

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th November, 2022

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
The High Sherriff, Councillor Hussey;
Alderman Dorrian:
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Duffy, Hanvey,
Heading, T. Kelly, Lyons, Maskey, McCabe,
McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, Murray,
Nelson, O'Hara, Spratt and Whyte.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. E. Clarke, Creative Programme Manager;
Mr. C. McCreery, Cultural Development Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Ferguson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 12th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st November, subject to the following amendments:

- Under the heading "Blue and Green Infrastructure Funding", the Council had agreed to engage with the Department for Infrastructure to investigate the replacement of Browns Bridge in Lagan Valley Regional Park, which was an unadopted asset, through the Blue/Green Infrastructure Funding, and in relation to unadopted alleyways across the City and the impact on residents, an external legal opinion was sought on how the adoption of alleyways might be actioned;
- Under the heading "Artemis Technologies", the Council had agreed that in relation to the presentation from Queen's University, to write to Queen's University to clarify if all staff would be in receipt of the Cost-of-living assistance payment outlined at the Special Committee, together with data on the number of

international and local student admissions and the impact of funding cuts might have on future admissions.; and

- Under the heading “Housing Led Regeneration Programme Update”, the Council had agreed an amendment which had been restricted due to commercial sensitivity, as outlined in the Council Decision Register.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to item 5.a) Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations Update, Councillors Beattie, Duffy, McCabe and McLaughlin declared an interest in that they worked for or were associated with the West Belfast Partnership Board and left the room while this item was being considered. Councillor McCabe also declared an interest, under the same item, in that she was associated with Féile an Phobail.

Committee Schedule 2023

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings for 2023 as follows:

- Wednesday, 11th January at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 8th February at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 22nd February at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 8th March at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 5th April at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 7th June at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 21st June at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 9th August at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 23rd August at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 13th September at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 11th October at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 25th October at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 8th November at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 22nd November at 5.15 pm (Special); and
- Wednesday, 6th December at 5.15 pm.

Presentation

Department for Infrastructure – Spring and Autumn Report

The Chairperson introduced Mr. D. McFarlane, Eastern Divisional Roads Manager, Mr. M. McKendry, Belfast North Section Engineer, Mr. D. Williams, Belfast South Section Engineer, and Mr. C. McLaughlin, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. McFarlane provided a brief overview of the 2022/23 Autumn Report on the work of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads across the Belfast City Council area which had been submitted in advance of the Committee for consideration.

He advised that the report contained details of works already completed across the Council area during the year 2022/23 as well as setting out initial proposals for schemes to be undertaken in the year 2022/23.

He informed the Committee that, in the absence of an Executive, the Department of Finance (DoF) had provided the Department with contingency planning envelopes, for both Resource and Capital, to assist with making decisions on the allocation of resources until a budget was established. The planning envelope provided an allocation for capital structural maintenance activities in 2022/23, which included resurfacing.

In relation to contracting resources, he advised that, following the legal challenges to the award of asphalt resurfacing contracts in 2021, regrettably the Belfast City Council area had been without a replacement resurfacing contract since November 2021. However, the Department had developed a new interim procurement strategy for resurfacing contracts and a new contract for the Belfast North area had recently been awarded. It was anticipated that a new contract for the Belfast South area would be awarded in early 2023. As a consequence, there would be a delay commencing the 2022/23 resurfacing programmes in the Belfast area.

He pointed out that the Department was continuing with a Limited Service policy for routine maintenance activities such as defect repair and gully emptying, which allowed the Department to repair defects greater than 50mm on all roads, including low trafficked rural roads and on high trafficked roads, defects greater than 20mm would also be repaired. The Department would aim to cut all roadside verges and sightline grass at least twice between April and October with sightlines at bends and junctions being cut more frequently as required to ensure public safety was not compromised. He also advised that a full street lighting repair service would continue during 2022/23.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city, together with an overview of the DfI Roads Programme of Works for 2022/23 for those projects and schemes that had been completed and were in progress, which included updates on minor works, maintenance of structures and inspections. He also summarised the updates to network traffic and street lighting, collision remedial schemes, traffic schemes and pedestrian measures and resident's parking schemes.

In advance of the meeting, the representatives had been provided with issues which the Committee had previously raised. Mr. McFarlane provided an update on the following matters:

Junctions (improvement works, plans and progress)

- Clifton Street / North Queens Street – DfC led scheme. DfI Roads would consider traffic impacts which would influence design;
- Frederick Street / York Street – interim scheme in delivery phase following opening of Ulster University, Junctions Working Group involved in choice of final layout which was compatible with York Street Interchange, Placemaking and Active Travel Review. AECOM was bringing this to Roads 'A Group'; and
- Peter's Hill – traffic impacts were being modelled and discussed. Junction improvements would be delivered by DfC in conjunction with their public realm scheme.

Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2035 (progress updates, timelines)

- Being prepared by the Department in collaboration with the five local councils within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA), in line with respective councils' Local Development Plan (LDP), Local Policies Plan (LPP) timescales;
- Envisaged that the Greater Belfast Area would form the first iteration and would be delivered in line with Belfast City Council's LDP LPP;
- Transport Planning and Modelling Unit (TPMU) continued to engage with the Council;
- TPMU was planning to arrange a meeting before Christmas with the council's LDP team to provide an update on progress; and
- The next stage - formal launch of the BMTP in 2023.

Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2 (progress updates, timelines)

- The public consultation report for the scheme was published on the 21st October, 2022;
- Preferred routes would be Antrim Road in the North, Ormeau Road and Saintfield Road in the South;
- Extension to the existing G2 from to QUB and the City Hospital;
- The North and South routes would seek to extend to Glengormley and Carryduff;
- BRT2 connecting to the north through the city centre was yet to be confirmed – as it would need to align with the Bolder Vision and proposals around the Civic Spine; and
- Earliest Go-Live date was September 2027, dependent on funding.

York Street Interchange

- Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR) was published on 11th October, 2022 and recommended that three of the options considered in it were further developed;
- Further engagement with stakeholders, including Belfast City Council and Ulster University and local residents' groups.
- Scheduled to conclude early in 2023;
- On 31st October, 2022 the Permanent Secretary met an all-party delegation from the Council and Ulster University to discuss works in the vicinity of the new campus, AECOM gave a presentation on the outcome of the YSI - Placemaking and Active Travel Review report. This could be delivered to the full Council at a later date for information purposes.

York Street Controlled Zone

- Experimental Order was advertised on 14th September and closed 6th October, 2022;
- Proposal was to restrict vehicular traffic between Great Patrick Street and Donegal Street except for busses, cyclists and blue badge holders;
- 19 responses to the consultation were received by the Department - 14 objected to the scheme, 3 supported the scheme, 1 was neither for or against and 1 was received outside the consultation period;
- Policy required that the Department considered these representations and replied in detail to the individuals concerned regarding the issues raised; and
- Should any objection remain after this stage, a submission would be made to Transport and Legislation Branch for direction on the way forward.

Delivery and Implementation of the Belfast Cycle Network

- The Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan (2022-2031) sets out a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years. The Plan highlighted those schemes that could be deliverable in the short term – the medium term – and the long term;
- The timescale for delivery of each project would be refined as each project was designed, consulted upon and constructed. Progress would also be dependent on the level of annual funding available for active travel;
- DfI Roads was currently progressing the Short Term (2022-25) schemes identified within the plan. There were 16 short-term schemes (for delivery between 2022-25). DfI Roads were working with key partners including Belfast City Council, Department for Communities, Belfast Harbour, PSNI, Community Groups etc; and
- The Department was currently considering its approach to the delivery of the schemes in the Belfast Cycling Network to allow a greater focus on scheme delivery. There were a number of stakeholders involved, most importantly members of the public and it would take a careful approach to explain the benefits the cycle network to them. Some would consider that any measures would have a detrimental impact on their local area or access to existing provision, and this needs to be considered and consulted on within the design process.
- *Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge* - a key element of the walking and cycling network to connect Belfast city centre with the south and east of the city and the Connswater Community Greenway, to improve access to Ormeau Park for recreational use. Planned opening in 2025 with a current estimate for the project of £12.9m

Pavement Orders and Footpath Parking

- The Footways (Prohibition of Waiting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 - proposal to amend to prohibit vehicles waiting on a footway adjacent to a bus stand, on a footway adjacent to the limits of any mandatory cycle lane or school keep clear, however needed Ministerial approval.

During discussion, Mr. McFarlane answered a range of questions in relation to the residents parking schemes, concerns over safety and traffic calming measures, the support for pedestrianisation of the city centre, and the consultation process of cycle routes.

A number of Members stressed the inability to contact DfI Roads staff to obtain updates on urgent remedial works and the importance of obtaining direct phone numbers for key staff that could provide such updates. Mr McFarlane advised that this would be explored and encouraged Councillors to avail of the online fault reporting system on NI Direct, or to contact the department directly via the eastern secretariat email address.

In relation to the BRT North South Glider Route, one Member raised the importance of residents parking schemes along the route before the Glider Route commenced. Mr. McFarlane explained the process further and stated that he would send the comment to the Belfast Rapid Transport Team for perusal.

During further discussion, regarding the Cycling Strategy for the City and its targets, Members expressed their concern at the lack of progress on the Bicycle Network and other active travel measures. Mr. McFarlane explained the resource issues and highlighted that the new Director's remit would help to expedite the process and network further.

The Members drew the attention of the officers from DfI Roads to a number of additional matters, which Mr. McFarlane advised would be investigated and a further update submitted to the Committee in due course:

- In relation to the Temporary Bollards on the Donegall Road – Safety Concerns for residents regarding access - update on when this would be addressed;
- An update on the residents parking scheme review and what, if any, have/ would be delivered across the City;
- The need for residents parking scheme's along the proposed new Glider Route;
- The need to review College Park Residents Parking Scheme;
- Lack of communication and the need for Members to have up to date, direct contact details for the DfI Roads Team so that issues could be resolved in a timely manner;
- An update on the delivery of Orpen Park / Porter Park Traffic Calming Scheme – was there a plan in place for what this would be and a timeline for implementation;

- Update on resurfacing of Roads and Pathways in Belvoir – Grays Park Avenue, Grays Park Gardens and Grays Park Drive;
- Cycle Network Development Plan - Resources and Budget Update and data on what had been implemented in the last two years;
- Learnings from Limestone/Cavehill proposed cycle lane consultation process;
- Potholes and resurfacing in Lagmore Glen/Twinbrook area;
- Update on Hill Street Pedestrianisation; and
- Update on the expected delivery of 38 disabled Parking Bays which had been approved.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI Roads would provide further information on the issues raised.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two items was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following 2 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Future City Centre Programme: Vacant to Vibrant

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the progress of the pilot capital grant scheme, 'Vacant to Vibrant', including the outcome of recent application submissions.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant pilot capital grant scheme and that regular updates would be submitted to the Committee for consideration;
- Noted the update on the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme; and
- Agreed to the recommended grant award as outlined within the report.

City Centre Revitalisation and Connectivity

The Director of City Regeneration and Development updated the Committee on recent correspondence from the Department of Infrastructure in relation to Road Closure Notices and informed the Committee of the outcomes and recommendations of the RSUA Open Belfast Design Competition.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the updates within this report in relation to the Road Closure Orders in respect of Brunswick Steet, Union Steet and Castle Place; and
- Noted the outcomes of the RSUA Open Belfast Design Competition and agreed that, at this stage, the proposal would not be brought forward to delivery due to the escalation in costs and the lack of funding.

Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure

Council Powers on Vesting

The Committee deferred consideration of the item to allow the Committee more time to review the report.

Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 Proposal

The Committee was reminded that various services across the Council, including the Climate Unit and City Regeneration and Development Division, were working together to ensure an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience such as supporting play and environmental sustainability through engagement with key stakeholders, including young people, families, and businesses.

In December 2020, Belfast had launched the Belfast Resilience Strategy alongside the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap and, with initiatives such as the Belfast One Million Trees programme, these formed key elements of the city's ambitions to achieve carbon neutrality (80% reduction by 2030 and 100% by 2050). Officers had been working collaboratively to align play, climate neutrality, tree planting and green infrastructure by developing the award-winning Urban Childhood Framework and had tested these new approaches in the design and implementation of the Cathedral Gardens pop-up park and the new Grey to Green programme.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, as a result of the Council's membership in the Resilient Cities Network, it had been invited, at short notice, to participate in a Horizon Europe funding application from the UP2030 (Urban Planning 2030) fund. Horizon Europe was the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion, which looked to tackle climate change, help to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boost the EU's competitiveness and growth and was focused on supporting cities achieve net zero.

She explained that UP2030 aimed to guide cities through the socio-technical transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions. It would do so by enabling a quantum leap from a 'business as usual' project-by-project decarbonisation approach to a vision-driven, strategy-based approach that was anchored on sound projects and renewed policy development. The approach used urban planning and design as a vehicle to create better connected, more compact, net-zero neighbourhoods that promote liveability and, through designing with intent, promote mitigation actions.

She confirmed that the Urban Planning 2030 consortium was made up of 46 partners with a total budget of €11,956,686. Belfast had been selected as one of the pilot cities, based primarily on the work via the Resilience Strategy and Bolder Vision, and had been nominated to receive €204,250 to support research, training and policy development related to the creation of a net zero district through: Enhanced tree planting, linking to the Resilience Strategy and Belfast One Million Trees; Green infrastructure, linking to the Bolder Vision and Council's Grey to Green initiative in the city centre; and Play, linking to the Urban Childhood Framework, and Belfast's membership of the Real Play Coalition (a global initiative led by the Lego Foundation, IKEA, ARUP, UNICEF and National Geographic).

She reported that, through the UP2030 funding, the Council would seek to create a framework that would be applied to regeneration projects that integrated tree planting, green infrastructure, play and co-design with young people and supported the integration of play and environmental sustainability into city design. She highlighted that, to maintain alignment with the Bolder Vision interventions, it was proposed that the framework could potentially be tested initially in the Linen Quarter district, which had the aspirations of becoming the first sustainable and net-zero business neighbourhood in Northern Ireland. Lessons learned from this pilot would then be used to identify opportunities in other neighbourhoods and bring forward the concept of net-zero neighbourhoods across the city and the intention was to work across council departments and with city stakeholders to elevate and embed the learning and approaches.

The Director also advised that a declaration of honour had been undertaken in order to remain within the bid process and officers were working with the consortium's administrative partner, Fraunhofer, to move the UK applicants from the status of being a Partner to that of an Associate (given that the UK was no longer within the EU). This would mean that funding would be underwritten by the UK government rather than the EU and advice had been sought and confirmed with Legal Services in relation to this designation. She pointed out that it was anticipated that the final Letter of Offer from SEUPB would be signed in December, with a project kick-off meeting of partners likely to take place in early 2023, with a delivery period of three years. It was expected that the Council would team up with another partner, who was linked to the consortium, on the delivery of this project. An initial conversation had been held with one of the Consortium advisor partners, Mapping for Change, around the possibility of cooperating with them in order to bring the project forward.

During discussion, Members highlighted the potential for a pilot project in a residential area, such as a neighbourhood near a motorway. The Director confirmed that the pilot was not location specific at this stage and could be discussed further.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the progress of a Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 bid to support development of a framework that integrated environmental sustainability and urban development aligned to the creation of a net zero neighbourhood as a pilot proposal and the offer of funding to further develop the project which was confirmed not to be definitive of any area at this stage; and

- Approved the participation of the Council as an Associate Member of the Urban Planning 2030 consortium as identified in the report.

Correspondence from the Office of the Minister for Infrastructure – Belfast Cycle Delivery Plan and Pedestrian Crossing

The Committee noted the correspondence which had been received from the office of the Minister of Infrastructure regarding the Belfast Cycle Delivery Plan and potential pedestrian crossing at the Ravenhill Road/Ardenlee Avenue Junction.

Proposed Public Realm Scheme at Little York Street and Little Patrick Street

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide an update on the Little York St Little Patrick Street Place Making Public Realm Design Work aligned to the Section 76 Developer Contributions secured in the area

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the emerging design proposals for a proposed Place Making Public Realm Scheme at Little York Street-Little Patrick Street and the Lancaster St entrance aligned to utilising the Section 76 Developer Contributions secured from the adjoining developments**
- **Agree the approach of the design works as outlined within this paper, pending consultation with stakeholders including the local communities, development managers and statutory partners, in relation to the utilisation of the Section 76 Developer Contributions within this area for the Little York Little Patrick / Lancaster St scheme subject to due diligence through the Capital Programme and approval at SP&R**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1** The CG&R Committee have received a number of reports relating to emerging projects to address the connectivity issues between the city centre and the local and new communities and development opportunities that sit on the northern side of the Dunbar Link. These projects include the Fredrick St Junction, and the North South Spine located at Tomb St. Officers are currently engaging with Belfast Harbour Commissioners on the North South Spine in order to bring forward a jointly funded proposal to bring this scheme up to RIBA Stage 3. An all-party delegation met with the Permanent Secretary for DfI and the University of Ulster on the 31st of October in relation to certain schemes coming forward in the University of Ulster area, and to address the time required to bring forward schemes, in particular now that the University Campus has opened and the pedestrian footfall levels have greatly increased within the area. DfI are to present their Autumn Report to this Committee meeting and have been asked to bring further detail on the emerging designs and timeframes for the schemes required to assist in the successful relocation of the University to the new City Centre Campus. Further reports on these schemes will also be brought to future meetings of this Committee.
- 3.2** The CG&R Committee agreed in September 2019 to the development of a place making public realm catalyst project within the University Quarter of the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown area in order to utilise secured Section 76 Developer Contributions from a number of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBMSA) Blocks within the Little York Street / Little Patrick Street area. The completed PBMSA developments within this small area are now operational and demand is exceeding supply. In total, the Little York Street Little Patrick St developments will be home to some 4,000 students within a very hard landscaped area on the fringe of the city centre with little local amenities. They are also located adjacent to existing communities in the Lancaster St area. A further report to CG&R Committee in October 2019 noted that there is also potential to explore the future vehicular requirements and potential pedestrianisation of Little York Street and Little Patrick Street to bring forward a high quality place-making project that would address road safety issues connected with 'rat-runs' through the area and safety issues in general that exist due to the environment surrounding these blocks.

- 3.3 The legal agreements which secured these ‘historic’ developer contributions (typically referred to as Section 76 Agreements in planning terms) tightly define how they may be used for public realm improvements. Each Section 76 agreement is accompanied by a plan which defines the geographical area within which the contributions may be spent. The agreements also specify the purpose and timeframe (usually seven years) of expenditure, and that failure to meet these requirements would result in repayment to developers. The Little York Street Little Patrick St scheme has been developed in order to comply within the conditions as contained with the legal Section 76 agreements.
- 3.4 Together with the Fredrick St Junction project and the North South Spine these three projects provide an opportunity to deliver on several of the emerging Bolder Vision Key Moves including Reimagining the Inner Ring and ending Car Dominance, Reducing the Severance to Communities and Supporting City Centre Living.

3.5 **Main Report**

Greater Clarendon/Sailortown – Great Patrick Street/York Street Junction and Little Patrick Street and Little York Street

The Little Patrick Street/Little York Street place making project was developed as a result of Council securing developer contributions (typically referred to as Section 76 Agreements in planning terms) for public realm improvements within the University Quarter of the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown area. The contributions relate to purpose-built managed student accommodation buildings developed in the area and will provide an enhanced city centre living experience for existing and future residents within the area. In order to deliver a high-quality project with the developer contributions Officers have appointed a design team to bring the project to detailed design, planning and construction.

- 3.6 The proposed public realm scheme at Little York Street-Little Patrick Street is situated within an area bound by Great Patrick Street, York Street, Great George’s Street and Nelson Street and dissect four managed student accommodation buildings and is a 2-minute walk to the newly constructed University of Ulster campus.
- 3.7 With the PBMSA developments creating a home for some 4,000 students the area has become densely populated and these streets are critical public spaces that should serve as extensions of living spaces, enabling and enhancing the

interaction of new and existing neighbourhood residents in order to sustain a sense of community.

- 3.8** Little Patrick Street and Little York Street is often used as a shortcut for traffic accessing the city core and has been identified as a source of late-night noise due to excessive & loud traffic through the streets. The objective of the scheme is to provide a reconfigured street design limiting access through the area to servicing and drop-off/pick provision for the accommodation blocks as well as enhancing place-making and public realm provision to provide a high-quality street within the area. The scheme will also bring forward proposals in conjunction with the local community to address the connection into the local Lancaster St community area to enhance the character of the area and to improve the connection to the emerging Fredrick St Junction.
- 3.9** The concept design looks to achieve the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists through the area by adopting a quiet streets approach by pedestrianising Little Patrick Street (West) and Little York Street (South) by implementing a physical restriction/road closure, first by temporary closure then by abandonment and a one-way traffic system proposed for Little York Street (North) and Little Patrick Street (East) which would see vehicular traffic come off the main road network at Great Georges Street and exit at Nelson Street.
- 3.10** As well as the design addressing safety concerns around traffic movement it also creates an environment for safe passage of pedestrians and cyclists with enhanced public footways, subtle lighting positioned under seated planters which deters anti-social behaviour while also respecting that students live here adjacent to a local community, and the inclusion of rain gardens which adds greening to an urban setting and reduces rainfall runoff and mitigates the impact of pollution.
- 3.11** The emerging preferred designs are included within appendix 1 (copy available on the Council's website) of this report and will be utilised to form the basis of consultation with Dfl and with the local communities. Design work is ongoing to develop the options to undertake works at the entrance to the Lancaster St area and a co-design process will be undertaken with the local community to develop these proposals. To enable the detailed design work to continue and to inform the consultation with Dfl additional surveys, including traffic modelling, topographical surveys and Risk Assessments etc are required and will be carried out in line with the developing design.

3.12 Pending approval from this Committee for the emerging works, and following consultation with the local community, statutory partners and the PBMSA providers, it is intended to develop these designs to RIBA Stage 3 and to bring the scheme forward to Planning in early 2023 followed by procurement and construction with regular reports to be brought to this Committee as the scheme progresses.

3.13 Finance and Resource Implications

Capital costs for this scheme will be met from existing S76 agreements in line with the conditions of those agreements, and subject to the due diligence of the Capital Programme process and approval from SP&R Committee

Procured design costs are as previously agreed by the CG&R Committee in October 2019. Additional surveys and design to inform the detailed design works and to satisfy the DfI requirements will be met from previously agreed departmental budgets

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

Equality & Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment will be considered as a part of the design development process.”

The Committee:

- Noted the emerging design proposals for a proposed Place Making Public Realm Scheme at Little York Street-Little Patrick Street and the Lancaster Steet entrance aligned to utilising the Section 76 Developer Contributions secured from the adjoining developments; and
- Agreed the approach of the design works as outlined within the report, pending consultation with stakeholders, including the local communities, development managers and statutory partners in relation to the utilisation of the Section 76 Developer Contributions within the area for the Little York Little Patrick / Lancaster Steet scheme. It was also noted that this would be subject to due diligence through the Capital Programme and required approval at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Growing Business & the Economy

Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the work to support local commercial districts through the Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations programme. This programme aimed to work with business/traders associations to develop and deliver interventions that could drive footfall and create vibrancy in those areas.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th February, Members were provided with an overview and update of the approach to supporting local business associations to develop and deliver interventions to drive footfall and create vibrancy in those areas.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the overarching purpose of the pilot initiative was to strengthen the competitiveness of our local business destinations, focusing on actions which aimed to:

- Support the development of shared and safely accessible commercial areas;
- Support the diversification of business destinations outside of the city centre;
- Bring together key stakeholders to benefit business destinations outside of the city centre; and
- Improve the quality of urban design, distinctiveness, and townscape quality.

He informed the Committee that, following feedback from a range of businesses and traders associations across the city and through engagement with the Department for Communities (DfC), an opportunity had been identified to secure resources through the DfC Revitalisation programme. Vibrant Business Destinations was identified as a pilot programme and was in keeping with the work which had been undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) to develop a "Living High Street Toolkit". He confirmed that the Council had successfully secured funding of £475,000 from the DfC, which would be supplemented by a contribution from the Council's resources to enable the delivery of advice and support to assist businesses to access the scheme. The scheme was intended to complement a wider programme of support and activity that was taking place within the city centre, including the targeted interventions to address vacancies and previous business support interventions through the Covid Revitalisation Programme.

He reported that the pilot initiative aimed to support up to 10 business associations to a maximum of £40,000 each, for expenditure on a range of eligible activities, and the objectives were to:

- Increase engagement and partnership working between statutory partners and local business associations;

- Support the development of area-based actions plans which addressed specific local concerns and deliver specific, measurable benefits over the short/medium and long term;
- Increase footfall and sales as a direct result of marketing and promotional activity; generating new customers or sustaining customer loyalty through increasing sales revenue, increasing the number of new customers or developing repeat business;
- Enhance the profile of the area with a view to stimulating economic activity;
- Support the growth and development of businesses engaged in associated activity; and
- Support the sustainability of businesses and local business associations.

He highlighted that the initiative had a two-stage application process. Stage one involved the completion of an Expression of Interest (EOI) by 31st May, 2023. The basic eligibility criteria included the following:

- Groups or established associations must be led by the business community (including social enterprises and cooperatives) to address locally based issues and be committed to becoming a constituted association;
- Groups or established associations must be made up of retail/hospitality/consumer facing businesses located on road frontage/local high streets;
- The priority focus was on arterial routes and routes with a minimum number of 15 confirmed businesses located on road frontage;
- Group membership should be representative of the businesses in the eligible area – both by volume and by business type; and
- Business membership must represent predominantly owner-occupiers and independent traders, however, could involve representation from community organisations.

Following successful completion of an EOI at stage 1, groups were supported to become formally constituted, where they weren't already, and to develop area-based action plans. The action plans would provide an analysis of the locality, the physical environment, existing provision and key challenges and opportunities. It would identify priority issues to be addressed to improve the business environment through engagement with existing businesses and stakeholders in the area. The action plans would form the basis for moving to a stage 2 application.

The Director of Economic Development advised that, to date, there had been 47 requests for an Expression of Interest which covered a range of areas across the city and there had now been 6 formal expressions of interests submitted. He confirmed that work was currently underway to support these groups to become constituted and to develop area-based action plans. Following completion and approval of action plans they could progress to stage 2 of the process. A successful Stage 2 application would enable the groups to draw down funding to support their action plan delivery.

He highlighted that a number of requests for expressions of interests had not met the initial criteria of the programme and had not progressed. Work was underway to support those groups who would be deemed eligible, however, there had been a

number of issues that have resulted in delays and non-progression to date including: Closure of businesses and concern for the future of some businesses given the current energy prices; Timeframes and effort for businesses to develop constituted associations with the adequate number of members; and Internal issues within business associations and disbandment. He advised that the team had been working closely with businesses to try and overcome these issues and support the process where possible and had also been working to ensure there was an adequate spread of applications across all parts of the city.

He outlined the range of communications and marketing activity to raise awareness of the pilot project, which included Council social media platforms and e-shots, City Matters, direct intervention via officers and email circulation to Council Members.

He confirmed that the activities outlined within the report would be resourced through the existing Enterprise and Business Growth budget for 2022/23 and funding secured through the Department for Communities.

The Committee:

- Noted the Council's update and work which had been undertaken to support the delivery of area-based Vibrant Business Destinations; and
- Noted that the pilot initiative was currently open to Expressions of Interest from local business/traders groups located outside the city centre and Business Improvement Districts.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Christmas Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of the Christmas programme proposed in November / December 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Note the contents of this report and that further information on the socio-economic impact of Christmas activity will be presented in due course (post event).**

3.0 Main report

3.1 On an annual basis, the Council's Culture and Events Units 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. This is further supported by the activity of other teams who support a number of annual programmes and activities and the Markets Unit who manage the delivery of the Christmas Market at City Hall in addition to year-round activity at St George's and Smithfield markets.

- 3.2 Members will recall that in 2021, officers adopted a different approach to the Christmas 2021 programme which replaced the traditional switch - on ceremony. In the context of Covid, the challenge for officers was to design a programme that continued to be cognisant of safety considerations and have the ability to respond to a changing environment whilst meeting the needs of city stakeholders including those businesses impacted by the pandemic. The cessation of the traditional Christmas Light Switch was also in response to safety concerns regarding crowd control raised by colleagues in our Corporate Health and Safety Unit. In addition, feedback from city centre traders on the traditional light switch was not entirely positive, with many highlighting traffic, parking congestion and the event itself acting as a barrier to normal trading at a crucial time of year.
- 3.3 As well as responding to the pandemic the Christmas programme also aimed to meet the development objectives set out in the ten-year Cultural Strategy, including long-term recommendations for events in the city including better strategic alignment across the Council in the design and, delivery of these event-based programmes and above all ensuring the activities were authentic and utilising our local supply chain.
- 3.4 Cultural animation and creative interventions were identified as fundamental in welcoming people back into the city and played a significant role in creating an authentic and open environment at Christmas.
- 3.5 As a consequence, in 2021, the Christmas programme consisted of a combination of creative initiatives such as street performance, projections, music, window dressing and lighting installations all inspired by the theme '*Once Upon a Time in Belfast*', utilising local artists, creatives and designers to create an authentic and engaging experience for all throughout the festive season.
- 3.6 The weekend event proved to be successful. Despite concerns over moving away from the traditional switch on format, the new approach offered increased value for money and audience satisfaction in an environment that was designed to prioritise public safety.

- 3.7 Estimated audiences over the 2 evenings (20 & 21 November) was 15,000, with the event primarily taking place in the City Centre across key zones which included Donegall Place, Cornmarket, Royal Avenue, Fountain Street, Fountain Lane, Queen Street, Castle Street, Castle Lane, Berry Street, Rosemary Street and Lower Garfield Street. The audience profile was similar to the previous format with a strong focus on families.
- 3.8 Belfast City Council also commissioned an independent socio-economic survey for the *Once Upon a time in Belfast* themed - event. Results included the following feedback:
- 65% of visitors were from the Belfast City Council area, and a further 35% from elsewhere with a small percentage of visitors from Republic of Ireland (3%).
 - 54% attended the event with children.
 - 84% gave the event a rating of 8 out of 10 or above, including 27% who rated it as 'Extremely good'.
 - 92% of visitors agreed that the event improves the city's reputation as a host for events like these and as a place to visit.
 - 69% of visitors said they would 'definitely' revisit the *Once Upon a Time in Belfast* event in future years, while 99% agree there should be more events like this in Belfast.
 - 98% believed that events like this encourage people to come to Belfast, and 93% said that such events improve their sense of well-being and community.
- 3.9 In 2022, it is intended that the 2021 model of Christmas animation and event delivery would be further consolidated through a programme of seasonal animation in the city centre, which would support economic recovery in the city post pandemic and uplift the city and visitors in the context of the current economic climate.
- 3.10 Benefits would include:
- 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

3.11 Christmas Programme 19th November 2022

Belfast's Christmas celebrations will officially begin on Saturday 19th November with the '*Christmas in Belfast*' opening day event, which will take place from 6pm to 9pm.

- 3.12 In 2022, the opening weekend activity is being reduced from two nights to one and will focus on Saturday night only. This decision has been taken based on the findings of the independent evaluation and feedback from 2021, which evidenced that the opening evening (Saturday) was much better attended than the Sunday. By reprofiling the event and animation budget into the Saturday night only, the programme can be uplifted to enhance the visitor experience and increase impact. The event schedule will consist of a range of elements including:

- Christmas lighting scheme
- Lighting projections
- Music programme
- Procession
- Window animation
- Street animation
- 2 Royal Avenue
- Christmas Market
- Lord Mayor Role
- Marketing and Communications Activity

3.13 Christmas Lighting Scheme

2022 will be year 3 of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme which will begin on the 19th of November and run until the 4th January. The scheme will be identical to the 2021 programme, with the addition of icicles on Ann Street and the positioning and lighting on 12 additional trees on Donegall place.

3.14 Lighting Projections

City Hall will be illuminated from 18th November to 7th January inclusive. This has consistently generated a positive response from the public. A temporary lighting scheme will also be devised for 2 Royal Avenue at the former Tesco site and the Bank of Ireland building. This will include mapped projections which will operate from 19th November to 1st January.

- 3.15 Another highlight for the Christmas period will be the lighting of the old Bank of Ireland Building at the bottom of Royal Avenue which will run from 19th November to 1st February. The lighting up of the Bank of Ireland building received

significant coverage on social media in 2021. This will be repeated for 2022, raising awareness of the significant ongoing work on the Belfast Stories project. Additional illuminations across the city on the 19th November will include Fountain House above Primark on Donegall Place and the Mayfair building in Cornmarket.

3.16 Music Programme

On the evening of the 19th, a music and animation programme will take place across the city across a number of zones (subject to change):

- Zone 1 - Donegall Place (From Carroll's to McDonald's (both sides of street) and Fountain Lane)
- Zone 2 - Waterstones, Fountain Street, College St, Fountain Mezzanine, St Mary's Church, Queen's St and Castle Street
- Zone 3 - Berry Street, Rosemary St, Tesco Metro, Castlecourt Front, Lower Garfield Street, BOI Building (All Royal Avenue)
- Zone 4 - Lombard St, Castle Place / Kiosk and front of Bank buildings
- Zone 5 - Cornmarket - Dunnes Stores, Ann St, Arthur St, Castle Arcade, Castle Lane and Calendar Street

3.17 A raised platform will also be in situ on the evening of the 19th (likely location in front of 2 Royal Avenue - TBC) with a three-hour set from 6pm to 9pm showcasing local musicians.

In addition, a music programme will be curated across the Christmas period including several music elements for the opening night including performances at Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church and music on Berry Street and Lower Garfield Street.

3.18 A 4 week 'weekend programme' of Christmas Animation will also be delivered. The activity will primarily take place in the city centre from 1pm-5pm each Saturday and Sunday in the build-up to Christmas.

3.19 Procession

An external provider (Lux) have been engaged to create an interactive 'White and Bright' cavalcade of props and performers which will move through Royal Avenue / Donegall Place on the evening of the event. It is likely that some props will also remain static for the event duration. This will be complemented by a community engagement programme of choreographed costumed performances, creating a real festive spectacle.

3.20 Window Animation

US Folk have been engaged to produce winter-themed window vinyls to create a more aesthetically pleasing city centre offering over the festive period. These vinyls are designed to remain in situ throughout winter and are therefore not completely focused on the Christmas theme. BCCM will independently operate a 'Christmas for All' themed window dressing competition for businesses in the city centre.

3.21 In addition, the programme will also include 'live' window animation on the opening night (19 November) in two of the main retail stores on Donegall Place. This will include music and comedy theatre sketches running throughout the event. This proved to be extremely popular in 2021. The Visit Belfast window will also be dressed during this period.

3.22 Street Animation

A range of 50+ Belfast - based organisations from the cultural, arts and theatre / performance sectors will be engaged to take part in this event and provide the animation over the opening night. The entertainment onsite will be a mix of music, dance, street performance, comedy and theatrical performance under the overall creative banner of *Christmas in Belfast*.

3.23 2 Royal Avenue

Maywe, the council-appointed provider in 2 Royal Avenue will operate an uplifted events programme over the festive period. This will include a Winter's Den in 2 Royal Avenue commencing on 19th November. This will create a welcoming hub for all to enjoy. Visitors will be able to experience a range of sustainable events including:

- Up-cycling Christmas decoration programme
- Up-cycling Christmas jumper workshops
- Creating own advent calendars
- Sustainable Christmas crackers
- 'Swap - shop'
- Santa's Post Box (open Thursday-Sunday weekly, with late night opening Thursday and Friday evenings)
- Advent Calendars
- Alpine Lodge

- Teddy Bear Hospital and Toy repair café
- Sustainable Wrapping service (cash for Kids drop-off point)

3.24 In addition, a wide range of free events will be on offer also from 19th November in 2 Royal Avenue, this will include twilight pottery and art markets, fashion swap nights, Christmas carolling events, storytelling, music, festive jazz for seniors, family silent discos, sustainable arts and craft and workshops and a Crufty Christmas Fashion Show in aid of Guide Dogs NI. Throughout the festive period the venue will welcome a range of community-based choirs, musical events and musicians both inside and outside the venue.

3.25 Council have also commissioned US Folk, a Belfast-based agency representing some NI's top illustrative and design talent. They will create an overall look and feel for 2 Royal Avenue's Christmas programme - The Winter's Den - this will include a suite of characters and folk illustrations which will come to life via a bespoke AR App made especially for Christmas. Audiences will be encouraged to engage with this AR app on their mobile devices where they will discover the Christmas characters come to life through animation on their screens when they visit 2 Royal Avenue. They will discover a secret treasure hunt via the AR, where they can collect stickers as they discover. The characters will also be incorporated on vinyl décor across vacant shop unit windows on Royal Avenue, as well as in shop windows across the city meaning the public can interact with the designs and treasure hunt via the AR App throughout the city centre during the festive season. This will run throughout the Christmas period from 19th November into January.

3.26 Christmas Market

The Christmas Market will run this year from Saturday 19th November to Thursday 22nd December. Market Place Europe Limited (MPEL) has held the Continental Markets contract for the past 17 years and have been awarded the contract for the next 3+2 years. Changes to the contract this year include a larger seating area, an enhanced Christmas experience with themed and animated walkways. There will be over 100 stalls and the new contract also sets out the requirement for 40% local traders and 60% continental traders. There will be a Santa's Grotto supporting the Lord Mayors Charity and a return of free school educational tours, to be extended this year to out of school hours childcare and youth service providers. MPEL also ran the Jolly Big Business Boost offering a free chalet to a young business. When the Continental Market trades at the front of the city hall the footfall increases into St Georges Market and

throughout the city Centre. The Christmas Market and the local Christmas offer in St George's trade side by side very successfully. MPEL has offered a free pitch to St Georges Market traders this year and in previous years to further enhance trade for the local traders.

3.27 Role of Lord Mayor

The Lord Mayor will play a key role in leading the Christmas procession, as well as the official opening of the 2 Royal Avenue Christmas programme on 19th November. An opportunity will also be possible for the Lord Mayor to speak from the raised platform in the city centre on the 19th November to those in attendance at the event.

3.28 A video message from the Lord Mayor to citizens and visitors to the city will be issued online on Monday 19th November to coincide with the opening of the Christmas programme (this will be pre-recorded on the evening of the 18th in front of City Hall).

3.29 Marketing and Communications Activity

Council will operate a digital campaign with pulse screens and online advertising to promote the fact that there is an event taking place on 19th November, as well as weekend entertainment thereafter and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. Council will be directing people to www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL, where the 19th November event information will be displayed prominently on the page. As information is finalised on the event schedule, online messaging will be strengthened.

3.30 Promotion will take place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before event details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight 19th November and 2 Royal Avenue in edition to be circulated to just under 160k homes w/c 7th November. A press release will also be issued w/c 7th November to promote the finer and confirmed details of the event schedule.

3.31 Economic Context

Following Covid and within the context of a cost-of-living crisis, Council are cognisant of providing support to city traders, with a focus on hope and optimism at Christmas. Council's Christmas campaign will have the following principles,

- Sustainability
- Giving back
- Sense of Home

3.32 Christmas lights are an essential part of dressing the city, in 2019 Council secured a new lighting scheme which features more energy - efficient lights. In addition, the lighting scheme will be turned on each evening between 3pm / 4pm and will be turned off at 1am. The pole mounted features operated by DFI will operate from dusk to dawn.

3.33 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial implications to this report. All expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals.

3.34 Equality & Good Relations Implications

None.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the impact of the Christmas events across the City and the Health and Safety concerns of a Christmas Lights ‘Switch-On’ event. He advised that some city centre roads were unable to be part of the Christmas Lighting Scheme because of the current infrastructure, due to building works, but would be explored for next year.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and that further information on the socio-economic impact of Christmas activity would be presented in due course (post event).

Music Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report and associated appendix:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in March 2022, it was agreed that the draft Music Strategy would complete a 12-week public consultation. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of feedback and present the final strategy for approval.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and feedback received as part of the public consultation.
- Agree the final music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’ including the priorities

3.0 Main report

Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in March 2022, it was agreed that the draft Music Strategy would complete a 12-week public consultation.

3.1 Becoming a UNESCO City of Music

As members will be aware, Belfast submitted an application in June 2021 and was officially awarded the title of UNESCO City of Music on 8 November 2021, bestowing upon the City the international recognition that music is part of our identity – past, current, and future. We became only the third city in the UK to be awarded the status, with Liverpool receiving it in 2016 and Glasgow in 2008, and we are the first city on the island of Ireland to be granted the prestigious accolade.

Development of the Draft Music Strategy

The development of a new music strategy is aimed at supporting the ambitions submitted in Belfast’s UNESCO application, delivering a more joined-up and visible music offer whilst also increasing opportunities for production and civic engagement in music across the city on a permanent basis.

In 2020, Council contracted Sound Diplomacy to develop an analysis of the Belfast music ecosystem; exploring how best to support its evolution and recovery from COVID-19, and its application to become a UNESCO City of Music. Following this, The Fourth Pillar, Morgan Young Consulting and Score Draw Music worked with Council to develop Sound Diplomacy’s research into a roadmap for music and the associated strategic recommendations. This included:

- 27 City of Music Steering Group meetings with 20 members representing various genres & city stakeholders such as Tourism NI, BBC, British Council and Arts Council NI.
- An online survey on music (both for audiences and sector workers) 1500+ responses
- 45 one to one meetings with music and city stakeholders representing a variety of expertise

- 6 round table workshops about music recovery for artists and music sector workers

3.2 Music Strategy – strategic themes and priorities

We want to reshape music in Belfast, so it is characterised by quality, sustainable projects, and accompanied by long-term strategic investment. This strategy constitutes a response to the challenges, concerns and, indeed, opportunities that exist and is intended to take a foundational approach – one which will deliver the fundamental needs of individuals working in or engaging with music and one which has identified the shortfalls in the local music ecosystem and sought to eliminate them. In our approach, we have chosen to put musicians, performers and music creators first for, without them, Belfast would be a culturally and economically poorer place.

Mirroring the A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are a number of actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector.

Theme 1: Place artists at the heart - Recognising the value of creators

Theme 2: Nurture the sector - Strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators

Theme 3: Ignite the live experience - Liberating the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth

Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO - Sharing the gift of music with the people of Belfast

3.3 Public Consultation

Following approval by City Growth and Regeneration Committee, the draft Music Strategy completed a 12-week public consultation. As part of this process Council engaged directly with over 162 stakeholders including:

- Online citizens and stakeholder engagement: The council carried out an online 12-week consultation via the Council's YourSay engagement platform to gather information, and this provided an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review proposals, provide feedback and help shape the final plan. Results indicated 327 visitors and 112 full responses to the survey.

- 5 public events held in venues across the city, namely Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, the Oh Yeah Music Centre, The Duncairn Centre, 2 Royal Avenue and Vault Studios
- 2 online sessions for the general public plus 2 online sessions with both the Disability Advisory Forum and the Sign Language Users Forum.

The overall feedback on the plan was very positive with a great deal of useful insight that we can utilise when shaping our implementation plans. Key elements of the draft strategy which received strong support in the consultation include:

- More artist development opportunities
- Greater accessibility for artists and audience members with disabilities
- More spaces for musicians to thrive / perform / practice
- A need to consult the sector about the current licensing laws
- A more inclusive city and music sector
- Music education, information sharing and signposting
- Increasing the perception of the value of music
- More accessible funding structures
- A review of funding currently available to the music sector
- A music hub
- Preventing venue closure
- A safer night time economy and the Get Home Safe policy
- Greater mental health support for musicians
- An expansion of the Gig Buddies scheme
- Engagement with the wider media sector to explore opportunities for locally created music to be featured across platforms
- A professional looking one-stop website with well managed information about what is happening throughout Belfast
- Filling vacant spaces with creative endeavours

3.4 Theme 1: Place artists at the heart.

This theme focused on recognising the value of creators. Several respondents indicated the need to ensure that opportunities for development are not just limited to younger people and that the needs of older people are reflected and understood. To reflect these concerns, this theme contains a new action point, namely:

- **4.5 Action - Engage with community groups such as the Over the Hill music collective to develop a greater understanding of the needs of older and retired music creators as well as any potential barriers to older audiences participating in music.**

Engagement also highlighted other key areas which will be considered and incorporated into the final implementation plan, namely:

- **Inclusion of information sharing and education around matters such as rights, monetising music, utilising marketing and PR and the use of collection societies while ensuring artists are able to advise us on what is most important**
- **Ensuring that we understand particular needs within areas of music that have more barriers to typical engagement**
- **More music engagement possibilities within public spaces**

3.5 Theme 2: Nurture the sector

This theme was focused on strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators. Feedback highlighted several key areas which will be considered and incorporated into the final implementation plan, namely:

- **Ensure the inclusion of nightclubs and DJs when exploring development and support schemes**
- **Look at the possibility of developing apprenticeships as one option for upskilling the sector**
- **Host regular masterclasses for music creators and people involved in the music sector to develop and learn new skills**
- **Better encouragement of Musicians' Union rates of pay as the norm for what music creators deserve**
- **More opportunities for cross-genre and multi-disciplinary collaboration**

3.6 Theme 3: Ignite the live experience

This theme focused on liberating the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth. Within this section of the consultation, we received several responses regarding grassroots music venues within our sector. Respondents highlighted the need for the venues within our city to have improved equipment and spaces as this would benefit their sustainability, the quality of music output as well as the attractiveness of Belfast to touring acts and booking agents. To reflect this feedback, this theme contains two new actions to show further support for the

need to preserve and better understand the needs of our grassroots music venues:

- 9.4 - Engage with the Music Venue Trust and the Music Venues Alliance to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed
- 9.5 - Review current support for venues to upgrade the quality of their event spaces and equipment. Work with partners to explore additional financial support strategies where necessary.

Feedback also highlighted several key areas which will be considered and incorporated into the final implementation plan, namely:

- A review of the effect of the current public and private transport infrastructure on the music economy and steps that can be taken to support more transport availability in the evenings and night.
- Engage with organisations such as the Musicians' Union to create a fairer sector with a higher standard of care for music creators

3.7 Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO

This theme focused on sharing the gift of music with the people of Belfast. Feedback highlighted several key areas which will be considered and incorporated into the final implementation plan, namely:

- Opportunities to better utilise the networks within our sister cities to expand reach of local music creators
- Explore opportunities to improve public awareness of events, festivals and conferences taking place within the city
- Work with both the local community and external industry to boost Belfast as an international touring destination

3.8 Governance Model

As part of our consultation with the sector we also requested feedback regarding The Belfast Music Leadership Model and the Governance recommendations. Feedback highlighted several key areas which will be considered and incorporated into the final implementation plan, namely:

- Ensure there is representation of individuals with an understanding of the night-time economy within the Belfast Region Music Board
- Engage members of the music education sector within the leadership model, such as those from local universities, colleges and schools as well as private tutors and trad groups
- Ensure diverse representation of backgrounds, genres, ages and skills
- Ensure no conflicts of interest in decision making
- Ensure music consumers and audiences are represented
- Conduct a regular review to assess the effectiveness of the board's objectives

3.9 Next steps

Following agreement on the final strategy, next steps include:

- Dec 2022 – Strategy published
- Jan 2023 – Recruitment and meeting of Belfast Region Music Board
- Jan 2023 – Publication of implementation plan and delivery of recommendations and actions
- Feb 2023 – Delivery of comms strategy – new website, social media, newsletters

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

There are currently no financial implications attached to this report. Phase 1 delivery has been agreed as part of approvals for UNESCO City of Music. The additional resources required have been considered and agreed as part of the structural review for Economic Development.

3.11 Equality & Good Relations Implications

This music strategy is part of the overarching cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA. An equality screening has been completed and mitigating actions will be considered as part of the public consultation.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development provided further information on continued stakeholder engagement, governance procedures put in place and future funding allocation. In response to Members concerns in relation to the music organisations not listed in the Strategy document as partners or allies, he highlighted that the organisations listed were illustrative, and the document was not prescriptive in what organisation would be involved in the Music Strategy.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and the feedback received as part of the public consultation; and
- Agreed the final music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast” including the priorities.

2024 Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report, together with a presentation which outlined the Strategic Case for Belfast 2024.

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out:

- **Strategic case, concept and creative developments for *Belfast 2024* – our ambitious year of cultural and creative celebration for Belfast including updates on brand and programme development and civic engagement approach.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

Note the content of this report and the summary of the strategic case and developments for delivery for *Belfast 2024*, and current approach and budget allocation for delivering St Patrick’s Day for 2023.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast 2024

***Belfast 2024* is a year-long celebration of home-grown culture featuring new and exciting events, theatre, music, and art developed through new co-design and partnership models with the city stakeholders, the creative sector and the citizens of Belfast. The year delivers on the aims of the City Council’s Cultural and Tourism strategies, Belfast Agenda, *Bolder Vision* and City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. All founded in a belief and a commitment from Council that culture, sustainability,**

collaboration, partnership and people should be at the heart of the city's Development to:

- Work towards Belfast becoming a more 'attractive' place to live and work
- Addressing city dereliction, by increasing vibrancy and civic pride
- Recognise the Climate Crisis, develop awareness & change cultural behaviours
- Re-activate Belfast's Tourism Sector and develop our Cultural Tourism offer
- Deliver a distinct portfolio of city events connected to citizens and attracting international visitors promoting Belfast as a world-class cultural destination

3.2 Strategic Case for Belfast 2024

The Belfast Agenda provides a long-term framework for how community planning partners will work collaboratively to deliver an ambitious and inclusive vision that will create a better quality of life for all citizens in Belfast. Catalysed by the European Capital of Culture Bid development in 2017, which involved the largest and most significant public engagement programme Council has undertaken to date, Council has been undergoing significant strategic development in Culture & Tourism. The results of which are 3 new strategies for the city – *A City Imagining* Cultural Strategy, *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan and *Music Matters* Roadmap - putting creativity, and the people of this city, at the heart of Belfast's development and growth opportunities.

A City Imagining launched in April 2020, has been developed with the people of Belfast and places culture and creativity at the heart of civic development. Outward-looking, forward-facing, innovative and inclusive, the strategy is supported by an Investment Model and an Implementation Plan that proposes a new partnership approach to funding and actions, and aims to:

- Support the cultural life of the city by enabling our people to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change
- Invest in our cultural and creative sectors to develop the skills and capacity for production and innovation
- Position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking
- Establish Belfast as a cultural destination

Belfast 2024 is a core strategic aim of the cultural strategy and will directly deliver on the above ambitions. ***Belfast 2024*** is a core ambition that will deliver on the priorities outlined in The Belfast Agenda which sets an ambition to be a culturally vibrant city; ***A City Imagining*** Belfast City Council's 10-year cultural strategy; ***The Bolder Vision*** city-centre regeneration strategy and ***Resilient Belfast***, the city's resilience aspirations and vision of what and where we want to be as a city. ***Belfast 2024*** will also target all four strategic themes in the ***Make Yourself at Home*** Tourism Plan, including Growth, Position (in tourist markets), Sustainable Tourism and the overall experience. As a member of the Agenda for Culture 2021 Council will ensure the programme for 2024 will also seek to align to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Based on these strategic priorities and goals, there is hopes of creating memorable and interactive spaces and moments across the city which will be critical to ensuring locals reconnect with their city and visitors are drawn in from outside of Belfast.

3.3 Benefits for Cities of Culture

City of Culture events – both European Capital of Culture and UK City of Culture designations, have played a key role in the development of several cities across the UK and Ireland. These events and programmes have held to increase the visibility or these cities bringing significant tourism as well as helping cultural development, which otherwise may not have occurred.

The city of culture designation has also provided significant opportunity to promote civic integration and overall regeneration for the delivering cities boosting prosperity, civic pride and placemaking.

Hull was designated UK City of Culture in 2017, a city of similar size and make up as Belfast with a shared industrial past has seen significant transformation in the last 5 years catalysed by their year of cultural celebration. Their 2017 programme for culture delivered:

- £178.1m in Day Visitor Spend and £61m in Overnight Visitor Spend; £20m and £3.1m more than in 2016, respectively.
- Increased the value of tourism from £285m in 2016 to £313m in 2017.

- Delivered 6.2m total volume of visits, 548,600 more than 2016.
- Created 589 total actual tourism jobs.
- £500m invested due to the City of Culture 2017
- Celebrations created £450m worth of advertising and media coverage

More recently Coventry was awarded the UK City of Culture title in 2021, and despite major disruption to their plans brought on by the pandemic they still:

- Created 1,486 jobs.
- Generated £51.2m gross GVA.
- Secured £172.6m in investment as a direct result of the City of Culture 2021.
- 320,000 visitors recorded, of which 213,555 tracked through ticketed events.

3.4 The impact for Belfast

Delivering on our own year of cultural celebration in 2024 will have transformational change for Belfast – the impacts of which will be felt across the cultural, tourism and hospitality sectors directly but also at a wider civic and international level and bring about lasting legacy for the city as a place and for its people.

The priorities of the city's cultural strategy, reinforced by the new tourism plan, will facilitate the creativity, capacity building and energy that is required in the lead up to this celebration and beyond. Our vision for the year is to create a legacy of better understanding our identity, our relationships with each other and our place in the world.

Belfast is different. Our history, our culture, our music, our industrial heritage, even our sense of humour all set us apart from other cities. So too does how our city has developed over recent decades and the challenges we face in the future development of Belfast.

Climate: If Belfast can transition to low carbon (or net zero carbon) economy in the next thirty years, and do it in an equitable way, it will secure its long-term future. If it does not, it will spend much more on disaster recovery, it will fail to meet its Belfast Agenda priorities and worse still, it could ultimately become a smaller, poorer city.

Vibrancy: At present, Belfast's vacant unit rate is 22.2%, which is 4.7% above the NI average and 9.5% above the UK average (Belfast City Centre Management Vacant Units Report). In order for Belfast to be a vibrant and safe place to

live, residents must be provided with an opportunity to lead engaged and fulfilled lives and surrounded by bustling, energetic high streets.

Culture and arts: Government investment in the arts has fallen by 30% over the last decade, and is currently lower than the UK and Republic of Ireland average (Arts Council NI). A resilient city is a culturally vibrant city. One which values culture and its role. Ensuring the city can tackle intractable problems and adapt to future challenges will require a significant expansion of the creative sector.

Belfast 2024 can play a significant role in building a cohesive 'bolder' Belfast by delivering a major year of creativity focusing on the themes of our people, our place and our planet which will humanise city challenges through thought provoking moments and compelling experiences, changing mindsets and releasing new meanings, paving our way into a culturally vibrant and resilient city of the future.

Belfast 2024 will contribute to the long-term vision for the city to become one of the world's greatest urban transformations; germinating an ecosystem of social, cultural, environmental, and economic initiatives that will catalyse new ideas, enterprise, skills, well-being, leisure, education, play and curiosity.

Through Belfast 2024 we aim to deliver:

£9m investment in creative and place-based programmes across Belfast in 2024 including:

- £2.5m directly to creative and cultural sector commissioning
- £1.5m directly to re-imagining and raising ambition of our city's signature events
- £2m to co-commissioned spectacle programmes with Dublin City Council & Bradford 2025
- £1m directly to civic based programmes led by co-design & engagement
- £1m to an ambitious, engaging and powerful Marcomms plan delivered with partners
- £1m to production crew, volunteering programmes and direct events delivery
- 6 signature events headlining the year inc St Patrick's Day, Maritime Festival & Christmas
- If successful with bidding hosting The Fleadh Ceoil

- 80 home-grown festivals delivering on 2024 themes
- Up to 70 brand new events commissioned by Council co-designed with the city
- 500 artist contracts
- 300 trained volunteers
- 50 citywide and neighbourhood events and programmes
- 10 international artist exchanges
- 14 artists in residence
- 10 national and international collaborations

Belfast City Council will continue to host a number of landmark international projects in the lead up to 2024 in such as UNBOXED 2022, where the Northern Irish commission – *Our Place in Space* – is now in Liverpool, and has been one of the most successful and well-received of all UNBOXED projects and will find a permanent home with National Museums NI in 2023.

3.5 Belfast beyond the Good Friday Agreement

2023 also marks the 25 year anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, a moment in time to mark the next chapter for our country, and Belfast's future, a welcome time to host One Young World, the most significant global youth leadership conference focused on platforming, developing and inspiring the future leaders of the world. As begin a new chapter for our country, and our city, and build towards delivering *Belfast 2024* the focus will be on catalysing a new future for our city, where we imagine where we will be in 25 years time from now, a new, greener, more inclusive, connected and creative city.

3.6 Recognising the crisis in the cultural sector

Delivery of our ambitious year of cultural celebration in 2024 is needed more than ever as our city recovers from the pandemic whilst also facing unprecedented economic pressures in the current financial climate. We recognise the profound socio-economic impacts of the pandemic across the city, especially for the culture and arts sector.

- The Lyric Theatre, NI's landmark Producing Theatre are projecting energy bills of £240k in 2022-23 - an increase of almost 2.5 times the costs pre-Covid and almost £90k within the last year alone.
- Belfast Children's Festival, a CMAG Imagine Festival, have had the service charge for their premises has increased by 43% without any prior warning and is now higher

- than their rent.
- There is reduced well-being as a result of increased cost of living/static salaries
- There is poor mental health as a result of reduced opportunities for delivery and local provision
- There is a talent exodus – people are leaving the sector or choosing to join other sectors due to better terms and conditions and greater job-security.
- There is a barrier to developing high quality partnerships with ROI/GB/Europe as the sector are increasingly misaligned in terms of resource and increasing prices and the long-term impact of lower investment and on-going issues brought about by Brexit

Council's Culture Team have been pivoting our programmes and to help recover and build the capacity of our cultural sector whilst maintaining our commitment to a year of cultural celebration in our city, originally planned for 2023 this will now take place in 2024 recognising the impact on the city's capacity to deliver on this ambition post-pandemic.

Creative collaboration will be at the heart of Belfast's recovery ensuring that we can build back better – across culture, tourism and hospitality - leaving a lasting legacy for these sectors, as well as the people of the city. While the full impact of Covid-19 and our current economic crisis is as yet unknown, what is clear is that recovery will require determination and genuine partnership working as well as creative and innovative approaches to our city's future development.

In continuing to deliver our home-grown year of cultural celebration in 2024 we will build much needed capacity and ambition in our creative sector whilst delivering on our strategic priorities for civic participation in cultural development as well as placing Belfast on the map internationally as a culturally vibrant destination.

3.7 Belfast 2024 Guiding Principles - our people, our place, our planet

People & Place are at the heart of our cultural strategy *A City Imagining* and our tourism plan *Make Yourself at Home*. Placemaking is a people-centred approach to delivering a local and shared vision. People shape places. Culturally vibrant cities are places where people negotiate their sense of belonging and where the private sphere connects to the public.

Local government is ideally positioned when it comes to placemaking, with an ability to connect with and bring together a diverse range of people and sectors across the city. It is in this role that Council must show leadership and *Belfast 2024* is a manifestation of this vision for putting people and place at the heart of what we do. We also recognise the need to focus on our role as facilitators, strengthening collaborations between sectors and silos in this city, using creativity and the ambitions of 2024 as our vehicle.

People & Place are therefore at the core of our guiding Principles which all work commissioned under the 2024 banner will follow: Collaboration and Co-design, New work, Our Shared Planet, Future thinking and Public space.

3.8 Belfast 2024 Signature Events

Despite the richness of Belfast's cultural offer and a number of significant successes in recent years, the city has not yet established itself as a truly global events destination. What the city has demonstrated with the *A City Imagining* strategy and *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism plan is the potential to be different, authentic and distinctly Belfast. Events can challenge and articulate a city's diverse identity and personality, a core theme in our cultural strategy.

Council's culture team have been working with the city and the sector to design a new approach to developing and delivering Belfast's events and festivals, which will come to fruition as core events in our Belfast 2024 programme – namely new approaches, engaging local and international creatives, to delivering St Patrick's Day and Maritime Festival, placing Belfast on the map for offering a distinct experience for these traditional calendar events. We will also continue to work closely with our four Imagine Festivals – Belfast Children's Festival, NI Science Festival, Feile and Mela – to raise their ambition in 2024 with regards to vision, content and collaboration resulting in a distinct core of signature events as pillars throughout our 2024 programme which will have legacy beyond the year itself.

3.9 Belfast 2024 Signature Partners

Successful cities of culture have shown that investment in homegrown talent has long-term and measurable impacts. It is also recognised that to develop local talent, and importantly raise their ambition, our creative sector needs to be inspired by and work in collaboration with international creative and cultural partners on a long-term and meaningful basis to raise the bar locally as well as garnering Belfast's reputation as a cultural and global destination.

Belfast 2024 will seek to anchor at least three significant international partnerships to deliver on this vision for the year. Importantly these partners will work in collaboration with our civic and creative sectors to co-design their contributions to the programming for 2024, working together with our city in leaving a lasting legacy and developing long-term relationships with globally recognised creative and cultural brands.

3.10 Our Open Call to the city

It is imperative that Belfast 2024's ambitious programme is to be created by and for the people of Belfast - the residents and workers of the city, the artists and creatives of the city, the cultural and non-cultural organisations of the city coming together with people of all ages and from all backgrounds to collaborate and create with us for 2024.

In November Council will launch its first Open Call for ideas via a new procurement model shaped on a Design Contest which gathers ideas at a high level and most importantly provides a vehicle seed-funding for ideas to be developed to full feasibility stage before being submitted for commissioning. We will ask the civic and creative sectors across our city to share with us ideas they want to develop for this year of creativity, to ensure we create and build this programme together. Council is particularly looking for ideas that will involve new ways of working through innovative processes, collaborations and co-design. They may evolve into new ways of delivering on our city events, such as Christmas, or new processes in engaging citizens in cultural activity from having a role as co-creators to learning new skills and even performing. We want to support new, ambitious ideas and initiatives that are about bringing people together to create new connections and collaborations, to think and work in new ways through creativity and imagination. We will support this process of ideation through a two-stage submission, giving time and seed-funding to develop ideas to full feasibility to lead to full commissioning beginning in May 2023. Successful commission teams will work closely with Council's Culture and 2024 team to develop their ideas into projects, events and programmes with a view to delivering these bespoke cultural activities throughout Belfast in 2024.

3.11 Platforming Belfast's up and coming talent

Belfast 2024 will provide a vital platform to celebrate some of our most successful and contemporary up and coming artists who are from Belfast and Northern Ireland.

Many Northern Irish artists have recently gained recognition at a national and international level, winning Emmy Awards in music as well as the coveted Turner Prize for visual arts. Platforming these artists in 2024 will provide local gravitas for Belfast 2024, raising our visibility and reputation globally as well as inspiring for younger generations from Northern Ireland who want to explore, and achieve a successful, career in the creative arts in this country

3.12 Timeline for Commissioning *Belfast 2024* Programme

Stage 1 Nov 22: Idea Open Call launches/ developing signature partnerships

Stage 2 Mar 23: Seed funding for feasibility studies for ideas

Stage 3 Apr 23: Feasibility submissions. Successful Belfast 2024 Commissions contracted

Stage 4 Apr+ 23: Development in partnership w/ Council's 2024 team

Stage 5 2024: Delivery throughout the city in 2024

3.13 *Belfast 204* Brand Development

Council's Culture and Comms teams have been working in collaboration with McCadden to develop a stand alone brand for our year of cultural celebration in 2024, recognising we are not a UK City of Culture, nor a European Capital of Culture, but that this year is about us, and our collective ambitions for our city to celebrate our creativity and be seen as a truly culturally vibrant city and global destination and therefore this year needs a distinctive brand that everyone across the city can engage with, adopt, adapt and have ownership of. The result of which is the name *Belfast 2024*, with a distinct, contemporary and fun suite of design assets that are flexible and adaptable which can be used to gather momentum throughout 2023 and promote events throughout 2024 across the city in various media and platforms.

Learning from other cities of culture, who have delivered projects of this scale and above such as Hull, Leeds and Liverpool, the importance of Marcomms for Belfast 2024 cannot be underestimated. Council's Culture and Comms teams are currently working up a full Marcomms plan for Belfast 2024 in partnership with key stakeholders such as Tourism Northern Ireland and Visit Belfast.

3.14 Civic Engagement & Co-design

A new approach to civic cultural engagement is being developed for Belfast 2024.

Rather than having a traditional audience role, citizens across Belfast will be invited and supported to co-create and participate in this year-long creative programme with Belfast City Council and the creative and cultural sector. Together we will co-design events, experiences and initiatives that empower people's creativity and increase our capacity to express and nurture it – in our city, neighbourhoods and lives. We will open opportunities for citizens to connect over their interests and explore what creativity means to them, encouraging ambition across the city for our citizens to try something for the first time or take their cherished creative pursuits even further.

To achieve this, we are developing new processes in areas such as procurement, communications, government and in our cross-departmental and cross-sectoral working.

We are putting civic participation at the heart of Belfast 2024, so citizens see themselves and their creativity reflected in this programme.

3.15 Updates on St Patrick's Day 2023

Members are reminded that £240,000 was approved previously by Committee in April 2022 for the St Patrick's Day 2023 event.

Approval is now requested to allocate an additional £90,000 from existing council and departmental budgets as follows:

April Committee Allocation	£240,000
Additional Council Allocation	£90,000
Total Budget	£330,000

Additional budget will uplift the event through building ongoing momentum towards the plans for a year of cultural celebration in 2024, as well as bid activities associated with Fleadh Cheoil. This will include:

- Additional programming elements including Ards Comhaltas Branch (key Fleadh Cheoil partner)
- Enhancing the visitor experience and increasing event dwell time within city centre
- Future-proofing the event in respect of delivery structure and stakeholder engagement models

This will increase the Council's investment in St Patrick's Day to £330,000.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

£90,000 requested for allocation to delivery of St Patrick's Day in 2023. As laid out above these monies are within existing departmental budgets agreed by Committee in March 2022 for the purpose of delivering city events.

£1.85million to cover the 2024 Open Call process launching later in November has been approved by CMT & SP&R in October 2022, this is allocated from the cultural reserve budget for 2024 development and delivery.

3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, which included the strategic ambitions of 2024, has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)."

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development described the intended legacy of Belfast 2024 and highlighted the need to increase participation, funding and resources for the Arts Sector. He also explained further the St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

The Director of Economic Development advised that a Workshop would be organised in the new year to provide further details of the developing plans for Belfast 2024.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and the summary of the strategic case and developments for delivery for *Belfast 2024*;
- noted the current approach and budget allocation for delivering St Patrick's Day for 2023; and
- Noted that a Belfast 2024 Workshop would be organised in early 2023.

Cultural Mapping for Culture, Arts and Heritage

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

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

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

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

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

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

- A key recommendation in this phase one report focused on addressing the shortage of affordable artist studio space in Belfast. Members would be aware that, at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2022, it had been agreed to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support for

this sector. As part of this support, members also agreed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast which would identify examples of best practice and potential solutions to this issue. This research would be conducted over the coming months, with a number of long-term recommendations presented to Committee in March 2023;

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

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee of the next steps in the Cultural Mapping Process. Phase Two of the Cultural Mapping work would delve deeper into research and scoping of the infrastructure identified in this initial phase. The phase would create a holistic view of the cultural sector and identify networks and artistic and cultural practice patterns. This would also include looking into

public participation, cluster interaction, research with partners and community networks, and the people and groups that use these spaces as their workplace. He advised that his work was due to be commissioned in November 2022, with a report presented to the Committee in May 2023. The overarching objective of this work was twofold, firstly, to increase and understanding of cultural infrastructure, drive use and participation and, secondly, to seek to agree long term remedies with partners in areas where gaps in provision were demonstrated. He pointed out that the Team would also continue to work with organisations across the city to locate and source suitable properties where there was an immediate or emergency need.

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

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

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

Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2022-23

It was reported that The Department for Communities was inviting local Councils to administer the Access and Inclusion Programme 2022-23 within their respective local Council areas and to submit an application for funding to the Department by 17th November, 2022. The Department had formally launched the programme as a competitive process on 20th October 2022, which advised that a total fund of £624,000 was available for this programme.

The Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme aimed to:

- Improve access to arts, culture and active recreation venues across NI for people with disabilities;
- Make arts, cultural and active recreation venues more inclusive across society; and
- Increase participation in arts, culture and active recreation activities by people with disabilities.

The Committee was informed that the Council oversaw the assessment and recommendation of projects via a competitive open call internally and externally and was responsible for the delivery of all projects in receipt of funding.

The Culture Development Unit (previously Tourism, Culture Heritage and Arts Unit) had managed the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Access and Inclusion Programme within Belfast and had received support for 24 projects with total value of £412,554, of which five were Council projects. In 2020/21, they had administered 11 Access and Inclusion

grants with a total value of £185,443 and 9 Programme grants in 2021/22 with a total value of £143,667. Examples of projects supported included improved access to the City Hall and the Tropical Ravine; easier access for audience and participants to not for profit cultural venues across the city; installation of new specialised playground facilities and changing spaces; and provision of equipment to provide immersive theatrical experiences for children with complex needs.

Capital works and equipment costs were eligible under this programme. The maximum grant was £30,000 and applicants were required to contribute at least 10% of the total project costs. To receive a £30,000 grant, therefore, applicants must provide a contribution of at least £3,000.

This year, the Department for Communities was particularly keen to welcome applications for Changing Places facilities, accessible equipment for play parks and projects that would impact positively on sustainability and climate change. Projects must complete on or before 31st March, 2023. The Department for Communities had advised that no extensions would be considered to the project completion date.

The Committee granted permission for Council to apply for, promote, assess and manage the Access and Inclusion Programme 2022-23.

Market License Application

The Committee was advised that the following Market License Applications had been submitted:

- ***Vault Art Studios, 4 – 84 Tower Street Belfast*** - to host a two-day Christmas Market on Saturday 3rd December and Sunday, 4th December, 11am – 17:00pm; and
- ***Fine and at Dandy Market*** - a monthly variety market beginning in February/ March 2023, in either Elmwood Hall or the Titanic Hotel depending on availability. proposing to trade on the first Sunday of every month from 1 - 5 pm.

In line with the overall Belfast City Council Markets Development Strategy, these two proposed events would help to enhance these two areas of the city and, in doing so, drive footfall into the areas.

The Committee:

- Agreed to grant the licence to Vault Art Studios for a one-off Christmas Market; and.
- Agreed to grant a licence to Kellie Mairs (Fine and Dandy market) for the running of a monthly market in Elmwood Studios / Titanic Hotel.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Belfast Zoo - Fun Run Event Request

It was reported that a request had been received from Monkstown Spartans Athletics Club to hold a 'Zoo Challenge 5k fun run' in the grounds of Belfast Zoo. The organiser were flexible with dates, and the zoo proposed that this should be held in the off-peak season (September 2023). The organiser intended to use the entire zoo site (public areas) and car park, with an anticipated number of participants of 250 to 500 maximum to be permitted.

The organiser intended to charge a registration fee to participants of £18 per person with a portion of the fee contributed to Belfast Zoo. The organiser also intended to donate a portion of the registration fee to their selected charity. The event would not impact on normal zoo opening hours, with set-up, run, and dismantle taking place prior to normal opening at 10.00am.

The Committee was informed that the organiser had submitted all relevant documentation, including public liability insurance, risk assessment and event management plan and the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Unit had confirmed suitability of the event to take place, as per the risk assessment and event management plan supplied.

The Committee approved the fun run event at Belfast Zoo.

Chairperson