

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th June, 2021

REMOTE MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
The High Sherriff, Councillor Long;
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and
Councillors Beattie, Brooks, Donnelly, Ferguson,
Gormley, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, Hussey,
Lyons, Maskey, McLaughlin, McMullan, O'Hara
and Spratt.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager - Economy; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Chief Executive's decisions taken under Delegated Authority and Minutes

The minutes of the special meeting of 28th April, and the Chief Executive's decisions taken under Delegated Authority of 12th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those decisions had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st June.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Request to Present

Translink, Belfast Transport Hub - Weavers Cross update

The Committee was reminded that Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) was working in collaboration with the Department for International Trade, the Northern Ireland Strategic Investment Board and Invest Northern Ireland to showcase the development opportunities Weavers Cross had to offer. Market engagement had commenced to identify the preferred method of appointing a potential private sector development partner for Weavers Cross regeneration scheme, with an online Developer Market Day Event taking place in November 2020.

It was reported that NITHC had commenced a Pre-Application Discussion for outline planning for mixed use development proposals at the Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme and would like to attend the next meeting of the Committee on 11th August in order update Members on its proposals.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority for Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company to present to the next meeting of the Committee on 11th August on the Belfast Transport Hub and the wider Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Supply Strategy: Call for Evidence

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 inform Members of a DfC Housing ‘Call for Evidence’ exercise that has recently been launched to gather evidence, data and views on a wide range of high level issues to in developing a Housing Supply Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Agree that officers develop initial responses to the questions posed in the recent Housing Supply Strategy: Call for Evidence document that has been launched by DfC**
- Agree that the draft response will subsequently be brought via Party Group Leaders given the closing date of 16 July for responses, with the final response brought back retrospectively to CGR Committee in August.**
- Note the ongoing work in respect of the city-wide strategic site assessment work and the proposal for a collaborative approach via the Community Planning Partnership City Development Board for a focused cross agency Delivery Group to co-ordinate the identification and collation of information on public sector lands suitable for housing development.**

3.0 Main Report

Housing Supply Strategy: Call for Evidence

- 3.1** Members will be aware that the Communities Minister announced in her statement to the Assembly on 3rd November 2020 that officials were to commence work on the development of a fundamental Housing Supply Strategy (HSS), as a key part of the housing programme to help meet Programme for Government commitments to reduce housing stress and increase housing supply.
- 3.2** On 19th May 2021, the Minister launched a public Call for Evidence to inform this new Housing Supply Strategy. A link to the Call for Evidence document is enclosed at Appendix 1.
- 3.3** It is intended that the Housing Supply Strategy will provide a framework for delivery of the right volume and types of homes to meet changing patterns of demand, in the context of societal, environmental, and demographic change, and deliver on objective housing need.
- 3.4** The following objectives of the Housing Supply Strategy have been identified:
- Increase housing supply and affordable options across all tenures to meet current and future demand;
 - Reduce housing stress, homelessness and improve housing solutions for the most vulnerable;
 - Improve housing quality and sustainability;
 - Ensure the provision of housing options that contribute to the building and maintaining of thriving and inclusive communities; and
 - Support the transition to carbon neutrality by reducing whole-life carbon emissions from both new homes and existing homes.
- 3.5** In total the project is to be delivered in six phases as follows:
- Phase 1 - Pre-development work (completed)
 - Phase 2 - Call for Evidence and Research Review
 - Phase 3 - Engagement
 - Phase 4 - Data synthesis
 - Phase 5 - Triangulation of Evidence/Policy Options
 - Phase 6 - Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy
- 3.6** This second and current stage of the Call for Evidence process involves the gathering of robust evidence and views along with the identification of data gaps to assist in developing the direction of a Housing Supply Strategy.

The Call for Evidence document considers a 'whole system' approach and sets out a number of questions across the theme of supply including land, planning and finance etc; place shaping; building communities; equality; poverty; climate change and sustainability; skills; innovation etc.

- 3.7 There is an 8 week consultation period with a closing date of 16th July 2021. It is open for anyone to respond with responses sought from a wide range of bodies both from within the housing and related sectors and more generally across society. A series of online workshops are also to run throughout the duration of the consultation.
- 3.8 Subject to Member's agreement, it is proposed that officers develop draft responses to the questions posed in the document and given that there are no July Committees, it is proposed that the draft response is brought via Party Group Leaders at a date to be confirmed. A final copy of the response will be brought back retrospectively to August CG&R Committee. Members can of course separately make their own submissions. In addition, it is understood that DfC intend to work with NILGA to organise information sessions for Members and Council Officers as appropriate.
- 3.9 **City Wide Strategic Site Assessments**
- Aligned with the Department's work in developing a Housing Supply Strategy, Members will be aware that officers have been undertaking work to develop an approach for city wide strategic site assessments of public sector lands that may be suitable for housing. To date this work has included the collation of various data sets and the mapping of BCC lands, together with DfC and NIHE lands and an analysis of this as against the LDP Urban Capacity Study which identifies potential housing sites across the city. This has been further considered in the context of the annual Housing Monitor which includes residential planning approvals and sites zoned for housing or identified in the Urban Capacity Study.
- 3.10 In addition, officers have been linking in with LPS who are undertaking a comprehensive Government Land & Property Register exercise to map and record all public sector lands across the province. Officers have also been working closely with NIHE to coalesce around site identification that they have been undertaking. DfC are also actively looking at lands suitable for housing development, including the potential for compulsory acquisition, and again officers have been liaising closely with DfC on this. Members will be aware that the

recent Development Brief process for the city centre INW lands involved a joint BCC/DfC approach involving lands in the ownership of BCC and DfC – and potential for further joint working and site identification at other locations is being progressed.

- 3.11 Whilst undertaking this city-wide strategic site assessment work it has however become apparent of the need to co-ordinate with various parties given the parallel work being undertaken by LPS, DfC, NIHE and other bodies, in order to avoid duplication of effort. Aside from the public sector led exercises there is other similar work being progressed by third parties including for example a 'Gentle Densities Mapping' exercise via QUB.
- 3.12 It must be highlighted however that mapping of land ownership and site identification on its own does not necessarily translate into lands that are suitable for housing development. There are a number of additional factors to be considered including access, ground conditions, title restrictions, potential for additional site assembly to scale up development etc. All of these would need to be considered on a site by site basis.
- 3.13 Members are aware that housing led regeneration has been identified as one of the priorities of the recently restructured Community Planning Partnership: City Development Board. A separate report is going to this Committee with a summary in relation to the recent Board. This includes a brief update in relation to a subsequent agreement with the NIHE Chief Executive that a delivery task and finish subgroup would bring forward a collaborative approach to the collation and identification of public sector lands for housing. Given the synergies with work underway by other CPP partners and the linkages across community planning it is felt this approach will maximise efforts across partners and build on the body of work that officers have progressed to date, alongside the work being separately undertaken by LPS, NIHE and DfC. It is proposed that this delivery group includes representation from BCC, NIHE, DfC, LPS and would be co-ordinated through governance of the Community Planning Partnership – City Development Board. NIHE have volunteered to chair this delivery group.
- 3.14 Co-ordination of this work will help to create momentum and focus with partners that can seek to unlock greater potential through evaluation of specific sites and land assembly that maximises opportunities and delivers better overall outcomes, for example in terms of housing mix, health & wellbeing, employment, skills, energy efficiency.

3.15 This work will also be very useful to inform the wider Housing Supply Strategy work as referenced above.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.

3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.”

During discussion, Members of the Committee suggested that the following additional points be added to the draft response: the possibility of a ring fenced fund for those areas with the highest need/deprivation; In relation to strategic site assessments, the Council to investigate acquiring land, including vesting of sites to put out a design brief, either on its own or together with DfC. The Director of City Regeneration and Development highlighted that this would need to be subject to availability of funding and that Council was also working currently with DfC in relation to the potential vesting of lands by DfC.

One Member also requested an update on City Centre Living Waiting List from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, to include geographical and demographic spread.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Agree that officers develop initial responses to the questions posed in the recent Housing Supply Strategy: Call for Evidence document that had been launched by DfC;
- Agree that the draft response would subsequently be brought via Party Group Leaders given the closing date of 16th July for responses, with the final response brought back retrospectively to the Committee in August.;
- Note the ongoing work in respect of the city-wide strategic site assessment work and the proposal for a collaborative approach via the Community Planning Partnership City Development Board for a focused cross agency Delivery Group to co-ordinate the identification and collation of information on public sector lands suitable for housing development;
- Note that, in the Call for Evidence response, points would be raised in relation to the possibility of a ring fenced fund for those areas with the highest need/deprivation, and, in relation to the strategic site assessment work, that the Council investigate

acquiring land, including vesting, subject to funding availability, either directly or in partnership with DfC and subsequently issue Development Briefs in order to shape future development.; and

- Note that an update on City Centre Living Waiting List would be requested from NIHE, to include geographical and demographic spread.

A Bolder Vision Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reminded the Committee that it had received regular updates and provided approvals relating to the progression of the next phases of 'A Bolder Vision' City Centre Connectivity Study. At its meeting in April, Members received an update on the completion of a tender process that resulted in the appointment of a multidisciplinary team, led by the Jacobs Belfast office.

She advised that the Phase 1 work, A Bolder Vision for Belfast, which had been ratified by the Council in March 2020 and subsequently approved by the DfC and DfI Ministers, was an ambitious and transformational approach and involved a fundamental rethink of how streets and places were used to make them attractive, inclusive, accessible, healthy, and vibrant places.

She highlighted that there were four agreed Visioning Principles to inform future city centre development and infrastructure delivery:

- Creating a healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environment that promoted wellbeing for all, inclusive growth and innovation;
- Fundamentally changing the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car;
- Providing lively, safe, and green streets linking inclusive shared spaces to promote resilience and enhance our built heritage; and
- Removing severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all.

She informed the Committee that the increased emphasis on public health and well-being, access to quality open space, sustainable transport and connections to services and access to amenities were key issues that came to the fore throughout COVID. There was an urgency therefore to respond to this changing landscape and it was intended that the next Phases of the Study would seek to seize these new opportunities and changes in public policy and citizen behaviours that would help drive change and enable the diversification of the city centre.

She provided a summary of Phases 2 and 3 of the Study which would roll out over the next 12 months. Initial work was underway for Phase 2 which would take place between May-September 2021 and would create the documentation for the public consultation in Phase 3. Key outputs in Phase 2 consist of:

- Baseline and Vision Review; Benchmarking;
- Stakeholder Engagement and Public Awareness Communications Plan;
- Scenario planning and development of interventions, including the development of a multi-criteria assessment framework to assess the scenarios and the initial identification of short, medium and long term interventions for streets and places;
- Draft Monitoring Strategy, Business Case and Strategic Environmental Assessment; and
- Draft Strategy for public consultation.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development informed the Committee that the scenario planning would help prioritise and align major infrastructure projects and identify packages of potential initiatives that would continue the re-imagination of streets and spaces in the short term and support longer term changes.

She advised that, in advance of the public consultation, there would be focused co-design sessions consisting of a Visioning workshop and thematic workshops with cross-sector stakeholders, including Council Members, between mid-June to mid-July to shape the scenarios and interventions. She highlighted that the purpose of these initial sessions would be to shape the draft Strategy document prior to the public consultation in the autumn and might take a hybrid approach online via an interactive platform, such as Mural or via webinars and Virtual Rooms. Subject to COVID guidelines, there might also be the opportunity to hold face-to-face sessions that were prebooked and would consist of a blend of virtual information and in-person interaction.

She pointed out that a Stakeholder Engagement and Public Awareness Communication Plan was also being developed and would be supported by both the Jacobs team and the Council, DfC and DfI Corporate Communications.

She reported that this work would link in with key Council strategies, including the Resilience Strategy, the Cultural Strategy and the Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe Programme as well as major capital programmes, including the Belfast Streets Ahead, Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2, and the Junctions Improvements work strands to ensure an holistic approach to addressing our issues through adequate infrastructure planning and provision. It would also consider major development planned for the city centre, as well as the criticality of connections with communities.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that Phase 3 was scheduled to take place between September 2021-May 2022 and the key activity was the 12-week public consultation programme which was envisaged to take place between September-December 2021.

In response to Members questions, the Director of City Regeneration and Development confirmed that the consultant Jacobs would be able to undertake a broad scope of work, and also advised that the Workshop could demonstrate 'quick-wins' to envisage what the interventions might look like in the City.

During further discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to the timeline of expected developments and the need to incorporate existing plans into this work and the importance of interventions, such as the greening of the City Centre, together with the long term maintenance and ownership responsibilities of new types of public realm. The Director of City Regeneration and Development also provided further information in relation to the ongoing engagement with Business Groups including the Belfast Chamber.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Note the appointment of a multi-disciplinary team and the timeline for the development of Phases 2 and 3 of the Bolder Vision Connectivity Study for Belfast. This work would include co-design workshops, the development of scenarios and interventions to bring forward the principles of the Bolder Vision, and the completion of the draft Strategy for public consultation in the autumn of 2021; and
- Note that Members would be invited to engage in the Stakeholder and Planning Workshops as outlined within this report.

Department for Infrastructure (DfI) - Roads Presentation to Special Committee

In advance of the Special Meeting of 23rd June, at which the Committee had agreed to receive the presentations from DfI and Translink, the Committee was reminded that it had written to the Minister to raise the following points ahead of the presentations:

- Request for the York Street Interchange Independent Assurance Review;
- Convey that Belfast was missing a key opportunity given the total meterage of pop-up cycle lanes delivered during the pandemic at a time when other cities were making significant strides in capturing and seizing the uptake and shift in travel patterns;
- The Committee called for an enhanced programme of safe cycling infrastructure, including pop-up provision to be brought forward at pace, while simultaneously ensuring that local issues and requirements are captured and incorporated within the design process;
- Request that DfI provide their presentation and details of discussion in advance of the Special Committee;
- Request that DfI have to hand for the Committee the relevant data, including the total meterage of safe cycle network delivered since 2016, and information on the planned roll out of future schemes;
- Request the attendance of Liz Loughran and Andrew Grieve at the Special Committee in anticipation of questions from Members on Walking and Cycling infrastructure provision; and
- Request an update on the current status of e-scooter legislation.

It was reported that the Committee had also been provided with updates on the status of the DfC led Junctions Working Group. The Group had overseen the concept design work of key Inner Ring Junctions, including the Fredrick Street/Great Patrick Street Junction, the Clifton Gateway and the Shankill Gateway and the impetus remained

with the DfI and DfC to bring these schemes forward to detailed design and delivery stage as a matter of priority.

In relation to the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, it was reported that the focus remained on ensuring delivery of the agreed schemes within the timelines set out within the funding agreement. To ensure the achievement of the funding deadline, and critically to support the reopening of the city centre, these outstanding actions included:

- Delivery of the necessary legislation and permits / license for works at Castle Place, Adelaide Street, Linenhall Street, Union Street, Bedford St, Church Lane and Brunswick St; and
- Delivery of the agreed Civils works at Castle Place, Adelaide Street and Brunswick Street.

The Committee was informed that, in relation to the maintenance of the existing Public Realm Council, officers had previously raised with DfI and DfC, on various occasions, the issue of the standard of reinstatement of the public realm following utilities and maintenance works. Increasingly these works were not reinstated to the agreed specification or reinstated to match the existing surfacing in the area, but rather were patched with tarmacadam with little control or post works inspections. This approach had led to a gradual degradation of our public spaces and had a significant impact on the overall attractiveness of the city centre.

It was reported that the Council had also received recent correspondence from businesses within the Cathedral Quarter area following a recent audit which identified over 80 reinstatement patches that were completed in tarmacadam (Appendix 1).

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

1. Note the issues raised at the previous Committee in May, as well as in previous committees, that Members wish DfI representatives to address or respond to during, or in advance of, the Department's attendance at Special Committee on 23rd June; and
2. Note that a letter has been issued to the Minister for Infrastructure setting out a list of issues and requests that Members had asked to be addressed or responded to during, or in advance of, the Department's attendance at Special Committee on 23rd June.

'The Status Quo is not an Option': Building a Sustainable Belfast - Invitation to Speak

The Strategic Director advised the Committee that the Chief Executive had received an invitation to speak at the following event: 'The status quo is not an option': Building a sustainable Belfast' on 24th June, to be held via Zoom, hosted by The Town and Country Planning Association, Dr. R. Hearne, Queen's University Belfast's School of Natural and Built Environment and Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR).

He advised that the event aimed to challenge the narrative around housing in contested spaces and the opportunity to speak at the event had been offered to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, either of which could not attend, therefore, if any Member of the Committee wished to speak at the event, on behalf of the Council, the opportunity was available.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

1. Agree that, in light of no Member of the Committee being able to participate and speak at 'The status quo is not an option' event to be held on Thursday, 24th June, the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director would discuss the attendance of an appropriate officer, if available; and
2. Due to the time-frame of the event, agree, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (2) (b), that the decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that the decision was deemed to be a case of special urgency.

Growing Business and the Economy

Sunday Opening Hours

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 3rd March, it had agreed to the request from large retailers to support extended Sunday opening hours (in line with Northern Ireland Executive guidance) on a temporary basis, to 5th July, 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing.

Following the March meeting, officers sought to engage with a range of stakeholders including representatives from USDAW, Retail NI, Northern Ireland Retail Consortium, Belfast Chamber, BCCM, Destination CQ BID, Linen Quarter BID, Belfast One BID, Victoria Square, CastleCourt Shopping Centre, the Kennedy Centre, Sainsbury, Tesco and Lidl and the outcome was reported to Committee in April.

It was reported that Members would be aware that, in line with the Northern Ireland Executive's approach as set out in the document "Moving Forward: the Executive's Pathway out of Restrictions", all nonessential retail was permitted to open from 30 April 2021, with indoor hospitality permitted from 24th May, 2021. While most businesses were now operational, they were still required to put in place additional measures to support social distancing and manage the spread of the virus.

The Strategic Director advised that an initial request from the business organisations had been made to extend the current approach until the end of the Summer in order to allow the businesses to bed in the operating restrictions following the

re-opening and to re-establish the vitality of the city centre, given the shorter opening hours on a Sunday. This involved extending the current approach until 5th September, 2021. He pointed out that it was understood that the current restrictions on Sunday opening times did not have an impact on home deliveries, which meant that retailers could carry out deliveries outside of the standard Sunday opening hours (1pm-6pm).

During discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to the request for extended opening hours and the impact it would have on workers, together with the need for further consultation, if the extension was to be considered to continue past September.

Proposal

Moved by the High Sheriff, Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Hanvey,

That the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to approve a request from city business organisations to extend the current approach to Sunday opening for large retailers until 5th September, 2021.

Following a vote, seventeen Members voted for the amendment and two against and it was declared carried.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to:

- Approve the request from city business organisations to extend the current approach to Sunday opening for large retailers until 5th September, 2021

Just Eat Belfast Bikes Strategic Review

The Committee considered the following report and associated appendices:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Members on the outcomes of the Belfast Bikes strategic review process and provide a summary of the main recommendations.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to:

- Approve the recommendations from the strategic review and priority actions including proposed phased expansion of docking stations. Specifically, 8 docking stations in 2022 and seven in 2023.

- Agree in principle to the recommended expansion and recommend that the associated £525k investment is considered as part the year end finance report which is due to be considered at the next meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
- Note the update of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes performance for Year 6 as outlined in Appendix D.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The scheme was launched in 2015 as part Belfast City Council’s physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme has been operated by NSL continually since inception using bikes and supporting infrastructure from Nextbike GmbH. The scheme currently operates with 400 bikes and 48 docking stations.

3.2 Performance

A breakdown of historic rental and associated revenue is contained at Appendix D. In summary the Belfast Bikes had 65,000 rentals in the financial year 20/21, 137,000 in F/Y 19/20 and 180,000 in F/Y 18/19. Members may be aware that in March 2021 the Belfast Bikes had a record month with 28,903 rentals. Rental forecast for May is 18,491 based on daily average.

3.3 Members will be aware that City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed to undertake a comprehensive strategic review of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes scheme and make recommendations for the future management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme. Intelligent Transport Services were commissioned in May 2019 to carry out the strategic review of the scheme and a summary of the methodology is outlined below.

Stages	Methodology & Approach
Assessment of the current network	<p>Detailed analysis of the current scale, coverage and density of the network. Factors to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Location; • Usage of each station – Rentals and returns; • Capacity of the station too big or too small; • Network of stations (distance between stations); • Access to quality bicycle infrastructure; • Customer and operational feedback;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to the Belfast Agenda objectives.
Review of the Scheme Objectives	The review will carry out analysis to measure if the scheme is meeting the objectives set at project initiation.
Review of operations	<p>The review will consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current operation and management system; • Distribution and maintenance activities; • Infrastructure specification – terminals, bikes and docking points; • Security and vandalism including innovation in security and asset tracking; • Marketing of the scheme; and • App / website.
Future Expansion	<p>The review will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing scheme coverage and identify options for potential expansion • Risks and barriers to expansion • A business model for any future expansion (capital and revenue) <p>Production of a prioritised, fully costed and phased expansion plan based on an assessment of options.</p>
Financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the procurement options for sponsorship and advertising in order to maximise income and streamline the process; • Review of the subscription and/or usage fees; • Consider alternative revenue sources - public funds & private investment; • Marketing of the scheme to promote growth in membership and usage.

3.5 Active Travel Infrastructure

The consultant made several recommendations regarding the prioritisation of certain routes contained in Draft Belfast Bicycle Network Strategy that was published for consultation in January 2017. These are.

- Route 6 - CASTLE JUNCTION (BELFAST) TO WHITEROCK ROAD (BELFAST) – 5.5KM; AND SHAW’S ROAD (BELFAST) – 7.7KM
- Route 7 - CASTLE JUNCTION (BELFAST) TO FORTHRIVER ROAD (BELFAST) – 4.5KM; AND BALLYSILLAN ROAD (4.5KM)
- Route 8 - CITY HALL (BELFAST) TO GRAY’S LANE (BELFAST) – 6.3KM; AND WHITEABBEY (NEWTOWNABBEY) – 10KM.

3.6 Members will be aware that the Belfast Bicycle Network Strategy has not been finalised yet.

3.7 In May 2017 the Council agreed a response to the DFI consultation on the Draft Belfast Bicycle Network Strategy, this response is contained at Appendix C. In summary Council agreed,

‘The Council would request consideration is given to including a number of the main arterial route in city which service high density residential areas as part of the primary network. In particular, the Lisburn and Ormeau Roads suffer from heavy traffic congestion and the opportunity to develop high quality cycle infrastructure along these routes to encourage modal shift is paramount. In addition, the south and north of the city will not benefit from the Phase 1 of Belfast Rapid Transit therefore, it is considered that priority should be given to promoting other sustainable modes such as walking and cycling routes.

The Council would also propose the creation of a community greenway to the south west of the City from the City Centre along the M1 Motorway to connect with the Lagan Towpath and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. The proposed southern arm of the West Route extends from the Bog Meadows along the M1 motorway to Kennedy Way where it then travels west towards Andersonstown Leisure Centre. It is suggested that a new community greenway is developed so the route continues south alongside the motorway to connect with the Lagan Towpath.’

3.8 Stakeholder engagement and a public survey was carried out in August/September 2019 and an elected member’s workshop was held on the 27th August 2019. Further engagement with Members on the outcomes of the review were scheduled for March 2020 but were cancelled due to the Covid 19 lockdown.

The scope of the review considered the following steps:

- Assessment of the current network
- Review of scheme objectives
- Review of operations
- Future expansion
- Financial sustainability.

3.9 Key Findings

Assessment of the current network

The main findings from the assessment of the current network are as follows:

- The scheme is generally meeting expectations of users, however the reliability of the service and maintenance of bikes are not considered consistent.
- Network coverage is an issue for existing and potentially new users. There are gaps in the network and demand for expansion of the scheme is supported by the public survey and through elected member/stakeholder consultation.
- Some stations experience low usage particularly in some parts of the north, west and east of the city. Developing a safe, convenient, and coherent cycling infrastructure should be a priority along with cycle promotion activities in these areas. Further detail of usage by station is available within the appended Strategic Review.
- Low usage of stations may also be a result of an unsuitable location and should be considered for relocation or a reduction in size.
- Vandalism is a widespread issue and various actions are proposed to tackle the issue such as CCTV, station relocation and continued PSNI/Community engagement. Detail of the cost of vandalism is contained within Appendix E.

3.10 Review of scheme objectives

The review concluded that the scheme was generally meeting objectives offering a low cost, sustainable option for travel in the city. However, there is a need to expand the network and promote cycling to ensure social inclusion and equality throughout the city. This must be considered as part of a wider active travel approach including supporting infrastructure.

3.11 Review of operations

- The general set up of operational facilities is good and is large enough to allow scheme expansion.
- The maintenance of the bikes and docking stations is a major issue that needs to be addressed. At the time of the review, most of the bikes had been in service for over 5 years with investment in new stock required. Additional investment in stock has been made over the last 12 months.
- Distribution of the bikes in the system needs to be improved, however it is recognised that this is difficult to achieve during peak hour traffic congestion.
- Consideration should be given to newer technology and security improvements from Nextbike to ensure infrastructure and user experience can be improved in the future. Members will be aware that our bike stock was recently replaced via DfI funding.
- Potentially explore a change to how the scheme is operated on the ground (such as floating bike engineer who could maintain bikes/stations in a more flexible way; for example in cooperation with local social enterprises)

3.12 Future expansion

The expansion of the scheme and its findings are the result of extensive stakeholder engagement, public survey and engagement with elected members. A summary of findings is below.

- There are gaps in the network along arterial routes and local centres in the North, West, South and East of the city. Investment in new stations should be carried out to increase network coverage and ensure social inclusion.
- Additional capacity is needed in the northern section of the city centre to service the new Belfast UU campus and the Tribeca development and in the east to service the Sirocco development. This should be funded through developer contributions.
- An assessment of the current network identified a number of existing stations which are under used and should be either relocated or reduced in size and used for expansion of new stations.
- Requests have been made from neighbouring councils and expansion into adjoining areas should be considered through partnership funding.

3.13 A recommendation is also made within the report relating to a matrix for the selection of new docking stations. The criteria for contained within the Site Expansion Matrix are detailed below.

- Employment Destinations
- Residential
- Public Transport
- Public Amenities
- Resident Requests
- Existing Usage at nearby stations
- Gaps in Network
- Survey Feedback
- Cycle Infrastructure
- Land that is either owned or managed by Belfast City Council or where express permission to situate a biking dock in already in place.

3.14 A summary of future expansion, potential relocations and complementary measures are outlined by area and included below. Areas for expansion have been selected by identifying gaps in the network along with feedback from the public survey and elected member/stakeholder consultation. Further work will be needed to determine exact locations and consider those against the Site Expansion Matrix and it is proposed that this should be discussed and agreed through the Area Working Groups meetings. These proposals have been phased over a two-year period to take account of the significant lead time and resource requirement required for an expansion. The costs are based on analogous estimates from our previous expansions of the network. In some instances, site specific conditions can result in savings or additional expense. The cost of relocating docking stations is approximately £5,000, again this is subject to site specific variations. If docking stations can be relocated from low use areas this will result in significant savings.

3.15 Members will also be aware that at its meeting on 12th May 2021 it was agreed that an additional four Belfast bikes docking stations would be deployed using DFI Active Travel funding. This expansion highlighted the following four sites

- Antrim Road, Waterworks
- Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre
- Olympia Leisure Centre
- Kennedy Shopping Centre,

3.16 Expansion – Timetable & Costs

North

There are currently four stations servicing the area located at Carlisle Circus, Mater Hospital, Girdwood community hub and Duncairn Centre.

New stations - It is proposed to expand the scheme to locate new stations along the Antrim Road, Shore Road, York Gate shopping Centre and the Duncrue estate. Translink have also been asked to include a new station as part of the York Street station redevelopment.

Phasing

- 2022 Yorkgate, Shore Road
- 2023 Antrim Road, Duncrue

Costing (North)

Year	Capital	Revenue	Total
2022	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000
2023	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000

Relocation of station - The station at Girdwood Hub has very low usage and high levels of vandalism. It is proposed that the station is relocated to one of the main arterial routes in the area.

Complementary Measures - There are also a number of stations in the area which have relatively low use therefore it is essential to develop safe, convenient and coherent cycling infrastructure as a priority such as Route 8 (identified in the draft Belfast Bicycle Network Plan) along with cycle promotion activities in these areas.

3.17 West

There are currently four stations serving the west located at Servia Street, Twin Spires, Royal Hospital (Broadway entrance) and the Shankill Leisure Centre.

New Stations - It is proposed to expand the scheme to locate new stations along the Falls Road (St Marys College/Culturlann), Andersonstown Road, Springfield Road, Whiterock Road and Shankill Road/Woodvale Road.

Phasing

2022 – St. Mary’s College, Shankill Road
2023 – Springfield Road, Whiterock Road

Costing (West)

Year	Capital	Revenue	Total
2022	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000
2023	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000

Relocation - The station located at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Broadway entrance experiences very low usage. It is proposed to relocate this station within the hospital grounds to the entrance at Grosvenor Road. This was originally the preferred location, however it was ruled out as this entrance closes between 10pm to 6am daily and would prevent customers from returning the bikes securely to the docking station during these hours. There is now a close alternative in the area to return the bikes at Twin Spires. The station at Servia Street also experiences very low use and high vandalism. It is proposed to move this station to the main arterial route along the Falls Road.

Complementary Measures - it is essential to develop safe, convenient and coherent cycling infrastructure as a priority such as Route 6 & 7 (identified in the draft Belfast Bicycle Network Plan) along with cycle promotion activities. The Glider route and the temporary cycle route on the Grosvenor have provided some initial improvements.

3.18 South

There are currently 5 stations located along main arterial routes at the City Hospital, Lisburn Road, Stranmillis Roundabout, Ormeau Park, mid Ormeau and Rosetta roundabout.

New Stations - Gaps in the network exist and there is a strong demand indicated through the public survey. New stations are proposed for the following roads Lisburn Road, Malone Road, and upper Ormeau Road.

Phasing

2022 – Lisburn Road, Malone Road
2023 – Upper Ormeau Road

Costing (South)

Year	Capital	Revenue	Total
2022	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000
2023	£30,000	£5,000	£35,000

- 3.19 **Complementary Measures** – The river provides good cycle infrastructure but linkages to the outer areas are required such as the Gasworks Bridge and Route 4. The draft Belfast Bicycle Network Plan ignores the main arterial routes in the south, however consideration should be given to dedicated cycling infrastructure along the main arterial routes to build on the cycling culture in these areas.

3.20 **East**

There are currently 4 stations located Connswater Shopping centre, CS Lewis Square, Skainos, and Fraser Pass.

New Stations - Gaps in the network exist and there is a strong demand indicated through the public survey. New stations are proposed for the following areas Ravenhill road, Cregagh road, Ulster Rugby grounds, Castlereagh Road, Holywood Road, Belmont Road and Upper N'Ards Road.

Phasing

2022 – Castlereagh Road, Upper Newtownards Road

2023 – Creagh Road, Holywood Road

Costing (East)

Year	Capital	Revenue	Total
2022	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000
2023	£60,000	£10,000	£70,000

Complementary Measures – The stations at Skainos and Fraser Pass experience low usage. Cycle promotion initiatives and better linkages to cycle infrastructure would be beneficial.

3.21 **City centre, Queens Quarter and Titanic Quarter.**

This area contains 30 docking station installed as part of Phase 1 with the addition of a station at All State.

New Stations – It is proposed to provide new stations at the Belfast UU campus, the Tribeca development and in the east to service the Sirocco development. This should be funded through developer contributions.

Relocation of Stations - The assessment of the network highlighted a number of these stations which are currently under used and could be considered for relocation. They are as follows: Cromac Square/St Georges Market – close alternative at the Waterfront and Alfred Street. Millfield – although the station is located outside the Belfast Met college it has low usage probably due to the poor cycling infrastructure in this area and the dominance of the road infrastructure. Carrick Hill also has low usage and should be kept under review.

3.22 Cost Summary

Year	North	West	South	East	City Centre	Total Revenue	Total Capital
2022	£70,000	£70,000	£70,000	£70,000	DC	£40,000	£240,000
2023	£70,000	£70,000	£35,000	£70,000	DC	£35,000	£210,000

3.23 Financial sustainability

The Belfast Bikes scheme receives income from the hire of bikes and sponsorship revenue. Based on the historic revenue from bike hire and the expected revenue from sponsors it is estimated for the financial year 21/22 that the Belfast Bikes scheme will require a subvention of £244,280 to cover its cost of operation. This forecasted subvention was accounted for during the FY 21/22 rate setting process and is within Place & Economy Departmental annual budgets.

3.24 A full list of the proposals is outlined in Section 5 of Appendix A and it provides more detail on the recommendations, timetable and the costs. This includes a 5-year programme of growth assuming funding availability with an estimation of the expected revenue derived from station expansion. It should be noted that the capital cost could be reduced if underused stations are relocated and used for further expansion.

3.25 Revenue

The additional revenue that is received through the new docking stations is estimated at 15 X £5,548 - £83,220 (based on a 10 bike docking station). This revenue is offset by an additional management cost that ranges per station between

£2,500 - £4,000 per annum, 15 x £4,000 - £60,000. Based on our experience an increase in docking stations and bikes will also have an associated increase in damage and theft costs.

3.26 Vandalism

As highlighted through the Strategic Review vandalism has been a challenge for the Belfast Bikes Scheme. It should be noted that all public bike share schemes experience some levels of vandalism. For this reason, within the management contract a provision is made to cover the costs of vandalism. Unfortunately, that provision within the contract has been regularly exceeded with gross costs relating to damage and loss resulting from vandalism in the F/Y 20/21 being over £13,000.

3.27 Sponsorship - The council has been successful in attracting two high profile sponsorship packages for 3 year terms since the launch of the scheme. The process to secure a sponsor has been carried out through a tender process on e-sourcing. It is recommended to use a lighter touch approach to tender for future renewal of the sponsorship contract. Resources should be allocated to warming up the market, communication activities and producing a high quality sponsorship pack.

3.28 Developer contributions - Developer contributions should be considered where appropriate through planning agreements.

3.29 Partnership funding - Joint funding bids should be considered with DfI and other government departments to expand the scheme as part of infrastructure, public realm and regeneration projects.

3.30 Marketing - Improved marketing of the scheme and offering new products such as corporate accounts and membership benefits should be implemented.

3.31 Tariff Review - It is not proposed to increase the subscription for annual users at present. The pay as you go level is also similar to other cities. It is proposed to offer free annual subscriptions to under 25's in order to encourage cycling among the youth however this requires further analysis and consideration as to how compliance can be monitored given current operational model.

Notice of Motion – Update

3.32 Rolloe

At the Council meeting on 2nd November 2020, Councillor Baker proposed a motion which was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin *to explore a pilot scheme to use Rolloe on Belfast bikes*

3.33 Officers are working with the company on the viability of pilot scheme and are awaiting further information from the company. Regular updates will be brought back to committee as this work develops.

3.34 Free Access to under 25 users

Following a Notice of Motion from Councillor O'Hara the Committee agreed on 4th March 2020 to, to investigate. *'as part of the current strategic review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, consideration be given to granting free access to young people 25 years of age and under to the scheme.'*

3.35 Officers continue to investigate how this proposal might be brought forward. A number of technical constraints, listed below, have restricted progress.

- The current system and payment gateway used by the operator does not collect information on the users age. As a result, there is currently no mechanism to distinguish the age of the user.
- GDPR

3.36 Officers will continue to work with the operator to understand if these barriers can be overcome, or if other incentive-based alternatives can be developed. Anecdotally the operator and our consultants ITS have flagged other considerations about providing free provision.

- Vandalism and theft can rise when bikes are free of charge, this has been a consistent finding from dockless bike share schemes.
- The provision of free access is likely to negatively impact revenue and require an increased subvention
- If free access increases the use of the bikes which is of course a positive, it could also reduce availability of bike stock

3.37 Officers will continue to investigate options and further reports on progress will be brought back to committee.

3.38 Financial & Resource Implications

Based on the historic revenue from bike hire and the expected revenue from sponsors it is estimated for the financial year 21/22 that the Belfast Bikes scheme will require a subvention of £244,280 to cover its cost of operation. This subvention was included in Place & Economy departmental estimates for the financial year 21/22.

3.39 An investment of approximately £525,000 is required to fund the recommended expansion of the network. If the Committee is minded to agree in principle to the recommended expansion, the Committee will need to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that £450k of capital costs is considered as part the year end finance report which is due to be considered at its June meeting. The revenue consequences of the expansion (£75k) will need to be provided for as part of the 2022/23 rate setting process.

3.40 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- Concerns in relation to the fairness and equality regarding the amount of docking station amounts across the city, and the impact it might have on health inequalities;
- The need for equality screening on the proposed expansion of the scheme;
- The Site Expansion Matrix bias towards existing cycle infrastructure areas;
- The potential to lower the age limit of users from 18 to 16,
- The lack of stations at the edge of city;
- The potential for relocation and the renegotiation of existing stations with partners;
- The Expansion Scheme to be kept as an expanse of the City Centre scheme;
- The unnecessary politicising of the issue;
- The Expansion Scheme could be examined by DEA’s not just quarters;
- The potential for a system work around in relation to a free service for young people;
- Free use of bikes for older people and those on benefits;
- The impact of air pollution levels;
- The poor number of students cycling to post-primary schools; and
- The potential to use the ‘Civic Dollar’ App for future.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the relocation of Royal Victoria docking Station was being considered and that the Council could engage with other Council’s regarding potential boundary docking stations. He also confirmed that the docking station on page 59 of the report, under Phasing of East Belfast should read as ‘Cregagh Road’.

During further discussion, the following suggestions from Members for the expansion of the scheme were accepted by the Committee:

- An Equality Screening on the expansion of the scheme, to be undertaken in parallel with the roll out of the expansion and the outcome reported back to the Committee;
- To lower the age of membership from 18 to 16;
- In relation to the expansion criteria, add both levels of air pollution and access to car/van as per census data 2011/21 when updated;
- Write to the Education Minister to request support for the Belfast Bikes Scheme as a way to turn the curve on modal shift and the poor number of students cycling to post-primary schools;
- Find a mechanism to ensure that the Council could provide free/discounted access to young people; and
- Engage with the Council's and other Youth Fora regarding free access for young people.

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to remove cycling infrastructure as part of the scoring matrix for expansion.

Following a vote, six Members voted for the amendment and twelve against and it was declared lost.

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to include health inequalities as part of the scoring matrix for expansion.

Following a vote, thirteen Members voted for the amendment and five against and it was declared carried.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to:

1. Approve the recommendations from the strategic review and priority actions including proposed phased expansion of docking stations. Specifically, 8 docking stations in 2022 and seven in 2023;

2. Agree in principle to the recommended expansion and recommend that £450k of capital costs is considered as part the year end finance report consider by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its next meeting in June. The revenue consequences of the expansion (£75k) will need to be provided for as part of the 2022/23 rate setting process;
3. Note the update of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes performance for Year 6 as outlined in Appendix D;
4. Agree that an equality screening would be undertaken in parallel with the roll out of the expansion, as outlined in the report, and the outcome reported back to the Committee;
5. Agree to include health inequalities as part of the scoring matrix on expansion;
6. Agree to lower the age of membership of users from 18 to 16;
7. Agree to add both levels of air pollution and access to car/van as per census data 2011/21 when updated to the Expansion Criteria;
8. Agree to write to the Education Minister to request support for the Belfast Bikes Scheme as a way to turn the curve on modal shift and the poor number of students cycling to post-primary schools;
9. Agree to investigate a mechanism to ensure that the Council can provide free/discounted access to young people;
10. Agree to engage with the Council's youth forum and other youth fora in relation to free access for young people;
11. Note that the Council was in discussion regarding the relocation of the Royal Victoria Hospital Docking Station and that officers could engage with other Council's regarding the location of boundary docking stations; and
12. Note that the potential for using the 'Civic Dollar' App as a reward scheme for Bike Users could be examined in the future, once the Pilot Scheme had been completed.

Employability NI Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- **Update members on progress with the work of the Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and seek approval of the emerging priorities to be considered as part of the action plan for 2021/22.**

2.0 Recommendations

The members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to:

- Agree the high-level outline of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership strategic assessment and action plan, and agree that this is submitted to Department for Communities to access funding, for an initial 18-month period from September 2021.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast Labour Market Partnership

Members have previously been updated on the establishment of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership, under the banner of Employability NI. The purpose of the partnership is to make employability and skills interventions more effective and support an inclusive approach to growth in the city.

3.2 The partnership in Belfast is currently working on the 18 month action plan that is to be submitted to Department for Communities (DfC) by the end of June 2021 and will support activity through to March 2023. Initial indications suggest that DfC and the Department for the Economy (DfE) will provide a financial contribution of around £1.45 million pa to Belfast to carry out a series of agreed activities, as set out in the action plan.

3.3 The strategic assessment has now been completed. This provides the intelligence to underpin decision-making and inform the priorities for action. It takes cognisance of issues such as:

- Supply-side perspective including an analysis of current structure and composition of labour market, taking account of short-term impacts arising from Covid-19 as well as long-term structural challenges around economic inactivity, long term unemployment and geo-spatial deprivation
- An analysis of labour market demand including the short-term demand pinch-points (such as logistics, social care and construction), sectors experiencing a skills mismatch (such as digital) and opportunities that can be built upon (such as the green economy)
- High-level mapping of provision including the performance of existing interventions and opportunities to improve outcomes for participants (more people into work; higher skills levels in vocationally-relevant areas) – including consider of how these interventions can support inclusive growth.

3.4 Based on our recent engagement with DfC – and taking account of the current challenges in the labour market - officers have identified priority target groups, key interventions and underpinning data and intelligence needs. Our assessment suggests that this approach gives the best chance of seeing positive progress in the Belfast labour market over the 18-month period.

3.5 Priority target groups

Based on the research and analysis, we have identified four priority target groups – detailed below. We are in the process of considering the commensurate level of support for each of the groups, based on need. We have categorised the groups as follows:

- **Quickly Back to Work:** reducing the impact of Covid-19 on those whose employment was disrupted
- **Enabling Access:** ensuring barriers are removed and pathways created for those who are long-term unemployed and economically inactive
- **No-one Left Behind:** creating pathways to employment for disadvantaged people and communities; and
- **Catching Up:** improving skills and qualifications through skill escalators for those in lower-paid work who wish to gain a better job.

3.6 Key interventions

Members will be aware that the council is already committed to a significant programme of investment in employability and skills, focusing on educational underachievement, economic inactivity and skills development in new growth areas. The LMP will bring the existing programme of work together with activities being undertaken by partner organisations (FE college, DfE, DfC), looking at how these might be scaled up or how the effectiveness of their delivery might be improved.

3.7 Some emerging interventions that have been proposed for consideration include:

- Exploring transferable skills and employability 'passports' that are recognised by employers as an alternative to existing qualification requirements at recruitment
- Creating better 'bridges' to jobs and skills for young people completing training and education

- Ensuring intensive engagement and ‘levelling up’ support is effective for those further back in the labour market both in terms of employment and self-employment/business start-up; and creating joined-up employer engagement strategies to offer a ‘seamless’ package of support to employers
- Enhanced, independent careers and education advice and guidance service for both adults and young people.

3.8 The research undertaken identifies priority sectors for employability interventions including:

- Sustainable construction, green economy and technology
- Logistics & transport
- Health & social care
- Opportunities generated by Anchor institutions and Community Planning partners
- Technology and professional services, including digital and financial services.

3.9 Data and intelligence

One of the emerging priorities is a commitment to establishing a Labour Market Observatory. This will serve a number of functions, namely:

- Tracking demand-side issues to ensure employment/workforce demand is identified and a co-ordinated approach is used to meet this demand; translating macro-economic data into better job matching
- Tracking supply-side issues within the labour market such as the linkages between employment/unemployment and deprivation as well as barriers to accessing a job (e.g. childcare, skills) that will drive delivery and focus resources
- Ensuring real-time intelligence on existing provision within the employability and skills ecosystem and creating solutions where gaps arise; using local level insights and engagement to make the delivery of existing interventions more effective
- Reviewing progress of specific interventions on a regular basis to understand what is working and to share insights with partners
- Co-designing interventions that can help move people back into work as quickly as possible – this will be particularly important for the ‘new unemployed’.

3.10 Given that work is still be finalised on the action plan, it is proposed that a report is brought back to the August meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to update members on the details of the approved plan and to set out a timeline and delivery approach for key interventions.

3.11 Financial and resource implications

No specific additional financial contribution required from the council at this point for Labour Market Partnerships. DfC has confirmed that it will provide resource support for the management and administration of the partnerships, alongside budget for programme delivery. Details of support available are currently being finalised. In the interim, officers are working to re-focus existing staff resources to support this important programme of delivery.

3.12 Equality implications/rural needs assessment

One of the key advantages of this approach is that it will enable us to target resources on specific groups, including those with particular access issues and barriers that currently prevent them from accessing training and employment opportunities. Labour Market Partnerships will be established in all council areas.”

The Senior Manager – Economy provided a presentation on the Belfast Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnership (LMP). She explained the emerging strategic priorities from the supply-side intelligence and highlighted that groups would focus on the following themes:

- **Quickly Back to Work** - Reducing the impact of Covid-19;
- **Catching Up** - Improving skills and qualifications;
- **No-one Left Behind** - Disadvantaged people and communities; and
- **Increasing Opportunities** - LTU and economic inactivity.

She informed the Committee of the emerging sectoral focus from the demand-side intelligence and explained further the sectors offering potential.

She summarised the issues with the current provision under each area of focus and described the emerging LMP priorities for the Year 1 Action Plan. She advised that the next steps included:

- A Draft action plan submitted to Department for Communities end June 2021;
- A Department would review, evaluate and approve Summer 2021;
- A more detailed Action Plan to be presented to August Committee;
- A delivery timeframe to March 2023; and
- Three year plans thereafter.

In relation to a query which had been raised at last month's Committee regarding the suggestions to add representatives to the Belfast partnership. The Director of Economic Development confirmed that DfC would look at the Membership of the Partnership after the initial development phase had been completed, in approximately 18 months.

In response to a question by a Member, the Senior Manager – Economy advised that details of the Work Ready Employability Services contractors for Belfast would be circulated to the Committee.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to:

- Agree the high-level outline of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership strategic assessment and action plan, and agree that this is submitted to Department for Communities to access funding, for an initial 18-month period from September 2021;
- Note that DfC would examine Partnership membership after the initial development phase (18 months); and
- Note that the 5 Belfast contractors in relation to the Work Ready Employability Services would be circulated to the Committee.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Conference Support Scheme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for amendments to the current Conference Support Scheme in order to ensure that Belfast can compete more effectively in the highly competitive international conference market.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4 May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- **Approve the proposed amendments to the Conference Support Scheme.**
- **Approve the annual budget of £200,000.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Belfast City Council works with Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI), Visit Belfast (VB) and a range of key strategic stakeholders to position Belfast as a destination of choice for Meetings, Incentive events, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE). This business is lucrative, with the average MICE delegate being worth on average three times that of the leisure visitor. Business Tourism brings valuable business to Belfast during mid-week and shoulder season periods when there are less visitors and more available capacity.
- 3.2** A report commissioned by Belfast City Council into the impact of Covid-19 reinforced that Business Tourism had contributed significantly to the city's growth in recent years. However, this has also made the industry particularly vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic and unable to solely rely on adapting their business model to the domestic market to aid recovery.
- 3.3** The viability of the expansion of accommodation in the city including 1200 new bedrooms had been based on the success of business tourism including assets such as ICC Belfast. This in turn brought wider spend into the visitor economy – taxis, restaurants, etc. Belfast's ability to compete in this market was in part due to the operation of a successful Conference Support Scheme, which sought to de-risk conferences choosing Belfast as their destination of choice. This type of scheme is common practice in the global MICE industry. Belfast City Council and Tourism NI match fund the Conference Support Scheme for Belfast, to the level of £200,000 per partner, creating a fund of £400,000 per annum, which is administered by Visit Belfast.
- 3.4** Conference support is critical for Belfast given we are still considered a 'challenger' destination in the MICE space. For a conference to relocate to Belfast compared to a city on the GB mainland, it will incur more costs such as venue hire, flights, increased transport costs for exhibitor set ups and the potential decrease in delegate numbers as additional travel is required, as opposed to delegates driving or using public transport.
- 3.5** The scheme commenced in 2013 and in March 2017 the current model was established with Tourism NI being an equal funder with an investment £200,000 per year. In August 2019, Council agreed an extension of the scheme to run up to 2030 in order to enable bidding for conferences that are planned several years in advance.

- 3.6 By 31 March 2019, the Conference Subvention Scheme for Belfast had secured 101 conferences with funding of £1.6 million, generating £97 million in Economic Impact - a clear indication of its critical role. NISRA statistics for conferences and business tourism in Belfast for 2019 estimated a total economic impact of £70 million.
- 3.7 The onset of COVID and the devastating impact on the MICE landscape, has intensified the need for a more flexible scheme. 70% of Belfast's conference and meetings business is from the GB market and with a future post Brexit and Covid macro landscape, investment in this sector and market is essential to support recovery.
- 3.8 Visit Belfast on behalf of the partners have worked throughout 2020/21 to review support and current letters of offer for conferences in 2021, 2022 and 2023. Assistance was provided to conference organisers who were making decisions whether to move dates, go hybrid or virtual. Belfast's commitment to honouring support agreed in advance of the pandemic has resulted in the retention of the majority of conferences ensuring that even with new targets in place, economic benefit to the city will be delivered. Visit Belfast has worked with BCC and industry partners to retain 103 conferences due to take place in Belfast (2021 – 2028) worth £72.9m in potential economic impact for the city.
- 3.9 Officers have investigated a number of options over the past 12 months to ensure that the scheme can continue to deliver an excellent return on investment whilst being flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. This is necessary of Belfast is to continue to secure new business.
- 3.10 Liaison with colleagues in GB and Ireland has been informative and we are aware of other competing destinations that have been reviewing and seeking to increase their Conference support – i.e. Failte Ireland will increase their 'Per Delegate' award from 10 Euros to 30 Euros basic support, further enhanced with additional monetary support based on a range of bonus point elements. This is under review with potential for further enhancement to basic support. The pandemic has also resulted in a change in strategy for a number of UK cities away from international conferences to bidding for events closer at home, thereby the market is even more competitive than before.
- 3.11 Whilst a realistic approach must be taken to setting new key performance indicators for a return on investment, this is the recommended approach to allow for stability that can then lead to renewed growth in future years. This risk is that without amendments to the scheme that business will be lost

to the city that will have a greater detrimental effect on economic impact for the city, at a time when the tourism and hospitality industry is in crisis. In addition to direct return on investment a number of non-monetary benefits should also be considered when reviewing the impact of the scheme. These include:

- Destination Perception: A move to increase financial support for meetings and conferences will be positively viewed by Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) where financial viability is now their paramount concern.
- Corporate reputation for Belfast: Meetings and Conferences not only generate economic impact but also position Belfast and Northern Ireland as leaders in specific sectors including Life Sciences and Fintech, linked to FDI and aligned to investment priorities of Belfast City Council and Invest NI.

3.12 Working together with Tourism NI and other strategic partners, a number of options have been examined and it is recommended that the scheme should move to a model of £50 per head conference subvention, to ensure that Belfast can compete more effectively on a national and international stage in the highly competitive conference market; thereby continuing to deliver a return on investment, and contribute to recovery, sustainability and growth. This replaces the current model where funding is granted based on a banding system aligned to economic impact. Economic impact is calculated by the number of delegates x bed nights per delegate = the total number of bed nights x the delegate spend per day = total economic benefit. As the proposed new model is still based on the primary input of number of delegates, economic impact remains the key consideration. However by having a clear per delegate rate increases transparency and is considered an easier sales tactic when positioning the city to compete and secure business.

3.13 The table below illustrates the proposed conference subvention and resulting economic return from a £50 per head support for conferences with a minimum of 100 delegates and up to a maximum of £100,000. Support for larger conferences would be considered on a case by case basis. Economic return is based on industry average of delegates staying for 3 nights.

Delegates	Bed nights	Economic Impact	Per Delegate Scheme (£50) – Proposed	
			Amount	ROI (1:29)
100	300	£ 146,682.00	£ 5,000.00	29
200	600	£ 293,364.00	£ 10,000.00	29
300	900	£ 440,046.00	£ 15,000.00	29
400	1,200	£ 586,728.00	£ 20,000.00	29
500	1,500	£ 733,410.00	£ 25,000.00	29
600	1,800	£ 880,092.00	£ 30,000.00	29
700	2,100	£ 1,026,774.00	£ 35,000.00	29
800	2,400	£ 1,173,456.00	£ 40,000.00	29
900	2,700	£ 1,320,138.00	£ 45,000.00	29
1,000	3,000	£ 1,466,820.00	£ 50,000.00	29
2,000	6,000	£ 2,933,640.00	£ 100,000.00	29

3.14 In addition to driving economic impact for Belfast the scheme will move to delivering additional outcomes for funders and the destination. Greater focus will be on how the event organiser will promote the destination in their marketing and where relevant, partnering on pre and post extender campaigns for international delegates. This ensures the scheme will deliver mutual benefits. Consideration will also be given to sustainability and legacy.

3.15 Council will work together with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to agree and implement governance, monitoring and evaluation arrangements through a revised Service Level Agreement. As recovery progresses the Conference Support Scheme will be reviewed regularly.

3.16 Financial & Resource Implications

£200,000 provided from within the existing Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts budget.

3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Approve the proposed amendments to the Conference Support Scheme; and
- Approve the annual budget of £200,000.

Update on City Events Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out:

- Proposed updated approach to city events further to previous decision taken in January 2021 to suspend the direct delivery of events until September 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4 May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Note and agree the proposed approach to the delivery of events in the remainder of 2021 including budget implications as set out at 3.17 and Appendix 1. This approach is subject to ongoing review in accordance with COVID 19 legislation and guidance.
- Note and agree the proposal to take forward the date to recommence the direct delivery of city events to August 2021. This will allow for the delivery of a market at City Hall over August bank holiday subject to compliance with health and safety requirements and confirmation of financial viability.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that in January 2021, SP&R Committee agreed the recommendation that events delivered directly by Council should be suspended until September 2021. This did not prevent digital programmes or the delivery of Council funded activity where this complies with the most up to date legislation and guidance relating to COVID-19.

- 3.2 On an annual basis, the Council's City Events Unit delivers a series of large-scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. The Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts Unit also support a number of annual programmes and activities. Committee will be aware that a ten-year Cultural Strategy for Belfast is currently being delivered. This strategy sets out long-term recommendations for events in the city including better strategic alignment across the Council in the design, delivery and funding of events.
- 3.3 For 2021/22, the recommendation agreed was to continue to allocate budget to deliver and/or support specified events however to suspend any direct delivery to September onwards.
- 3.4 The re-opening of the city, the easing of restrictions and the ongoing impact of Covid-19 has accelerated the need to consider the role of events in a wider programme of seasonal animation and recovery that seeks to:
- Improve the cultural vibrancy of the city
 - Foster civic pride
 - Position the Belfast brand
 - Support the local culture, arts and events sectors
 - Deliver direct economic benefits
 - Support businesses
- 3.5 The main focus of this report is in relation to the immediate requirement to agree an approach to Q2 and Q3 of the 2021/22 financial year to ensure adequate planning and risk management. This includes reviewing current position to suspend direct delivery until September 2021.
- 3.6 **Proposed Approach**

June/ July 2021

Following the further easing of restrictions on 24th May it will become clearer as to the outlook for city recovery in the high season months of June and July. However, for tourism and hospitality businesses recovery will also be dependent on a strong uptake from GB and Ireland markets as well domestic and local visitors to the city on daytrips or city breaks. Visit Belfast and Tourism NI both have activity planned to attract domestic visitors into the city including Tourism NI's Embrace a Giant Spirit TV cycle for Belfast commencing 31st May. Other marketing activity had been subject to review and clarity over guidance relating to the common travel area.

- 3.7 In addition to the marketing of the city, consideration is also being given to some level of street animation to support vibrancy of the city centre. Feedback to date from the sector has focussed on current lower levels of footfall Monday through Thursday and concerns over the outlook further into 2021 and the need to sustain demand into the Autumn. Within the next number of weeks, it will become clearer as to whether hospitality in particular will improve across the week with restrictions lifting on eating in. However, if required and in line with ongoing restrictions animation activity and programming could be put in place over the summer months to support recovery.
- 3.8 August 2021
- August is traditionally a busy period for the city and the cultural sector with events including EastSide Arts Festival, Belfast Mela and August Féile. All of these events are intending to deliver activity on the ground in August. Whilst event organisers recognise that a return to 2019 will not be possible in terms of larger scale attendees at single events, an innovative approach is being taken to combine live programming with digital content. Activity is also being dispersed through extended timeframes and multiple locations.
- 3.9 Given the likely landscape for August it is therefore proposed that the previous decision to suspend events until September 2021 is reconsidered to allow for the market that normally takes place on the Spring bank holiday to be delivered on the August bank holiday. This will be subject to compliance with health and safety requirements and confirmation of financial viability.
- 3.10 At present a number of other complementary initiatives are in development with Council working with the BIDs to take forward initiatives to support businesses and improve the overall city centre experience. Currently this includes a proposal for hubs in the city centre with seating and dressing to allow eating spaces for take away and street food offerings. This is to support existing businesses with no plans presently to provide an additional food offer. Subject to full compliance with guidance this could be further supported with animation activities including music.

3.11 September-December 2021

Officers have been working to develop a potential cultural recovery programme including animation, events and festival activity for September – December 2021.

3.12 To date a number of culture and arts organisations have indicated that they intend to deliver substantial activity at this time of year. This includes programmes that normally take place such as Culture Night (September), International Arts Festival (October) as well as other festivals rescheduling from earlier in the year such as Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival. There is therefore emerging a critical mass of activity that subject to ongoing restrictions would help drive domestic footfall as well as visitors from GB and Ireland.

3.13 The programme would also include Belfast City Council direct delivery activity including the Maritime Festival in September, Freedom of the City music showcase in Oct/ Nov and a new approach to a Christmas seasonal programme. Council will also assume a more pro-active role in co-ordinating activity and this has been positively received following engagement with the cultural sector.

3.14 It is therefore proposed that Council takes the following approach:

- **Deliver Cultural Recovery Programme as part of city re-opening and recovery with focus on – ‘Culture is back’:**
 - re-opening and re-establishing venues and activities
 - Adapting and delivering new programming e.g. increased use of public spaces
 - Increased audience engagement including campaign to increase confidence and return to activity
- **Timing:**
 - Development phase: June – July 2021
 - Launch August 2021
 - Critical mass of activity through seasonal programmes with 2 distinctive phases:
 - Autumn (September – mid Nov 2021)
 - Christmas (Mid-Nov to New Year)

- **Proposed approached:**
 - **Co-ordinated programme with Council operating a clash diary with partners across events, festivals and arts sector.**
 - **Overarching Marketing and Communications Campaign with implementation plan to include Council, Visit Belfast and cultural partners.**
 - **Additional animation and dressing to increase connectivity across the programme.**
 - **Dedicated music programme – aligned to UNESCO application and music recovery plans.**
 - **Dedicated hospitality initiatives - a food tourism recovery plan is being commissioned to be completed in July. Recommendations will be implemented in partnership with BIDs and local industry.**

3.15 New concepts for Christmas are currently in development and will be completed by June 2021. This lead in time is designed to ensure increased co-operation with other partners including BIDs, Castle Court, Victoria Square and Titanic Belfast. This alignment will maximise the impact of an overall city approach to Christmas in 2021. Building on 2020 there will also be opportunities to provide support to neighbourhood initiatives and ensure these are integrated into the overall Christmas programme.

3.16 Remaining events in 2022

A future report will be presented in relation to St Patrick’s Day as development work is underway to look at a refreshed approach to this event from 2022 onwards.

3.17 Financial and Resource Implications

The costs associated with the delivery of this programme is included in departmental budgets. Support for Marketing and Communications activity will be drawn down from existing allocation within revitalisation funding.

3.18 Equality & Good Relations Implications

The proposed programme of events is open to all and as such have the potential to promote good relations and equality by bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds. Events are part of the cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA.”

The Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism provided a presentation on the planned Autumn/Winter 2021 Events Programme. She explained the engagement that had been undertaken with the sector to discuss current plans and challenges relating to re-opening, and potential initiatives to support recovery.

She summarised the key events and dates for the recovery programme's planned Festivals and Events and highlighted the 'Belfestive' Experience which had been planned for 20 – 21 November. She described the programme for the Christmas City Experience which was due to commence in November and continue into the New Year. She also summarised the intended approach for 2023.

During discussion, the Senior Manager provided further information in relation to the events which had been planned. She advised that the Council were awaiting confirmation from Belfast Pride for its intended summer events and that Belfast Mela had changed its model of events for this year to extend its programme to include a number of dates and locations.

In response to Members query, she confirmed that the previously agreed 2021 UEFA Super Cup Football event should also be included in the report, as an up to date position had recently been received. She advised that a plan was in place to decorate/animate the City for the event, in conjunction with the IFA, together with the Reception in the City Hall.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Note and agree the proposed approach to the delivery of events in the remainder of 2021, including budget implications as set out at 3.17 and Appendix 1. This approach was subject to ongoing review in accordance with COVID 19 legislation and guidance;
- Note and agree the proposal to take forward the date to recommence the direct delivery of city events to August 2021. This would allow for the delivery of a market at City Hall over August bank holiday subject to compliance with health and safety requirements and confirmation of financial viability; and
- Note that the previously agreed 2021 UEFA Super Cup Football event in August would also be included in the City Events Programme and a plan was in place to decorate/animate the City, in conjunction with the IFA, together with the Reception in the City Hall.

Update on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor

The Committee was provided with an update on progress to date on work to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and next steps in developing the work programme to achieve the ambitions of the corridor partnership.

The Committee was reminded that, since the establishment of the partnership, partner councils had been working to shape its future direction and to find ways to work collaboratively to realise the potential benefits of the further development of the Corridor.

It was reported that, in 2019, Dublin City University and Ulster University were commissioned to carry out research on behalf of the councils to inform how the councils could collaborate for mutual benefit between the cities of Dublin and Belfast and the regions between. The report detailed the current economic performance of the Corridor and the prospects for the region based on current trends. The report also began the work of identifying potential areas for cooperation which could create a stronger trajectory for growth in priority areas, including Research and Development Skills, Tourism, Infrastructure, Trade and Investment.

It was explained that, since this initial research was undertaken, the global economy had been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in monumental declines in levels of economic activity across the board. The pandemic had also had an impact on the speed of the partnership's plans to support economic regeneration across the corridor area, however, the pandemic had highlighted the interdependencies across the area and reinforced the need for a coordinated commitment to enhancing the future economic potential of the corridor. Therefore, the councils had proceeded with the development of the partnership and agreed to put in place an official launch event, which took place on 24th March, to showcase the work undertaken to date, highlighting the councils commitment to driving inclusive economic growth across the area.

The Director of Economic Development summarised the launch event and highlighted that the partnership was working to develop a plan of activity to progress the recommendations of the initial research, delivering against priority areas of work and identifying opportunities to access funding to support the development of the corridor.

Some of the key action/areas of work to be undertaken to achieve this included:

- First meeting of the political advisory group would take place in June 2021. Representatives from the Council include Councillors Dorrian, Beattie and Hanvey. The aim of this initial meeting would be to provide the group with an outline work plan and seek input and strategic advice on the future direction of the corridor partnership;
- Governance structures had been extended to include a business advisory group This group would provide advice and guidance to support the strategic direction of the partnership and provide invaluable private sector input. Members of the partnership were currently working to agree representation that includes an adequate sectoral spread and mix of both large businesses and SME's, the first meeting was expected to take place in August;
- A marketing and communications steering group would be put in place led by Fingal County Council. Work was underway to develop a marketing and comms plan for the partnership to continue to raise awareness of the area across multiple marketing channels, this would include ongoing engagement with businesses to develop case studies and the development and delivery of a series of webinars aligned to priority areas of work;

- The Chief Executive group had identified that an initial priority focus should be on Research and Development, therefore a scoping exercise was being undertaken to identify existing Research and Development focussed delivery across the area and identify gaps in delivery and potential opportunities for collaborative interventions;
- A number of meetings had taken place to date to identify future funding opportunities with organisations including SEUPB and the Shared Island Unit. The partnership was now working to further scope out these opportunities and would be developing proposals aligned to priority areas for collaboration to deliver on the work programme being developed; and
- There had been agreement by the partnership to develop a strategy and action plan which reflected the needs and economic opportunities for the region and sets out clearly articulated “asks” and “interventions” that could be supported by central and local government as well as the private sector. The terms of reference for this piece of work was currently being developed, it was expected that this would be procured in July 2021.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of this report and progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Economic Strategy Approach

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 advise members of planned work on an economic vision and strategy for Belfast for the period to 2030, in line with emerging government policy, ensuring a focus on inclusion and levelling up and maximising the contribution of Belfast to the regional economy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercises her delegated authority to:

- **Note the proposed approach to the economic strategy for Belfast**
- **Agree for members to engage in the strategy development work in order to ensure alignment with emerging council priorities.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the global economy. As places begin to emerge from operational restrictions, town and cities are considering how they can work most effectively to support businesses and individuals in the short-term while considering the longer-term implications of changes to working practices and consumer behaviour on their infrastructure and environment.

3.2 The changes have been well documented:

- Increased focus on the use of technology across all sectors (and across wider consumer groups)
- Reduction in traditional High Street retail with a resultant growth in online business
- Growth in vacancies as a result of retail closures – with city centres most significantly impacted
- Unprecedented levels of redundancies, with more than 100,000 people across NI on furlough at its peak (20,000 of whom were Belfast residents)
- Doubling of unemployment – with more significant increases for young people
- Consumer-focused businesses most significant impacted – particularly hospitality and retail – with job numbers unlikely to return to pre-Covid figures
- Resilience of some sectors – including tech and digital, health and social care – and increased demand in new sectors – particularly transport and logistics and green tech/renewables.

3.3 In response to these changes, the Northern Ireland Executive and the government departments have been working on a series of new policy approaches, in parallel with the Pathway to Recovery work that has driven the short-term recovery and rebuilding work. These include:

- **10 X Economic Vision for a decade of innovation:** this aspires to positioning Northern Ireland amongst the small advanced economies in the world, ensuring that the benefits of this change felt by everyone. It aligns closely with commitments set out in the City Deal programme
- **Programme for Government:** the NI Executive has recently consulted on the draft outcomes framework for the next Programme for Government. Indicative outcomes include:

- Everyone can reach their potential
 - Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon neutral
 - People want to live, work and visit here
 - We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment
- **Development of a new skills strategy:** this new approach is grounded in work undertaken by the OECD over the last 2 years. The consultation on the Strategy is to be released at the end of May 2021. It focuses on three priority approaches, namely:
 - Reducing skill imbalances and driving economic growth
 - Creating a culture of lifelong learning
 - Enhancing digital skills.
 - **Employability NI:** members have received a number of recent update reports on the establishment of Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) in each council area, as a means of enhancing coordination on employability and skills interventions at a local level. The LMPs are part of a wider approach to revamping provision – under the banner of Employability NI. This is a cross-government approach involving, in particular, the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department for the Economy (DfE).

3.4 Meanwhile the UK government is pursuing a strong ‘levelling up’ agenda, through which it is making significant investments in initiatives that will address the current economic imbalances across the UK, particularly in terms of employment/unemployment, economic inactivity, disadvantage and deprivation and infrastructure investment. The emerging innovation strategy also presents opportunities to address long-running under-investment in R&D. There are a number of live and imminent funding opportunities aimed addressing these issues. There is a strong focus on place-based interventions and this is likely to become an increasing feature of policy development as we move beyond the economic recovery approach.

- 3.5 There are some common themes emerging from these pieces of work:
- Commitment to inclusive economic growth (albeit that this is articulated in different ways in each of the documents)
 - Focus on those sectors in which the city/region has competitive advantage
 - Recognition of need for greater collaboration across government – as well as with private sector and those from the voluntary and community sector
 - Increasing focus on place-based interventions and solutions
 - Need to re-shape and sharpen the unique selling points of city and regional economies – and develop new go to market strategies in a post-Covid, post-Brexit operating environment.
- 3.6 Members will also be aware of the work of the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission – the grouping of local and international experts that has been offering expertise and insights on how to generate inclusive economic growth in Belfast. The Commission’s work picks up on many of these themes and, given its independence and the individual and collective intellect of the group, its draft final report directly calls out the need for timely and targeted government investment if Belfast is to achieve its potential.
- 3.7 Like many cities, Belfast is now at a crossroads – not only in terms of how it rebuilds its physical fabric but also in terms of its business base, its economic ambition in this new environment, its cultural vibrancy and how attractive it is as a place to live and work and deliver on its aspiration to ‘build back better’.
- 3.8 While the council has been working closely with government departments in the development of the new strategic approaches, it is clear that there is a need to articulate the city’s strategy for inclusive economic growth over the next decade, focusing on how it can contribute to the delivery of regional ambitions and articulating its investment needs in its role as the regional economic driver. This is important as we move into a new ‘phase’ of the Belfast Agenda, developing new stretch targets for the coming five year period in order to refocus efforts on achieving those long-term, partnership-driven ambitions that continue to focus our collaborative working.

- 3.9** The purpose of the strategy will be to set out the economic vision for the city up to the period 2030 and outline clear actions over the short, medium and long term in order to deliver on the vision. The strategy will also take account of the role of the council and articulate actions or asks to be delivered by the council and its strategic partners in order to deliver sustainable and inclusive economic growth. It will consider indicative investment levels required to bring forward headline objectives, strategic priorities and key actions so that these can inform our lobbying position with the various levels of government and help us to articulate the city position on and maximise access to resources from emerging funding opportunities such as Levelling Up, Shared Prosperity Fund and Peace Plus.
- 3.10** One of the key elements of work that will need to be considered is how the city positions itself internationally. Our International Relations Framework (which has now expired) focused activity on Belfast's partner cities, making the case for a smaller number of relationships that run deep, rather than a multitude of superficial engagements. A recent thinkpiece on this area that was used to contribute to the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission's work drew on a series of interviews with senior government officials to present a number of recommendations that included:
- **Be strategic:** there was a clear view of strategic growth sectors for the city (and wider city region) including cyber security, fin-tech, artificial intelligence, life sciences, health tech, advanced manufacturing and the creative arts. There was a desire for the city to resist spreading itself too thinly and to instead focus ruthlessly on those things which will make the most difference to Belfast's economic future
 - **Boost trade and investment:** Targeted outreach to sectoral centres of excellence around the world can foster collaboration and bring economic dividends. The research proposed that the council should work with universities, industry leaders and Invest Northern Ireland to further build relationships with high growth sectors and their investors. It also noted the important of a sustained and coordinated programme of work to help change the perception of Belfast in key markets across the world
 - **Be clear about the purpose:** Belfast's desire to build stronger outward-looking relationships was recognised in the research. However, those interviewed noted that there was limited appetite for relationships for relationships' sake. Rather, there was a desire to work on shared agendas or projects of mutual benefit

- Value of approaching this as more than a council: there was widespread support for Belfast to take a stronger lead in relationship building across Ireland and the UK to further economic growth and prosperity, and those interviewed stressed the need for city actors to work collectively, rather than the council seeking to do this on its own. Stakeholders were also clear about the need for role clarity among partners – letting those best placed take the lead as appropriate
- Time is of the essence: the research identified the need for Belfast to reposition itself in a post-Brexit world. There was praise for Invest Northern Ireland and others but a recognition that there was still some distance to go before Belfast/NI has the (domestic and international) profile and influence it needs to succeed.

3.11 While Belfast City Council has a role to play – particularly in maximising existing city to city relationships – the research points towards the value of setting international engagement in the context of a wider economic strategy. This means focusing on key sectors and markets aligned to Belfast’s unique selling points and assets and taking a partnership approach to promoting the city’s offer, with an understanding of the potential for return and the ability to follow through to deliver results. There are a number of examples of how this currently happens: through sister city relationships, through our ‘Renewed Ambition’ partnership with public and private bodies across the city region and through emerging structures including the work of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor. It is proposed that the economic strategy considers how Belfast can take a place-based approach to trade and investment opportunities, in keeping with the emerging priorities set out in the 10X Economic Vision document.

3.12 Although there is already a significant volume of research and data in place, it is proposed that the development approach for this strategy will involve a significant level of engagement with partners to ensure alignment with their agendas, maximise leverage and ensure buy-in for future collaborations. This will include engagement with elected members.

3.13 **Financial & Resource Implications**

No specific financial or resource implications at this point. The work will be carried out within existing resources.

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

Equality/good relations implications to be consider as part of the brief.”

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Note the proposed approach to the economic strategy for Belfast; and
- Agree for members to engage in the strategy development work in order to ensure alignment with emerging council priorities.

Renewed Ambition Programme and Social, Economic and Environmental Impact of Real Estate Regeneration and Investment

The Committee was provided with an update on the Renewed Ambition Programme focusing on real estate investment, including ongoing research on the social, economic and environmental impact of real estate investment in the Belfast City Region.

The Committee was reminded that the Future City Centre (FCC) programme currently had six cross cutting pillars aimed at revitalising the city centre and creating a vibrant shared city centre where people would want to live, work and invest, but also enhancing connectivity with surrounding communities.

One of the key pillars within the FCC programme of work was 'Position the City to Compete', which seeks to build on the city's reputation as a unique destination for investment, tourism, development and ultimately inclusive economic growth.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, in order to support both the recovery and longer term growth ambitions for the city as a whole, it was important that Belfast proactively promoted itself to the investment and real estate community. This required partnership working across the public and private sector to build awareness of the Belfast investment proposition and facilitate investor engagement to support delivery of regeneration projects across the city, projects which would create the economic and social infrastructure / assets that were needed for inclusive growth.

She reminded Members that the Council and other partners were involved in various activities to promote Belfast internationally. Showcasing Belfast to both the local and international real estate investment, development and occupier market was an important part of this jigsaw as we seek to attract investment into the city to drive the delivery of key regeneration projects, including housing and commercial developments which would help the Council provide for sustainable inclusive growth in the city.

In addition, continuing to work in collaboration with Department for International Trade (DIT) and Invest NI to promote investment opportunities in Belfast was also critical.

In the past, the Council alongside a wider 'Team Belfast' made up of public/private partners had attended international real estate and investment events in order to promote the investment opportunity in the city as part of a wider 'Position the City to Compete' proposition.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development explained that, given the Covid-19 global pandemic, many of these events including MIPIM 2020 were cancelled. The Renewed Ambition Task Force was, however, keen that this should not preclude the continued promotion of Belfast as a place to invest, particularly given the need for continued growth at a time of economic downturn. It was also felt that it was important not to lose momentum on the strong collaborative approach across the wider Team Belfast partners with the need for a shared narrative and approach to positioning Belfast. It was therefore agreed to deliver a comprehensive initiative known as the Renewed Ambition Programme (RAP). This Programme aimed to position the Belfast City Region for real estate investment during 2020/21, with a view to reconsidering engagement at real estate and other investment events in future years.

She informed the Committee that the delivery of this Programme was via a Renewed Ambition Taskforce, chaired by Mr. J. O'Neill, Chief Executive of Belfast Harbour, with Lanyon Communications, a consultancy agency appointed to support delivery of the RAP. She advised that the Membership of the Taskforce included Council officers, BRCD representation, INI, and representatives from the developer, housing association and financial services organisations together with Belfast Chamber.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an overview of Renewed Ambition Programme (RAP), a 5 pillared programme which focused on activities to ensure Belfast was positioned to continue to attract investment and deliver on inclusive growth.

The 5 pillars included:

- **Programme of Content** aimed at the real estate audience, both here and further afield. There had been a number of activities showcasing the Belfast City Region for future real estate investment, also building upon opportunities on foot of the Belfast Region City Deal. This had included webinars and podcasts through channels such as Estate Gazette, Real Estate Live, Reed Midem, the Dept for International Trade (DIT) and Downing Street;
- **Programme of Engagement and Advocacy** to facilitate two-way conversations with policy makers and showcase real estate opportunities to the investor community. This aimed to position the Belfast City Region positively and sought to identify and try to address barriers that investors, developers and occupiers might face when they considered Belfast as a destination. Work to date had included issuing joint public private partnership responses to key Government consultations such as Living with Water. Targeted engagement had also taken place with the Invest NI teams globally, the DIT, Downing Street - Investing in Cities event, the US Consulate and NI Bureau Washington to highlight investment

opportunities in the Belfast City Region and sought to influence decision makers and international investors. Subject to Members agreement, it was proposed that representative members of the Renewed Ambition Taskforce attend a future Committee meeting to provide an overview of activity and priority issues and sought Members views accordingly;

- **Media and Stakeholder Engagement** reinforcing positive messaging around Belfast's investment proposition. This had involved editorials in sectoral publications, targeted conversations with key journalists, a revamp of the investinbelfast.com website and producing monthly newsletters highlighting the positive news stories in the Belfast City Region;
- **A shared access Repository** was also created for the Renewed Ambition Programme partners, which facilitates sharing of data, marketing collateral and intel to help ensure consistent messaging and shared narrative was used by all partners when promoting the city region; and
- **Research aligned to the impact of real estate investment.** To date this included two ongoing areas of research. Firstly, a Markets Insights piece which was nearing completion and included market commentary in terms of the Belfast City Region as a location and across all development asset classes; asset performance and comparison with other cities and sources of finance. This work would help provide a useful summary document for the Belfast investment proposition, particularly in the context of comparability with other similar cities. As set out below, the second piece of ongoing research sought to examine the wider social, economic and environmental impact of real estate investment, looking at developments in the Belfast City Region, as well as best practice elsewhere.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided a summary of the Social, Economic and Environmental Impact of Real Estate Investment Research. She explained that the main aim was to allow the Renewed Ambition partners, including the Council, and other BRCD Councils to better understand the wider economic, social and environmental impact resulting from real estate investment, and sought to ensure the maximum social and environmental impact was realised from such investment and development. The work should help inform the case for investment support, attract future investment and ensure that this investment has the most positive and inclusive impact on the city region.

She informed the Committee that it was important to maximise the potential of future real estate investment across many areas, including social and environmental impacts, jobs, public sector services, transport links, green spaces, carbon neutral buildings, etc. Whilst recognising that real estate investment could be viewed as one pillar of the success of a city region, this research sought to understand how benefits go beyond the traditional direct economic impacts to better contribute to the overall inclusive

growth agenda. She highlighted that an objective of the work included an assessment of how best to achieve and measure environmental, social impact and inclusive growth impacts from investment and development.

She advised that a Members workshop was proposed in August to ensure Members input into the report and consider priority areas and the role that Council and its partners could play to maximise the impact of real estate investment and a final research report would be presented to Members at a future meeting. She highlighted that this research was commissioned via the Renewed Ambition Programme, although with a strong Council focus.

In response to query about forthcoming workshop for Members and potential for this to be merged with other stakeholders, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that this Workshop could potentially also include representatives from other sectors such as BRCD Council representatives, or with members of the Community Planning City Development Board.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Note the update on the Renewed Ambition Programme which is being delivered via a public/private partnership;
- Approve Members participation in a forthcoming workshop, relating to research into the social, economic and environmental impact of real estate investment in the Belfast City Region; and
- Agree that representatives from the Renewed Ambition Taskforce attend a future Committee meeting to update on activity and priority issues and seek Members views accordingly.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Committee Plan 21-22

The Committee was reminded that, at the Strategic Policy and Resource Committee in March 2020, a new four year corporate plan had been agreed. In line with the corporate planning process, Committee Plans were due to be brought to in April 2020, however, due to the COVID pandemic, emergency planning procedures were implemented and corporate planning processes were suspended for 2020-21 to enable resources to be redirected to responding to the emergency response needs of the city.

It was reported that, to recommence the corporate planning processes, an Annual Corporate Delivery Plan 2021-22 had been drafted and was due to be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resource Committee for approval in June. The Corporate Annual Delivery Plan would reflect the in-year deliverables against the priorities agreed as part of the four year corporate plan, plus some additional priorities that have arisen in response to the pandemic.

The Strategic Director advised that the draft Committee Plan for 2021-22 (copy available [here](#)) followed the same structure and contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan which fell under the remit of the Committee, plus additional deliverables that had been agreed by the Committee, together with those relevant to the Standing Orders of the Committee. Whilst the Committee had a role to play across a number of the themes, the clear focus for the Committee was Inclusive Economic Recovery, with a number of key priorities that would help the people and businesses of Belfast continue to respond to, and recover from, the economic impact of the pandemic while also shaping the future development and sustainability of the city. Examples of this included:

- Supporting the delivery of the Belfast Region City Deal, including the Destination Hub;
- Supporting the city recovery and reopening, including the delivery of initiatives and programmes relating to the Department for Communities COVID19 Revitalisation Fund;
- Leading on the Future City Centre Programme and its priority pillars across regeneration (including city centre living and connectivity/active travel); business and investment; culture and vibrancy; digital an innovation; positioning the city to compete and clean, green and safe;
- Delivering on Inclusive Growth and recovery through employment initiatives, Employability NI, education-based youth support, promoting opportunities for developer contributions and social clauses, and supporting local businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises;
- Working with key stakeholders to deliver on the priorities and projects within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy;
- Working with key stakeholders to bring forward and maximise the regeneration and development of the city, including housing development opportunities, to support the city's goals for a sustainable and inclusive city;
- Continuing to deliver the Cultural Strategy 'A City Imagining' and develop the new 10 year Tourism recovery plan;
- Championing city infrastructure improvements to ensure sustainability for the future success of the city;
- Working with stakeholders to bring forward improved, sustainable connectivity and active travel across the city, including the City Centre Connectivity Study;
- Continuing to progress the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor; and
- Promoting and marketing the city to position Belfast as a location of choice for business, investment, tourism and education to support the city's goals for a sustainable and inclusive city.

The Strategic Director advised that overall progress report would be submitted to the Committee in October/November 2021 and a year-end report in April/May 2022. He highlighted that the Committee Plan would be delivered in accordance with the cash limit of £18,237,846 agreed by the Committee in February 2021.

He explained that, in order to deliver on the intensifying programme within the City Development and Regeneration Division, it was proposed to transfer the recurring programme budget into the staff budget to enable the recruitment of 3 additional Regeneration Project Officers (PO4). This additional resource was required to deliver on the key priorities as set out by this Committee and as included within the Recovery Framework, including priority areas within the Future City Centre Programme; working with partners to bring forward Connectivity and Sustainable and Active Travel including the City Centre Connectivity Study; targeted regeneration projects to help address dereliction and reimagination of the high street and working with partners to maximise the regeneration and inclusive growth potential of major developments across the city. He pointed out that this would be covered within the existing division budget and did not represent any impact on the rate.

During discussion, one Member questioned if the proposal in relation to the Disability Accreditation Parking Scheme, in the name of Councillor McMullan, considered by the Committee in January, could be considered under the refresh of Car Parking Strategy. The Strategic Director advised that the issue would be examined in the future, but a timeline could not be confirmed at this stage.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Approve the draft Committee Plan for 2021-22;
- Note that six monthly progress reports will be brought to Committee to oversee progress against commitments in the Committee Plan, as agreed at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in October 2019;
- Agree to transfer recurring programme budget from within the City Regeneration and Development Division into employee budget to enable the recruitment of 3 Regeneration Project Officers to deliver on key priorities as set out by this Committee and as included within the Recovery Framework. Committee to note that this does not represent any addition on the rate; and
- Note that the proposal on Disability Accreditation Parking Scheme under Issues Raised in Advance by Members (by Councillor Mulholland of Councillor McMullan, January 2021) would be examined in the future, and that officers will investigate if it could be considered as part of the Car Parking Strategy Review.

**Community Planning Update: City Development
and Job, Skills and Education Boards**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on community planning with a specific focus on the work being taken forward by the newly re-configured ‘Jobs, Skills and Education’ and ‘City Development’ Delivery Boards.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- (i) Note the on-going work of two of the Belfast Agenda Delivery Boards, namely, the Jobs, Skills and Education Board and the City Development Board**
- (ii) Note the alignment and synergies between the Boards and the work of the Committee**
- (iii) The potential for the Boards to bring collaborative focus to key city priorities and challenges and unlock delivery across partners.**
- (iv) The role and on-going opportunities for Elected Members to input and shape the work being taken forward through Community Planning Partnership, including the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated delivery plans, over the coming months and years.**

3.0 Main report

Inaugural meeting of newly configured Boards

3.1 Members will recall that in order to ensure that the vision and ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda (community plan for the city) translated into action and mobilised city partners to support delivery, four cross-sectoral delivery Boards have been formed (City Development | Jobs, Skills and Education | Living Here | Resilience and Sustainability) under the auspices of the Community Planning Partnership. These delivery focused Boards have been established to drive enhanced collaboration across partners to address key challenges and priorities for the city and communities.

3.2 As reported to Committee in May 2021, partners have agreed to reconfigure two of the Boards to align priorities and maximise the synergies and impact of their work. As highlighted, the focus of the two Boards - City Development and Jobs, Skills and Education – clearly aligns with the work of this Committee. Accordingly, the intention going forward will be to update the Committee on the work of the boards alongside specific engagement and input from elected Members and Parties through the All-Party Community Planning Working Group and Community Planning Partnership. Members should note that the newly reconfigured Boards met for the first time in April and May 2021 respectively. This report provides an update on the focus of the Boards and key activity underway.

3.3 Jobs, Skills and Education Update

The Board considered and confirmed its priorities for the next 12-24 months, as set out below and as reported to Committee in May, and committed to scheduling a specific action planning session in early July to develop and secure partner commitment to SMART action plan(s). Attached at Appendix 1 for Members information is a copy of the agreed Programme Brief and Terms of Reference for the Board, the presentation slide-deck and draft action note from the recent Board meeting held on 6 May 2021. Some specific points to note include:

- **Skills and Employability – The Employability NI Programme was set up in November 2018 within DfC’s Work and Wellbeing Division. It was established in recognition of the fact that there were several existing employability interventions coming to an end between 2020 and 2022. It is a cross-government initiative (both regional and local government level) aimed at co-designing and co-commissioning a sustainable employability offer providing a tailored level of support commensurate with need. At a local level DfC have constructed Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnerships in each of the eleven council areas. In Belfast the membership of the Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnership (LILMP) includes – Belfast Chamber, CBI, VCSE representation, FE Colleges, Invest NI, Advice Sector, BHSCT, DfC, DfE & Belfast City Council.**

The aim of the Partnership is to:

'help improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by working through coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency partnerships, achieving regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions and helping to connect employers with employees'

While the Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnership is a DfC partnership, governance for the work is through the Jobs, Skills & Education Board reporting to the Community Planning Partnership. A next action is for the Board is to review the Belfast Local Inclusive Labour Market Action plan which is currently in development.

- Enterprise and Business Growth - Working to bring forward an integrated approach to supporting businesses, sustaining jobs and creating new employment opportunities in the city including arterial routes and key economic hubs
- Educational Underachievement – ensuring the recommendations emerging from the Expert Panel on Education Underachievement established by the Education Minister can be accelerated and implemented within Belfast. Also maximising opportunities to deliver specific short-term interventions and scale up support to those who may need it. This includes, but not limited to, access to digital devices and helping improve digital literacy, working with schools to bring forward summer interventions such as summer schemes and educational support.
- Tourism, Culture, Arts, Entertainment & Hospitality – Acknowledging the devastating impact upon the vitality and functionality of these sectors city partners will seek to protect and rebuild during our recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic
- UNESCO Learning City Network – commitment to review the opportunities presented by the city's designation as UNESCO Learning City and seeking to align existing activities across partners and identify opportunities to collaborate and scale. A further report on this work will be brought forward for Committee consideration.

3.4 City Development Update

The Board confirmed that its focus for the next 12-24 months would cover four core themes as set out below and have committed to an action planning workshop in early July to develop and secure partner commitment to SMART action plan(s). It is important to note that there has been significant work already underway and/or emerging across these themes as discussed at the recent Board meeting. Attached at Appendix 2 is the programme brief and presentation slidedeck from the Board meeting which provides some insight into the work underway.

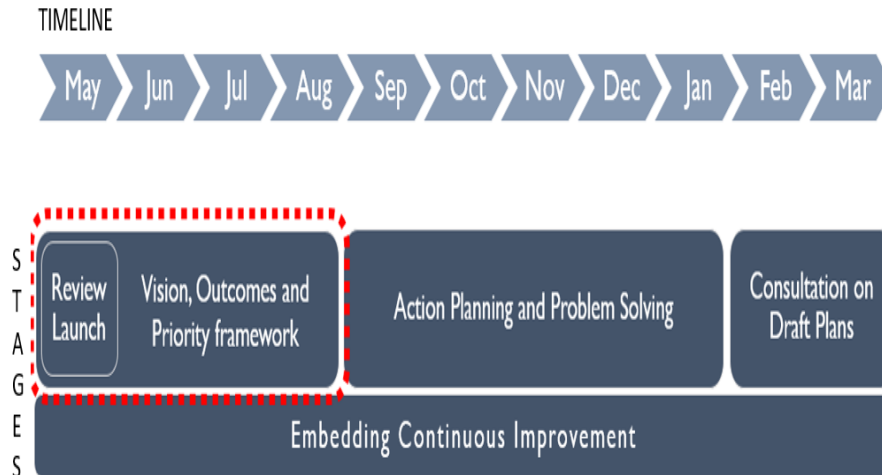
- (i) City Regeneration and Investment
- (ii) Housing-Led Regeneration
- (iii) Future City Centre Programme
- (iv) Active Travel and Connectivity

3.5 Also attached at Appendix 2 is a draft note from the Board information for Members information (NB. remains draft and subject to Board endorsement). Some specific points which we would highlight for Members information include:-

- Further development in identifying opportunities to unlock public sector land assets to support housing development. Agreed, subsequent to the main CPP Board, to convene a Housing Implementation Group chaired by NIHE with representation from BCC, DfC, LPS.
- Consensus on need to bring forward transportation plan for Belfast
- Continued delivery of DfC Revitalisation Programme to support recovery from pandemic
- Implementation of the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure funding
- Importance of engaging with developers in support of the work of the Board and to ensure inclusive growth. This will complement the cross-sectoral representation involved included the community and voluntary sector.

Review of the Belfast Agenda and Action Planning

3.6 Members will be aware that work is about to commence to refresh the Belfast Agenda and the associated focus for the next 4-years. The diagram below outlines the process and timeline for this work.



3.7 As the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have begun to emerge, there is a need to understand how our city economy and communities are likely to be impacted by COVID-19, and what we need to focus on to rebuild in the coming months and years. Clearly, the pandemic is not over and there will need to be sustained efforts to protect the safety and health of our citizens, while at the same time balancing the need to stabilise and rebuild our economy and city. In this context, and as part of the review of the Belfast Agenda, there is a need to take stock and reassess the focus of Community Planning and the work of the Boards over the coming weeks and months. This is not to say that the ambitions and commitments set out within the Belfast Agenda should not remain at the core of our work. However, in order to address challenges that will continue to emerge as a result of the pandemic we may need to pivot our collective focus and seek to prioritise and accelerate key interventions and programmes.

3.8 Role of Elected Members

Elected Members will be engaged at each stage of the review process through the All Party Working Group on Community Planning. In addition, it is recommended that all Elected Members will have the opportunity to shape the priority framework and plans for the new 4 year period through Party Group briefings. In addition, Elected Members will also be supported by our Marketing and Communications team who will provide ongoing support via a communications toolkit to enable them to engage their constituents to make their voices heard.

The All Party Members Working Group will be a key platform for Members to have line-of-sight and input into the work being taken forward through Community Planning and the respective delivery boards. Regular update reports will also be brought to Committee for consideration.

3.9 Financial & Resource Implications

Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations of rural need implications in this report.”

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Note the on-going work of two of the Belfast Agenda Delivery Boards, namely, the Jobs, Skills and Education Board and the City Development Board;
- Note the alignment and synergies between the Boards and the work of the Committee;
- Note the potential for the Boards to bring collaborative focus to key city priorities and challenges and unlock delivery across partners; and
- Note the role and on-going opportunities for Elected Members to input and shape the work being taken forward through Community Planning Partnership, including the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated delivery plans, over the coming months and years.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Closure of Donegall Street for Belfast Pride
(Cllr O'Hara to raise)**

Councillor O'Hara outlined that he had been approached by a number of LGBTQI+ businesses and organisations that wished to host a Covid safe event for the community in 7 weeks, on the first Saturday in August. He explained that there was a likely need that the event would request the closure of Donegall Street and they sought support from Council to help make this happen and expedite the process.

The Strategic Director advised that a request or details of the proposed event had not yet been received from the Group and the issue could be looked at, once it was received, to see what could be done.

The Members of the Committee recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- note that officers would examine the proposal to close Donegall Street for a Belfast Pride Event once a request/events plan had been received from the organisers.

Chairperson