

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 15th January, 2025

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: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th January.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in item 2.a) Externally Funded Placemaking and Active Travel Projects Update, in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

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.

Externally Funded Placemaking and Active Travel Projects Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the ongoing engagement with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in relation to funding to support connectivity, placemaking and active travel projects aligned with A Bolder Vision and strategic priorities within the Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Action Plan in the Belfast Agenda.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Noted the update in relation to externally funded projects and the potential to secure DfI funding for Active Travel Enabling projects; and
2. Subject to funding, approved the progression of the projects outlined within the report, including any third party Funding Agreements, consultancy and procurement as required. The Committee noted that funding and the Letter of Offer would be subject to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approval via the Capital Programme process, in conjunction with the Property and Projects Department or in conjunction with third party delivery partners as outlined within the report.

Vacant to Vibrant Programme

The Committee was provided with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and considered the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the receipt and assessment of recent applications.

The Committee:

1. Noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which, subject to approval of the three applications contained within the report, two for the city centre and one for city wide, which would be supporting up to 41 businesses to locate or expand into long term vacant units;
2. Agreed and noted the recommended grant awards as outlined within Section 3.21 of the report for both the city centre and city-wide schemes;
3. Noted the update on application V2V109; and

4. Noted the update on application V2V126.

Events Update

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised the Committee on the progress and engagement which had been undertaken for a number of forthcoming events, namely: Lord Mayors Day; St Patricks Day; The Euros; Oireachtas na Samhna; and The Fleadh Cheoil.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Noted progress on events planning;
2. Agreed to the forward budget allocation of £42,000 for the Lord Mayors Day from 25/26 core budget as outlined in 4.0 of the report;
3. Agreed to the recommendations for the Fleadh Cheoil expenditure of circa £100,000 as outlined in 3.8 of the report; and
4. Agreed to the attendance of the Chief Executive and Senior Council Official at the GB Comhaltas convention as outlined in 4.0 the report and the funding of Ards CCE travel costs to the value of £4,000, which would be funded from existing Departmental budgets.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

UP2030 Update - Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **To provide an update on the UP2030 Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework, including the work to date across the priority themes of active travel, greening and retrofit, stakeholder engagement, and key milestones for 2025, including holding a Members’ briefing workshop.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to:**
 - I. **To note the progress to date and future key milestones for the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Horizon Europe funded project to develop a Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework.**

- II. To agree to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer on the emerging draft Framework prior to taking the final draft Framework to Committee in the autumn.
- III. To note the 3 main themes of the Framework around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing led regeneration programme and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.
- IV. To note that an update report on UP2030 is also being brought to the Climate and City Resilience Committee tomorrow, 16 January 2025.

3.0 Background

Members will recall that Council is involved in a three-year Horizon Europe consortium programme called Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) that aims to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions. The City Regeneration and Development and Climate teams were successful in joint bid of €204,250/£176,024 to further an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience. At the most recent update to the City Regeneration & Development and Climate and City Resilience Committees in June 2024 Members were reminded that Belfast is one of 11 pilot cities, and the focus of the project is on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework around three thematic areas: active travel, greening and retrofit. These themes link across to the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience. The Framework will be informed by data, stakeholder engagement and the use of climate tools to support analysis, mapping and engagement in the pilot area.

- 3.1 The geographic area of the UP2030 pilot was agreed at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in March 2023 and covers the Linen Quarter and surrounding city centre communities of Barrack Street, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Market. Whilst this work was undertaken within a defined boundary the purpose was to produce a framework that could be adapted and used within all communities and districts to set forward net zero tailored approaches, attract

funding and support climate adaption plans tailored for the uses of that specific district.

- 3.2 Over the past year and a half there has been engagement with communities and wider city partners at each key stage. Members received an update at the CG&R and Climate and City Resilience Committees in June 2024 that outlined the stakeholder engagement, workshops, key milestones and highlighted wider alignment of the UP2030 programme with other workstreams such as the Solar PV Study and the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.

4.0 Main Report

4.1 Progress to date

Cross-sector stakeholder engagement

As reported in June 2024, stakeholder engagement has been a key feature of the programme, and the team continue to engage with the local areas as well as thematic, statutory, and citywide partners that have broad experience or are prospective delivery partners. Between April and October 2024 significant engagement took place through workshops and interactive sessions with a range of cross-sector stakeholders including:

- Belfast City Council officers across departments
- Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel (CAST) Belfast Agenda subgroup
- City Greening Group
- Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub
- Cross sector stakeholder Vision and Actions feedback workshop
- Youth session with South Belfast Alternatives Youth Group
- QUB StreetSpace engagement and research group
- Donegall Pass Seniors' Group
- Open Botanic Festival
- Retrofit workshop with elected Members
- World Cities Day Youth Event with BCC Youth Council

- 4.2 The purpose of these events was to encourage people to step into the future and consider what life might be like in a Net Zero (NZ) Belfast of 2050 and gain agreement on the vision for the project across the three themes (greening, active travel and retrofit) as well as to engage in 'climate conversations' to build awareness and understanding of climate change. During the sessions, participants were presented with mapped geospatial analysis data and the insights gathered on the project to date and asked for feedback on the emerging Framework ideas, local priorities

and build a shared understanding of NZ options. Through this we were able to sense check the emerging framework ideas, build a shared understanding of NZ options and agreed the adaptive pathways for the short/long term sequence of actions that would be required to support the transition as well as explore opportunities for pilot projects to help test concepts for the NZ Framework alongside continued stakeholder engagement.

- 4.3 There have also been indirect engagement opportunities that have helped to build knowledge and expand networks which will also help to inform the Framework. For example, the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub is convened by the Climate Team in Belfast City Council and is Chaired by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects. It has over 100 members it takes a consortium approach to catalyse retrofit activity and engages with stakeholders from across the construction supply chain, funders, academics, public sector, housing providers and consumer bodies. Working through the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub a session was held with energy managers from the public and private sector with large scale estates to share experience on retrofitting buildings to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub also hosted a peer-to-peer exchange with the Galway City Council Warm Homes Hub community retrofit programme and a variety of interested stakeholders from Belfast to explore their One Stop Shop approach and retrofit methodology. This is part of the ongoing work of the Climate Team and demonstrates the importance of linking the shared learning and feedback into the NZ Framework.

4.4 **Building out the Framework**

The UP2030 team have consolidated the feedback to date on the emerging vision and thematic adaptive pathways, data and worked with consortium partners on the format and content of the Framework. Sections one to three of the draft Framework are due for submission to the UP2030 Consortium in February 2025 and is based around the following chapter outline:

Preface

1. Introduction and Context
2. Neighbourhood Assessment
3. Vision and Adaptive Pathways
4. Pilots and What We Tested
5. Lessons Learned

6. Net Zero Neighbourhood
7. Implementation and Recommendations
8. Outputs and Visual Aids

- Report Document: Comprehensive overview
- Visual Guides: Posters, infographics on achieving net-zero by 2050
- Glossary

4.5 Pending feedback from the UP2030 Consortium on the draft Framework, the intention is to go back out to stakeholders in late Spring/early Summer to sense check the actions within the emerging final draft and explore dissemination. As part of this, it also proposed to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer that will provide an opportunity to input into the Framework and explore the themes prior to bringing this to Committee for approval in the autumn. This builds on previous engagement with Members that took place as part of the dedicated session on Retrofit and similarly, it is proposed to invite Members from City Growth & Regeneration, Climate & City Resilience and Members who represent the UP2030 area. The final Framework must be submitted by November 2025.

4.6 Primarily, the target audience for the Framework is decision makers and policy makers in local and central government, statutory partners, communities and urban practitioners. As part of the legacy of the project, officers are considering how it will be of use to key stakeholders and looking at this through 'personae' such as a community group, investors, senior public officials, or a thematic or special interest organisation. The value of taking this approach means that officers will be able to structure and tailor the content of the Framework, so that it is accessible and relevant to the core audiences and assist in the dissemination of the material.

Action Phase: Testing Net Zero options

4.7 Alongside the drafting of the Framework, the UP2030 team is in the Action Phase of the programme, which focuses on testing options that could be included in the NZ Framework under the three themes, active travel, greening and retrofit. The exploration of solutions is central to the action phase of the programme wherein we need to trial approaches or actions that can help us achieve NZ whilst also providing an opportunity to engage with citizens on the key themes of the project. The piloting of these approaches helps us to capture lessons learned and recommendations that will form part of

the final NZ Framework as well as gaining a better understanding of the capacity building and knowledge exchange required to help communities transition together. Through this period officers have continued to engage with stakeholders, delivery partners and tool providers to solidify partnerships that will help test some of the NZ approaches that are in the emerging draft Framework. Included in this action phase is a pilot Walking Bus project that will be funded and delivered by Belfast Healthy Cities by March 2025. A Walking Bus is a group of children walking to school together in the morning. They are supported by an adult at the front and at the back of the group, acting as the 'driver' and 'conductor' of the walking bus.

- 4.8 Additionally, a Walking Bus is an action in the Belfast Agenda Connectivity Active & Sustainable Travel (CAST) Action Plan and is an approach that was suggested by communities during the UP2030 engagement period. This pilot draws upon the expertise of one of the consortium tool providers, Design Clips, who are an architectural practice specialising in participatory planning and placemaking with a focus on co-design with children, and Belfast Healthy Cities, who are currently working with schools to deliver walking buses. Adding to the Walking Bus concept, a toolkit and teacher training materials have been developed encouraging children to 'audit' their route to school and considering how their neighbourhood could be cleaner, greener and healthier, creating safe routes and healthy places. Further to the pilot, this toolkit (including a Walking Bus toolkit, teaching materials and activity materials) will be a free resource for any school or community in Belfast and is an example of how the UP2030 NZ approach can be scaled up in other areas.
- 4.9 Similarly, it was agreed in the Climate and City Resilience Committee in June 2024 to support Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) with their Early Career Architects proposal to run a Net-Zero Neighbourhood Ideas Competition as a partnership between the (RSUA) and JP Corry with support from the NIHE and the Northern Ireland Construction Group (NICG). This work is ongoing and intends to explore how a holistic neighbourhood approach to lowering carbon emissions compares to a more focused property-by-property approach and is an opportunity to build on the visioning outcomes of the retrofit work and importantly, engage with communities in the pilot area to codesign approaches for net zero delivery and contribute to the development of the NZ Framework and consider how it can be replicated in other areas.

- 4.10** Increasingly, new technology comes forward to help address carbon emissions and within the greening theme, we are completing a cost/benefit exercise on the planting and maintenance of 44 trees in the Air Quality Management Area of Cromac Street in comparison to the installation of a technical solution, 'CityTree', which claims to achieve the benefit equivalent in cleansing the air. This exercise builds on the work of the 'Tree Establishment Strategy' survey completed by colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services which has identified existing canopy cover across the city and highlighted much needed tree planting in areas that have the lowest tree canopy cover, and subsequent lowest tree equity scores and the UP2030 pilot area includes some of the highest priority areas of the city.

Key milestones for 2025

- 4.11** The final output of the UP2030 programme is a NZ Framework that will be an interactive pdf, supplemented by user-friendly information that can also be distributed to communities and other stakeholders. However, central to this project is how the learning is embedded and helps Council and partners adapt and prepare for climate change. The Framework will provide an approach and suggested interventions that can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero approaches. Going forward, consideration is needed as to how it can integrate and inform local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; the housing led regeneration programme, placemaking and mobility initiatives and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.
- 4.12** The dissemination will take different forms and officers will publish and promote the material in different formats, engage with communities and engage across Council teams and seek to influence wider city and regional stakeholders. The final output is being developed with target audiences in mind that includes decision makers, urban practitioners and community leaders. It is hoped that the Framework will help these audiences to understand what a transition to net zero could look like through the three themes, and the urgency of sequenced actions required.
- 4.13** The UP2030 programme concludes in December 2025. Below are the high-level milestones and deliverables for the year:

- Ongoing roll out of demonstration projects as part of the Action Phase, i.e. Walking Bus, RSUA Early Career Architects NZ Neighbourhood Ideas Competition
- Submission of the draft Framework by February 2025
- Engage in consortium upscaling workshops and with tool providers, including utilisation of the financial and governance toolkit and peer-to-peer learning, and provision of material/content.
- Stakeholder and Member engagement to sense check and validate the NZ Framework, May-June
- Submission of final Framework and reporting to the UP2030 Consortium in November 2025
- Launch and dissemination December 2025 and ongoing into 2026.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Members will be aware that given that the UK is no longer within the EU, the status of Council was changed from to being a Partner to that of an Associate which means that funding is underwritten by the UK government (UK Research & Innovation, UKRI) fund rather than the EU. The Horizon Europe UP2030 Project is 100% funded for revenue only. No additional funding is required from Council however a small team drawn from the Climate Team and City Regeneration and Development work together to oversee development and support implementation. Officers continue to work with partners to identify potential capital or revenue funding in the future and align current and emerging workstreams that could support the transition to net zero.

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

Officers will carry on an Equality Screening on the final NZ Framework and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.”

During discussion, the Committee suggested the following additions for inclusion in the draft Framework:

1. Geothermal sites – practical implementation of geo-engineering and the potential to use in social housing; and
2. Upskilling of young people on retrofitting and geothermal engineering.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development and Development Manager answered a range of questions in relation to the low carbon heat network, geothermal sites, upskilling, air quality, active travel opportunities, the walking bus and school streets pilot, and the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard and Tree Strategy. The Development Manager highlighted that the heat network, geothermal and retrofit strands were being taken forward through the work of the Climate Team.

In answer to a Member's question in relation to the boundary of the Neighbourhood and the surrounding communities ability to feed into the process, the Development Manager highlighted that a climate session could be accommodated with groups and that shared learning in regard to retrofitting would be considered also.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised the Committee that the relevance of the Framework would be engrained in the other Council initiatives such as the Housing Leg Regeneration programme.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the progress to date and future key milestones for the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Horizon Europe funded project to develop a Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework, and that Members comments would be considered for inclusion in the draft Framework;
- Agreed to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer on the emerging draft Framework prior to taking the final draft Framework to Committee in the autumn;
- Noted the 3 main themes of the Framework around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project could be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing led regeneration programme and specifically how it would fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans; and
- Noted that an update report on UP2030 was also being presented to the Climate and City Resilience Committee on 16th January, 2025.

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure - Public Transport Fares

The Committee considered correspondence which had been received from the Department for Infrastructure, in response to the Committee request for the Minister to consider reducing the cost of public transport fares over the Christmas period.

Noted.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Gary Moore Statue (Councillor Smyth to raise)

Councillor Smyth advised that he had been liaising with the Wild Frontier Memorial Trust in relation to the potential for a Gary Moore Statue to be installed in Belfast. He advised that the Trust proposed to fund the statue to celebrate Mr. Moore's contribution to blues and rock, inspire future generations of musicians and encourage tourism.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Council explore land availability for the possible installation of a Gary Moore statue within the Cathedral Quarter and that the item be referred to the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group for further consideration.

Chairperson