume their last drink and may buy more than they would have previously. If successful and implemented responsibly by licensees, the extra 30 mins may facilitate a more gradual and steady dispersal of patrons, therefore reducing the impact of 'spilling out' of customers' en-masse from licensed premises.

Removal of off-sales

It is the Council's view that similar timings and conditions should exist for both the on and off trade for the sale of unopened alcohol to be taken off the premises. The Council would support the prohibition on being able to remove alcohol after 11.30pm as there is a risk that alcohol being purchased after that time could increase the likelihood of alcohol fuelled anti-social behaviour, noisy parties, etc.

Places of public entertainment

At the time liquor licensing legislation was enacted, betting at race tracks was not permitted on a Sunday. The Betting and Gaming (NI) Order 2004 permitted on-course Sunday betting, but with no

corresponding changes to liquor licensing law, the sale of alcohol on a Sunday therefore remains illegal under a 'Place of public entertainment' race track licence.

Following the conclusion of the 2012 consultation and during the early passage of the Bill, representations were made to amend the law to allow permitted hours on a licensed race track on a Sunday. The Council agrees that this anomaly should be rectified.

Major events

The Council consider that special arrangements or dispensations should be made for special events given their importance to the local economy and tourism. The current licensing laws caused difficulties in delivering the MTV Music awards and when the Council was assisting in preparing the UK and Ireland's bid for the Rugby World Cup. It is essential that the Department takes proactive steps to provide more flexibility for special events now so as to provide more confidence for statutory agencies bidding to bring international events to Northern Ireland.

As Northern Ireland, and in particular Belfast, seeks to establish itself on a global scale, it is important that there is flexibility for international events which are of regional economic significance. The legislation should be worded in such a way as to allow the decision to designate an event as a major event to be taken by either the Chief Constable or senior civil servants. Otherwise the requirement to enact legislation to make the decision may act as a hindrance to securing these events and/or delivering them. In particular, for street based events, special arrangements should provide for the sale and consumption of intoxicating liquor by establishing zones outside licensed premises in which this would be permitted. The same dispensation should apply within areas designated for events associated with festivals/carnivals within town and city centres. This would be subject to appropriate controls including stewarding of the areas in question.

Alignment of entertainment and liquor licences

The 2016 Bill proposed that entertainment cannot be provided any later than the permitted hours for the consumption of alcohol which, on the basis that drinking up time was extended, would be 1am on a Sunday and 2am the rest of the week. Entertainment until 3am would only be permitted 12 nights per year for certain licensees who have applied for a court order to sell intoxicating liquor until 2am.

To support the night-time economy and Belfast as a destination for tourism the Council believes the proposed limitation of 12 nights

per year should be amended to permit these liquor licensing arrangements to 2am on two nights per week for certain licensees, subject to strict controls relating to patron dispersal and nuisance. Consideration should be given to giving district councils power to designate areas/zones in which these licences could be granted.

The Council believes the alignment of hours for liquor and entertainment licensing is not required and that flexibility should be permitted in respect of licensees who wish to provide entertainment going beyond the hours for which the sale and consumption of intoxicating liquor is permissible.

The Council remains of the view that district councils should be given powers to deal with both Liquor Licensing and Entertainments Licensing, as they are best placed to administer and issue both types of licence. This would allow alignment of the licences and ensure there is a holistic approach to dealing with issues around how premises are operated.

Children's certificates

The Council supported removal of the requirement to have Children's certificates and the extension of a person under the age of 18 being allowed on the premises to 9.30 pm instead of 9.00 pm as proposed in the 2016 Bill.

Deliveries of alcohol

The Council continues to welcome the 2016 proposals in this regard. The experience of Council officers is that the delivery of alcohol to under 18s through taxis (Dial a Drink) or online via supermarkets is contributing towards anti-social behaviour issues involving minors as these deliveries tend to be consumed 'on street' or in parks.

The Council view is that alcohol should not be delivered to a minor and verification of age should be sought when delivering alcohol – a system of introducing this to supermarket deliveries and also allow controls on other delivery options such as Taxis should be an enforceable offence and may require additional legislative control.

Underage functions

The Council supported the proposed 2016 changes as it will permit hotels and other venues to host events and functions catering for the younger audience, provided there are strict safety controls in place, without fear of breaching their Liquor Licence. The

Department may, however, wish to consider introducing a lower age limit for these events.

Family functions

The Council agrees that the current law should be reviewed to facilitate under 18's, when attending family events in licensed premises. However, a family function must be defined in the legislation to avoid any potential ambiguity for enforcing authorities.

Young people in sporting clubs

The Council welcomed proposals in the 2016 Bill that young people be permitted to remain in the bar area of a registered club until 11.00 pm during the summer months or to attend an awards ceremony on one occasion in a calendar year. The Department may wish to consider that competitions and ceremonies are not just confined to the summer months and clubs may have more than one awards night per year.

Restriction on advertising in supermarkets and off-sales

The Council continues to support the 2016 proposal and considers it appropriate that, with the current societal problems with alcohol, advertising and promotions be restricted from view in places and environments where children are likely to be present.

Advertising of functions in clubs

The Council remains supportive of the proposal in the 2016 Bill that a registered club will be allowed to advertise any function outside a club premises where the advertisement clearly states that only members of the club and their guests may attend.

Provision of entertainment in restaurants

There is a need to provide a diverse range of entertainment venues and care should be taken not to affect the current ability for restaurants to provide entertainment as an ancillary means of enhancing their offer.

However, there have been significant problems in the past associated with restaurants operating as a bar and providing entertainment when they only have the benefit of a restaurant licence thereby effectively using the premises as a nightclub. The Council would welcome measures to prevent this occurring. It may be that more detailed conditions could be attached to such licences to prevent this use and introduce a power to immediately

suspend a licence for a limited period where these conditions appear to have been persistently breached rather than having to apply for a Court Order. Such an immediate deterrent will be much more effective in ceasing the unauthorised use. As the premises is unlikely to hold valid insurance for the provision of entertainment other than as ancillary to the provision of food, the Council is of the view that such a legislative provision would be appropriate in the interests of public safety.

Self service

The Council agrees that self-service of alcoholic drinks for immediate consumption should be regulated.

Our view is that this type of self-service in a bar or club environment does not encourage patrons to alternate their alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks and does not promote responsible drinking. Bar staff cannot monitor when individuals have consumed too much alcohol and therefore are not in a position to refuse service.

Codes of practice

The Council agrees that the Department should formally approve a Code of Practice in relation to the display or sale of alcohol, as well as any activities designed to promote the sale of alcohol. Whilst the 2016 Bill requires a court to be satisfied that a licensee is aware of the Code upon the grant, transfer or renewal of a Licence it does not refer to protection orders. Nor did it make it an offence to fail to comply with any such approved Code.

Whilst this is welcomed in principle, the Council remains concerned that the fact it is not an offence to fail to comply with the Code will render it meaningless and that PSNI and others will seek to enforce this Code through the prism of Entertainments Licensing. It is imperative that some statutory force is afforded to such a Code, which should be written by the Department, in conjunction with both PSNI and local councils and in consultation with the relevant trade bodies.

Remote sale of alcohol

The Council agrees that clarity is required. The Council would like to reiterate its previous comments around the delivery of alcohol to young people and the need for the proposed additional safeguards including prohibiting under 18s from receiving any deliveries of alcoholic drinks and requiring proof of age to be shown and recorded upon delivery as proposed in the 2016 Bill.

Loyalty Schemes

The fact is, even among supermarkets, it's not completely clear how effective loyalty cards are. Asda and Waitrose, for instance, manage to attract a loyal following without them. Unless there is clear evidence that changing the law in this regard will have any significant impact on alcohol misuse or alcohol related harm there would seem little need at present to make such a change.

Other aspects of liquor licensing law that should be changed

There are two additional areas which the Council feels should be changed.

Controlling wider patron dispersal – At present there is a significant issue around liquor licencing, the hours of operation and the management of patrons spilling out on the street in the wider university and Lower Ormeau Road area. The problem is exacerbated by fast food outlets staying open until 4 am to accommodate lingering patrons which perpetuates the noise, littering and other anti-social behaviour issues. This is having a significant impact on those local neighbourhoods. The inability to effectively deal with these issues demonstrates, in the Council's view, that current licensing legislation is not fit for purpose. These issues cannot be dealt with through the prism of entertainment licensing as the majority of the issues occur in public rather than on the premises. It is essential that provisions are introduced to allow a wider control of patron dispersal where it is considered necessary to do so.

The Council is of the view that it is important to look for innovative ways to feed community views into the liquor licensing process. This could be, for example, requiring operators to carry out a community impact assessment where their premises have been identified as potentially being linked to anti-social behaviour or if their premises is located within a certain area of the city in which such behaviour is considered prevalent. Furthermore, all operators could be required to submit an anti-social behaviour plan which must be approved by PSNI in consultation with local councils. There should be an express legislative requirement that these assessments and plans must assess the cumulative impact of their premises together with other licensed premises within the local area.

Irresponsible drinks promotions – Drinks promotions continue to be prevalent at certain times of the year at events such as students' Fresher's, Halloween etc. These promotions have the potential to result in increased antisocial activity in residential areas within the city and impacts on the wider community living

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within those areas and risk the health and wellbeing of those consuming the alcohol.

The introduction of effective management and controls of drinks promotions would be welcomed as part of the review of liquor licensing laws, with the ability to ban in certain areas in which such promotions would be likely to result in anti-social behaviour.

3.3 Financial & Resource Implications

None.

3.4 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 16th January, 2020.

Minutes - Active Belfast Ltd. Board

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Ltd. Board of 20th January, 2020.

Minutes of Meeting of Working Group on the Climate Crisis

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 13th January, 2020.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group of 8th January, 2020.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Girdwood – Councillor Dorrian

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Dorrian requested the Committee to consider the potential closing of the gates at the Girdwood Hub on a more permanent basis, when the Centre itself wasn't open, due to ongoing anti-social behaviour in and around the site.

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After discussion, it was agreed that a report in relation to the issues raised be submitted to the North Area Working Group for consideration.

Regeneration Powers

In the absence of Councillor Nicholl, Councillor Long requested the Committee to consider writing to the Minister for the Department of Communities requesting that she consider again the transfer of regeneration powers to local councils.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Chairperson