

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 11th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Black, De Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Harvey, Lyons, Maskey, F. McAteer,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, McKay and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. L. Leonard, European and International Relations
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick and Councillors Harvey, Kelly and Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 7th and 28th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd September, subject to the decision under the heading 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update' to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest regarding item 6.a) International Relations Activity Update, in that he was a Council appointee on the Lyric Theatre Education Advisory Panel.

Mr. John Greer

The Chairperson informed the Committee that Mr. John Greer, the current Director of Economic Development, would be leaving the Council shortly to take up a post with Department for Communities. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee,

referred to the significant contribution that the Director had made to the Council during his time in service and wished him well in his new post.

Matters referred back from Council

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in September, the Council had agreed that the decision under the heading 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update' to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The report is in response to a decision by Council on 2 September 'that the decision to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2024/2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.'

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 In considering the recommendation the Committee is asked to consider the appended detailed report as presented to Committee in August 2024 on outcomes from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme including attendance at MIPIM as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024.

3.2 In addition, the issue was raised at Council about the importance of considering proposals for attendance at MIPM in the context of an updated International Relations Framework. A separate report has been provided to the committee updating on International Relations Activity which

asks the committee to note the planned review of international opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agree to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions. It also advised that this work will be developed alongside a paper for the committee setting out the principles that will underpin an updated international relations framework.

- 3.3 Although no longer current, Members may wish to note the main purpose of the 2017-2021 International Relations Framework was to;

Ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the international stage to realise our ambitions, and that our resources and priorities are aligned with the overarching strategic vision for the city and – as a driver of the regional economy.

It focused on three main areas:

- Business – investment and export/trade activity
- Tourism development (both leisure and business)
- Education/Culture development

The Framework was based on the premise that;

Belfast can and should be active internationally, that the Council has a ‘value added’ role to play, and together with our partners across the city we can compete internationally for the benefit of our citizens.

The framework recognises that our;

international ambitions rely on strong collaboration with a range of partners including the Executive Office, Invest NI, the universities, FE colleges and a range of bodies with shared ambitions to attract investment, tourism, conferences, students and so on.

And that we can;

complement and amplify the work of these partners, rather than compete against them.

- 3.4 It is also worth highlighting that the focus on Business investment and export trade activity and the partnership approach are likely to be key elements of any updated framework with which the BRCP partnership programme, including MIPIM attendance align.

- 3.5 The BCRPP is an important partnership to promote and position the city to compete globally to attract inclusive and sustainable investment to support the realisation of our inclusive growth ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, which is likely to require investment of £7.5bn - with a significant quantum from private sector funding and institutional investment. By way of context setting, as noted in paragraph 3.6 in the appended report, 24% of Northern Ireland's commercial investment in 2023 came from Institutional investment with the proportion of investment in NI from institutional investors having reduced significantly since the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016. This private sector investment complements public sector funding, noting that in terms of housing delivery there is requirement for 20% affordable under LDP policy, and highlights the importance of collaborative working across the public and private sector to both attract external investment and delivery of our shared ambition for the city.
- 3.6 As part of the recently refreshed Belfast Agenda, Members will be aware that this included associated Action Plans aligned to each priority area. Under Our Place, Future City Centre and wider city regeneration & investment, we along with our Community Planning Partners have agreed to the strategic intent to 'Promote and position the city to compete globally to attract inclusive and sustainable investment', with the Council as the convening lead. Attendance by senior officers at MIPIM as part of BCRPP is a core component part of this, and, as noted above, complements other work streams that Council undertakes to promote the city internationally through our International Relations Framework. The Belfast Agenda is our overarching strategy, on our ambition for the positive inclusive growth of the city, and from this we have developed aligned policy and strategic priorities and our direct delivery.
- 3.7 As noted to this Committee in June 2024 the BCRPP is delivering a structured programme of work aligned to securing investment and regeneration for Belfast and the wider city region, which includes a presence at key real estate investment conferences including MIPIM. The 'Team Belfast' attendance at MIPIM is an important forum for Belfast to position itself to a global audience and attract the interest of institutional investors, developers, occupiers and funders in the context of bringing forward sustainable development to support the city centre and wider city regeneration and investment. Members will be aware that 'Positioning the City to Compete' is a key programme of work within this Committee's work plan as agreed at a special meeting of CGR Committee in May 2024, with which the BCRPP, including MIPIM attendance align. In addition, it aligns and supports a joint public-private approach to

promoting and positioning the city and city region as a priority location for investment, to underpin the generation, development and infrastructure required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions – a key action within the Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-25) as agreed by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in August 2024.

3.8 The appended report on the outcomes from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme including attendance at MIPIM highlighted the BCRPP programme objectives to:

- Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.
- Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.
- Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.

It noted that outcomes from MIPIM should be viewed in the context of the wider programme objectives, with highlights of the tangible outcomes detailed below:

3.9 Programme objective: Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.

Paragraph 4.10 in the appended report highlights that marketing activities during MIPIM have translated into inward visits to the city and subsequent investment into the city's built environment. While there is commercial sensitivity in terms of subsequent investment and delivery following introductions and engagement at MIPIM, a presentation to this Committee on the 2023 Regeneration Tracker in April 2024 noted that there has been an overall positive trajectory of development and regeneration activity in the City Centre since 2015 which has positively contributed to the wider region including economic growth, job creation, access to services and cultural and recreational amenities. Members will note that 133 leads were collected at MIPIM 2024 with interest from a variety of sectors including residential development, leisure / hotel development, green energy and life sciences, a number of follow up meetings having already taken place in Belfast with Council officers and also other BCRPP members, with more planned in the coming months.

3.10 Programme objective: Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.

Members should note that BRCPP members continue to see value in attending MIPIM and continuing the collaborative partnership approach, as noted in paragraph 4.16 of the appended report, and have highlighted the importance of having the Council play a lead civic role in supporting this joint public private sector approach to collectively market the city internationally in the context of delivering our shared ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda.

3.11 Programme objective: Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.

Members should note that other core UK cities in attendance at MIPIM include London, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Cardiff, with Belfast representatives participating in joint events with these UK cities, UK government and private sector partners. MIPIM 2024 saw the organisation of the inaugural UK Cities Investment Event which Belfast co-hosted with Liverpool and Cardiff alongside The Department for Business and Trade and the British Property Federation, providing an invaluable platform to positively position Belfast as an attractive investment location and build relationships and share learnings with other UK cities, and planning has commenced for 2025 marketing activities. The sub regional approach outlined in the draft Programme for Government further underscores the importance of Belfast promoting itself in a global context to attract international investment.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Approval is sought for attendance of senior officers at MIPIM 2024. Travel costs for Council attendance at MIPIM 2024 to be met from within existing and approved departmental budgets. All other costs related to these events would be met from the 2024 / 2025 BCRPP Partnership programme budget.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.”

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development explained further the tangible outputs of the Council’s attendance at MIPIM.

Proposal

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to the recommendation as outlined in the report.

Accordingly, the Committee approved attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following four 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 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Belfast Zoo Quarter 1 Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly update on performance at the Zoo across the following areas:

- Visitor Services;
- Education Services;
- Animal Collection;
- Marketing and Events, and
- Financial performance.

The Committee noted the Zoo performance update report for the period April to June 2024.

Belfast Bikes Quarter 1 Performance Update

The Committee considered an update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in Quarter 1 (April 2024 to June 2024) of year 10 of its operation.

The Committee:

- Noted the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for year 10, quarter 1 (April to June) financial year; and
- Approved the proposed discounts for corporate memberships.

Financial Reporting – Quarter 1 2024 / 2025

The Committee considered its Quarter 1 financial position which included a summary of the financial indicators and an executive summary.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Markets Quarter 1 Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly performance and financial update for the period to end June 2024, together with future plans for the coming quarter.

The Committee also considered a request from organisers of a proposed market to take place in the Titanic Exhibition Centre (TEC) in November/December 2024 which sought approval for a market licence to be issued for the event.

During discussion, Members suggested the need to increase the potential of Council parks to hold more markets across the city, together with the expansion of the Christmas market. The Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the markets policy was under review and would consider different models and development.

One Member suggested that further engagement with stall holders and attendees of the Christmas Market would be beneficial in relation to the potential to expand the Market in the future.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the update on city markets – with a focus on St George’s Market;
- Noted the priority actions for the coming quarter and noted that further updates on progress would be brought back to future meetings of the Committee;
- Agreed to approve the issuing of a market licence for the Tedberry Market to be held on 30th November/1st December, 2024 in the Titanic Exhibition Centre; and
- Agreed that engagement with stall holders and attendees of the Christmas Market 2024 be undertaken in relation to the potential to expand the Market in the future.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

City Centre Boundaries

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Following a request by Members to clarify the boundary of the city centre and the rationale for how boundaries are applied for projects, and how this might be looked at going forward, this paper sets out the city centre boundary and proposes a future approach on this issue.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- I.** Note the context of the Draft BMAP City Centre Boundary and the update on the rationale for allocating city centre boundaries to specific projects.

3.0 Background

3.1 At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 12th June and at the Climate and City Resilience Committee on the 13th June 2024 Members raised queries in relation to the boundary of the city centre and how these are used to delineate project borders. Members had referenced certain examples including the Inner North West, UP2030 and the Business Cluster and Community Grant schemes. The Committee agreed that ‘a future report would be brought to the Committee to outline the rationale around red line boundaries including the city centre boundary and various Programmes and projects and how this might be looked at going forward.’

4.0 Main Report

4.1 The statutory boundary of the city centre is often used as the recognised and defined boundary area given its definition within planning policy in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP). The city centre boundary as defined by draft BMAP remains the most up to date expression of the Department’s spatial planning approach to the Belfast Metropolitan Area and may remain a material consideration where appropriate within a planning context. The city centre boundary will be reviewed as part of the Local Policies Plan stage of the LDP process.

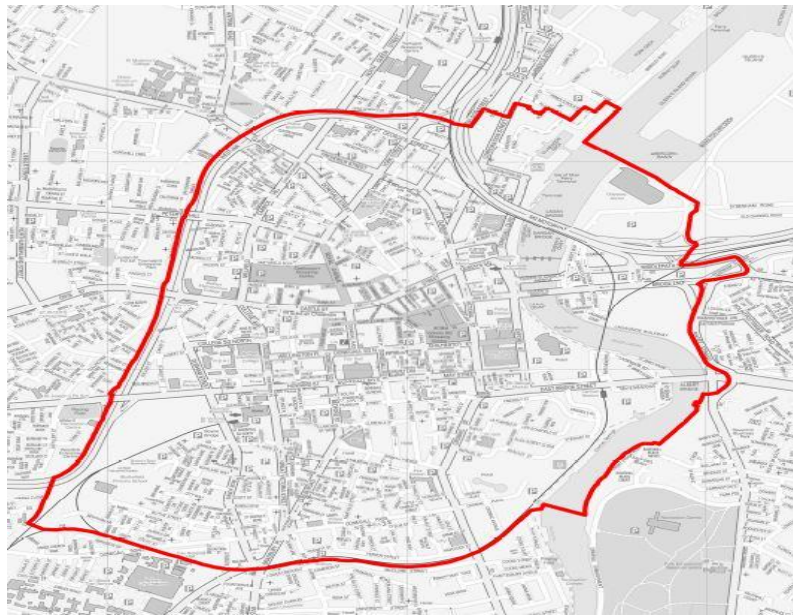


Figure 1 - Draft BMAP City Centre Boundary

4.2 A number of schemes or projects developed within in the city centre have been brought forward based on the eight principles of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) as set out below:

- Increase the Employment Population;
- Increase the Residential Population;
- Manage the Retail Offer;
- Maximise the Tourism Opportunity;
- Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres;
- Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre;
- Connect to the City Around, and
- Shared space and social impact

4.3 As projects are developed to target specific issues or priority areas the parameters of the project, including boundaries, are brought to the CG&R Committee for approval prior to designing and implementing the project. When developing projects aligned to BCCRIS the Draft BMAP city centre boundary is typically used as the starting point for setting the boundary, subject to discussions with Members. Setting boundary areas is often required on projects when addressing specific area-based issues, or when subject to funding constraints.

- 4.4 An exception to the use of the draft BMAP boundary is in relation to the Inner North West Masterplan which was defined by the Special Action Area agreed by Council in 2016 as a part of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy document where, following consultation with Members the agreed BCCRIS document established the INW boundary as one of five Special Action Actions to be addressed through BCCRIS. With regard to the UP2030 Net Zero District the boundary was selected to encapsulate the highest concentration of typical city infrastructure, including high frequency transport networks, walking & cycling, a mix of commercial and residential areas, to develop a holistic framework that could be adopted for any city area. Following consultation with Members in 2021 the boundary area was increased to include more residential area that surround the city centre.
- 4.5 Recently delivered schemes such as Vacant to Vibrant, Grey to Green and the Active Travel Enablers were brought forward within defined funding allocations and/or timeframes and agreed through the Committee process. In each of these cases, the interventions were developed to address specific city centre issues, such as vacancy, or contained elements within the grant process that were aligned to the BCCRIS Strategy with the draft BMAP city centre definition used to identify the boundary for these projects.
- 4.6 For example, this definition was applied to the Vacant to Vibrant pilot due to the particular issues in the city centre where vacancy is significantly higher than the UK average and with a recognition that the city centre was in need of intervention to preserve it as the economic centre for the region. The initial pilot project for secure cycle facilities was also trialled within the city centre following a Notion of Motion from Members to bring forward secure cycle facilities within the city centre. Funding for both of these schemes was limited in the pilot phases and it was agreed that concentrating the funding within a defined area would create the greatest impact. Following the initial pilot period the secure cycle project received additional funding to deliver a city-wide project, and Officers are currently seeking external funding to deliver a city wide Vacant to Vibrant programme as agreed at the June Meeting of the CG&R Committee.
- 4.7 At the time of the initiation of Vacant to Vibrant and with the secure cycle parking projects there were a number of complementary projects and programmes under delivery that supported communities and businesses outside the city centre including the Vibrant Business Destinations Programme (in partnership with DfC) and community-focused funding streams such as the Business and

Community Cluster Grants and city-wide covered cycle schemes. Members will also be aware that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund was developed in line with the Area Working Group boundaries and other area-based funding streams, such as the Social Investment Fund, Urban Villages and the Local Investment Fund are delivered within an agreed geographical boundary and are reported to the appropriate Area Working Groups.

4.8 Where funding is defined or limited, it is often necessary to define the parameters and area of funding to ensure maximisation of the impact of benefits within a defined programme or when addressing area specific issues. While some Programmes do need to be defined within a certain area for a specific reason, it is acknowledged that using standard approaches may not always provide the best results and may lead to parties, groups, businesses or communities just outside the boundary area failing to be able to avail of or engage with the initiative.

4.9 While it is normal that the parameters of a new project are presented to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee prior to finalisation and initiation, it is recommended that at the development stage the proposed boundary areas are outlined as a specific element of the parameters for discussion and agreement by the Committee within the remit and constraints of the project, but recognising that budgetary constraints may influence the scope and impact.

5.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource requirements associated with this paper, although financial implications will need to be considered on a project-by-project basis as boundary areas are agreed.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.”

During discussion, the Committee requested a larger, clearer map of the City Centre Boundary. Members also suggested that the Committee be consulted on the city centre boundary as part of the Local Policies Plan process and highlighted the importance of flexibility in relation to funding boundaries.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the context of the Draft BMAP City Centre Boundary and the update on the rationale for allocating city centre boundaries to specific projects;
- Agreed that an appropriate City Centre Boundary Map be circulated to the Committee; and
- Agreed that, in relation to any further consultation on the city centre boundary as part of the Local Policies Plan process, a briefing be provided by Planning Officers at a future meeting of the Committee.

Off-Street Car Parking – Notice of Motion Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in January 2021, former Councillor Mulholland, on behalf of former Councillor McMullan, had outlined the following proposal:

“This Council is committed to ensuring that the city and neighbourhood areas of Belfast are accessible and inclusive for disabled people, older people and carers. This Council recognises that access to a car is central to the independence of many people with mobility issues but notes the low provision of accessible bay parking spaces in its off-street car parks with just 3% of its spaces designated as accessible across the city. This Council agrees to join Disability Motoring UK’s Disabled Parking Accreditation scheme to improve the minimum number, size and quality of our accessible bay parking spaces. This Council further notes this is one of many interventions that need to be taken by this Council and partners as part of our commitment to an inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery and our commitment in the Belfast Agenda to become an accessible city for all by 2035.”

It was reported that the Committee had been provided with updates on the motion through quarterly Notice of Motion updates that officers had contacted the British Parking Association (BPA) to discuss the general principles of the accreditation criteria and how this could be achieved within the Council’s current portfolio.

Along with general access requirements and a prerequisite number of bays, consideration would also be made of the standard and location of the pay and display machines within each car park. Following these conditions being met, the Council could apply for accreditation and pay an annual fee for membership. Officers had met with the BPA to conduct site assessments, within the charged car parks in the city centre, to apply the criteria for the accreditation and making recommendations where appropriate.

The Committee was informed that, to achieve accreditation, car parks must not only have accessible bays correctly marked and in the specified number but must also have alternative ways to enter and pay. Following the site assessments, the BPA noted that, although our provision was below the number designated within the criteria, there

was an under use of DB bays. This could be explained by the number of blue badge holders parked on-street within the vicinity of car parks.

The general condition of the car parks was deemed acceptable, with an acknowledgement that some additional pedestrian access was required for people with more complex needs and the reconfiguration of some DB's for the same purpose. Officers had examined how to reconfigure the car parks to meet the criteria, including structural changes where required. It was also noted that most of the car parks had been earmarked for development and City Regeneration and Development were currently advancing plans for these locations.

It was reported that officers were in the process of reconfiguring the car parks to address the comments made during the Strategic Site Assessments.

Rather than incur the cost of accreditation, (£5,100 for initial registration and a £2,550 yearly fee), it was recommended that any costs should go towards work to reach compliance with the BPA's audit recommendations (attached at [Appendix 1](#)).

It was explained that there could be costs to get the car parks relined for additional DB accommodation, including remarking and any structural works. These costs would be delivered within existing budgets.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on progress with respect to the original notice of motion detailed at section 3.1; and
- Noted the Council's desire to make parking provision compliant with the provisions set out in the Park Access criteria but not to seek accreditation.

Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme 2024/25

It was reported that, in line with previous years, it was expected that the Department for Communities would be inviting local Councils to administer the Access and Inclusion Programme 2024-25 within their respective local Council areas and to apply for funding to the Department. Whilst the Departments for Communities capital budget was currently fully allocated, approval was requested to launch the programme as a competitive process should the Department open the funding at a later date in 2024/25.

The Committee was reminded that the Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme aimed to:

- I. Improve access to arts, culture and active recreation venues across NI for people with disabilities.

- II. Make arts, cultural and active recreation venues more inclusive across society; and
- III. Increase participation in arts, culture and active recreation activities by people with disabilities.

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that the Council oversaw the assessment and recommendation of projects via a competitive open call internally and externally and was responsible for delivery of all projects in receipt of funding.

She pointed out that the Culture Development Unit had managed the programme since its inception in 2018/19 and in 2023/24 funding had been reduced by 50%, resulting in 2 external projects with grants equating to £30,926. 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.

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, explained that capital works and equipment costs were eligible under this programme. The maximum grant available was £30,000, (the maximum project cost cannot exceed £80,000), 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.

She informed the Committee that 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, 2025.

She highlighted that the Culture Development Unit would work closely with the Council's Equality Unit and the Department for Communities to ensure positive equality implications which is the central component of the Programme. Officers would discuss the Programme with the Council's Disability Advisory Panel.

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that the Programme would be open to all applicants and the Council intended to have feasibility studies ready in order to put forward Council assets also.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Chief Executive exercise his delegated authority to grant permission for Council to apply for, promote, assess and manage the Access and Inclusion Programme 2024-25.

Belfast Waterfront Framework - Waterfront Tour Request

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Waterfront Task Group to invite Members of the City Growth and Regeneration and the members of the Planning Committee to attend a presentation on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Framework, followed by a boat tour along the lower Lagan waterfront area providing an overview of the of the proposals included within the Framework and to receive an update on the work of the Maritime Belfast Trust in preserving, developing

and promoting the Maritime Mile. Representatives from Maritime Belfast Trust, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Titanic Quarter Ltd would be in attendance along with officers from the Council, and it was suggested that the visit would take place in October.

The Committee was reminded that a Waterfront Task Group had been established to develop a focused approach to the Belfast waterfront, aligned to the A Bolder Vision key move 'Embracing the River'. The Task Group, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and consisting of Maritime Belfast Trust, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Titanic Quarter Ltd, Department for Communities, Department for the Economy, Tourism NI, Odyssey Trust and Department of Agriculture, Environmental and Rural Affairs commissioned a detailed analysis of the waterfront area from the Ormeau Road Bridge to Thompsons Dock.

The Committee was also reminded that consultants, Schulze + Grasso, had undertaken a detailed analysis of over 10km of the waterfront, compiling analysis on the completed and pending developments, as well as identifying the catalyst opportunities and gaps in infrastructure to maximise the social, economic and environmental opportunities that existed along the waterfront. This work also undertook to identify the existing and proposed projects emerging from within the adjacent communities, and to identify catalyst opportunities to connect these projects and the local communities to the wider education, employment and leisure facilities along the waterfront corridor. This work was carried out in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including local communities, through online surveys and a dedicated charrette style design workshop. In addition, a specific Waterfront Neighbourhood Network had been established to build relationships and support ongoing engagement with the Task Group. It was noted that the network would be asked to nominate two representatives to sit on the Task Group going forward to ensure representation and feedback.

It was reported that the Waterfront Task Group had also proposed a study visit to Copenhagen in November 2024 for members of the Task Group and members of the Waterfront Neighbourhood Network. The study visit would explore best practice examples of a leading waterfront city in terms of how the city engaged with the water's edge, how the public realm integrated art and maritime heritage, and how the area engaged and connected to the local communities and the wider city. The trip would be subsidised by Maritime Belfast Trust reducing the costs for organisations to approximately £550 per attendee for travel, accommodation and food. Members were asked to approve the attendance of the Chairperson (or his nominee), the Chief Executive and up to two officers on the study visit.

During discussion, in relation to the presentation of the Belfast Waterfront Framework area, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that there was a forthcoming meeting of the Neighbourhood Network in October. She advised that the Network included the Markets, Sailortown, Eastside, LORAG, the Dock, Titanic Quarter Residents and representatives from these groups had also been invited to the study visit to Copenhagen.

One Member highlighted that water ways and ecological groups should also be included in the consultation review process, such as the Lagan Navigation Trust.

Members highlighted the importance of including community views in the progression of the Framework. It was suggested that the Neighbourhood Network representatives were invited to the forthcoming boat tour and presentation and be given the opportunity to input into the Copenhagen tour objectives.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that feedback would be provided to the Waterfront Task Group on the issues which had been raised.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Agreed to attending the boat tour and presentation of the Belfast Waterfront Framework area and that a request be made to the Waterfront Task Group to invite community representatives to also attend; and
- II. Agreed to the Chairperson of the Committee or his nominee, the Chief Executive and up to two Council Officers attending the proposed Waterfront Task Group study visit to Copenhagen.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Night-time Economy Notice of Motion Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October 2021, Councillor de Faioite had raised a Notice of Motion which focussed on Belfast City's Nightlife and Night-time Economy which sought to deliver two specific actions, including:

- a roundtable engagement event which seeks to identify the main challenges facing the city centre's evening and nighttime economy (ENTE) and opportunities for the future; and
- the establishment of an ENTE 'coordinator'.

It was reported that, at a meeting of the City Centre All-Party Working Group (CCAPWG) on 26th January, 2023, Members had welcomed Amy Lamé, London's Night Czar, who had provided an overview of her background, role and collaborative approach to ensuring London thrives as a 24-hour city.

Ms. Lamé had outlined the challenges that she had faced, including changing perceptions of the city at night, ensuring women felt safe in London at night, addressing issues relating to nighttime workers and improving nighttime transport links. Members had heard that, key to addressing these challenges, was working in partnership with the nighttime industries, local authorities, the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and the general public.

At the same meeting, Members had also received a presentation from the Council's Director of Economic Development who provided an update on council related work which was assisting with the revitalisation effort of the night-time economy following the Covid pandemic. This included a presentation on case studies and best practice from other cities and information on Belfast's Purple Flag status. (Purple Flag

was an internationally recognised accreditation for excellence in the nighttime economy and helped to create safe and thriving locations at night for all users).

It was reported that Belfast City Centre First Achieved Purple Flag Status in 2020, just prior to the lock down and more recently Belfast City Council had joined the Steering Group that was seeking re-accreditation. Membership of the group included representatives from the following organisations:

- Belfast One BID;
- Linen Quarter BID;
- Destination CQ BID;
- Belfast City Council;
- Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce;
- PSNI;
- SOS Bus;
- Value Cabs;
- Hospitality Ulster; and
- Translink.

As part of its recent application for Purple Flag status, the Steering Group undertook a self-assessment evening in September 2023 which identified the main challenges facing the city's nighttime economy and a number of areas of improvement in relation to the Purple Flag themes. Belfast City Centre's Purple Flag status was successfully re-certified in January 2024 (following an assessment conducted by assessors in November 2023).

The Committee was informed that the CCAPWG had also received a presentation from Mr. C. McCracken, Managing Director of the Linen Quarter BID (on behalf of the Purple Flag Steering Group), at its meeting in May 2024. Mr. McCracken had updated the Working Group on the latest status and outlined the next steps of the process, which included addressing a number of recommendations within the assessors' feedback report (attached at Appendix 1). It was agreed that the CCAPWG would be used to collate and direct Members' feedback to the ongoing work of the Purple Flag Steering Group.

Night Czar

On 11th June 2024, Belfast's three BIDs (Linen Quarter, Belfast One and Destination CQ) had announced the appointment of Mr. M. Stewart as Belfast's city centre's first Night Czar. The role reflected a previous Purple Flag recommendation and would focus on enhancing, coordinating, leading and advocating for the city's night-time economy. The Night Czar position followed appointments in cities such as London, Manchester, and Edinburgh and was an honorary role attracting remuneration of £12K per year which was jointly funded by the three BIDs.

Following discussion by the CCAPWG in May, it had been recommended that the Night Czar should be invited to future meetings to engage with elected members. It was proposed that the Working Group would enable ongoing political engagement to ensure that elected representative's feedback could be provided and discussed (as suggested by best practice from other cities).

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need to develop the role and the potential for increased Council involvement and funding requirements.

The Committee also suggested that the Purple Flag Steering Group engage with Community Groups, Women's Groups and LGBTQ+ Groups and consider consultation with local neighbourhoods, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College and NUS-USI.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on action in relation to the Notice of Motion on Belfast City's Nightlife and Night-time economy;
- Agreed that Members engage with the newly appointed Night Czar through the City Centre All-Party Working Group;
- Agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how to develop the Night Czar role and the potential for increased Council involvement, together with options based on best practice advice and funding requirements;
- Noted that feedback be given to the Purple Flag Steering Group on ensuring effective engagement of Community Groups, Women's Groups and LGBTQ+ Groups;
- Noted that feedback be given to the Purple Flag Steering Group to consider consultation with local neighbourhoods, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College and NUS-USI; and
- Agreed not to close the Night-time Economy Motion which was recommended for closure as part of the quarterly Motion update.

City Centre Animation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report presents a number of proposals for increased animation opportunities within the city and for extended destination profile.**

Members are asked to provide approval to progress with an extended city centre animation programme to provide support for key stakeholder to deliver partnership initiatives

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report, and agree the allocation of the following direct awards in relation to;

- **Belfast One - Busking activity – up to the value of £20,000**
- **Belfast One - Halloween activity – up to the value of £40,000**

3.0 Background

3.1 The 10 year cultural strategy – A City Imagining outlines a vision of Belfast as a city:

- **where everyone fulfils their potential**
- **where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy**
- **where everyone experiences good health and well being**
- **that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all**
- **that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable**

Building on the community planning process, It acknowledges that change requires ambition, long-term commitment and a sustainable and adaptable approach building on the creativity and resilience in the very fabric of our city. A city imagining can be the catalyst for the urgency and agency required to encourage innovation, new connected thinking and greater collaboration.

In response to ongoing significant regeneration efforts, aiming to drive increased footfall and activity within the city centre. It is essential to address the challenges that the city centre is facing while aligning with initiatives such as the UNESCO City of Music designation, Belfast 2024, Make Yourself at Home tourism strategy and the core principles of co-design and partnership working.

As such the cultural unit have been working with city stakeholders to consider upcoming opportunities to continue to build and grow the positioning of Belfast as a welcoming and culturally vibrant destination.

4.0 Main Report

- 4.1** Whilst there have been a range of very positive developments and investments in the city centre, the economic environment is challenging and the impact of the dereliction associated with the Tribeca site continues to be felt.

Initiatives have been put forward to work in partnership with 'Belfast One' to respond to the ongoing need for a continued programme of city centre activity to drive footfall and give additional reasons to visit the city centre and attract both residents and tourists.

Officers have worked with stakeholders at Belfast One to identify the following proposals;

4.2 BuskFest - up to £20,000

Objective: Increase footfall and create a vibrant atmosphere through Music further building on the work aligned to realising Belfast's UNESCO city of music status.

BuskFest will bring musicians into designated areas of the city to perform live music, creating an engaging and lively environment for visitors. This initiative will support local artists and provide entertainment that encourages people to spend more time in the city centre. Belfast One would aim to run a competition and have 5-6 locations across the city for buskers to perform in over 4 weekends in through to November and in the run into 'Sound of Belfast' with the winner getting a recording prize and time on one of the local radio stations.

This would build on previous success realised on activity delivered in 2018 and 2019 on the Great Belfast Busk Off.

4.3 Halloween 2024 – up to £40,000 (if both components progressed)

Objective: Boost seasonal footfall and create a festive atmosphere.

Belfast One has already committed to hosting 5 monsters in buildings across the city BCC are seeking to provide increased funding to enhance this to 7 creating a monster trail and placing monster eyes in trees on Donegal Place.

These are attractive and award-winning outdoor attractions which have been on display in other cities including

Manchester, London, Glasgow and Dublin with great success. Through an exciting primary-school competition to name each of the monsters, we can drive footfall from children and their families into the City Centre to visit the monsters to enter the 'Name the Monster' competition.



- 4.4 The remaining funding would deliver in partnership with Belfast One a pumpkin patch in the grounds of City Hall over 2-3 day replicating the popular event to draw families and Halloween enthusiasts into the city. The event would be a free ticketed event and would encourage participants to take their pumpkins to designated design stations across the city to dress their pumpkins. This event creates stunning visual images in front of the City's main municipal building and demonstrate visually that the City is open for families and children.



5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

The cost of delivering the programme is up to £60,000.

This will be funded from existing budgets and, if all options are fully implemented, also from specified reserves.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.”

During discussion, in response to Members’ questions, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that access, inclusion, and considerate ticketing would form part of the agreement with Belfast One and she would confirm where pumpkins were being sourced for the event. She highlighted that attendee feedback would be compiled in relation to future Halloween events as part of the core programme feedback.

In response to a Member’s question in relation to the process for the delivery of the aforementioned events, she confirmed that a formal process for Halloween events would be considered for future programming.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report, and agreed the allocation of the following direct awards in relation to:-
 - Belfast One - Busking activity – up to the value of £20,000; and
 - Belfast One - Halloween activity – up to the value of £40,000
- Noted that access, inclusion, and considerate ticketing best practice would form part of the agreement with Belfast One;
- Noted that attendee feedback would be compiled in relation to future Halloween events as part of the core programme feedback; and
- Noted that a formal process for Halloween events would be considered for future programming.

Growing Business and the Economy

International Relations Activity Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members’ approval for council engagement in and attendance at a number of**

international profiling events in USA in early 2025 as well as support for the upcoming Friendship Four event.

2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the invitations for the Lord Mayor to attend the St Pat's for All event in early March 2025 as well as the Nashville Peace Summit in late February 2025 and agree attendance at both events by the Lord Mayor and appropriate senior officers up to a total maximum cost of £12,000
- Note and approve the request for £15,000 financial support towards the Friendship Four event to take place in November 2024
- Note and approve the request for £10,000 financial support towards the touring route for 'The Agreement'.
- Note the planned review of international opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agree to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions.
- This will be developed alongside a paper for the committee setting out the principles that will underpin an updated international relations framework.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 St Pat's for All engagement – New York – early March 2025

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council annually participates in the New York New Belfast Economic Showcase. This showcase event has been running for more than a decade, and for the last three years has been streamlined to focus solely on seeking economic opportunity within New York City and the wider East coast. Over 150 business, civic and political leaders gather to hear the latest Belfast developments and updates on trade and investment opportunities across key growth sectors as well as capital investment development and opportunities.

- 3.2 At this year's 15th annual event, the Lord Mayor took part in a number of side meetings with City and State political representatives. He was also invited to speak at a key focal point for LGBTQIA rights, the Stonewall Inn. This aligned with the Lord Mayor's inclusive city theme. The event was attended by many influential business, political, academic and civic leaders, including former City Council Speakers Christine Quinn and Corey Johnson, along with NY State Comptroller Tom Di Napoli.

- 3.3 On the back of this engagement, the Lord Mayor has now been invited to lead the 26th annual 'St Pat's for All' Parade, assuming the role of Grand Marshall. The Parade attracts over 3,500 participants, and around 28,000 spectators. In addition to participating in the parade, the St Pat's for All President and Board have offered to facilitate a wider programme of engagements around inclusive growth and neighbourhood regeneration, in line with Corporate Plan priorities. The Lord Mayor will also undertake a series of follow-up business meetings arising from the June 2024 New York New Belfast event.
- 3.4 Reframing international and Sister Cities engagement activity
- Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been a formal Sister City with Nashville and Boston since 1994 and 2015, respectively. The objective of these agreements is to develop and deliver collaborative and mutually beneficial activity for each city in the areas of the economy (both business trade and investment), education (mainly through attracting international students and research partnerships), tourism development and cooperation in culture and music.
- 3.5 Activity with both cities at civic level has been intermittent since the pandemic. This is due to a number of factors including changes in personnel; competing priorities and immediate funding and resource pressures on other issues. Despite this, organisational partnerships between educational establishments, business and community organisations have continued to strengthen. As we emerge from the recent economic shocks, there appears to be an appetite from both cities to re-engage, with the potential for renewed conversations across a range of areas for collaboration. Officers are undertaking a review of opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and a report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions.
- 3.6 In the interim, the city of Nashville is currently making plans to visit Belfast with an economic mission from 29 September-4 October this year. The council is working with economic partners – in particular Invest NI – to ensure that a targeted programme of meetings and engagement is in place for each of the delegates. Updates on opportunities for

engagement with elected members will be flagged once there is greater clarity around timings and attendees.

- 3.7 Given that 2024 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Belfast-Nashville Sister City link, the City Council in Nashville is planning a number of activities to mark the occasion. One flagship event is a Peace Summit which is being developed by Queen's University Belfast and Belmont University (who have long standing connections and yearly joint work programmes) and which will take place from 25-28 February 2025. The programme for this event is still being finalised but it is likely to involve recognition of the work on Civil Rights through storytelling, history, music, community, and building peace in Nashville and around the world. The event will focus on issues related to past, present, and future movements and the connections between Civil Rights and peacebuilding. Primary partners include Belmont University, Fisk University, and Queen's University Belfast. The Lord Mayor has been asked to speak at the event on the Belfast experience of peace building and community and place building. Nashville Metro Council through the Office of Mayor Freddie O'Connell, along with the Sister City Board have endorsed the invitation and have extended an offer to organise a series of wider business engagements. These meetings will provide a helpful re-introduction to some of the key local business partners, on the assumption that we have commitment from Nashville to engage in this area of work in the future. Our engagements with Invest NI have confirmed the specific opportunities for collaboration between NI and the Nashville/Tennessee area and they have committed to working with us on opportunities arising from the discussions.

3.8 Friendship Four

Members will be aware that, since 2015, the Council has supported the work of the Odyssey Trust in developing and delivering the Friendship Four series. This tournament and wraparound activity have been an important element of the Belfast-Boston Sister City relationship and have been used as a platform to promote Belfast as a study, investment, and tourism destination.

- 3.9 In 2019, the Friendship Four was expanded to incorporate a Women's Tournament. Both events attract positive international TV exposure for Belfast in the United States and Canada, reaching over 150 million households.

- 3.10 The 2024 Friendship Four series is due to take place in November and is divided into two distinct parts, namely the delivery of the tournament (29-30 November 2024) and the Friendship Four Legacy Project (25-28 November 2024). This year's tournament will involve teams from Notre Dame, Harvard, Boston University and Merrimack College. It will attract over 1,000 overseas visitors to the city and account for over 3,000 bed nights to the Belfast economy. Each team will travel with 40-50 players and immediate staff members as well as 10 match officials, with typical home crowds of 3,000 fans attending their respective games. It is estimated through the Tourism NI return on investment calculator that the visitor spend during the event will be £500K and the total direct economic spend will be in the region of £750K generated for the city over the event.
- 3.11 The Legacy Project will extend beyond the main sporting activities and will include a schools cultural exchange programme involving over 400 young people. The main tournament event will be used as a 'hook' to draw out discussion topics such as confidence, resilience and self-esteem, mental health and wellbeing and diet and nutrition. It will also involve a two-day STEM conference focusing on science and youth empowerment through sport. Finally, the overall event will be supported through a large-scale volunteer skills development programme which will see the recruitment, training and development of 60 volunteers to support a variety of roles across the weeklong programme.
- 3.12 Alongside the main event, there will also be a series of side programmes involving representatives from business and educational, sports and cultural institutions. Building on previous programmes, collaborative arrangements have already been made involving student engagement and faculty collaboration across the key educational establishments in Belfast and this year's programme will seek to support and enhance these. With the introduction of new teams this year, there are opportunities to provide additional opportunities, not just for university-to-university collaboration, but also for business-to-business collaboration. Several opportunities have already been identified by universities competing in the 2024 tournament around the areas of cyber security and AI, sports tech and data reporting and STEM.
- 3.13 The event receives financial support from a range of partners including Tourism NI, the Department for Communities and the US Consulate alongside ticket income and corporate sponsorship. To continue this longstanding partnership, the event organisers are seeking a financial contribution of £15,000 towards the November 2024 event.

The Agreement

- 3.14 The cultural unit have been engaging with The Lyric theatre in relation to a request to support the touring route for 'The Agreement' up to the value of £10,000. The Agreement is an award-winning play by renowned playwright Owen McCafferty. It examines the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement revealing the drama behind this complex, pivotal moment for Northern Ireland.
- 3.15 The Lyric Theatre, Belfast and the Gate Theatre, Dublin are bringing this important work to audiences during Dublin's Theatre Festival for four weeks from end Sept – Oct 2024.
- 3.16 Other key partners in this initiative include Tourism NI and officers are in discussion on leveraging the opportunity this presents to host key ROI/International media and stakeholders and further build on the destination reputation of Belfast and our artistic partners.
- 3.17 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Members are asked to approve a maximum of £12,000 in support of both the Nashville Peace Summit and wider Sister City visit, as well as the New York St Pat's for All and wider inclusivity visit to New York, both city visits aligned between 25 February and 3 March 2025. Members are also asked to agree to a financial contribution of £15,000 towards the Friendship Four November 2024 event and £10,000 towards the touring route for 'The Agreement'.

- 3.18 All above costs will be met within the existing budget for 2024/25.
- 3.19 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with this report."

During discussion, in response to Members questions in relation to the review of international events and the tracking of benefits, the Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the approach to International relations, the framework and its themes was currently being reviewed, together with the overall external engagement approach. She highlighted that a report would be submitted to the Committee in October to consider the principles and high-level objectives of the new Framework. The European and International Relations Manager also provided further information on the benefits of engagement to foreign investment.

During further discussion, in response to a Member's query in relation to the request for the financial support towards the touring route for 'The Agreement', the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, explained further the process and rationale for the request.

The Committee:

- Noted the invitations for the Lord Mayor to attend the St Pat's for All event in early March 2025 as well the Nashville Peace Summit in late February 2025 and agree attendance at both events by the Lord Mayor and appropriate senior officers up to a total maximum cost of £12,000;
- Noted and approved the request for £15,000 financial support towards the Friendship Four event to take place in November 2024;
- Noted and approved the request for £10,000 financial support towards the touring route for 'The Agreement';
- Noted the planned review of international opportunities and potential areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agreed to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions; and
- Noted that a paper would be presented to the October committee setting out the principles and high-level objectives of the new international relations framework.

Business Growth and Scaling Support

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in May 2024, it had endorsed the Enterprise and Business Growth workplan for the 24/25 year. The report set out key priority areas of work for the 2024/25 financial year, aligning to the delivery of the targets under the 'Our Economy' pillar of the Belfast Agenda.

The report had provided plans for scaling support and innovation, focusing on key technologies and priority sectors, including Fintech and Financial Services, Creative and Digital Life and Health Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing. Since that time, officers had continued to work closely with the City Innovation Team to develop and deliver on new interventions which build capacity among local businesses – including those aligned to the Belfast Region City Deal interventions. Through this work and engagement with stakeholders in the wider ecosystem, including Digital Catapult, Ulster University, Queen's University, and the Fintech Corridor, the Senior Manager, Economy, explained that two key projects had been identified which were considered to have clear alignment to the overall plan and which could lever resources and support from other key organisations.

Fintech Support Programme

Working in partnership with the Fintech Corridor, the Fintech Support Programme would aim to address the issues and strategic objectives identified in the Fintech NI action plan. The Fintech Corridor was established in 2020 and was a cross-border cluster working with multiple Fintech companies, academic institutions, and development agencies along the Dublin to Belfast corridor. It supported local SMEs working in the financial services to utilise new technology to grow and scale and provided important networking opportunities for companies along the corridor as well as with international companies working in this space.

The Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the Council sought to support 40 Belfast based companies to provide new partnership and networking opportunities, mentoring to support business growth, scaling and access to finance, and to look at opportunities to support the skills development and pipeline into the sector.

The support programme would focus on addressing specific barriers to SME growth and would provide the tools to overcome these barriers, including mentoring, education, and support to enable business and product development, route to market engagements enabling b2b opportunities for Fintech SMEs, facilitated networking and collaborative space to explore and develop innovation, future opportunity identification and shaping SMEs for a growth mindset.

Advanced Media Production Capacity Programme

The Senior Manager, Economy, informed the Committee that, working in partnership with Digital Catapult, the Advanced Media Production (AMP) capacity programme would aim to address key barriers to growth and explore opportunities for creative digital SMEs to engage with large scale Advanced Media Production (AMP) facilities such as Studio Ulster. The AMP programme would support up to 50 Belfast based companies wishing to build capacity in the commercial use of, and access to, Advanced Media Production (AMP). Through this programme businesses would have the opportunity to gain valuable skills and learning linked to Advanced Media Production and Studio Ulster in particular, to apply this new understanding to offer potential new market opportunities and to develop a pathway for local SMEs to engage and benefit from large scale City Deal projects, Studio Ulster, in this case.

Test trading opportunities for growing businesses

The May 2024 Committee report had provided an overview of the role which the Enterprise and Business Growth team takes in supporting businesses at all stages of their journey, including improving start-up and survival rates of new businesses and encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship across the city.

The report had outlined plans for the continuation of the Council's dedicated start up space at St George's Market. Since April this year, the team had enhanced the promotion of this service and demand had grown for the offer as a result. Two stalls at the market were set aside for new traders and participants rotated on a six-week basis in order to ensure that businesses got a feel for the retail environment – as well as ensuring that the opportunity was available to a growing list of interested businesses. Further to this, the team had enhanced its stakeholder engagement, ensuring that

services were accessible in all areas of Belfast and across all communities. Through this stakeholder engagement, the Council had explored various opportunities with shopping centres and trading locations across Belfast to explore further opportunities for test trading. As part of this engagement, the team had identified an opportunity to provide test trading to approximately 30 pre/early start businesses in a busy retail environment.

In order to pilot this approach, the team had developed a partnership with the Kennedy Centre in West Belfast. Through this, a space would be provided for approximately 30 traders over the duration of the pilot. If feedback was positive and this process successful, the team proposed providing test trading opportunities across other retail locations in Belfast. Early discussions were already under way to identify viable opportunities. The pilot would include wraparound support being provided to the businesses through the established Go Succeed service and each business would avail of branding, marketing, and sales support. Following successful completion of the pilot programme, the Kennedy Centre had committed to a period of reduced costs on more permanent trading space within the centre. A maximum budget of £20,000 was proposed for this activity to include pilot development, recruitment and marketing, wraparound support for businesses, and evaluation of the pilot.

The Committee:

- Noted and approved the allocation of £20,000 from the existing 2024/25 Economic Development budget to support the Fintech Support Programme, in partnership with the Fintech Corridor;
- Noted and approved the allocation of up to £65,000 from the existing 2024/25 Economic Development project to support the Advanced Media Production (AMP) capacity programme in partnership with Digital Catapult; and
- Noted and endorsed the proposal to invest in a localised test trading pilot to support pre/early start businesses with a maximum budget of £20,000.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notice of Motion Quarterly Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion that it was responsible for, in line with the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that all standing committees receive regular updates.

It was reported that there were currently seven Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which the Committee was responsible for and it was recommended that the Committee agree to close the following 4 motions and note the status updates for the remaining 3 motions which remained open:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- Disabled Parking Accreditation Scheme (ID = 153)
- Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy (ID = 208)
- Belfast 2024 Animation Culture Night (ID = 381).

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- Environmental Infrastructure in Council Car Parks (ID = 152) which will now be considered as part of the council's Low Emissions Vehicle Strategy.

One Member highlighted that the motion on Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy would remain open, as previously agreed under item 5.a).

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion/ Issues Raised in Advance that it was responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- Agreed to the closure of three Motions, as referenced in Appendix 1, as it had been agreed that Belfast City Nightlife and Night-time Economy Motion (ID = 208) would remain open under the previous item 'Night-time Economy Notice of Motion Update'.

Meeting request from the Department of Education

The Committee noted that a meeting request had been received from the Department of Education to discuss the RAISE program, an educational disadvantage intervention from the 'A Fair Start' report and that the Committee would be invited to attend.

Chairperson