

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 6th November, 2024

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;  
Alderman Lawlor;  
Councillors Black, de Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,  
Harvey, Kelly, Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe,  
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, I. McLaughlin,  
R. McLaughlin, O'Neill and Smyth.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;  
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;  
Ms. E. Clark, Programme Manager;  
Mr. A. Cairns, Zoo Manager;  
Mr. F. Grant, Assets Development Manager;  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance  
Coordinator.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were received.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 9th and 23rd 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 4th November.

### **Declarations of Interest**

In relation to items 3(a) Major Events Update and 3(b) Belfast 2024, Councillor McCabe declared an interest, in that she was employed by Féile an Phobail and left the meeting whilst the items were being considered.

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in item 5(a) Committee Plan 2024-25 - Six Monthly Update, in that the organisation that he worked for was associated with the employment skills and tourism work plans and left the room whilst the item was under discussion.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2025**

The Committee approved its schedule of meetings for the period from January to December 2025:

- Wednesday, 15th January at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 29th January at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 5th February at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 12th March at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 26th March at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 9th April at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 7th May at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 28th May at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 4th June at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 6th August at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 27th August at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 10th September at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 8th October at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 29th October at 5.15 pm (Special);
- Wednesday, 5th November at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday, 26th November at 5.15 pm (Special); and
- Wednesday, 3rd December at 5.15 pm.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following three 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.

### **Vacant to Vibrant Scheme Update**

The Committee was provided with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and the associated recommendations from the assessment panel.

The Committee:

- i. Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant Programme that, subject to the approval of three applications, would support up to 35 businesses to locate or expand into long term vacant city centre units;
- ii. Agreed the recommended grant awards outlined in the report; and
- iii. Agreed the update in relation to the position of external funding applications to bring forward the proposed city wide Vacant to Vibrant scheme and wrap around support services.

### **Zoo Quarter 2 Update**

The Committee was provided with an update on the performance of Belfast Zoo in Quarter 2 (July-September) of 2024-25.

During discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to animal welfare and staffing at the Zoo, together with the need for a wider independent review of the Zoo and its governance model.

### **Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Smyth,  
Seconded by Councillor O'Neill, and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that the concerns raised be discussed at the forthcoming Special Meeting.

During further discussion, the Zoo Manager answered a range of questions in relation to health and safety, risk assessments, animal welfare, staffing and absence figures.

The Senior Manager, Economy advised that an update could be provided at the Special Meeting on 27th November, and that, as a formal Health and Safety investigation was ongoing, the Committee would be provided with the outcome of this, in due course.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the Zoo performance update report for the period July to September 2024; and
- Agreed that an update on the issues raised in relation to animal welfare and staffing at the Zoo would be discussed further at the Special Meeting of the Committee in November, together with next steps.

### **Belfast Bikes Quarter 2 Update**

The Committee was provided with an update on the performance of the Belfast Bike Scheme for Year 10 in Quarter 2 (July-September) of 2024-25.

The Committee noted the Belfast Bike Scheme update report for the period July to September.

### **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

#### **Major Events Update**

The Senior Manager Culture, Tourism and Events provided an overview of the following report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on a number of major events.

##### **2.0 Recommendation**

2.1 Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this paper.
- Agree support for enhanced St Patricks day activity to be funded through Shared Prosperity funding.
- Approve officers to enter into license or Service Level Agreements required for the successful delivery of the Maritime Festival.

##### **3.0 Main Report:**

###### **Christmas**

3.1 Christmas preparation continues for the switch on event on the 16th November 2024 as per update report to last month's committee.

###### **Fleadh Cheoil**

3.2 A detailed update was provided to the Committee in October and as outlined, work is intensifying to secure the Fleadh for Belfast in partnership with Ards CCE in 2026, including through continuing participation in Comhaltas meetings and events, hosting visits by senior representatives and starting to put in place the necessary resources, plans and governance arrangements.

### Oireachtas 2025

- 3.3 Members of the events unit and key delivery partners attended the event this year from the 30th October to 2nd November in advance of delivery planning and preparation for Belfast to host in 2025. Working groups will continue to integrate with event organisers and update reports will be provided to members in due course.

### Lord Mayors Day

- 3.4 Lord Mayors Day will be held on a Saturday in mid April 2025. The final date will be agreed with the Lord Mayor's Office and City Hall management team. Officers will meet with Lord Mayor's team on programming in November.

The aim is to create an event that is inclusive, celebrates all that is good, creative and fun about Belfast and offers something for all ages to enjoy at a neutral, easy to access venue in the city. The approved budget for 2024 was £42,000, and draft estimates are similar for 2025.

### St Patrick's Day 2025:

- 3.5 Members will be aware that Council delivered a significant programme of events in 2024 with a number of partners and delivery input from the Council events team. In preparation for 2025, as presented to CG&R in May 2024, a small number of tenders have been issued to encourage creative sector interventions. A tender for a City Centre Music Programme has been awarded to Tradfest, and contract management has commenced.

In a similar manner, a tender for Parade content was issued for float provision, community participation and professional performers. It is anticipated that one successful contractor will provide a suite of floats consisting of 34 processional pieces and 21 professional performers, their animated production will include 68 dancers sourced via local community and amateur arts groups. It is also envisaged that two further contractors will facilitate community circus workshops; one will work with 40 children and 8 adult emerging artists and will showcase various circus skills developed at the St Patrick's Day Parade. A second will facilitate, co-ordinate and deliver a stilt walking workshop for 20 children to showcase in the parade.

A further contractor will facilitate coordinate and deliver multiple cross- community arts workshops and aim to recruit 300 plus participants from North, South, East and West

Belfast to create props and work on costumes to showcase and deliver within the St Patrick's Day parade.

Feile an Phobail have been awarded year 2 of their previous tender for their Trad Trail project.

The Council team will provide wrap-around logistical support for the parade in particular. Additionally,

Members will also be aware that an element of the St Patricks day programme is delivered by Seachtain na Gaeilge which runs from the 1st – 17th March. As part of additional monies made available through the shared prosperity funds officers are recommending an additional £20,000 for enhanced activity to support a headline event on Saturday 8th of March, this would be a family celebration event to take place at Custom House Square and 2 Royal Avenue and would support Belfast City Council's delivery and engagement in the run into the Oireachtas festival at the end of October.

As in previous years, Council Corporate Communications will provide a MARCOMM's package to promote the entire programme.

**Maritime Festival 2025:**

- 3.6 Members will be aware that the event is now on a biennial basis and budget allocations reflect this. The Belfast Maritime Festival will take place on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th September 2025. There are ongoing discussions with Maritime Belfast Trust on programming, which is well advanced. The festival footprint is currently under review, but is planned for almost the entire Maritime Mile, with the new City Quay's Gardens coming on line for the first time. Research continues on the availability and costs for visiting Tall Ships supplemented by ongoing discussions with the Royal Navy and Commissioners for Irish Lights. There are several procurement processes in respect of the creative sector participation, and Legal / Land Agreements being considered.

Committee is also asked to approve officers to enter into any license agreements or Service Level Agreements required for the successful delivery of these events. For example, use of TQ, DFI and Odyssey Trust land, and partnership programming with Maritime Belfast Trust. Legal Services require Council minutes giving this authority prior to entering into these agreements.

**The Open Championship**

**3.7 Officers are currently exploring opportunities with Tourism NI on the role that Belfast could play during the event week. Given the significant number of visitors that will be in the city during that time and the potential to provide additional animation and activation.**

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications:**

**Major events are being progressed within previously agreed budgets and the budget of £20,000 for additional St Patrick's day event will be funded from Shared Prosperity funding.**

**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, in response to Members' questions, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism advised that officers were currently exploring opportunities on the role that Belfast could play for the Open Championship and UEFA Euros 2028. She advised that costings for reestablishing a celebrity guest to switch on the Christmas lights could also be explored.

In relation to the St. Patrick's Day 2025, several Members highlighted the importance of inclusivity and engagement with the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community for the programme of events. One Member suggested the potential for further funding, such as small grant match funding or community festival funding for St. Patrick's Day events across the city. The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism undertook to update the Committee in December.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report;
- Approved support for enhanced St Patrick's day activity to be funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund;
- Approved officers entering into license or Service Level Agreements required for the successful delivery of the Maritime Festival; and
- Agreed that officers investigate the potential for additional community festival funding for St. Patrick's Day events.

### **Belfast 2024**

The Committee was reminded that Belfast 2024 had been launched officially on 29th February 2024, and had achieved significant successes across the programme so far.

The Programme Manager advised that there had been a wide range of events, performances, and engagement throughout the city to create an extensive range of artistic and creative work, while supporting the sector to build skills and capacity as well as showcasing Belfast as a cultural destination, which included:

- £2.7m directly invested into creative and cultural sector commissioning locally;
- £960k to Direct Commissions and partnerships, including Little Amal, Eden Project, BBC concert, International Artist Project;
- £0.9m towards strategic and music-based events to celebrate and embrace UNESCO City of Music designation and our music strategy;
- 800+ contracts have been created for B24 delivery within the creative sector including artists, production staff, facilitators and designers;
- 500+ workshops and events have taken place across the city with more to come by December;
- 16 artists supported on Creative Bursary programme;
- 6 International Artists working in residence with communities for 2 years with British Council partnership funding; and
- 35,000 attendees and participants to date.

She explained that the Belfast 2024 Interim Report, November 2024, attached at [Appendix 1](#) provided an overview of the events completed so far and outlined important feedback which had been received as part of the Evaluation Framework. The report covered the period up to end of August 2024 and provided information on:

- Background and Strategic Context of Belfast 2024;
- Belfast 2024 Programme Structure;
- Belfast 2024 Programme;
- Programme Delivery to End September;
- Marketing and Communications Update;
- Partnership Development and Delivery;
- Evaluation, impact and Feedback so far; and
- Lessons Learned and Legacy Planning.

The Programme Manager highlighted that the evaluation findings were at an interim stage, including the statistics outlined below:



***Belfast 2024 programme statistics summary to date***

Events	549
Participants/attendees	35,000
Artists & Contractors involved	811
Programme Partners	203

***Feedback so far based on 600 audience/contractor surveys:***

- 99 % of attendees agreed they had a good time
- 97 % agreed the activity was absorbing and held their attention
- 98 % agreed they would come to something like this again

***Attendees also report:***

- 98 % of attendees agreed they felt welcome and included
- 95 % agreed they felt connected to others
- 97 % agreed that they felt proud that it was happening in Belfast

***Lessons learned and Legacy***

The Programme Manager informed the Committee that Belfast 2024 was, at its core, an 'accelerator' project for the Council's Cultural Strategy 2020-30, to create the conditions to support capacity building, test new ways of working, strengthen existing and forge new connection between cultural delivery within the Council and the wider city. The legacy of this significant project was critical to show the return on investment, to ensure lessons learnt were captured, and to embed critical elements of the programme into 'business as usual'.

She pointed out that work was ongoing to capture and learn lessons both positive and negative in relation to the planning and delivery of Belfast 2024 and to consider how these could be applied to future programmes and plans, including through application of co-design models for the delivery of City events and Tourism and to ensure that there was an effective legacy from the programme. She highlighted that the emerging themes for legacy development included:

- Informing Implementation Plan for Second Phase of Cultural Strategy A City Imagining 2025-2030;
- Supporting the delivery of Belfast Stories, including through Our Stories Festival;
- Supporting legacy of the projects and artists /creators; and
- Still to come in Belfast 2024.

The Programme Manager advised that, during Autumn, the programme continued to deliver a broad range of events, activities, workshops and participative opportunities across the city, appealing to a range of audiences from communities to visitors and international tourists, such as the City Hall Immersive Experience, Are You On The Bus, Touch, Hear, Feel premiere – an inclusive performance engaging all senses, Hearth our film of Belfast by Belfast with Mark Cousins and Belfast Film Festival and the Our Stories Festival In partnership with Belfast Stories.

She provided an overview of the Belfast Stories Partnership – Our Stories Festival 20th – 24th November, designed in partnership with Oliver Jeffers/Jeffers Studios, Nerve Centre, and NI Science Festival as well as Ulster University, which were celebrating their 175th year. This was an exciting programme which would see the city centre come to life with a combination of talks, workshops, art installations, comedy, music and food and engagement with local communities on the future of the city – housed at City Hall, 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast Stories site and Ulster University's new campus. Guests included Oliver Jeffers, Tim Smit – founder of Eden Project, Martin Green CBE, Hannah Peel, Ruth McCarthy and Stacey Gregg, with further names to be confirmed including Chris Packham and local artists who would lead on a series of engagements, as well as integration with a number of our Bank of Ideas projects who had come through the participatory budgeting programme.

During discussion, in response to a Member's question in relation to the value for money per participant of each event, the Programme Manager explained that there was an error in the Boom Clap Play - Wiggle Room attendance published in the report, in that the figure for attendance of 750 was for how many people would have visited since it opened at the end of September to the report date. The actual overall figure would be calculated as a minimum of 3360 and was anticipated to increase by the 29th November, the closing date of the project.

After discussion, the Committee noted the progress of the Belfast 2024 programme.

### **Growing Business and the Economy**

#### **Response to Invest Northern Ireland Business Strategy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a draft response from Belfast City Council to Invest NI's business strategy 2024-2027 and to update members on the Department for the Economy's recently published sub-regional economic plan.**

##### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the draft response to Invest NI's draft business strategy and agree that this is submitted to Invest NI following the committee meeting in order to meet the 14 November deadline – with the caveat that the response is subject to formal council ratification
- Note that the Department for Economy has recently produced a 'sub-regional economic plan' and agree to receive a further update at the next committee meeting as to how some of the key proposals in this plan might be taken forward in Belfast.

### **3.0 Main Report**

**3.1** Invest NI recently launched their new business strategy 'Our Future in Focus' in mid-October 2024. The strategy covers the period 2024-2027. All councils were invited to attend briefings on the draft strategy and these took place across the region over the last number of weeks. The deadline for written responses is 14 November 2024.

**3.2** The draft strategy is attached as Appendix 1. The consultation survey on the strategy is structured around a series of questions, namely:

- Does our Vision set a suitable level of ambition and successfully frame our shared destination for the Northern Ireland economy?
- As an entrepreneur, business leader, partner or stakeholder, does our Mission Statement appeal to you and does it convey what you need from Invest Northern Ireland?
- Does the overall strategy feel right? Are there any major omissions/areas of focus to be added/areas that should be removed
- Are the draft targets the correct ones to deliver maximum impact?
- Is a Client model approach, that enables us to prioritise resources and intensify support with those businesses with the greatest growth potential, the correct approach?
- Is the definition and engagement model sufficiently broad to enable us to deliver for all businesses strategically?
- Do you agree that the priority sectors identified are the correct ones to focus on?
- Which market opportunities or technologies do you believe present the greatest challenge for you over the long term?

- Do you agree with the strategic priorities (Boosting business investment; Accelerating innovation and skills; Driving global ambition; Developing and achieving sustainability; Maximising City and Growth Deals and Promoting places and partnerships).
- 3.3 The draft strategy aims to support an economy characterised by high productivity, good jobs, regional balance and decarbonisation. It therefore reflects the Minister for the Economy's vision, set out in February this year, which focused on driving regional balance; improving productivity; reducing carbon emissions and delivering more 'good jobs'.
- 3.4 The draft Belfast City Council response to the consultation is attached as Appendix 2. One of the key points in the draft strategy is the commitment to 'build capacity outside of the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA)'. By that, they mean Belfast as well as the three adjacent council areas of Lisburn and Castlereagh; Ards and North Down and Antrim and Newtownabbey. There is a specific objective of making 65% of investments 'outside of the BMA' by 2026/27 – representing an increase of 6%. It is understood that this target relates to the number of investments rather than the value of the investments. In reality, it is unclear how this will impact in practice in Belfast. However we know from Invest NI's own data that investments in Belfast-based business generate greater return than investments in other locations (second to Antrim and Newtownabbey) so it is unclear how this can square with the focus on driving productivity.
- 3.5 The draft strategy notes that the commitment to build capacity outside the BMA will be done by 'incentivising and supporting greater levels of investment' in non-BMA areas. It does not detail what these incentives and supports might look like – and whether it will mean that some incentives are not available at all in the BMA or whether it is simply an enhanced level of investment in areas outside of the metropolitan area – but that all parts of the region can access the same menu of support.
- 3.6 To counter concerns, the strategy notes that 'building foundational capacity outside the BMA will not come at the expense of the BMA'. It recognises that Belfast and the adjacent areas remain the economic engine for the wider region. It also acknowledges that – while the BMA may be more productive than other parts of the region – the area is not without its challenges. To that end, the draft strategy notes that 'we will be acutely responsive to the need to address inequalities and disadvantage present within the wider BMA through investments we support in the area' and

that ‘a collaborative partnership approach will be key to achieve this’.

- 3.7 The draft strategy contains six strategic priorities, one of which is Maximising City and Growth Deals. Commitments within this priority focus on using the investments to build strong, globally competitive clusters and generate ‘enhanced skills progression pathways’. Given that the Belfast deal is further progressed than the others, there is an opportunity to pilot new approaches, focusing on maximising the benefits from the capital investment projects. At present, officers are exploring how this can be done for those projects that are more advanced as well as considering how we can build the learning into future schemes. This approach is essential in order to ensure that our residents and businesses benefit from these centres of excellence. We are particularly interested in exploring inclusive skills pathways, building on the learning from our previous Academy approaches.
- 3.8 Another strategic priority is ‘Promoting Places and Partnerships’. Under this priority, Invest NI plans to deliver on its commitment to increase investment outside of the BMA and notes its proposals to ‘factor regional balance into all investment decisions’. The methodology for doing this is not clear at present and we have included a question on this as part of our response. Invest NI also commits to expanding from four regional offices to five, but there is no clarification on what the area breakdown will be. There is also a commitment to increase the number of staff in the regional offices by 40%. In reality, this is a bigger issue for areas outside Belfast than for the city, given that a lot of Belfast-based companies are supported by staff based in the Bedford Street HQ – although it may be helpful in ensuring an enhanced focus on our indigenous businesses. The final proposal under this priority is to develop a new Regional Property Programme. Invest NI has very limited space in Belfast: it owns two business parks, one at Forthriver (location of the council’s Innovation Factory) and one in the Whiterock area. A number of years ago, the organisation did bring forward a programme to support proposals for new business sites focused on small businesses but this did not progress. As part of the engagement work, Invest NI has been clear that they do not yet have the resources that may be required to support this work and that it may take some time to build the necessary funding.

**Department for the Economy's Sub-Regional Economic Plan**

- 3.9 Just ahead of the publication of the Invest NI business strategy, the Department for the Economy issued its Sub-Regional Economic Plan. The Ministerial ambition behind this plan is 'through local partnerships, central government, Invest NI, Councils and our network of education providers and civic society, we will work together to identify the main barriers to economic development, and the interventions that will unlock the area's potential'.
- 3.10 The plan focuses on recognising and tackling regional imbalance across each of the council areas. It sets out a series of indicators and ranks each council area from 1 to 11 in terms of how they sit against each of these. Metrics include labour productivity; median wages, greenhouse emissions and sub-regional employment rate. While Belfast ranks top in the first three, it ranks 10 out of 11 for greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.11 At a recent meeting with the Minister for the Economy, members took the opportunity to outline the anomalies in some of this data and to point out that, while jobs and wages in Belfast are generally better than other council areas, almost half of those that work in Belfast do not live in Belfast – so this skews the figures significantly. They also noted that those living outside of Belfast but working in the city earn on average £3,474 a year more than Belfast residents and that, while Belfast supports proportionately more higher-level jobs than other areas, it also has a disproportionate level of deprivation in many neighbourhoods: 6 of the top 10 most deprived wards in NI are in Belfast while the top 15 most deprived wards for the Education, Skills and Training domain are all in Belfast. Therefore there is an inherent risk in assessing sub-regional performance purely by looking at council-level data without understanding the nuances of these insights.
- 3.12 Another point that members made to the Minister for the Economy was that, while productivity levels in Belfast are higher than other parts of the region, Belfast still lags behind most UK cities – and significant behind RoI cities. Instead, they argued, future policy should aim to help places achieve their productivity potential, which will differ from area to area, rather than trying to get every council area to achieve the same level of productivity. Investment decisions are taken on a global level: so Belfast is not competing with its neighbouring towns and cities for FDI investment in particular – we are competing against other global cities.

**3.13** As a means of tackling imbalance, the Minister proposes to support the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) in each council area. These partnerships will be able to access funding from the Department – an indicative three-year budget of £45million has been identified but it is understood that this funding has not yet been secured. Officials are currently working on guidance and a funding formula around the partnerships and these are likely to be forthcoming in the next few weeks. The partnerships are to focus on improving productivity, raising median wages, increasing the employment rate, lowering economic inactivity and taking steps towards delivering net zero and industrial decarbonisation.

**3.14** The indicative timelines in the plan are that the LEPs should be formed by the end of the calendar year and that projects to be funded should be finalised by end March 2025 with a view to delivery starting from April 2025.

**3.15** Early indications from engagement across council areas is that most intend to use existing partnerships as a structure around which they will base their LEP. In reality, this means using either Labour Market Partnership (LMP) or Community Planning structures or, alternatively, establishing a new structure to take forward this work. Officers are currently working on options and will bring forward proposals to the December committee in order to seek member endorsement for the Belfast approach. Following that, work will begin on identifying priority projects for investment although, in reality, it is likely that these will have been identified through our previous engagement work with partners.

**3.16** Financial and Resource Implications

No specific financial implications at this point. The LEPs are likely to have access to a budget of £45million over three years although DfE has not yet finalised the funding allocation model.

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

All activities to be undertaken will be subject to equality screening. This funding formula will be determined by the Department for the Economy.”

During discussion, Members raised the following points to be considered for inclusion in the draft response to the Invest NI Business Strategy:

- Consider the importance of a community wealth building approach to build capacity to grow the economy and local employment;
- The definition of a 'good job' needed clarification; and
- Highlight the importance of Green Growth, including the retrofitting of homes.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the draft response to Invest NI's draft business strategy and agreed that it be submitted to Invest NI following the Committee meeting in order to meet the 14th November deadline – with the caveat that the response was subject to formal Council ratification;
- Noted that feedback from the Committee would be considered for inclusion in the response; and
- Noted that the Department for the Economy had recently produced a Sub-Regional Economic Plan and agreed to receive a further update at the next committee meeting as to how some of the key proposals in the plan might be taken forward in Belfast.

### **Strategic and Operational Issues**

#### **Committee Plan 2024-25 - Six Monthly Update**

The Committee considered the six-month progress update on the key actions contained in the 2024-25 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan, as agreed by the Committee at its special meeting on the 29th September, 2024.

The Committee was informed that [Appendix 1](#) outlined the progress with the main commitments in the Committee Plan for the six month period, April-September 2024. It was highlighted that many of the commitments would continue to be delivered over the course of the year and that the Committee would be kept informed of progress.

It was reported that, in total, the Committee Plan contained a total of 105 deliverables across 16 Strategic Priorities. In addition, the Plan included a total of 18 Key Performance Indicators.

In response to a Member's question in relation to the progression of key performance indicators and targets, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that baselines were currently being established and further targets would be set in due course.



The Committee noted the contents of the mid-year report and progress against the agreed actions within the 2024-25 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan and that further targets were being considered.

### **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

#### **Women's Safety in the City**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the issue had also been raised at the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in November, and highlighted that the following decision had been agreed:

- ***That officers examine existing budgets and funding streams with a view to identifying initiatives that would support women's safety in greater Belfast. It was agreed also that a report in this regard be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd November, for consideration; and***
- ***In conjunction with the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, a special meeting would be convened to which a range of stakeholders would be invited to consider city-wide and multi-agency initiatives to support women's safety in greater Belfast.***

### **Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Kelly,  
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor, and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that, due to the importance of the issues raised, that officers consider the potential to use departmental underspend to support the work being undertaken.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the decision of the People and Communities Committee at its meeting on 5th November; and
- Agreed that officers examined the potential to use departmental underspend as part of the report which would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd November.

Chairperson