LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Committee held in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, on Wednesday 7 October 2026 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:	Alderman S Skillen (Chair) Councillor N Parker (Vice-Chair) Alderman J Baird , M Gregg Councillors J Bamford, S Burns, A Gowan, G Hynds, B Magee, C McCready and M McKeever
PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:	Councillors P Catney and A Givan
OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT IN REMOTE LOCATION:	Councillor J Harpur
IN ATTENDANCE:	Director of Environmental Services Head of Service (Waste & Operational Services) Head of Service (Environmental Health, Risk & Emergency Planning) Head of Service (Building Control & Sustainability) Member Services Officers (EW and BS)

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chair, Alderman S Skillen, welcomed those present to the meeting and advised that it would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business. The Chair stated that unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per the Council's Standing Orders. The Chair asked that mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting.

In accordance with the Protocol for Remote Meetings, the Chair asked that those attending via zoom to ensure that the meeting could not be seen or heard by any other person at their remote location when confidential business was being considered. The Chair proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. Apologies

An apology for non-attendance at the meeting was accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillor R McLernon.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor A Givan joined the meeting via Zoom during this item of business (6.04 pm).

2. Declarations of Interest (Cont'd)

Councillor M McKeever declared an interest in item 4.1 Belfast City Council – Northern Ireland Houses in Multiple Occupation (NIHMO) Service Level Agreement as a member of his family is a HMO landlord.

3. Report by the Director of Environmental Services

3.1 Part A: Off Street Car Parking (OSCP) Update
Part B: Evaluation of Free Carparking Initiative during December and January and Proposed Pilot Scheme

The Director of Environmental Services delivered this report, which the Members had already been furnished with.

Councillor N Parker welcomed the report and expressed gratitude to the officers and staff for their work in compiling it.

In response to a query from Councillor C McCready regarding clarification on the free weekend parking initiative, the Director of Environmental Services advised that because Sunday parking was already free, the pilot scheme would extend free parking to Saturdays as well.

Councillor G Hynds welcomed the pilot scheme but expressed concern around people using the car parks for long stays without contributing to the city centre economy.

Alderman J Baird commented that the survey should have asked if patrons to our car parks used them to park their car and travel elsewhere. The director confirmed this question could be embedded into the pilot evaluation.

Councillor A Givan welcomed the initiative and advised it would be difficult to remove this scheme once the 14 months expire.

In response to queries from Councillor C McCready regarding car parking machines, contactless payments, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) and barriers, the director advised that DfI was currently modernising on-street pay-and-display parking machines and introducing ANPR technology. She also advised that several machines within the council have reached their end-of-life cycle, and following the completion of this pilot the council will review its car parking strategy with a view to introducing new initiatives alongside machine upgrades.

Councillor C McCready requested that a report be brought to the committee detailing the lifespan of current machines and the specifications of their planned replacements.

Councillor P Catney enquired whether the council had contacted the commercial owner of the Lisburn car parks and if there would be an impact on jobs in respect of council owned car parks.

3.1 Part A: Off Street Car Parking (OSCP) Update
Part B: Evaluation of Free Carparking Initiative during December and January and Proposed Pilot Scheme (Cont'd)

In response, the director advised that because a third-party contractor handles the monitoring and enforcement of the council's car parking this would not impact jobs. She further advised that no contact had been made with the car park's commercial owner, explaining that the pilot programme was being introduced specifically to boost city centre footfall and encourage longer visitor stays.

It was proposed by Councillor N Parker, seconded by Councillor C McCready, and agreed to:

- note the update report on OSCP;
- recommend approval of the progression of Option 4 to provide free of charge weekend car parking as a 14-month pilot beginning 1 December 2026 and concluding at end of January 2028 in all council owned off street carparks; and
- recommend approval of £8k expenditure for interim and post pilot evaluation of Option 4.

4. Report by the Head of Service (Environmental Health, Risk & Emergency Planning)

4.1 Belfast City Council – Northern Ireland Houses in Multiple Occupation (NIHMO) Service Level Agreement

Councillor M McKeever left the meeting during this item of business (6.27 pm).

The Head of Service (Environmental Health, Risk & Emergency Planning) delivered this report, which the Members had already been furnished with.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor S Burns, and agreed to recommend approval for the Chief Executive to sign the SLA between Belfast City Council and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to satisfy the requirements of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (NI) 2016 in delivering the mandatory licensing scheme.

4.2 Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) Service Level Agreement

Councillor M McKeever returned to the meeting during this item of business (6.28 pm).

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor A Gowan, and agreed to recommend approval for the Chief Executive to sign the SLA between The Drinking Water Inspectorate (on behalf of DAERA) and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council for the purpose of undertaking risk assessments and sampling of private water supplies under the Private Water Supplies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 on behalf of DWI.

In response to a query from Alderman M Gregg regarding risks to the council with testing because of the quality of drinking water coming from Lough Neagh, the

4.2 Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) Service Level Agreement (Cont'd)

Head of Service advised that the council carries out a risk assessment in relation to how a sample is taken and processed in approved testing facilities.

4.3 Consultation on Restricting Promotions of High Fat, Sugar and Salt Foods

Councillor G Hynds welcomed the report, stating that if the government intends to encourage healthier eating habits, it should promote discounts on nutritious food options.

Councillor C McCready raised concerns over costs, emphasising the need for an equal balance between healthier options and affordable pricing.

Alderman J Baird raised concerns regarding personal choice and food affordability, noting that fat, sugar, and salt frequently serve as preservatives. He stated that the best way to build a healthier society is to teach people how to cook and encourage better portion control.

Councillor C McCready commented on the council's past health and wellbeing eating event, highlighting its value in providing constituents with practical advice on healthy eating and live cookery demonstrations. He asked whether the event would be held again in the future. The Head of Service advised that several initiatives were held throughout the year supported by funding from the Food Standards Agency. He would follow up with details of any forthcoming events.

It was proposed by Councillor G Hynds, seconded by Councillor J Bamford, and agreed to recommend approval of the draft response, thereby enabling the council to respond to this consultation before the closing date of 21 October 2026.

4.4 Environmental Crime Update

In response to queries from Councillor G Hynds regarding dog fouling in Wallace Park, CCTV and graffiti, the Head of Service advised that CCTV was not utilised for dog fouling detections, instead enforcement relies on reports and evidentiary statements from council officers, Elected Members, or the public. Regarding graffiti, the council's hands are largely tied when it comes to prosecution as responsibility belongs to the DfI for street furniture, and to residents for private houses.

Alderman S Skillen welcomed the drop in dog fouling statistics but noted that the issue remains highly frustrating.

Councillor M McKeever noted that a low number of reports does not indicate a drop in activity and asked how the council could better publicise the reporting process. In response, the Head of Service highlighted that the council's website is fully equipped to handle complaints, compliments and enquiries, and committed to exploring additional channels for residents to submit reports.

Councillor M McKeever placed on record his appreciation to officers for the community impact initiatives.

4.4 Environmental Crime Update (Cont'd)

The Director of Environmental Services advised she will liaise with the council's Communications team to better promote the methods the public can use to report these issues.

Councillor A Gowan suggested leveraging the council's social media platforms to raise awareness and combat the under-reporting of issues. Highlighting community-led solutions, he praised local constituent Tom McGrory, who voluntarily cleared more than 1,000 bags of rubbish across a one-mile radius over 330 days, exemplifying the vital impact of local volunteers.

Councillor C McCready welcomed the report but noted that the 16 litter penalties issued seemed relatively low.

Councillor A Givan expressed concern over large-scale dumping, stating that the current £400 fixed penalty was insufficient. In response, the Head of Service noted that the £400 penalty was introduced just two years ago, representing a substantial increase from the previous £75 fee.

Alderman J Baird asked if recognition could be given to Tom McGrory for his contributions, suggesting that highlighting his work could inspire and encourage more members of the public to volunteer.

The Director of Environmental Services noted that the previous Mayor had hosted a recognition event for volunteers. She suggested leveraging the work of volunteers across the borough, including Tom, in promotional campaigns to inspire more community members to volunteer.

The Head of Service advised that 'Live Here Love Here' will release a report next month. Additionally, an upcoming awards ceremony will be promoted through the council magazine and via colleagues in community services.

Councillor A Gowan stated that Tom had attended the Mayor's event. He suggested that highlighting Tom's story on council social media channels could encourage reflection within the local community.

Councillor G Hynds backed using social media advertising to address the issue, noting that the council's large following could help set standards for community group involvement.

The committee noted the annual update report on Environmental Crime across the council area.

5. Report by the Head of Service (Waste & Operational Services)

5.1 Christmas Waste Collection Arrangements and Recycling Centre Opening Hours

The Head of Service (Waste & Operational Services) delivered this report, which the Members had already been furnished with.

5.1 Christmas Waste Collection Arrangements and Recycling Centre Opening Hours (Cont'd)

In response to a query from Councillor A Gowan regarding the suspension of brown bin collections over the Christmas holidays, the Head of Service advised that the suspension would result in a four-week gap between brown bin collections, noting that this schedule would affect all residents equally.

The Head of Service assured Members that alternative Christmas bin collection dates would be followed as closely as possible.

The director stated that the council would promote both the operating hours for recycling centres and the revised schedule for bin collections.

In response to Members' concerns regarding Christmas bin collection publicity, the Head of Service confirmed that the schedule information would be distributed to all households via the winter edition of Citywide magazine. Additionally, the details will be actively promoted through the council's social media channels, official website, online collection calendar, and the Binformation mailing list.

In response to a query from Councillor C McCready regarding the quality of green food bags, the Head of Service clarified that the manufacturing specifications have not changed. He advised that these compostable bags have a natural shelf life after which the material begins to degrade and lose its structural strength.

The committee noted the alternative waste collection dates and alternative Household Recycling Centre opening hours over the Christmas holiday period.

5.2 Christmas Toy Reuse Scheme 2026

Councillor A Gowan praised the initiative and expressed his gratitude to everyone involved.

Councillor C McCready asked if the scheme could be extended to other areas. In response, the Head of Service explained that the council works together with Habitat to promote the initiative, noting that several pop-up events had already been introduced. He added that he would pass Councillor McCready's request along to Habitat to explore expanding into new locations.

Councillor J Bamford welcomed the report and asked if the scheme would also apply to drop-in centres. The Head of Service committed to investigate this and update Councillor Bamford.

Councillor P Catney welcomed the report and thanked everyone involved for their hard work.

The committee noted the information contained within the report.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Cemetery Benches
Councillor G Hynds

In response to a query from Councillor G Hynds regarding damaged cemetery benches, the Director of Environmental Services confirmed that the owners would be notified in advance of any bench being removed due to disrepair.

6.2 Public Bins in Carryduff
Councillor J Harpur

Councillor J Harpur highlighted the issue of overflowing public bins in Carryduff spilling onto the street and requested additional bins for the area. In response, the Head of Service (Waste & Operational Services) agreed to provide an update directly to Councillor Harpur.

6.3 Gateway at Lambeg
Councillor P Catney

Councillor P Catney noted that the vegetation at the Lambeg gateway had been cleared and requested that a new feature be considered for installation in the area.

6.4 Layby at Queensway
Councillor P Catney

Councillor P Catney thanked the Head of Service (Waste & Operational Services) for installing a new bin at the Queensway layby. He highlighted that it is encouraging to see commuters utilising the area for parking before catching the train to Belfast.

6.5 Translink
Councillor N Parker

Councillor N Parker advised that she had contacted Translink regarding the removal of overgrown vegetation at the Lambeg gateway. She noted that she will liaise directly with council officers on the matter and welcomed Councillor P Catney's proposal to create a focal point in the area.

The Chair, Alderman S Skillen, advised that the following item would be dealt with "In Committee"

7. Any Other Business (Confidential)

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Councillor M McKeever, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed that the following matters be considered "In Committee," in the absence of members of the press and public being present.

7. Any Other Business (Confidential) (Cont'd)

The member of the press seated in the public gallery left the Council Chamber (7.37) pm).

7.1 Off-street Car Parking
Councillor C McCready

Councillor A Gowan left the meeting during this item of business (7.37 pm).

The Director of Environmental Services responded to comments and questions from Members.

7.2 Kerbside Harmonisation Legal Update
Councillor C McCready

Alderman M Gregg left the meeting during this item of business (7.42 pm).

The Director of Environmental Services and the Head of Service (Waste & Operational Services) responded to comments and questions from Members.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A Givan, seconded by Councillor P Catney, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

The Chair, Alderman S Skillen, thanked Members for their attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.53 pm.

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Chairperson