

# **Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Friday, 19th June, 2020

## **MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

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

Also attended: Councillors Kyle and McMullan.

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

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in respect of item 3 (a) Recovery Programme during discussion in respect of the possible weekend closure of the Ormeau Road, in that his employer RSUA had been lobbying for the closure of the Ormeau Road and he left the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following 4 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 as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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**Financial Reporting - Quarter 4 2019/20**

The Committee considered a report which presented the 2019/20 year end management accounts position for the Council, it included a detailed explanation of each of the relevant indicators and the outturn for the year.

The Director of Finance and Resources reported that the departmental year-end forecast was an underspend of £304k which represented a variance of 0.2% of the annual net expenditure budget. The district rate forecast from Land and Property Services (LPS) was a clawback of £1.1 million.

The Director reported that, in financial terms, it had been another difficult year for the Council. In the previous quarterly update, departments had forecast an underspend of £764k. Continuing budgetary pressures on cleansing, waste management and the Zoo and the impact of Covid 19 had all led to additional funding requirements which had significantly reduced this forecast.

As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, the Council had made a number of operational decisions. The Director explained that whilst departments had absorbed some costs, a further £234k had been identified that would need to be funded from available balances.

In terms of the District Rate, the outturn was a clawback of £1.13m. The Director explained that whilst the impact of Covid19 on the 2019/20 rate income had been minimal, the impact on 2020/21 and future years was likely to be significant. In addition, the economic uncertainty facing each of the sectors making up the Council's rate base made forecasting rate income difficult. He confirmed that Council officers would work with the LPS throughout 2020/21 to carry out ongoing analysis of rate income forecasts as information became available and would continue to provide Members with regular updates on the progress.

The Director detailed that the general reserves balance at the end of 2019/20 was £12.90m and the specified reserves year-end balance was £14.7m. He added that prudent levels of reserves for the Council was considered to be about £13m. He explained that the specified reserves presented were as at 31st March 2020 and that adjustments would be made at the start of the new financial year, therefore, the revised specified reserves would be presented to committee at its meeting in July 2020.

The Director further advised that, having received more detail on REVAL2020 and the Executive striking its budget and setting the Regional Rate at the end of March 2020, the Council now estimated that the actual bills would be approximately £400k higher than had been included in the Council's estimates. As a result, the Members were asked to approve the creation of a specified reserve of £400k to offset the increase which would then be factored into the estimate process for 2021/22.

The Committee agreed the 2019/20 balances and the creation of a specified reserve to meet the shortfall in the budget for the Council's rates bill of £400k.

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**Finance Update**

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Finance and Resources on the Council's reserves and the financial sustainability of the Council in light of the Covid 19 pandemic. This provided a more detailed explanation in respect of each of the relevant indicators and considered the potential long-term implications for the Council. It also included detail in respect of the mitigation measures that had already been implemented and included information in respect of the following proposed Finance Strategy which recommended an approach to securing the finances of the Council, with general reserves only to be used as a last resort:

- To secure financial support from central government through:
  - DFC support for income (loss £4m secured for Q1);
  - DFC Covid-19 community support funding;
  - Claim for increased waste costs from DEARA;
  - Use of Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance;
  - Use of Covid-19 Job Retention Scheme; and
  - Lobby DOF for rates income guarantee based on the EPP.
- To balance the deficit as far as possible through savings in the 2020/21 budget by:
  - Identifying and capturing savings associated with the closure of facilities and withdrawal of services;
  - Assessing the financial impact of re-opening facilities and re-instating services;
  - Re-alignment of budgets to revised priorities;
  - Implementing strict vacancy control measures;
  - Exercising stringent expenditure controls; and
  - Reviewing capital expenditure.
- Through the use of balance sheet funds (CCIF £14.35m, Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund £8m);
- The use of specified reserves (14.7m); and
- The use of general reserves (£12.9m).

The Committee was provided with a detailed analysis of the gross loss of income from across the Council's various revenue streams. It included specific detail in respect of a 3 month rent holiday that had previously been agreed for all Council tenants for Quarter 1 (April – June), a loss of income of £1.5m. The Members were asked to note that the majority of other public and private sector landlords had continued to require payment in full, unless agreement had been reached on deferring payment. The Director reported that this was not a sustainable position for the Council and it was therefore recommended that from Quarter 2 the Council would resume full invoicing for rents.

The Director also drew the Members' attention to specific detail in respect of the additional expenditure associated with the Council's response to the Covid 19 pandemic. At this stage, the expenditure related to the additional costs associated with the delivery of

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critical services, the establishment of the community hub and the facilitation of home working. The Director explained that, as the Council moved to re-opening, additional costs would be incurred to secure a safe and secure working environment and to facilitate a sustained period of a significant number of staff home working. As a result, a further estimated £1m would be required for digital support to enable continued service delivery both on site and remotely.

The Members also were presented with the current cost of the Community Response to date and the potential cost of the City re-opening. The Committee noted that there had been significant costs associated with the increased waste management costs and advised that a claim had already been submitted to DEARA to recover this expenditure.

The Committee was also advised that the reopening of leisure facilities was also likely to be complex and costly as it would require a phased approach.

In addition, the Waterfront and the Ulster Hall had both forecast significant losses due to the closure of its facilities. The Director requested that, as the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee was currently not meeting, the Council would issue a Comfort letter to Barclays Bank in respect of its overdraft facility.

The Director advised that in respect of rates income there was an obvious concern about a loss of income for the Council in future financial years and he outlined the importance of local government continuing to lobby central government for the rates in the next two years to be based on the 2020/21 EPP.

The Director concluded by detailing the mitigation measures that had already been implemented by the Council which included, funding from the Department for Communities, use of the Scheme of Emergency Financial Assistance, use of the Furlough Scheme and departmental savings. He advised that more information in respect of the expenditure controls to be implemented by the Council would be presented at the next meeting which would include potential savings from employee costs.

The Committee agreed:

- the proposed finance strategy to manage the impact of Covid-19 and noted that a financial update would be provided to the Committee on a monthly basis rather than quarterly;
- that the Council would resume full invoicing for rents for all tenants, recommencing Quarter 2;
- that the Council would issue a Comfort letter to Barclays Bank in respect of the overdraft facility for the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd;
- noted that the financial impact of the re-opening of leisure centres and potential saving from employee costs would be considered at the July meeting; and
- noted that the expenditure controls to be exercised by the Council would also be presented at the July meeting for information purposes.

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**Core Multi Annual Funding - Events and Festivals**

The Committee considered a report which detailed the current status of events and festivals, as funded through the Core Multi Annual Grants, in the context of Covid-19 and which provided additional information in order to agree an approach to funding for the remainder of the financial year, taking into consideration the following factors:

- Health and Safety: The 5 step pathway to recovery published by the NI Executive;
- Financial: the implications of Covid-19 on Council's financial position and need to make savings where possible;
- Strategic: Immediate impact and long-term resilience of the festival and events sector especially in relation to their role in city recovery; and
- Reputational: Council response in the context of other public funder and approaches in other cities.

The Director of Economic Development outlined the important role that Events and Festivals would play in contributing to the city's recovery. He advised that Council officers would work with city partners, including Visit Belfast to ensure that the proposed investment was maximised with this activity marketed as part of the re-opening and recovery of the city. In effect, this would become the cultural strand of the recovery programme, with opportunities to enhance animation of city centre and neighbourhoods.

The Committee was advised that current projections indicated that key tourism markets would return by 2023 and there was therefore a need to ensure that the city could deliver highly visible and strategic activity to attract the market.

Several Members referred to the arts and culture sector and noted the valuable contribution it made to Northern Ireland and the need to support it over this difficult period. It was noted that the arts sector often contributed to the health and wellbeing of the community and helped to bring people together. The Members expressed their desire to provide assistance to the sector, to help organisations to find different ways of engaging with their audiences and to ensure that arts services were not withdrawn from the public at this crucial time.

The Economic Development Officer provided an assurance that Council officers would continue to work with the sector and where possible would involve them in Council events.

The Committee noted the potential financial implications and agreed the allocation of funding and the recommended contribution towards programming based on the assessment of the information provided by each organisation, as detailed at Appendix 1.

**Support to Community Partners Summer 2020**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services presented the Committee with a report that considered the realignment of staff resources and funding streams in order to better meet the emerging community need over the summer period.

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The Director referred to the valuable work already undertaken, with Council officers having worked directly with local and city wide organisations to ensure that those who were most vulnerable had been assisted. He advised that there had been significant learning as a result of the COVID-19 Emergency response both internally within Council and based on feedback from community partners and advised that this had been and would continue to be factored into any future decision making.

The Committee then considered the previously scheduled summer 2020 community provision grants programmes and activities and the associated funding. It was noted that due to the current situation that the proposed programmes and activities would not be able to take place in their current form. The Members also noted that many of the programmes and activities were match funded by central government and that there had been very positive engagement with central government funders in supporting continuing this approach and they were awaiting a formal request from the Council to proceed.

The Committee also considered in detail the many emerging needs within communities and how these could best be addressed. The Director detailed that it was proposed that a two strand grant programme (strategic funding and micro funding) would be immediately established, it would be aimed at supporting both strategic community partners and grassroots organisations. This programme would be funded using the £636,097 of community provision funding not being distributed up to end September 2020.

The Committee agreed:

- to use the available £636,097 from previously scheduled grant programmes for 01/04/20 – 30/09/20 to meet ongoing emerging needs as part of the COVID 19 recovery;
- to grant delegated authority to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to liaise with and make the necessary proposals to the Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the Shared City Partnership to secure their buy-in; and
- that allocation of the funding would be as follows:

**Strand 1 – Strategic Funding of Key Area Based Organisations**

**Budget:** £486,000

- 50% by population to reflect that Covid-19 need can be measured through deprivation; and
- 50% by Super Output Area 2017 Measures of Multiple Deprivation.

**Process:**

- Allocated to those key organisations, who had shown a track record of managing similar work;
- This would be a direct award (not an open call);
- Organisations would be required to submit proposals based on the identified priority areas above;
- Organisations who received funding would provide strategic leadership and support to local groups in the planning and delivery of services in the identified areas above; and

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- Support from Area Support Teams within Council with documentation, delivery and evaluation.

**Note:** To facilitate agility in supporting the community Strand 1 would work with the 9. community partners previously identified as part of the COVID-19 Community Support Funding. However, recognising these organisations might not necessarily have expertise or knowledge in the priority areas identified above, they would be required as part of their funding proposal to establish the necessary consortiums and networks for effective delivery. If they were not in a position to do that, Officers will work within each part of the city to identify other appropriate strategic community partners. The proportion of funding would remain unaffected by any change in strategic community partners.

**Strand 2 - Micro Grants (For delivery up to end September 2020)**

**Budget:** £150,000

Maximum allocation per organisation: £1,000 per organisation.

**Process:**

- Rolling open call on Council website/social media and promoted through existing community networks;
- Focus on local delivery over the summer period in the identified priority areas above;
- Application process to be easy with quick turnaround to facilitate delivery; and
- Support from Area Support Teams in Council with documentation/delivery/evaluation.

**Strategic Issues/Belfast Agenda**

**Recovery Programme**

The Committee received a presentation from the Chief Executive which detailed the key elements of the Council's recovery plan in response to the Covid 19 Pandemic, the details of which had also been included in the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to inform Elected Members of the high level proposals that the Council is both delivering and coordinating on behalf of other partners in order to support the city and its communities to recover from the Covid - 19 pandemic.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to:**

- (i) **note that the Committee will receive a presentation on the key elements of the Council's recovery plan for the city as set out within this report;**
- (ii) **note the immediate focus and energy on supporting the safe reopening of the city**

- (iii) note the reopening of St George's Market on Friday 3rd July and Smithfield Market on Monday 22 June; and
- (iv) note work is underway with central government to identify potential funding available to support recovery efforts.

**3.0 Main report**

**Context**

- 3.1** In the midst of the pandemic, authorities are rightly focused on minimising the human cost, providing relief to their communities and delivering essential day-to-day services. Another major challenge for the Council and city partners is to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their local economies, so that businesses can once again thrive and provide employment opportunities and vibrancy to local communities and the city centre.
- 3.2** It is evident that there will be lasting structural changes to the city's economy, its infrastructure, its environment and to its communities, and will likely result in financial and economic uncertainty for some time. To thrive, we must reimagine the future now and act together to deliver it.
- 3.3** The crisis has shone a spotlight on vulnerabilities within key systems and the structures of our economy and society, however, some benefits will be felt by the city from the behaviour change required by the response to the crisis (such as less car usage, flexible working arrangements, more community interaction, support for front line workers). It is important that we understand what these are, and how feasible it is to sustain these behaviours, appropriately, and over time.
- 3.4** The Covid 19 crisis presents a reset moment for Belfast's economy and society, and whilst we will seek to build upon our strengths as a city, we will seek to be innovative, explore the art of the possibility and try to mobilise and reposition for a sustainable and inclusive future.
- 3.5** The Covid-19 crisis has mobilised and energised the community and voluntary sector who have been providing community support over the past 12 weeks. Knowledge of the sector, relationships and networks have strengthened significantly in a short space of time and there is a real opportunity to build upon this and reimagine our neighbourhoods as the city plans its response, rebuild and recovery.

**NI Executive – five phase plan**

- 3.6 The overarching context for the council interventions is the ‘Pathway to Recovery’ issued by the Northern Ireland Executive on 12 May 2020. This incorporates a five step decision-making framework towards relieving all of restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The framework covers a number of areas including retail; work; education, family and community; travel and sport, culture and leisure activities.
- 3.7 The council is only one of a number of organisations that has a stake in the recovery planning. While we have a direct delivery role in some areas, we also have a significant place shaping and leadership role in ensuring that there is a resourced and coordinated response to the recovery plans. In this context, we have been leading on an integrated approach to city recovery with the key government partners and wider statutory, community and business partners.
- 3.8 The recent announcements made by the NI Executive has heightened the urgency in relation to bringing forward proposals and practical interventions (e.g. introducing social distance measures, signage and wayfinding etc) to support the safe reopening of the city.
- 3.9 This report outlines the immediate work and planning underway as well as the medium-longer term ambitions to support the rebuild and recovery of the city in a sustainable way.

**Guiding Principles**

- 3.10 Officers from across the Council have been working to develop a Council recovery plan which is underpinned through a set of guiding principles.
  - Ensuring public health and safety
  - Adopting a phased and managed approach to the transition through emergency response, rebuild and sustained recovery.
  - Adopting a place based approach to the re-opening of our neighbourhoods.
  - Accelerating economic recovery and enabling businesses to reopen effectively
  - Accelerating elements of the Belfast Bold Vision, which seeks to take forward a shared approach to creating a more attractive, accessible, safe & vibrant city centre.
  - Enhancing civic pride to attract local people and visitors

**Council's Approach to Recovery**

- 3.11 At the meeting of the Party Group Leaders on 5 June 2020, a report was presented to all members, setting out the proposed approach to city recovery on a phased basis, namely Response: Rebuild: Recovery. This acknowledged the need for an immediate response – which – kicked in immediately following lockdown – as well as the requirement to rebuild a new economy in a very different economic climate, maintaining a focus on sustainable and inclusive growth.
- 3.12 In addition to the phased approach, a series of complementary interventions are to be delivered in each of the phases, across a number of work areas, namely:
  - (i) City Reopening
  - (ii) Social and community development
  - (iii) Economic development
  - (iv) Environmental development
  - (v) Digital transformation, Innovation and Smart Belfast
- 3.13 Additionally, there is significant programme of work underway to support these interventions and ensure organisational and operational readiness in terms of our staff, services, assets, facilities and processes.
- 3.14 While the final shape of the recovery plans is still emerging, and will clearly be shaped and informed by Elected Members, some emerging areas of work and initial emerging plans on a page is attached at Appendix 1. The following sections of the report outlines the emerging programme of work for Members' consideration.
- 3.15 (i) **Reopening the City**

City & Neighbourhood Services, in conjunction with officers from City Regeneration and Development, Economic Development and Corporate Communications are progressing the delivery of a number of initiatives that will support the re-opening phase of recovery, while also contributing to longer term regeneration objectives for the city that will ensure sustainable and resilient recovery.
- 3.16 It is proposed to reopen St George's on Friday 3rd July and Smithfield Market on Monday 22 June this takes account of traders views and demand and the mobilisation work required at both venues to ensure social distancing measures are in place.

3.17 The immediate focus of reopening the city is being taken forward in conjunction with key city statutory and business partners, and it is this collaboration and political will that is required to re-establish confidence in the city to support business to reopen and to contribute to the longer term resilience and inclusive growth of the city. There are a number of strands of work being taken forward in parallel including:

3.18 Clean, Green, Attractive and Safe

- Working with DfI and DfC to provide additional public spaces through the re-allocation of road and civic spaces to facilitate social distancing, queueing and for the provision of businesses to operate effectively outside their own footprint.
- Providing enhanced city cleansing regimes focusing on cleaner city streets, touch points and public infrastructure such as benches, bins and public toilets;
- Imaginative use of open and civic spaces particularly those in public ownership to support retail and hospitality sectors.
- Consideration of temporary *use of public spaces in the short-term for cafes, restaurants and outdoor space to facilitate SDM*.
- Providing city ambassadors to provide information to the public and to assist in managing public spaces and pinch points.
- Ensuring the continued consideration and delivery of infrastructure & measures to take account of equality for vulnerable users of the city.
- Expanding this approach to arterial routes, urban villages and local communities;
- Marketing and branding to provide clear messaging and city marketing, implementing a city confidence mark (Appendix 2) and a unified approach to the visual quality of the temporary interventions.

3.19 Enabling access and supporting connectivity

- Consideration of adopting our current Belfast Bikes model and reinstating the scheme with initial focus on prioritising the busiest sites and introduce enhancing cleansing and sanitising regime at doc stations.
- Provision by DFI of temporary pop-up cycle lanes and additional cycling infrastructure and storage facilities to encourage sustainable transport and to trial potential longer term interventions, the implementation of 20mph zones, and working closely with Translink to ensure the delivery of an effective public transportation system;

- Progressing with the work of the Bolder Vision for Belfast Connectivity Study; promoting active and sustainable travel, removing severance to neighbourhoods and the domination of the car, and providing a healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environment.
- This work will also enable the delivery of the ambitions of the DfI Minister, and council officers are working closely with the newly appointed DfI Walking and Cycling Champion to develop short, medium and long term interventions to realise these ambitions.

**3.20 (ii) Supporting and Enabling Community Recovery**

- 3.21 While there clearly remains an immediate need to continue to provide emergency support, looking ahead it will be important that we work collaboratively and harness the energy of our communities and city partners, ensuring greater co-ordination and innovation in addressing the specific issues that communities face across the city. As we move forward, there is a need to build community confidence, capacity and resilience across neighbourhoods through a range of programmes of support.
- 3.22 The benefit and potential impact of this approach is clearly demonstrated through the community response hub established by the Council to support residents during the coronavirus pandemic. Working with DFC and a range of community, voluntary and statutory partners the hub provides assistance to Belfast residents, including the coordination and distribution of 40,000+ food parcels to shielded and vulnerable people across the city. In addition, we provide advice on jobs and benefits, practical assistance such as collecting prescriptions and offering emotional support to anyone who may be feeling anxious during these uncertain times.
- 3.23 The community hub is also helping to coordinate the distribution of £965,000 funding (£479,300 from the Council and £485,700 from the Department for Communities) to support vulnerable individuals and families within communities across the city.

**Area Working Model & Developing Area Recovery Plans**

- 3.24 Close ongoing engagement throughout the COVID-19 response has demonstrated the value of our newly established area-working model and has resulted in strong and meaningful relationships between Council officers and community partners. As we move forward, there is a need to build upon this, capturing emerging needs and priorities within Area Recovery Plans, jointly developed and implemented with partners, which inform future investments, utilisation of assets, service provision and thereby support

**community recovery and the delivery of improved outcomes for people at a local and citywide level.**

The strength of Belfast's vibrant communities and supporting sectors has been at the forefront in many respects, with many examples of partnership working to address urgent community needs, in localities and across the city. There has been significant learning as a result of the Covid-19 emergency response both internally within Council and based on feedback from community partners, which should be considered as we plan our recovery:

- Ability to be responsive to need and empowering communities;
- Meaningful and highly effective relationships between Council and community partners to aid agile service delivery;
- Creating opportunities for engaging/supporting more volunteering in communities;
- Ability to share information quickly between different statutory and C&V organisations;
- Opportunity to embed area-working concept both internally/externally with partners.

**3.25 The emerging recovery plan also seeks to explore and accelerate key enabling and supporting interventions including, for example:**

- Explore opportunities to align grant funding streams to support recovery efforts subject to members consideration and approval
- We need to collectively understand community capacity and structures and how partners in the community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors will need to be supported to maximise their contribution to community recovery and wellbeing improvement.
- Maintain focus over the coming months to enhance our community-services provision.
- Working with partners to explore how we can maximise the social value of our procurement spend and encourage 'buying local' initiatives.
- Implementation focused employability and skills programmes including, reskilling and employment academies to enable local people to access job opportunities.
- Support local enterprise/business models including social enterprises and co-operatives.
- Supporting local tourism development across the city.
- Engage with Departments, SEUPB (Peace Plus), and others to develop our connected communities' pathways model.

- Continue to work with DFC and other partners to overcome obstacles to housing development across tenures and to identify financial models to unlock housing market.
- Work with partners to develop a long term revised and sustainable funding model for VCSE sector.

**3.26 (iii) Economic Recovery**

Officers have been revising some of the planned activity to support new start-ups and existing small businesses as well as our employability and skills support. This work has not only been about re-focusing some areas of activity but also reviewing how the activity is delivered, given the inability to undertake any face-to-face engagement. Emerging areas of work in order to take account of the economic changes include:

**3.27 Response Phase (first six months)**

- Focus will be on job retention and business survival
- Pivoting our business support offer to include a greater focus on support for digital transformation and business resilience/recasting business models and will develop a supporting information campaign to increase awareness of the offer.
- Developing a new business information line (launched 8 June 2020) to support businesses that have any queries around re-opening in particular – engagement between environmental health and economic development teams to ensure a coherent approach.
- Seeking to secure additional support from the Northern Ireland Executive to support businesses to re-open safely, particularly retail businesses.
- Prioritising the mapping and zoning of the city centre and the arterial routes to identify targeted interventions required to support business recovery while ensuring that social distancing can be managed in the public realm.
- Developing and implementing an enhanced cleansing regime and develop signage and wayfinding information. This will include the ‘confidence mark’ to be rolled out.
- Exploring the potential of deploying ‘business ambassadors’ in core areas as a first point of contact for the public, providing information on issues such as operating times; additional cleansing provision and provision of sanitising equipment; specific measures being undertaken to help the public stay safe
- Working with DfI to explore opportunities to undertake environmental enhancements in the public realm, and to deploy additional street furniture to potentially facilitate

- access to additional facilities for local businesses, taking account of social distancing both in-store and on the street.
- Working with businesses and city partners to consider imaginative uses of open and civic spaces, taking account of the need for ongoing management.
- Exploring opportunities to enhance access and connectivity to our key retail and business locations and work with businesses to co-ordinate opening hours etc, taking account of ongoing challenges with public transport
- Maintaining focus on educational underachievement, we will work with the Department for Education and the Education Authority to re-scope our GCSE support programme, in line with the changed school timetable.
- Re-scoping employability interventions to enable remote delivery and to take account of the changing demand across sectors.

**3.28 Rebuild phase (up to 12 months)**

- Development of a targeted marketing campaign for ‘staycations’ – focusing on the domestic audience – working in collaboration with Visit Belfast, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland
- Exploring the potential for an employer incentive scheme to focus on the long-term unemployed/economically inactive. This is likely to focus on key and emerging growth sectors.
- Ongoing flexible support programme for business resilience: scaling-up of existing support, with move away from job creation to job retention in first instance. Ongoing focus on digital support, including alignment to emerging City Deal Digital strand.
- Development work to re-model business start-up support: assuming an increase in demand as a result of redundancies–packaging support including services and facilities at the Innovation Factory. Also expanding current start-up support programme for economically inactive, working in conjunction with DfC.
- Investment in digital re-reskilling programme: developing targeted initiatives across the board to take account of general technical skills as well as vocational-specific skills, in line with the changing job market.
- Continue support for social enterprises and cooperatives, taking account of reductions in grant funding and supporting community organisations to explore new business operating models.
- Working with DfE and colleges to support and encourage apprenticeships, particularly in new vocational areas, linked to the city’s growth.

- **Developing a culture and tourism recovery plan – ensuring that the economy recovery work is balanced with investment in quality of life for residents and attraction for visitors.**
- **Revamping the employment academies programme to target new growth areas including logistics, green recovery and upskilling in social care.**
- **Scaling up educational underachievement investment support, with a view to reducing the attainment gap for young people in our schools.**
- **Working with DfC to mobilise the principles around the Employability NI model, focusing on the ‘local labour market partnerships’–this means taking an agreed approach to helping move people back into employment, ensuring that a focus is maintained on address inequalities in the labour market.**
- **Informing and shaping the regional economic strategy**
- **Building capacity among local businesses to avail of City Deal support and to inform future delivery.**

**3.29 Recovery phase (up to 36 months)**

- **Working on a long-term restructuring/reset of the economy – to be informed by the work of various institutions and areas of work including the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission; City Deal; Climate Commission; Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor.**
- **Move forward on the plans for development and delivery of the proposals for 2023 and the UNESCO City of Music.**
- **Supporting delivery of the Belfast Destination Hub and wider City Deal projects – including alignment of skills and business engagement opportunities.**
- **Developing a new model of business tourism, taking account of changing patterns of attendance and engagement (integrating digital and onsite conferencing).**
- **Developing a long-term tourism development plan for the city including economic modelling, experience-based product development and local tourism framework.**
- **Developing a new model for the delivery of business start-up and growth, ensuring enhanced co-ordination and leading to the creation of more innovative and export-focused businesses.**
- **Leading the work of the local labour market partnership to ensure co-ordination of employability and skills investment, helping more people into better jobs.**
- **Progressing the Strategic Sites Assessment work to help deliver on increased city centre living and wider housing and city growth ambitions.**

- Exploring with partners the potential to bring forward proposals around potential free port. Working with the Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner and the Digital and Innovation Partnership to prepare a joint response to the UK government consultation on the potential to establish freeports, that are innovative hubs, boost global trade, attract inward investment and increase productivity.

3.30 Environmental Recovery

The current pandemic has demonstrated the importance of good planning for major risks to our city. One such risk is climate change. To this end, we've set up an internal Climate Plan Programme Board, chaired by Commissioner for Resilience, Grainia Long. This group will be responsible for working together to take forward our work on sustainability and climate.

- 3.31 The city's draft Resilience Strategy has a vision to 'transition Belfast to an inclusive, low-carbon climate resilient economy', so it's critical that council plays its part. The programme board brings together colleagues from across council to agree ways to improve the organisation's impact on the environment and prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- 3.32 As a Council we are adapting to a 'new normal', we want to rebuild and recover in a more sustainable and inclusive way. Being resilient to climate change, reducing our carbon footprint stimulating a sustainable economy is going to be critical and are key priorities moving forward. Some areas of focus include:

- Explore with partners the potential to bring forward a housing retrofit programme to address energy efficiency and fuel poverty.
- Accelerate the development of a climate mitigation and adaptation plan and identify and progress immediate quick wins.
- Develop options paper to minimise the impact of air and noise pollution post Covid-19 to inform the development of a new Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast.
- Incentivise reduced car use, promote & support use of public transport.
- Accelerate site assessment in support of the One Million trees programme in context of wider NI Executive commitment to 18 million trees.
- Commence and complete energy review for Council.
- Work with partners to explore opportunities to accelerate sustainable/smart transport and mobility programmes (including electric vehicle infrastructure).

3.33 **(v) Digital Transformation, Innovation and Smart Belfast**

Digital innovation has been critical in addressing many of the challenges emerging from the pandemic. We must acknowledge the role of the public sector in helping to support local innovation. It is also important that we build upon the digital and innovative strengths of both our universities and the active role of their new (and existing) research centres. as well as the programmes of work linked to Smart Belfast, Belfast Region City Deal and the recently appointed Digital Commissioner for the city

- 3.34 The Covid-19 crisis has not negated the economic and technological challenges previously identified by partners. In fact the crisis has amplified these challenges and accelerated the time scales against which they need to be addressed.
- 3.35 There exists an opportunity to accelerate elements of the city's digital and innovation roadmap and seek to bring forward a pipeline of catalytic projects (e.g. Innovation/smart districts, potential free super ports, a revised approach to supporting tourism and green stimulus through use of new technologies) that will strengthen the city's foundations and support our recovery efforts going forward.
- 3.36 Working with partners, the Council seeks to accelerate opportunities emerging from the Belfast Region City Deal and Smart Belfast to support our recovery efforts. We are investing in digital reskilling, upskilling and business transformation initiatives which is crucial to ensure that all of society benefits from this investment and opportunity. In conjunction with partners we have designed an ambition programme that will:
- Proactively address digital skills gaps experienced within the general economy to optimise economic recovery (targeted reskilling programmes)
  - Support businesses to utilise digital technology to adopt business model; minimise the economic impact of Covid-19 by helping them to normalise their business operations, where possible, through remote working and developing approaches to generate income i.e. e-commerce.
  - Develop the digital skills capacity of residents to improve their future employability and create a more resilient workforce aligned to an increasingly digitalised economy.
  - Targeting approaches to ensure those sectors and/or communities/client groups at most risk are prioritised and supported through ours actions.

**3.37 City Regeneration and Development**

While the full impact of Covid-19 is yet to be fully understood, council officers are continuing to engage with a range of stakeholders to progress previously agreed priorities and programmes of work to establish the city to continue to grow in line with our inclusive growth agenda. A number of key strands of work are already established that will facilitate effective recovery and position the city for longer term sustainable, inclusive growth. These work strands will be continually reviewed and adapted as required, and include;

**3.38 City Centre Living**

Prioritising the delivery of the Strategic Sites Assessment Phase 1 to bring forward residential-led, mixed use, mixed tenure opportunity development sites within the city centre as previously approved by Council in December 2019 and 2020. Officers continue to work to bring forward the first opportunity as part of Phase 1 of the SSA work Phase 2 of the SSA work aims to identify residential led opportunities across the city wide public sector estate.

**3.39 Progress the Future City Centre Programme**

In February 2020, Members of the CG&R committee approved the emerging ‘Future City Centre Programme’ (FCC) which builds on the key findings and recommendations outlined in the Belfast City Centre Retail Analysis, and aims to create a dynamic and experiential destination for users of the city centre and bolster Belfast as NI’s dominant retail and leisure destination. The Programme included a number of priority themes including Physical Regeneration & Environmental Improvements, City Centre Vitality, Positioning the City Centre to Compete, Addressing Vacancies and Policy & Legislation

**3.40 The programme is however being recast in the context of Covid-19 to ensure that it addresses not only challenges to the retail and leisure sector but the city centre as a whole. Some specific projects being progressed include:**

- Public realm catalyst projects- historic developer contributions have been committed to 5 city centre streets through the 5C's scheme (design team appointed), while other catalyst projects are being developed in conjunction with DfC and DfI including the Fredrick Street, York Street Junction, and Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) phases 3 & 5 (design team procurement commenced May 2020).

- Entries & Lanes- work is continuing to transform a number of city centre pedestrian lanes. The work, due to complete late summer 2020, will enhance permeability and wayfinding through the city centre and promote local heritage and culture.
- Cathedral Gardens - work is continuing on site to deliver a multi-functional family-friendly pop up park and is expected to complete during summer 2020.
- Lighting Strategy - work is almost complete on a Lighting Strategy for Belfast which will guide future delivery of all types of lighting across the city. A number of innovative lighting pilot projects have also been designed, with installation due to complete summer 2020.
- Addressing vacancies- mapping out and tracking vacancy levels across the primary retail core, and bringing forward proposals for meanwhile use to support independents, community infrastructure, and the cultural and arts sector; as well as supporting the longer term establishment of a retail, leisure and tourism narrative to understand the emerging market behaviours and specifically the medium and long term impact of Covid-19.
- Digital Innovation- it is recognised that digital innovation is likely to be a key enabler of recovery and consideration is being given to how data, analytics, complementary digital platforms and marketing can be used to aid short-long term recovery for businesses.

**3.41 Financial and resource implications**

Members will note that the Department for Communities intend to shortly bring forward a ‘Revitalisation Plus’ £10million regional fund to enable councils to bring forward specific proposals to support city centre recovery. Whilst the specifics of the fund is still to be released council officers are working with departmental colleagues to identify the potential scale of funding for Belfast and the potential to align with the emerging recovery plans outlined above.

**3.42 Officers are also continuing to lobby the Executive Departments for funding to assist with recovery and in particular to align with funding that is available for local authorities in England. This includes the UK £50million High Street Fund to support the safe reopening of high streets. The UK government has also recently made an urgent call for ideas of ‘shovel ready’ infrastructure projects in England to aid economic recovery. Suggestions for projects include modernising town centres, road, rail and cycle infrastructure and skills and training.**

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**3.43 When further clarity becomes available on funding to be made available a report will be brought back to Committee for Members consideration. Additional Council funding to support the recovery plan will need to be considered as part of the proposed financing strategy which is also being considered at this meeting.**

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

**Equality screening will be undertaken as part of the ongoing workplans and delivery activity.”**

During discussion it was suggested by a Member that the Council would write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) seeking it to expedite the temporary closure of Donegal Place, Castle Place, Church Lane, Brunswick Street and James Street South to help enable outside hospitality and to assist retailers.

Several Members concurred and it was further suggested that that consideration would be given to extending this also to the Ormeau Road and to further exploring the weekend closure of other arterial routes throughout the city, whilst considering the introduction of resident's car parking permits and engaging with stakeholders.

The Committee:

- noted the proposed reopening of Smithfield Market on 22nd June, Belfast Zoo on 1st July and St George's Market on 3rd July and agreed not to waive the stall fees for market stall holders at St George's Market;
- granted delegated authority to the City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services to waive license fees for pavement cafes;
- agreed to write to the DfI seeking it to expedite the temporary closure of the following roads under the Road Traffic Legislation Order (3A):
  - Donegal Place;
  - Castle Place;
  - Church Lane;
  - Brunswick Street; and
  - James Street South.

And to also seek the weekend closure of Ormeau Road and to further explore the weekend closure of other arterial routes throughout the city to enable hospitality and assist retailers. It was agreed that the proposals on road closures would be subject to consultation with stakeholders including at the Stakeholders Group Meeting on Friday, 26th June. The correspondence would also include consideration of resident's car parking permits; and

- noted that work was ongoing with central government to identify potential funding available to support recovery efforts.

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**City Region Growth Deal**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) in the context of the Covid-19 emergency and the importance of the Investment Programme to the region's long-term recovery plans.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked:**

- Note the announcement of the £350m match funding for BRCD from the Northern Ireland Executive.
- Note the update in respect of each of the pillars and the governance and resourcing arrangements in light of the Covid-19 emergency.
- Note the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.
- Note the key strategic challenges ahead when the immediate crisis has passed its peak and the importance the BRCD Programme will play in the region's recovery from the Covid-19 emergency.

**3.0 Main report**

**Programme Update**

- 3.1 Due to the emergency pandemic and the increased pressure on partners, in particular local councils, in the early stages of the response to the pandemic the meetings of the BRCD Executive Board, Advisory Boards and the BRCD Council Panel were cancelled. Plans for enhanced stakeholder engagement were also postponed.
- 3.2 The BRCD Team however continued to engage with partners virtually to understand the immediate implications for progressing work relating to the BRCD and to seek to support continued progress in the development of business cases where practicable. Virtual meetings have now resumed although the BRCD team is mindful of the significant pressures still faced by partners in ensuring the continuation of essential services, supporting the emergency response to the crisis and ensuring the safety of their staff, customers and citizens.

- 3.3 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a monumental impact on people all across the world. Beyond the immediate impacts, the widespread societal and economic impact, the full extent of which isn't fully known at this stage, will create a number of challenges for the BRCD, including in relation to timelines and some areas of planned investment. However, the BRCD was developed based on a robust industrial strategic framework which aligns key economic strengths with resilient and growing areas of the economy. The BRCD is therefore well positioned to play a key role in supporting long-term economic recovery across Northern Ireland.**
- 3.4 The aim of developing OBCs for all the capital projects that were outlined in the Heads of Terms document by end of May 2020 has understandably had to be reviewed and will be addressed as the situation evolves and greater clarity is known. Discussions are ongoing with the NI and UK Governments and BRCD Partners in relation to the timeline to sign a 'Deal Document', with previous target being to have a Deal Document ready by end September 2020.**

**NI Funding and Governance Arrangements**

- 3.5 On 4th May 2020 the NI Executive announced £350m match funding for the BRCD, confirming the commitment to an overall investment package from the UK and NI Governments and the BRCD partners of £850M. This was a clear recognition of the role that the BRCD can play in the long-term recovery from the effects of Covid-19.**
- 3.6 As well as announcing the match funding the Executive has also agreed to provide up to an additional £100 million for complementary projects where partners can demonstrate a viable capital project which is complementary to the City/Growth Deal proposals. The BRCD Team will liaise with officials to clarify the details of the Executive agreement including the reference to the £100m for complementary project.**
- 3.7 The NI Executive also confirmed a commitment to match fund other City and Growth Deals in Northern Ireland and agreed NI Governance Structures for City and Growth Deals.**

**Investment Priorities**

- 3.8 The BRCD Programme Management office has continued to engage and conduct business online with partners across all pillars, and an update on progress to date is provided below.**

**Tourism and Regeneration**

- 3.9 Checkpoint sessions for Tourism and Regeneration strategic cases have proceeded during April, with strategic cases being circulated**

to all relevant partners for review and comment to enable progress on OBC development to continue. Progress continues to be made but the impact of Covid-19 is creating real challenges in the Tourism & Regeneration pillar given the severe implications for the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors. Engagement is ongoing with partners to achieve progress where possible and to support the further development of OBCs. The Tourism & Regeneration Advisory Board have begun to discuss the implications of Covid-19 with among others, colleagues from the Department for the Economy, Tourism NI and the Tourism Alliance, however more time will be needed before the overall impact on the sector is understood and also how the BRCD projects can best support the long term recovery.

**Innovation**

- 3.10** The Innovation Advisory Board, is overseeing the development of plans for five global centres of excellence in the digital and creative industries, life and health sciences and advanced manufacturing growth sectors. Business cases have now been drafted following engagement with over 250 businesses and government stakeholders. The first three draft OBCs, Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) and Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) were submitted to UK and NI government departments for consideration and review in February 2020. Feedback from the Department for the Economy and Invest NI, has been provided and is now under consideration. A fourth OBC, the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) has also been submitted in June for review.

Due to the Covid-19 response, feedback from the UK Government has been delayed and there will undoubtedly be a delay in completing the business cases. There is a desire nevertheless to progress the completion of the OBCs as soon as possible as there is a recognition in both government and industry that these projects are potentially more important than ever, as they seek to strengthen innovation and research capability in sectors that have proved resilient during the current crisis and which are well positioned to continue to grow after the pandemic.

**Digital**

- 3.11** The BRCD Team has been engaging with the Department for the Economy and the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport to discuss the proposed approach to development of the digital pillar to ensure that the ambitious digital programme is sufficiently flexible to respond to the rapid nature of technological development. This will include an increased use of challenge funds to support industry innovation. The Covid19 crisis has highlighted the

fundamental importance to the economy and society of the increased investment in our digital capabilities that is planned as part of the BRCD.

- 3.12 The Fraunhofer/BABLE Institute, a global leader in digital innovation and smart districts/testbeds, has been working with partners to develop an implementation plan for the main elements of the digital programme. There have been impacts from the travel restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19 and due to the limited opportunity for detailed business engagement during the current crisis. As a result, the BABLE timetable has been revised and business engagement postponed. The outputs from BABLE, which will feed into the programme business case, will now be available at the end of June.
- 3.13 Jayne Brady has been appointed as the Digital Innovation Commissioner for Belfast and has now taken on the role of Chairperson of the BRCD's Digital Advisory Board. Jayne will be engaging with partners in the coming weeks to help shape the planned BRCD investments so that they are effective in both tackling major societal challenges, such as digital exclusion, and boosting the digital innovation capabilities of businesses across the region.

**Infrastructure**

- 3.14 As the Department with responsibility for the delivery of the infrastructure projects, the Department for Infrastructure is leading the Infrastructure investment pillar. Engagement with the project leads to ensure the OBCs identify opportunities to integrate with the overall BRCD programme has been delayed but will recommence in the next few weeks. Key areas of integration include social value and employability & skills, recognising the critical importance of these in contributing towards inclusive growth.
- 3.15 As a result of Covid-19 the Infrastructure Advisory Board (IAB) planned for March was cancelled. A virtual meeting will be scheduled within the next few weeks at which interim OBCs are expected to be submitted for consideration.

**Employability and Skills (E&S)**

- 3.16 The Employability & Skills Pillar work programme has been realigned in light of Covid-19 to focus on those areas in which progress could be achieved in the current context. Significant progress continues to be made in developing programme interventions in priority areas, specialist consultants have been commissioned to develop programme proposals in a number of areas and an inclusive growth framework has also been developed

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for consideration by the Employability & Skills Advisory Board. Detailed engagement with partners and with industry which was postponed during the Covid crisis will start to recommence in June and will continue over the summer.

- 3.17 There has also been initial discussions about the potential for fast-tracking proposals for digital skills/inclusion to support the immediate COVID-19 recovery and a specific task and finish group involving all council partners has been established to progress this.

**Communications & Engagement**

- 3.18 Communication and engagement continues to be a priority both at a project and programme level. However, planned work on strategic engagement, including both business and political engagement has been postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis. Briefing documents outlining key economic and social benefits of each project and overall BRCD programme will be prepared to support the engagement activities that will take place after the current crisis.

**BRCD Council Panel**

- 3.19 Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a joint forum for members from all six councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council has four members on the Forum and as agreed by this committee the four nominees from BCC are the party group leaders (or their nominees) of the four largest parties. As highlighted due to the emergency pandemic, the April meeting of the BRCD Council Panel was cancelled.
- 3.20 The next meeting of the panel, which was due to be held in June will also be postponed and an update report has been provided to Panel Members. The BRCD team will liaise with Council partners to identify an appropriate date for rescheduling the postponed meetings and whether a virtual meeting could be scheduled.

**Strategic Challenges & Next Steps**

- 3.21 The BRCD Executive Board and the Advisory Boards for each of the investment priorities are in process of reviewing and challenging the BRCD programmes and projects to ensure that they are effective in delivering the partners ambitions for inclusive economic growth in what is likely to be a very challenging economic climate. On completion of this work revised timelines will be developed for OBC completion and developing the associated financial and implementation plans.

**3.22** The work that has been completed to date has identified a very strong alignment between planned investments in innovation, digital and skills with what is required for an inclusive economic and social recovery. The scale of the current crisis has also further emphasised the need for strong collaboration between partners across the public and private sector and our anchor institutions. Such collaboration is a fundamental strength of the BRCD. Also, whilst it is by its nature a transformative and medium to long term programme, there have been opportunities identified to aid the short-term recovery, specifically in digital capacity building, skills and inclusion. The aim of this short-term work is to align the resources of the City Deal with the plans of partners and investment from government to improve digital literacy, support the development of new digital business models and develop skills for the future economy.

**3.18 Financial & Resource Implications**

All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

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

The Approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;

*'BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.'*

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**SMART Belfast Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 ‘Smart Belfast’ encourages city partners to work together to exploit leading-edge technologies (such as AI, robotics, wireless networks, data science and industrial service design) in order to address urban challenges in more innovative ways. And at the same time, fostering a creative environment in which start-ups and established businesses can adopt digital technologies to create new products and services.

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The approach is likely to become increasingly important as Belfast emerges from the Covid-19 crisis. As a powerful contributor to increased productivity, digital innovation will be vital to Belfast's economic recovery. Smart Belfast will have a role to play in this. This paper sets out the current work of the team and a number of forthcoming opportunities.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked:**

1. To note the launch of the Covid Connect platform and that proposals for future developments will be presented to Committee in August.
2. To note the award of €680,431 to Belfast under Horizon 2020's 'Entrepreneurship for the Transformation of Historic Urban Areas' project, and the commencement date of autumn 2020.
3. Members are asked to note the contents of the attached Smart District booklet.
4. To approve Belfast City Council's membership of the World Economic Forum & G20's Smart Cities Alliance.
5. To approve the Council's participation in the ESCR/IRC Data Driven Societies project application.
6. To note the award of £100,000 for Phase Two of Amazing Spaces: Smart Places.
7. To approve the Council's participation in a €250,000 bid to Horizon 2020's nature-based solutions call to address urban air pollution.
8. To approve the Council's support for a £500,000 Urban Mobility project bid to Innovate UK's Smart Grant.

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Covid Connect platform**

During the first phase of the Covid-19 crisis, the City Innovation team were approached by a number of digital companies seeking to offer help in response to challenges faced by government and community and voluntary sector organisations. And at the same time the team had also been approached by organisations, including teams within the Council, seeking technical support.

- 3.2 In response the team rapidly established the [www.covidconnectni.com](http://www.covidconnectni.com) online brokerage platform over a three-week period. (It was officially launched by the Lord Mayor on 18<sup>th</sup> May and received publicity locally and nationally.) The platform connects companies offering mainly digital support (often on a pro

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bono basis) with public, community and voluntary sector bodies. The platform builds on a European funded project the team had already been part of, led by local SME Xpand Group.

- 3.3 To date, over 80 organisations have signed up to the platform (including EY, Deloitte, Amazon, BT, Microsoft, Kainos, etc.) The brokerage service has already led to a number of projects including data analysis on business sectors in the city; solutions for organisations seeking to engage remote with vulnerable client groups; and using sentiment analysis tools to track the update of social distancing guidance to support health organisations.
- 3.4 The team are currently developing proposals for a longer term role for the platform once the initial crisis response period is over. For example, the platform can be re-purposed to support better collaboration between organisations across the city on a wide range of digital innovation projects. Members are asked to note the work on the platform and that proposals will be presented to Committee in August.
- 3.5 **Entrepreneurship for the Transformation of Historic Urban Areas (Hub-In)**  
Committee had previously approved Belfast City Council's participation in a €7.5 million consortium bid to Horizon 2020 for a project that proposes to work with local communities to develop entrepreneurial skills in relation to opportunities arising from the transformation on historic urban areas.
- 3.6 The European Commission has informed partners that the bid was successful. Belfast will receive €680,431 of the award over four years commencing autumn 2020. EU partners accepted that Belfast's Maritime Mile met their 'historic urban area' criteria and the Council therefore onboarded the Titanic Foundation as a key local delivery partner. (Other partners we have onboarded included Catalyst Inc, Ulster University, Dept. for Finance's Innovation Lab and Future Screens NI.)
- 3.7 Under an MoU with Titanic Foundation, the Council will recruit a funded staff member and manage the grant finances. Titanic Foundation will be primarily responsible for co-ordinating the designing and deliver of the on-the-ground programme with local communities – connecting the wider maritime mile developments with entrepreneurial innovation programmes with local community.
- 3.8 Members are asked to note the successful application and that the project is due to begin in Autumn 2020.

**3.9 The Belfast Smart District and post-Covid recovery**

**Building on the Smart Belfast approach, work is now under way with the Vice-Chancellors of both local universities, Belfast Harbour and Catalyst Inc, to develop a shared narrative that makes the case for Belfast as a globally significant place for innovative businesses to invest.**

- 3.10 The narrative is constructed around the investment opportunities of the ‘Belfast Smart District’. Members will be aware of Belfast Harbour’s existing commitment to invest £254 million over the next five years and the plans for digital and innovation investments under the Belfast Region City Deal. Partners are considering opportunities to promote these investments alongside complementary plans for an FDI-focused innovation district at Titanic Quarter; and a Belfast City Council-led ‘Smart Core’ that focuses on the revival of our city centre.**
- 3.11 As Belfast prepared plans for economic recovery, the importance of place-based digital innovation, that builds on the city’s indigenous research and sector strengths, will be an important element of this work. The attached leaflet is a first attempt to share this ambition with both local and international business.**
- 3.12 Members are asked to note the contents of the attached Smart District booklet.**

**3.13 G20 Smart Cities Alliance membership**

**Following discussions at the Smart Cities World Congress in Barcelona in November 2019, we have been asked to join the World Economic Forum and G20’s Smart Cities Alliance.**

**<https://globalsmartcitiesalliance.org>**

- 3.14 This Alliance is bringing together 20 global cities to establish standards and practice on the ethical development of Smart Cities. There are no charges or fees associated with membership, just a commitment of Officers to engage on the development of the standards. As part of the Belfast group we have also suggested the involvement of Daithí Mac Síthigh, Professor of Law and Innovation at Queen’s University Belfast, to take part as an international academic expert on data ethics. Professor Mac Síthigh has agreed in principle to be part of the work, pending Committee approval.**
- 3.15 Members will probably be well aware that digital technologies raise issues of trust and privacy – and that city councils around the world are beginning to take a leadership role in ensuring that emerging smart city projects are designed around a shared ethical approach.**

**Belfast's involvement in this global framework places the city at the forefront of this debate, something which will prove attractive to innovators and technologists.**

- 3.16 Members are therefore asked to approve Belfast City Council's membership of the Alliance.**

**3.17 Data Driven Societies: Enabling Public Engagement**

**In a similar vein, Belfast has been asked to take part in a bid led by Maynooth University to the Economic and Social Research Council & Irish Research Council to develop a learning network between Dublin, Edinburgh and Belfast that aims to strengthen the potential of data driven innovation and Artificial Intelligence to have a positive impact on individuals and society.**

- 3.18 If successful, Belfast City Council Officers would be asked to contribute to an international multi-stakeholder network for social science, civil society and public sector organisations across the UK and Ireland.**

- 3.19 Members are asked to approve Belfast City Council's participation in the project if the funding application is successful.**

**3.20 Amazing Spaces, Smart Places update**

**The Council has received confirmation from the Department for the Economy that a final £100,000 has been agreed for phase two (April 2020 to March 2021) of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) project, '*Amazing Spaces, Smart Places*'. This is a joint project with the Department of Justice to support SMEs to work with council to develop innovative methods to help manage the safe use of our parks and open spaces. This brings the total funding received to a total of £320K.**

- 3.21 The City Innovation team and officers from City & Neighbourhoods department will be working with two local companies who are now through to phase 2, Civic Dollars and SparroWatch, to further develop proto-types in a real-world park environment. Engagement will continue with park users, communities and Members. The work takes on a renewed significance in the light of the current social distancing challenge as emerging learning will inform how parks are used.**

- 3.22 Members are asked to note this next award of £100,000 for Phase two of Amazing Spaces,: Smart Places.**

**3.23 Upsurge: Air Quality and nature-based solutions**

Smart Belfast was approached by a consortium of European cities wishing to develop a substantial Horizon 2020 bid to trial nature-based solutions to urban air quality problems.

- 3.24 The bid is being led by Slovenia's E-Institute and administration of the project locally would be delivered by Queen's University's School of Built Environment working closely with the Council's Resilience team and the City Innovation team.
- 3.25 If successful, up to €250,000 would be available to Belfast over a four year period to test interventions seeking to reduce local air pollution levels. An outline phase 1 proposal has just been accepted by the European Commission. Partners will now work together to develop a more detailed phase 2 proposal prior to the September deadline. If successful funding will be awarded from December 2020.
- 3.26 Members will note the opportunity that the project represents in relation to the city's draft Resilience strategy, our Climate Emergency agenda, and the city's Blue and Green strategy.
- 3.27 Members are asked to approve the Council's participation in the phase two bid development process.

**3.28 Covid-19 and Urban mobility**

As cities emerge from lock-down many analysts have noted that there are likely to be a series of urban mobility challenges as well as new opportunities to support active travel (eg) walking, cycling, e-bikes or scooters. Understanding existing travel behaviours will be important for new plans and interventions – and the use of digital technology is playing an increasingly important role.

- 3.29 Smart Belfast are involved in a number of projects to support digitally-enabled mobility. The Council were recently involved in a successful bid to the Department for Finance's Open Data NI competition. This seeks to use a combination of publicly available data and commercial data to explore the impact of new mobility solutions on local SMEs.
- 3.30 Building on this work, the lead company, Xpand Group, has invited the Council to participate in a more ambitious application to Innovate UK's Smart Grants. This fund is making £25 million to industry to deliver ambitious or disruptive R&D innovations that can make a significant impact on the economy.
- 3.31 The Belfast bid will focus on mobility solutions in relation to SME survival during in the months after the Covid lockdown. The duration of the project will be between 6 to 18 months with a project value of between £250,000 and £500,000.

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**3.32 Members are asked to approve Belfast City Council's support for the bid. Further details will be presented to the Committee in August.**

**3.33 Financial & Resource Implications**

**All costs associated with this work have been identified within existing departmental budgets.**

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

**None.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor**

The Committee was reminded that a partnership had been established which was made up of four councils in Northern Ireland and four in the Republic of Ireland to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. In order to shape the future direction of the partnership and in an attempt to identify economic opportunities along the corridor, Dublin City University and Ulster University Economic Policy Centre had been commissioned to carry out research on behalf of the councils.

The research paper had now been completed and the partnership had agreed that it be forwarded to the North South Ministerial Council for its consideration and to enable further discussion. The report detailed the current economic performance of the Corridor and the future prospects for the region based on current trends. It also initiated the work of identifying potential areas for cooperation which could create a stronger trajectory for growth.

The report highlighted a number of population and employment forecasts which had been based upon ‘baseline’ or ‘current trends’ assumptions, while adjusting for potential impacts of Brexit, although it should be noted that it had been prepared prior to Covid 19. The ‘baseline’ scenario to 2040 pointed to the current divergence in growth rates between Northern Ireland and Ireland continuing. It also found that the Corridor would continue its trajectory to becoming the location for a third of the island’s population, perhaps reaching a total of 2.5 million people by 2040.

The report also identified the general strengths of the Corridor as it currently functioned, highlighting demographic trends, skills levels and connectivity. These strengths remained, even in light of the current Covid 19 event and the associated public health crisis. Sectoral concentrations and strengths included tradeable services (including ICT, Professional Services and Financial Services), as well as high tech Manufacturing and Construction. Another sector that was important in every Council area was tourism with 68,000 jobs across the Corridor. It was noted that over 10 million trips had been made in the Corridor in 2017, with access onto the island being especially beneficial. A high proportion of these numbers had been in Belfast and Dublin.

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The report concluded by proposing a number of broad areas for government-led collaboration which aimed to deliver additional economic value to the region and the island more generally. These included promotion of the corridor area to attract investment from both inward private and domestic and public sources, in addition to investment in infrastructure in areas such as transport connectivity as well as research and innovation centres, Smart Cities initiatives, and investment in environmental and energy management projects.

The Committee noted the outcomes from the research paper undertaken by Ulster University and Dublin City University in respect of the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor.

**Invitation to join UK100 Resilient Recovery Taskforce**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek committee approval for Belfast City Council to accept an invitation to join the UK100 Resilient Recovery Taskforce, and agree that the Chair of Strategic Policy & Resources Committee should represent Council on the Taskforce, with officer support from the Commissioner for Resilience.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to**

- Approve BCC membership of the Resilient Recovery Taskforce, and that the Chair of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee represents Council.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Key points to note**

- 3.1 UK100 is the network for UK local authorities, urban, suburban and rural, focused on climate and clean energy policy. It connects local leaders to each other, to business and to national government, enabling them to showcase their achievements, learn from each other and speak collectively to accelerate the transition to clean energy. It works closely with elected representatives, policy experts and grassroots campaigners to make the clean energy transition a reality. This involves developing solutions to challenges faced by each and all of our local leaders, whatever their geography, history or makeup, so as to influence national government and building public support for clean energy solutions. It has a close working relationship to ‘Core Cities’ of which Belfast is an active member.**
- 3.2 UK 100 has written to Belfast City Council to invite it to join a newly formed Resilient Recovery Taskforce. The Taskforce is ‘designed**

to bring the expertise and experience of local leaders to bear on how to rebuild our economy in a way that meets the challenges of climate change.’ It follows guidance written to government from the UK Committee on Climate Change on a resilient recovery, which highlighted the importance of accelerating action on decarbonisation and adaptation, given the lessons learned from Covid-19.

**3.3 While the specific actions will be agreed by the Taskforce over the coming months, it is expected that its programme of work will include, action to:**

- Communicate the opportunities of placing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change at the heart of resilient recovery, by using our collective voices and individual actions to ensure that the UK Government supports local government and the investments needed locally.
- Establish a process of engagement with national government that enables local leaders to help develop constructively the design, format, content and delivery of an economic recovery package, or packages that create resilience in our communities and reduce carbon emissions. This should be complementary to any existing engagement that exists currently.
- Agree a shared set of broad priorities, in the form of a declaration, that reflects how we want to achieve collective goals and that helps Task Force members in securing support for specific projects and programmes for their local areas.

**3.4 In the first instance UK100 have agreed to perform the necessary secretariat duties, with the support of Core Cities, and there is no expectation of a financial contribution for participation.**

**3.5 Belfast City Council has already undertaken to support and shape a potential future ‘green stimulus’ as part of our broader work on ‘Response, Rebuild and Recovery’ from Covid-19. The UK100 Resilient Recovery Task Force is a useful opportunity to make the case for investment in this area, alongside other cities.**

**3.6 Resource & Resource Implications**

Membership of the Taskforce does not involve a financial contribution- other than officer time, no other financial resource are expected to be required.

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

**None arising from this paper.”**

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Council does not accept the invitation to join the UK100 Resilient Recovery Taskforce.

On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the proposal and twelve against and it was declared lost.

The Committee approved the Council's membership of the Resilient Recovery Taskforce, and agreed that the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would represent the Council. It was further agreed that the Council would also explore climate change on an all Island basis.

**Governance**

**Annual update of the Scheme of Delegation**

The Committee approved the amendments made under the delegated power to the City Solicitor to make minor amendments to the Scheme of Delegation and noted that the Scheme had been amended to reflect the following, which were all noted in the version control section of the document:

- powers relating to the termination of service in respect of persons declared medically unfit (and the amended terminology) transferred from the Director of Finance and Resources to the Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
- following the retirement of the Director of Property and Projects, the transfer of those delegated powers to the Chief Executive;
- the addition of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations 2020 to Appendix B, which had been made pursuant to the minor amendment power delegated to the City Solicitor in Section 3.3.13.

**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 report provides:**

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- An overview of capital projects recently completed
- An update on Covid 19 implications and key actions
- Capital programme 2020/21 project update movements

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to –**

- note the update on the Physical programmes completed projects as at 3.1 below and in Appendix 1. When appropriate, as per Covid 19 public health guidance, the Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.
- note the update on impact of Covid 19 on the capital programme for 2020/21
- agree to include 2 new IT projects under the council's IT Programme due to business criticality and to ensure ongoing business continuity – a new Backup platform infrastructure, and new Uninterruptible Power Supply - and move to Stage 3 Committed with a maximum £100,000 and £150,000 (respectively) budget allocated.
- Agree that the Belfast Zoo Health and Safety project is moved to Stage 3- Committed with a maximum £1.6m budget allocated.

**3.0 Main report**

**Physical programmes update**

**3.1 The Council's Physical Programme includes Council's rolling Capital Programme is a significant regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves the existing Council assets, or provides new council facilities; it also includes funding streams (BIF, LIF and SOF) and acting as a delivery agent for other government departments (UV, SIF, DfC). 3.2 below provides an update on the current impacts of Covid 19 on the delivery of physical projects, however over the last 6 months a number of projects have been completed including:**

- *Leisure and sports facilities:* The new Andersonstown Leisure Centre (LTP); 3G carpet replacement at LORAG Shaftesbury centre and Cregagh; 3G pitch at Hanwood (BIF); new MUGA and outdoor facilities at John Paul Youth Club (LIF/UV);
- *Upgrades to parks, open spaces and playgrounds* - playground refurbishments at Ormeau Park (lower Ormeau/Ravenhill playground), Geeragh Community

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- Centre at Finaghy; Rev. Robert Bradford playground and new MUGA (UV/DfC);
- **Community facilities:** Cancer Life line facility (BIF/DfC); PIPS Suicide prevention facility refurbishment (SIF); New Diamond project facility (UV).

Photos of the completed projects are attached in Appendix 1. When appropriate, as per Covid 19 public health guidance, the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

**3.2 Covid – 19 impact update**

In the April Physical Programmes update report, Members were advised that an analysis and ongoing monitoring exercise on the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of the Council's wider Physical Programme was being carried out by the Physical Programmes Department, working closely with Financial Services and Legal Services. Some 24 projects were at an On Site stage of delivery when Covid 19 restrictions took effect in March. Almost all projects temporarily ceased works - with the exception of essential works projects, such as Waste Transfer Weighbridge improvements. 18 projects are now live with remaining projects working through return to site measures and any outstanding issues to starting on site.

The key Covid 19 impacts are: delay to completion dates/ change of delivery programme; Return to Site costs and subsequent ongoing Covid 19 related costs that are additional to budgeted costs. Of the 24 live projects, half are projects with either external funding (eg DfC, SEUPB) or projects being delivered on behalf of external funders (UV and SIF), which means that funding agreement commitments needed to be assessed. We have been liaising closely with all funders to regularly update and review Covid 19 impacts, with the view to seek additional costs via funder budgets. The final cost implications are not yet known and are still being monitored and reviewed. In addition, with regards to Covid 19 cost implications on projects on council's capital programme, a claim will be made to DfC under the DfC assistance fund for Council's to seek reimbursement. Officers continue to engage with contractors and external stakeholders to closely monitor this evolving situation.

**Capital programme 2020/21 - Project movements**

**3.5 *IT Programme – a new Backup platform infrastructure, and new Uninterruptible Power Supply***

Under the Council's IT Programme of work, two projects have been identified as being business critical and required to ensure continuity of service provision –

- **New Backup platform infrastructure:** With the recent home working demands and subsequent capacity constraints, coupled with the ever increasing risk of cybersecurity attacks, there is an urgent need to re-evaluate the systems back up architecture. The purpose of this project is to replace the current backup environment with one which is capable of providing a standardised, scalable solution enabling the council to meet its backup needs for the next 5 years, whilst making use of the advancement in backup technologies to improve the efficiency of our business continuity options. This should result in quicker, more space-efficient backups on storage separate to the current live storage environment.
- **New Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS):** to protect equipment in the server rooms from power surges – it ensures the seamless transition to standby generators in the case of a mains power failure; and also allow time for a graceful shutdown of sensitive IT equipment in the event of a backup generator failure, protecting equipment from damage and preventing data loss. The UPS in the secondary server room is nearing end of life and requires replacement, and there are no UPS in place to protect network equipment in several key communications cabinets that are an important part of the corporate data network. The network team have been experiencing issues with distributed network equipment being damaged and losing their configuration when the power supply to different buildings is interrupted either as the result of a power cut or as the result of maintenance work. UPS in communication cabinets would protect network equipment during power outages, thus avoiding service outage associated with power cuts. This project will ensure resilient access to the Council backup server room and prevent damage to network equipment elsewhere in the council in the event of a power outage.

- 3.6 Members are asked to agree that each project moves to Stage 3 Committed in order to expedite the necessary procurements and it is recommended that a maximum budget of £100,000 and £150,000 respectively is allocated. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed the affordability of these projects due to the corporate criticality requirements and to ensure business continuity is maintained.

**3.7 Belfast Zoo Health and Safety**

Members are reminded that the Belfast Zoo Health and Safety programme of work is an agreed Stage 2- Uncommitted project on the council's Capital Programme. This emerged from a number of independent reports which included measures required to safeguard animals, zookeepers and the public. Since then a number of key activities have been completed: an outline business case examining a new Large Cats enclosure, and Water Treatment in the Sea Lion Pool – both of which are required to eradicate immediate health and safety issues. Additional measures were assessed and scored according to their impact on health & safety, visitor experience and strategic priorities. It is therefore recommended that works associated with new Large Cats enclosure, Water treatment of Sea Lion pool, wider enclosure and access improvements (health and safety specific), and Zoo wall/landscape issue at car park, are included within the current health and safety capital programme for the Zoo. Any further or additional capital-related health and safety requirements will be kept under review.

- 3.8** Members are asked to agree that the Belfast Zoo Health and safety project is moved to Stage 3- Committed but each health safety measure being held at appropriate Tier to reflect readiness to proceed on site and satisfactory tender; with a maximum £1.6m budget allocated. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed the affordability of these projects due to the health & safety requirements and the need to protect the public, zookeepers and the animals.

**BIF/LIF/SOF Updates**

- 3.9** At the last round of Area Working Group meetings in January 2020, an update on the status of projects allocated under LIF, BIF and SOF programmes was provided. It was agreed by each AWG that a letter would be issued to those groups where there had been no information or progress for some time (seven in total), with a deadline of 22 April set where information on project was sought and/or confirmation the group wished to remain in the funding programme process. Given the Corona pandemic this was subsequently extended to 3rd June 2020. Members are asked to note the following updates in respect of these projects

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Project	Funding amount	
Braeheid (Ulster Scots Hub) – BIF31	£500k (BIF)	Confirmation of withdrawal from the Programme
Intercomm Antrim Road NLIF2-13	£75k (LIF)	Confirmation of withdrawal from the Programme
Holy Family Church NLIF2-18	£15k (LIF)	No response received – assumed withdrawal from Programme
Mercy Primary School NLIF2-05	£15k (LIF)	Information received and project progressing
The Dock Café ELIF1-14	£15k (LIF)	Confirmation of withdrawal from the Programme
Castlereagh Presbyterian Church BIF38	£382k (BIF)	Information received and project progressing
Royal British Legion BIF29	£500k (BIF)	Confirmed remaining in the Programme and attending next AWG to present project

**Members are asked to note that an update on the above will be brought into the next round of AWGs so that the AWGs can consider their projects and agree on any re-allocations of monies to be recommended back into SP&R. BIF and LIF were agreed on an area basis and therefore any allocations remain within these areas to be reconsidered.**

### **3.10 Financial & Resource Implications**

***Financial –***

- IT Programme - a new Backup platform infrastructure, and new Uninterruptible Power Supply – maximum £100,000 and £150,000 budget allocation.
- Belfast Zoo Health and safety projects; and a maximum £1.6m budget allocation.
- BIF/LIF – to be considered by the AWGs

**Resources – Officer time to deliver as per project requirements.**

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Asset Management**

**Lock Keepers Cottage Visitors Centre –  
Lagan Valley Regional Park Lease Renewal**

The Committee granted a renewal of the lease for the offices occupied by Lagan Valley Regional Park at the Lock Keepers Cottage Visitors Centre for a term of 3 years from 1st April 2020 at a rent of £ 5,000 per annum.

**Ulster Hall - BBC Recording Studio Lease Renewal**

The Committee approved the renewal of the lease of c. 350 sq ft of accommodation situated on the third floor of the Ulster Hall to the BBC for a term of 5 years from 1st July 2020 at a rent of £3,500 per annum.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Contracts Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

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

- seek approval from members for tenders and STAs over £30,000

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1)
- Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2)
- Note the award of contracts by Arc 21 on behalf the council (Table 3)

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**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Publically Advertised Tenders**

Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender

Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.

Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.

**3.2 Single Tender Actions (STAs)**

The following STAs are being submitted for approval:

- Provision of consultancy services to provide a five year strategic plan, including creative programming approach, for the Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival. The tender was publicly advertised in October 2019 but all suppliers who submitted a response failed the evaluation. This work aligns with the Council's new ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, approved by Members in August 2019. Urban Scale Intervention were identified as a supplier that can complete the work
- Delivery of Research to Inform Provision of Enterprise Support. This tender exercise approved in October 2019 resulted in no suitable bidder being appointed.
- 12 month extension of contract with BT for data connectivity for remote sites. This extension is required to assist with the implementation and handover of the new data connectivity service provider which has been impacted by COVID-19.
- 15 month extension of contract with Bryson Recycling from 1st August 2020 until 31st October 2021 for the continued provision of kerbside collections. This extension is required until a strategic decision on the future of the service is finalised and a procurement strategy developed in line with the Waste Framework 2017.
- 12 month extension of T1612 contract with Signtime for the provision a wide variety of signage (information and H&S) that the Council requires in parks, open spaces, depots, recycling centres etc from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

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**This STA will regularise this expenditure whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed.**

- **12 month contract with an approved contractor for the removal, treatment and disposal of seasonal/contentious waste during this 2020 financial year as agreed at the Bonfire Project Board in February 2020.**

- 3.3 The Committee is also asked to note that a 6 month extension of contract has been agreed with our supplier for the continued treatment and disposal of residual waste.**

**3.4 Financial & Resource Implications**

**The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets**

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

**None.”**

A Member referred to the proposed 15 month extension of the Council's contract with Bryson Recycling and requested that it be reduced to three months due to their poor performance and the number of complaints regularly received.

The Chief Executive, the City Solicitor and the Director of Finance and Resources urged caution and advised that the Council was currently in the process of developing a new waste collection strategy in line with the Waste Framework and stated that it would not be feasible to implement a new strategy within such a short timescale.

In addition, the Director of Finance and Resources detailed the significant capital finance implications that returning this function in-house would have on the Council's finances and stressed that no provision had been made.

Detailed discussion ensued, following which it was agreed that initially the extension would be for a period of 6 months, with a report to be submitted to the next meeting of Committee regarding the impact that this would have on the strategic decision and on the future of waste collection services.

The Committee approved:

- the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Table 1;
- approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Table 2 (with the exception of the Bryson Recycling); and
- noted the award of contracts by Arc 21 on behalf the council as detailed in Table 3.

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**Table 1 – Publically Advertised Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Short description of goods/ services</b>
Provision of a Sustainability Audit on Belfast City Council	Up to 9 months (31st March 2021)	£60,000	Grainia Long	Belfast City Council has agreed to develop a Climate Plan and the first stage of this is to establish a baseline and evidence base from which to identify priorities and actions.
Supply & Delivery of Goods for Resale at Belfast Zoo	Up to 4 years	£460,000	Nigel Grimshaw	The tender is required for goods for resale for the souvenir shop at Belfast Zoo. This generates additional income for the zoo.
Provision of a Christmas Lighting Scheme for Belfast City Centre from Christmas 2020 onwards	Up to 5 years	£800,000	Alistair Reid	5 year lease costs for replacement of Christmas lighting. Current lighting managed by BCCM and near end of life
Provision of an Active Travel project to increase journeys by foot or cycle - PEACE IV Shared Space and Services Theme	Up to 16 months	£150,000	Nigel Grimshaw	EU Funded project to increase journeys taken by foot or cycle along the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.
Provision of a community engagement	Up to 16 months	£80,000	Nigel Grimshaw	EU Funded project to engage with 600 young people along the Forth

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project - Civic Education PEACE IV Shared Space and Services Theme				Meadow Community Greenway.
Provision of the delivery of 3 Community Events - PEACE IV Shared Space and Services Theme	Up to 16 months	£120,000	Nigel Grimshaw	EU Funded project to engage with 600 participants and hold 3 public events along the Forth Meadow Community Greenway
Provision of the delivery of an Intergenerational Project - PEACE IV Shared Space and Services Theme	Up to 16 months	£80,000	Nigel Grimshaw	EU Funded project to encourage community participation along the Forth Meadow Community Greenway
Provision of recruitment, delivery and accreditation of Volunteer Training - PEACE IV Shared Space and Services Theme	Up to 16 months	£124,000	Nigel Grimshaw	EU Funded project to recruit 60 volunteers from Forth Meadow Community Greenway and deliver and achieve certification in mediation training.
Supply and delivery of a range of fruit and vegetables for Belfast Zoo	Up to 3 years	£225,000	Nigel Grimshaw	The tender is required for the supply of fruit and vegetables for Belfast Zoo.

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**Table 2- Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Action)**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
Provision of consultancy services to provide a five year strategic plan, including creative programming approach, for the Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival	UrbanScale Intervention	£80,000
Contract for the provision of data connectivity for remote council sites	British Telecom (BT)	£35,000
Delivery of Research to Inform Provision of Enterprise Support	Aston Enterprise School	Up to £100,000
Kerbside recycling collections (T1200)	Bryson Recycling	£2.4m (only a six month extension agreed)
Supply and Delivery of Installation of Signage (T1612)	Signtime	£75k
Seasonal/ contentious waste removal	Confidential	Confidential

**Table 3- Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the council**

<b>Contract Title</b>	<b>Period of Contract</b>	<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>
Municipal Waste Disposal Contract – Lot 1	Up to 3 years	Nigel Grimshaw

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**Equality and Good Relations**

**Dual Language Street Signs Policy**

The Committee considered the following report which considered a motion previously raised seeking to amend the Council's existing Irish language street naming policy:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to consider the Notice of Motion in relation to the Dual Language Street Signs Policy.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Consider the Notice of Motion in relation to the Dual Language Street Signs Policy.
- Consider a minimum response threshold in respect of the survey requirement. If Members are minded to change the policy, a revised policy will be drafted in accordance with your decision and presented for adoption with an equality screening carried out at your next meeting. Committee to note that other revisions could be made to the current policy to address issues which have arisen since it was first adopted, for example new streets or streets which have no occupiers, and accordingly these revisions could be incorporated within any new policy should you choose to adopt one.
- Following discussions at Party Group Leader's Consultative Forum a protocol for managing engagement with consultees will be developed for consideration by members at a subsequent meeting

**3.0 Main report**

**3.2 Background**

- 3.1 The Council adopted a Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Policy in February 2009 which incorporates a Dual Language Street Signs Policy. At Council on 3 February 2020, Councillor Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion:**

**'This Council has one of the most restrictive policies of any council in the North in regards to Irish Language Street Signage Policy.**

**Currently, the policy is that you need a 1/3rd of the eligible electorate in a street to sign a petition which starts the process. Once the**

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process has been initiated, a letter is sent to everyone in that street who is on the electoral register asking if they consent to have bilingual signage installed. The resident has three options, namely, Yes, No and Don't Care. For the process to come to a successful conclusion, 2/3rds of the total electorate in the street need to consent to yes. If a letter is not returned, it is considered by the Council as saying that they don't consent for the bilingual signage. Furthermore, where residents send the survey back saying 'Don't Care, this is also considered to be a negative response.

If we, as Elected Members were held to the same standard as this policy in the Local Government elections, not one Member would have been returned to serve on this Council, as we would not have met those restrictive parameters. The Council's Language Strategy refers to increasing the visibility of the Irish Language in our City. However, it is essential not to impose the Irish language on residents if the majority of them in a street do not consent to it.

Therefore, this Council will amend its Irish language street signage policy to the following:

- i. continue with the 1/3rd of the eligible electorate in the street to initiate the process;
  - ii. change the policy to reflect that it will be the majority of respondents to the survey that will decide if the process has been successful. Therefore, it will be 50% +1 of respondents that will determine if the petition to erect bilingual signage has been successful. Non-respondents will not be considered as a negative response; and
  - iii. those respondents who respond as 'Don't Care' are not considered to be a negative response and will be treated as a void vote.'
- 3.2 The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin. In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee

**3.3 Key Issues**

The motion sets out a proposal to move from the current arrangements ( $\frac{1}{3}$  expressing an interest by petition and  $\frac{2}{3}$  indicating a preference in a subsequent survey to erect a dual language street sign) to a simple majority of respondents. The proposal would mean that non-respondents are not considered in the context of any final decision on dual street naming. The proposal retains the current trigger through a petition to initiate the process. Given that no minimum response threshold is established Members may wish to consider that if you support the motion to change the current policy, whether a minimum threshold of those on the electoral register

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responding should be met through the survey before the matter is referred to committees for consideration. For example that the respondents to the survey would equate to a minimum of  $\frac{1}{3}$  (or such other figure as you may agree) to those on the electoral register in that street.

- 3.4 Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995 requires the Council to take into account the views of the occupiers in a street.
- 3.5 The current Council policy was subject to a legal challenge which was successfully defended. A copy of the judgement is attached for information. This does not affect the ability of the Council to adopt a different policy should it choose to do so.
- 3.6 Some political concern has been expressed as to how the process is undertaken in terms of engagement relating to the consultation required to inform the decision. A protocol to sit alongside the policy could establish principles underpinning that process. The rationale for this approach, in terms of the political view expressed, is to ensure the integrity of the process.

**3.7 Financial & Resource Implications**

Any change to the policy to the extent suggested is likely to result in a greater number of applications and a greater number of signs to be erected.

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

This change of policy will need to be equality screened."

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the motion, as proposed by Councillor Wash and seconded by Councillor McLaughlin at the February 2020 meeting of Council.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Long,  
Seconded by Alderman Kingston,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the Dual Language Street Signs Policy until the next meeting of the Committee to enable further discussion to take place at the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum, to

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enable further legal advice to be sought and for representatives of Conradh na Gaeilge to attend a future meeting.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for the amendment and nine against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was put as the substantive motion and agreed.

**Operational Issues**

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 12th June, 2020.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Race Equality Champion for Belfast City Council - Councillor Nicholl**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, the Committee considered a report which had been requested by Councillor Nicholl who, in light of current events following the death of George Floyd in America, had requested that the Council would give consideration to the appointment of a Race Equality Champion.

The Committee agreed that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee which would summarise the existing structures, internal policies and action plans relating to addressing equality of opportunity and promoting the inclusion of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities (BAME). The report would also include options which Members could consider to enhance its current arrangements with the purpose of promoting the equality and inclusion of BAME communities, their access to Council services and participation in civic life. It would also take into consideration the review of the Council's wider approach to championing diversity and give consideration as to how the valuable views and opinions of the Shared City Partnership and Migrant Forum could be better fed into the Council decision making process.

**Disabled People and Older People**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor McMullan addressed the Committee and proposed the following motion:

"This Council commits to delivering a Covid-19 pandemic response and long-term recovery that is inclusive of disabled people and older people. We further commit ourselves to put the resources required behind a further commitment to become a global leader in inclusion and accessibility in the delivery of our previous commitment in the Belfast Agenda to be an accessible for all by 2035 and no one is left behind.

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This Council recognises that lockdown has created severe impacts on the day to day lives of many disabled people, older people, and carers, for example, the removal or reduction of access to key services and support for independent living and the impact of self-isolation on health and wellbeing. Social distancing will be with us for the foreseeable future and presents additional and serious challenges that need to be addressed in the measures taken by this Council and other stakeholders. As we consider how we will reopen our City, we need to ensure that social and physical distancing does not lead to social and physical barriers. This Council believes we need to ensure that our short term response in the decisions made on measures to adapt to social distancing are taken through direct engagement with disabled people, older people and carers.

This Council also recognises that for many disabled people, older people and carers the 'old normal' often did not work for them. We want to ensure that the long-term recovery of Belfast leaves no one behind and to ensure that the 'new normal' aspires to address the concerns and lessons of the 'old normal'. We recommit ourselves to the commitment made in the Belfast Agenda to be an accessible city for all by 2035, and to build back better than there was before in a way that is inclusive, accessible and sustainable.

To achieve these short and long term objectives, this Council believes we need a common, strategic vision of disability-inclusion and accessibility across all of our strategies and plans as we respond and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic through our functions and through our influence with our partners and other stakeholders. We call on Belfast City Council to:

1. Ensure disabled people, older people and carers are consulted as part of the 'Reopening the City' strategy and are active participants in the planning and delivery of this strategy, particularly through the Belfast City Council's Disability Advisory Panel.
2. Create a Reference Group for Disabled People. This will provide a forum for councillors, our Disability Advisory Panel, council officers as well as other relevant stakeholders and experts from time-to-time, to discuss and progress actions on Belfast City Council's commitment to becoming an accessible city for all by 2035.
3. Create an 'Access and Inclusion' senior staff role. This role would act as both an internal focal point for council staff to improve access and inclusion in the delivery of Council services and have a key role in strategic policy making to deliver a common vision of disability inclusion. It would also act as an external point of contact for residents, disabled people and external stakeholders on day-to-day queries on improving access and inclusion in the city, working with external stakeholders to deliver a more inclusive city.
4. Undertake an independent consultation report on models of best practice of accessibility and inclusion from other cities that will

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provide recommendations on how these could be applied within Belfast through this Council and its NI Executive partners.

5. Develop a strategic roadmap for delivering an accessible city for all by 2035 that leaves no one behind that provides a common strategic vision of disability access and inclusion across all its strategies and plans, and outlines how we will get there.”

The Committee agreed that the points raised would be considered within the context of the Council's overall Recovery Programme to ensure that the response and recovery would be inclusive of disabled people, older people and carers.

**Celebration of Donor's Day**

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

“This council wishes to acknowledge the fantastic work done by many families and individuals in relation to blood/platelet donation, stem cell donation and organ donation across Belfast and beyond. On January 31st 2020 Belfast City Hall hosted events for the first ever Donor's Day, which was celebrated across the North. Following on from the great success this Council will agree to light the City Hall in pink on 29th January, 2021 to celebrate Donor's Day. Furthermore this council will work with the Blood Transfusion Service, NHS Organ Donation Service, Public Health Agency and Anthony Nolan Trust to host an information and donation session in Belfast City Hall on Donor's day. Finally this council will also write to the Assembly Commission to request that Stormont is also lit pink to celebrate Donor's Day.”

The Committee acceded to the request to light the City Hall pink on Friday, 29th January, 2021 to mark Donor's Day and agreed that the Council would work with the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service, NHS Organ Donation Service, Public Health Agency and the Anthony Nolan Trust to host an information and donation session in Belfast City Hall on Donor's day. It was further agreed that a letter would be forwarded to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission requesting that Parliament Buildings would also be lit pink.

Chairperson