

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

7th December, 2022

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item(s) will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 5.15 pm on Wednesday, 7th December, 2022.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN WALSH

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

(d) Correspondence Received - Queen's University Belfast (Pages 1 - 8)

4. **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

(a) Cultural Mapping for Culture, Arts and Heritage (Pages 9 - 12)

To consider further the minute of the meeting of 9th November which was referred back to the Committee by the Council on 1st December (minute attached).

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Subject:	Correspondence – Queen’s University Belfast (QUB)
Date:	7th December, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick , Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from QUB in relation to its Widening Participation Programme, cost-of-living assistance, student intake and the potential funding cuts might have on future admissions.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The Committee will recall that, at its Special Meeting on 26th October 2022, it received a presentation for Queen’s University Belfast in relation to discuss the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on both its staff and students, the possible reduction in student numbers, and to provide an update on the work of the City Deal.

3.2	At the Council meeting on 1st November, it was agreed that the minute of the meeting of 12th October, under the heading "Artemis Technologies", was amended to provide that, in relation to the presentation from Queen's University, the Council would write to QUB to clarify if all staff would be in receipt of the Cost-of-living assistance payment outlined at the Special Committee, together with data on the number of international and local student admissions and the impact of funding cuts might have on future admissions.
3.3	The correspondence also requested information on the Widening Participation Programme as noted at the Special Committee in October.
3.4	Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to QUB (Appendix 1) and a response was received from Mr, R, Feeney, Director of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility (Appendix 2).
3.5	Mr. Feeney notes that Caroline Young, Director of Queen's University's Student Plus, will be in attendance at the Committee on 7th December to speak on student accommodation alongside representatives from Ulster University and will be happy to address any issues the Committee may wish to raise in relation to student numbers.
3.6	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
	None associated with this report.
3.7	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>
	None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – BCC Letter to QUB 161122 Appendix 2 – QUB Response 061222

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Ms Eilish McGoldrick

Our reference EMcG. CL. 01.11.2022

Email democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date 17th November, 2022

Sent via Email: r.feeney@qub.ac.uk

Mr. R. Feeney
Queen's University Belfast
University Road
Belfast
BT7 1NN

Dear Mr. Feeney,

Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Queen's University staff and students

At the special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee held on 26th October, 2022, a presentation was received from Queen's University to discuss the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on both its staff and students.

During discussion, you had pointed out that the University had a Widening Participation Programme which assisted student intake came from lower income backgrounds and that QUB were exploring new initiatives in this regard and advised that further information would be provided to the Committee in relation to how areas of social deprivation benefit from the economic impact of the University.

Furthermore, at its meeting in November, the Council agreed to write to you, to clarify if all staff would be in receipt of the Cost-of-living assistance payment outlined at the Committee, such as temporary and agency staff. The Council also requested recent data on the number of international and local student admissions, together with information on the potential impact funding cuts might have on future admissions.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eilish McGoldrick'.

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer

Belfast City Council, Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
Tel: 028 9032 0202 Textphone: 028 9027 0405
Dx No.: 383 NR Belfast

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6 December 2022

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Via-Email: McGoldrickE@belfastcity.gov.uk

Dear Eilish,

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 November 2022 in relation to my appearance at the special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee held on 26 October 2022.

You have asked for further information in relation our Widening Participation Programme, our cost-of-living assistance and in relation to student intake and the potential funding costs might have on future admissions. Please find the requested information below:

Widening Participation Programmes

The University has a range of Widening Participation programmes aimed at both primary and post-primary age pupils. These programmes are designed to introduce the concept of continuing in education, assist them in making qualification choices that will assist their entry to further or higher education, study techniques and academic mentoring.

This link provides information on all of our Widening Participation activities:
<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/wpu/>

Some 30% of Queen's University students come from the most disadvantaged quintiles. The University's Pathway Opportunity Programme provides direct assistance to students who have the ability to succeed at Queen's but are unlikely to gain admission due their circumstances.

Participation in the programme provides the chance to:

- Receive a reduced grade conditional offer or a guaranteed interview (where applicable).
- Receive a £1,000 Kilwaughter Minerals Bursary to help with their studies at Queen's.
- Meet like-minded students and get to know a range of Academics and staff.
- Attend a completely free Summer School that gives them the chance to study as a Queen's student.
- Improve and build a range of skills such as study skills, confidence, and knowledge.
- Get support and help with applications and transitioning into University life.

A total of 300 students started the Pathway Opportunity Programme in January 2022 and they are currently applying on UCAS for a September 2023 entry. Our target is for 50% of those to gain admission to Queen's. We have 371 Pathway students currently in their undergraduate degrees.

Table 1 provides the most recent data for Pathway Opportunity Programme participants.

Table 1 Pathway Opportunity Programme participants

Cohort year Jan-Dec	Pathways	No of participants	Year entered Queen's	No entered Queen's
2017	3 pathways: Computer Science, Food Microbiology & Environment, Law	60	Sep-18	12
2018	6 pathways: Archaeology & Palaeoecology, Business, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Food Microbiology & Environment, Law	112	Sep-19	35
2019	7 pathways: AHSS, Archaeology & Palaeoecology, Business, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Food Microbiology & Environment, Law	187	Sep-20	104
2020	8 pathways: AHSS, BioSci, Business, Computer Science, Engineering, Law, Medicine Dentistry & Biomedical Science, Natural & Built Environment	245	Sep-21	135
2021	10 pathways: AHSS, BioSci, Business, Computer Science, Engineering, Law, Medicine Dentistry & Biomedical Science, Natural & Built Environment, Pharmacy, Psychology	255	Sep-22	132
2022	13 pathways: AHSS, BioSci, Business, Computer Science, Engineering, Law, Mathematics & Physical Sciences, Medicine Dentistry & Biomedical Science, Natural & Built Environment, Nursing & Midwifery, Pharmacy, Psychology, Social Work	300	Sep-23	applying on UCAS now (Target 150)
2023	13 pathways: AHSS, BioSci, Business, Computer Science, Engineering, Law, Mathematics & Physical Sciences, Medicine Dentistry & Biomedical Science, Natural & Built Environment, Nursing & Midwifery, Pharmacy, Psychology, Social Work	300 planned (recruiting participants October/ November 2022)	Sep-24	(Target 150)

Cost of Living Assistance

You will be aware that the University recently announced a support package of £7.69m for the following interventions to assist students and staff:

- A total of 3,600 students who come from families earning under £25,000 will each receive a one-off payment of £400.
- All other students will receive a one-off payment of £150.
- University staff, excluding senior management, will receive payments of between £500 and £750 dependent on salary. This does not include individuals engaged through a recruitment agency as they are employed and paid by the recruitment agency, not the University.
- The University will also allocate £600,000 into a student support fund for international students. In addition to this, DfE have increased the funding allocation for student hardship funds with an additional £2.8m, bringing the total allocation to £5.6m for this year.

- The University provides a range of support and advice for students, including:
 - a daily drop in from 11am – 3pm.
 - Students' Union advice on budgeting, welfare entitlement, housing, and consumer rights, dealing with debt.
 - Budget calculator and financial advice and support.
 - Free period products.
 - The University is providing free breakfast for students.
 - In addition to the above, the University has suspended fees for late returns to the library and reduced by 50% the fines applicable for breaches of conduct regulations.

Student Numbers and Admissions

In relation to student numbers, we have approximately 25,000 students, of whom around 4,600 are international students. It is important to point out that international students do not and cannot displace students from the island of Ireland.

On your query regarding the impact of potential funding cuts, Queen's would have no option but to reduce places for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland students at a rate of around 525 students per five percent cut – for example this would result in 1,050 or 1,575 less places respectively in the case of 10% and 15% funding reduction.

As explained at Committee, we also face a demographic surge of 18-year-olds and, between Queen's and Ulster University, we will need to provide around 5,000 extra places by the end of this decade just to stay still in terms of meeting demand.

You will be aware that the Westminster House of Commons Northern Ireland Select Committee recently produced a report on the current economic challenges they faced and made the following point in relation to Higher Education, with which we fully concur:

“The university cap leads many Northern Ireland students to leave to obtain high level qualifications, which they then take into employment elsewhere in the UK or overseas. This places a handbrake on the Northern Ireland economy, with international and other firms either less willing to invest in the first place or unable to fill job vacancies and increase their existing investments. We recognise that the cap is an Executive responsibility. However, we urge the Government to explore with the Executive, including through the NI Department for Economy's review of higher education funding, how the cap on university numbers might be raised to enable the retention of home-grown talent in Northern Ireland and an expansion of the high skilled sectors of its economy. (Paragraph 55)

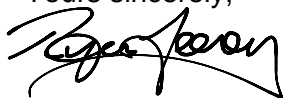
Full report at:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/120/northern-ireland-affairs-committee/news/174199/focus-on-skills-to-attract-investment-to-northern-ireland-mps-tell-government/>

Finally, my colleague Caroline Young, Director of Queen's University's Student Plus, is attending Committee on 7 December 2022 to speak on student accommodation alongside representatives from Ulster University and will be happy to address any issues you may wish to raise in relation to student numbers.

If you have any further queries regarding any of the issues above or on any matter pertaining to Queen's University, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Ryan Feeney
Director of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

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Extract from Minutes of:-

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9th November, 2022

Cultural Mapping for Culture, Arts and Heritage

The Committee was reminded that, as a key action of Belfast's ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, the Culture Unit, in partnership and the Department for Communities, had jointly commissioned a report on Belfast's cultural infrastructure. The aim of this report was to analyse what physical space was available for residents to experience culture, and to examine current physical resource allocation for the cultural sector across the city.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the overall cultural mapping project was key to the delivery of the city's cultural strategy and the city's community plan (the Belfast Agenda). He described the significance of the research, and the requirement for a whole city approach in terms of a critical analysis of physical resources for cultural activity, identifying gaps and models of good practice – starting with a study of the physical resources for culture. He pointed out that the Culture Team were committed to delivering a cultural mapping of the city within A City Imagining implementation plan 2020-2023.

He explained that the Cultural Mapping project addressed the existing and future needs of Belfast's cultural and creative industries sector by ensuring that policy was informed by up to date and accurate data whilst also providing a valuable resource for the public to increase engagement and participation. Furthermore, this data had the potential to be utilised by residents, visitors, artists, cultural and creative organisations, funders and planners. This Cultural Mapping Report was Phase One of a major cultural mapping project which included the following phases:

- **Phase One** - A review and analysis of Belfast's hard cultural infrastructure;
- **Phase Two** – Study and Scoping of the soft infrastructure, identifying cultural resources, networks links and patterns of cultural practice. Research with partners and community networks, wide-reaching public engagement and cluster engagement, crowdsourcing ideas; and
- **Phase Three** – An interactive digital cultural map product that would allow residents to browse the city's cultural offerings. This would be similar in concept to Dublin's 'culture near you' project.

The Cultural Mapping report (copy available [here](#)) provided strategic recommendations for improving Belfast's creative provisions in the short and long term and could be seen as a tool that could inform broader plans for the city alongside other areas, including, but not limited to, regeneration, heritage, and economic development.

He outlined the recommendations within the Cultural Mapping Report as follows:

- A key recommendation in this phase one report focused on addressing the shortage of affordable artist studio space in Belfast. Members would

be aware that, at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2022, it had been agreed to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support for this sector. As part of this support, members also agreed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast which would identify examples of best practice and potential solutions to this issue. This research would be conducted over the coming months, with a number of long-term recommendations presented to Committee in March 2023;

- The report identified 2 Royal Avenue as a space which could accommodate artists. On 15th April, 2022, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had approved the proposal around *Meanwhile Use* until the end of 2023 at our recently acquired 2 Royal Avenue building, with a focus on cultural, animation and creative activities. The proposal was to create a non-commercial space in the heart of the city and provide citizens and visitors with a free and accessible place to relax and enjoy arts programming and a cultural offering, whilst developing long term strategy use. In July 2022, the Council had submitted an application to the Levelling Up Fund, proposing a 'Creative Hub', for the building at 2 Royal Avenue. The concept was based on a mixture of complimentary commercial, creative and cultural activities across the building to create one holistic offer;
- Recommendations in this Cultural Mapping report also focused on Cultural Entrepreneurship as it related to physical space. As members would be aware, The Vacant to Vibrant, 2 year pilot, Capital Grant Scheme had allocated £1m to seek to support local independent businesses and SME's, social economy businesses and creative and cultural organisations that would provide a unique or distinct offer for the city centre and transform vacant spaces to become vibrant. This scheme had garnered interest from the cultural sector. At the Expression of Interest stage, approximately 33% of the submissions by businesses/organisations were from cultural sector. Many from the cultural sector Eols have indicated that they were seeking maker space and their property requirements also might not align with the parameters of this grant, which would primarily seek to occupy and activate vacant ground floor space in prominent areas of the city centre; and
- Long term recommendations in the report included a hotel levy. As members would be aware, this was considered in the tourism plan for Belfast, "Make Yourself at Home", presented to the Committee on 6th April 2022. Within this plan, it was acknowledged that, while areas like passenger duty and visitor levies were not within the remit of the Council, we would adopt policy positions based on up-to-date research, consultation and evidence.

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee of the next steps in the Cultural Mapping Process. Phase Two of the Cultural Mapping work would delve deeper into research and scoping of the infrastructure identified in this initial phase. The phase would create a holistic view of the cultural sector and identify networks and artistic and cultural practice patterns. This would also include looking into public participation, cluster interaction, research with partners and community networks, and the people and groups that use these spaces as their workplace. He advised that his work was due to be commissioned in November 2022, with a report presented to the Committee in May 2023. The overarching

objective of this work was twofold, firstly, to increase and understanding of cultural infrastructure, drive use and participation and, secondly, to seek to agree long term remedies with partners in areas where gaps in provision were demonstrated. He pointed out that the Team would also continue to work with organisations across the city to locate and source suitable properties where there was an immediate or emergency need.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the methodology of the report and the engagement with the Arts Council and other cultural bodies. Members raised the issue of some research gaps in the Cultural Mapping report, in that not all Musical Venues and Theatres had been included from across the City and some venues needed to be defined further. The Director advised that the report was not a complete list of cultural venues, however, Members could submit any additional prominent cultural venues to be included in the audit for consideration.

One Member also pointed out that the Balmoral DEA needed to be included in the illustrative maps of the city.

The Committee noted the contents of the Phase One report on Cultural Mapping and that Members would submit any additional prominent cultural venues to be included in the audit to the Director of Economic Development for consideration.

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