

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**Minutes of Meeting of the Regeneration & Growth Committee held in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn and in remote locations on Thursday, 13 February 2025 at 6.00 pm****PRESENT IN THE CHAMBER:**

Alderman A Grehan (Chairperson)

Alderman A G Ewart MBE (Vice Chairperson)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor K Dickson

Aldermen J Baird and M Gregg

Councillors J Gallen, J Harpur, C Kemp, U Mackin,
A Martin, C McCready and T Mitchell**REMOTE ATTENDANCE:**

Councillors J Lavery BEM, D Lynch and N Parker

OTHER MEMBER:

Councillors G Hynds (Chamber)

IN ATTENDANCEDirector of Regeneration & Growth
Head of Economic Development
Head of Planning & Capital Development
Head of Assets
Member Services Officers (BS and EW)
IT Officer**Commencement of Meeting**

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, extended a welcome to all present at the February meeting of the Committee and reminded those present that the meeting was being audio recorded unless the item was being considered under confidential business.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

Alderman M Gregg entered the meeting at 6.02 pm and Councillor D Lynch joined the meeting remotely at 6.03 pm.

1. **Apologies**

There were no apologies recorded.

2. Declarations of Interest

Alderman J Baird declared a pecuniary interest in respect of item 3.2 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme funded by DAERA under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation in view of his company having benefited from this grant scheme.

During the course of the meeting the following declarations were declared in respect of item 6.2 Extension to Leases:

- Councillor T Mitchell - in view of him being a shareholder in Ballymacash Sports Academy (pecuniary interest)
- Councillor A Martin – in view of his interest in Lisburn Recreation & Community Hub of Lisburn Rangers (non-pecuniary interest)
- Councillor G Hynds – in view of his interest in Lisburn Recreation & Community Hub of Lisburn Rangers (non-pecuniary interest)

3.0 Report of Head of Economic Development

3.1 Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2025 - 2030

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the Council's Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025/2026 which had been developed following a structured consultation process, workshops with Elected Members and industry representatives, a period of research, analysis and a public consultation exercise.

A copy of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025/2026 had been appended to the Officer's report together with a feedback report from the 8-week consultation process.

The Head of Economic Development responded to questions from the Committee on issues arising out of the report, including:

- the proposed 33.6% increase in revenue generation via tourism in Lisburn and Castlereagh throughout the Strategy's 6-year lifespan which represented a 5.6% per annum increase each year, and
- any effects on the targets as a result of the introduction of the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme

The Director of Regeneration & Growth also addressed the Committee in connection with the issues raised.

3.1 Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2025 – 2030 (Cont'd)

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Councillor U Mackin, and agreed to recommend that the final version of the LCCC Tourism Strategy with the associated Action Plan 2025-2030 be approved, both Members having expressed thanks to the Officers concerned for their efforts thereon.

3.2 NI Enterprise Support Service: Go Succeed

Alderman J Baird left the meeting at this point having declared a pecuniary interest in this item of business (6.14 pm).

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the NI Enterprise Support Service which had been branded "Go Succeed" and which was designed to support individuals and businesses throughout their start-up and growth journey.

The report outlined that Belfast City Council (BCC), the lead Council for the initiative, had been engaging with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund on behalf of all Councils to secure a 12-month extension and that these discussions were anticipated to reach a conclusion by the end of this financial year. It was noted that during the interim period, BCC Programme Management Office faced the risk of losing key personnel due to a lack of committed funds and that to address this and ensure the feasibility of any future extension, BCC had requested each Council to contribute £48,000 towards staff costs for programme delivery in 2025/26.

The Head of Economic Development responded to a question from a Member who had requested clarification on the anticipated level of funding for the Lisburn and Castlereagh area which included an additional amount for staff costs. The Member welcomed the funding that was coming into the Council area which would help many businesses to succeed.

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, and agreed to recommend that the Council commit £48,000 for 2025/26, for the reasons outlined, on the basis of proportionality, pending any additional UKSPF funding secured.

3.3 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme funded by DAERA under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme

Alderman J Baird returned to the meeting at 6.19 pm.

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme.

The Head of Economic Development reported that 43 applications had scored above the 65% scoring threshold and that following the success of the current call for applications DAERA had been able to source additional funds to allow all applications who had scored above the threshold score of 65% to be issued with a Letter of Offer.

The Committee had been furnished with a summary of all the successful applications to the above Rural Business Development grant scheme.

A Member welcomed the success of the above grant scheme, two small businesses in their DEA having received funding under this grant scheme.

It was agreed that the update report and summary in connection with the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme funded by DAERA under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation be noted.

4. Report of the Head of Planning & Capital Development

4.1 Access to Justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention (a Call for Evidence)

The Head of Planning & Capital Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with a Call for Evidence on Access to Justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention from the Department of Justice.

The Committee had been furnished with a copy of the Department's consultation document and questionnaire.

The Head of Planning & Capital Development drew the Committee's attention to Section 4 of the consultation document in which the Department highlighted relevant case law and the flexibility already available to judges in Northern Ireland in allowing cases to proceed after the existing time limits are expired.

Taking account of the key issues outlined in his report the Head of Planning & Capital Development recommended the following response to Section 4 of the consultation:

4.1 Access to Justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention (a Call for Evidence) (Cont'd)

It is the experience of this Council that cases are normally brought without delay and that it may only be in an exceptional circumstance where a judge may require flexibility. This issue, however, is wider than the costs protection regulations and it is recommended that caution is exercised as making any change has wider implications for Judicial Review. These potential implications are not engaged in this call for evidence. A further and more wide-ranging review is required of Aarhus as a means of securing access to justice. We recommend that the Department consult more widely and beyond the narrow scope of Costs Protection Regulations.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor C Kemp, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the limitations on the ability of the Council to engage constructively in the Department of Justice's Call for Evidence consultation process, as outlined in the report, be noted, and
- b) a response be issued to the Department of Justice to Section 4 of the call for evidence as outlined above.

5. Report by Head of Assets

5.1 Bells Lane – Dunmurry Gospel Hall

The Head of Asset's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with a request to the Council by Dunmurry Gospel Hall for permission to erect a temporary portable building within Bells Lane car park in order to facilitate gospel meetings from late August through September 2025 and also the requirement for the Council temporarily setting aside the relevant Byelaws.

The Head of Assets responded to questions from two Members in connection with:

- a) any impact on visitors to nearby facilities due to the use of the car park by Dunmurry Gospel Hall, and
- b) any objections raised during the consultation with neighbours.

It was proposed by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor C McCreedy, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the Council approve the request to utilise Bells Lane car park to erect a temporary portable building for Dunmurry Gospel Hall to facilitate gospel meetings, and
- b) the Council approve the setting aside of the Byelaws to enable this request to progress.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Vacant Properties in Lisburn City Centre Councillor U Mackin

Councillor U Mackin requested an update on work to address the gradual increase in the number of vacant properties in Lisburn City Centre.

In response the Director highlighted a number of actions that had been on-going to address the issue of vacant properties, including:

- the reserve funds that had been set aside for this area of work
- approximately 40 submissions having been received following a call for Expressions of Interest.
- a number of expressions of interest would be re-directed to other appropriate sources of funding
- continued liaison with DfC in respect of High Street initiatives including funding access
- the maintaining and monitoring of a vacant unit register
- the directing of investors' applications through the planning team for triage
- the recruitment of the project manager post
- plans to build on the positives arising out of the successful Christmas light festival for the high street

The Director gave an assurance that a report on the plans to address vacant properties in Lisburn City Centre would come before the Committee in the next few months.

6.2 Promotion of Lisburn & Castlereagh Tourism Councillor C McCready

Councillor C McCready welcomed the Lisburn and Castlereagh tourism screens that were in place at the newly opened Chicken-Fil-A restaurant at the Applegreen Lisburn South Filling station. Councillor McCready particularly welcomed the fact that visitors and tourists coming into the area would see the tourism offering across the Lisburn and Castlereagh area. Councillor McCready also enquired about any plans to put in place 'Welcome to Lisburn/ Castlereagh' signs, similar to those he had seen in Belfast.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth welcomed Councillor McCready's interest in the areas he had raised and advised that in regard to the 'Welcome' signs there was a proposal to deal with an Arterial Routes Programme. In addition the Area Plan would have regard to the designation of the boundaries for the City Centre.

6.3 Lisburn Castlereagh Business Awards 28 March 2025
Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, highlighted the forthcoming Lisburn Castlereagh Business Awards ceremony which was taking place on Friday 28th March 2025 in the La Mon House Hotel which would recognise and showcase the excellent businesses across the Council area across 14 categories. The Chairperson advised that invitations to this event would be issued to Members of the Committee in the near future and encouraged Members to attend this important event.

6.4 Remote Attendance
Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, referred to a request made by a Member at a recent meeting of Council in connection with the provision of a screen in the Council Chamber so that those in attendance in the Chamber would be able to see those Members attending remotely and advised that this had not yet happened due to the additional technology required. In this regard the Chairperson advised of the names of those Members of the Committee who were in attendance remotely that evening.

7. Confidential Report from Director of Regeneration & Growth

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, advised that confidential report items were required to be considered under confidential business due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor C McCreedy, and agreed that the Confidential Reports be considered “in Committee” in the absence of press or members of the public. The audio recording was paused at this stage in proceedings.

7.1 2025/2026 Major Tourism Events
 (Redacted report to be published post agreement by Council)

The Director of Regeneration & Growth’s report set out the background and key issues in connection with the Council’s Major Tourism Events Funding programme.

A number of related documents had been appended to the Director’s report.

The Head of Economic Development responded to a question from a Member in connection with a key issue contained within the report.

7.1 2025/2026 Major Tourism Events (Cont'd)

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Councillor U Mackin, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the proposed recipients for funding support for the 2025/26 Tourism Major Events programme be noted,
- b) the evaluations of recipients for 2024/25 Tourism Major Events programme be noted, and
- c) a summation of outcomes of both planned and past grant recipients in future presentations of this report, in lieu of all the background appendices, be approved.

7.2 Extension to Leases

(Redacted Report to be published post the award to contracts under the funding programme – approximately January 2026)

The Committee considered a report outlining the background and key issues in connection with an 'in principle' proposal to extend leases in relation to the Council's leasing of pitch facilities following the launch of the Performance Programme funding initiative by the Department for Communities.

The Committee had been furnished with a copy of the Guidance document issued by the Department for Communities.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth responded to questions from Members in connection with issues arising out of report and also in connection with an issue relating to protocol around Members' declarations of interest.

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that the Committee agree to an 'in principle' position of extending the leases for any club applying under the Performance Programme within TNIFF to 1 January 2051 so as to assist any applications.

8. Any Other Confidential Business

8.1 Budget Reserves in Regeneration & Economy Councillor C Kemp

At the request of Councillor Kemp, the Director of Regeneration & Growth provided clarification around the proposed approach to allocating the underspend relating to 2024/2025 Regeneration and economy budget reserves that had been considered the previous evening at the Corporate Services Committee meeting.

8.2 Protocol around Members' Declarations of Interest
Alderman J Baird

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, responded to comments by Alderman J Baird in connection with the protocol around Members' Declarations of Interest.

At a later point in the meeting further comments were noted from Alderman M Gregg on this matter.

8.3 CityWatch/CCTV and Belfast City Region Deal (BRCD) - Updates on Timelines
Councillor J Lavery

Councillor J Lavery enquired about the timeline for the CityWatch/CCTV update report and also in regard to the timelines for the Belfast Region City Deal projects. The Director of Regeneration & Growth updated the Committee on the on-going work on both the CityWatch matter and the BRCD Projects. He advised that an update report on CityWatch/CCTV would come forward in due course.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor C McCreedy, seconded by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

Conclusion of Meeting

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and there being no further business for consideration the meeting was concluded at 7.09 pm.

Chairperson