

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 13th September, 2017

## MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor O'Donnell (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff (Alderman Haire);  
Aldermen Kingston, McGimpsey and L. Patterson; and  
Councillors Beattie, Boyle, Dorrian,  
Dudgeon, Graham, Hargey, Johnston,  
Magee, McAteer, McDonough-Brown,  
Mullan, O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;  
Ms. N. Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development;  
Mr. D. Durkan, Director of Development; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Howard and Kyle.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 9th and 23rd 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 4th September.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

### Members' Devices

A Member expressed concerns with the performance of the new device which had replaced the iPads. A number of Members explained that they had been unable to access the Committee papers on the device, which was unsatisfactory in terms of preparing for the meeting.

The Chief Executive confirmed to the Committee that she would speak to the Head of Digital Services about the concerns which had been raised.

### Restricted Items

**The Information contained in the following three reports is 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 Committee meeting during discussion of these items as, due to the nature of the items, that 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.

### **City Centre Investment Fund Update**

The Director of City Centre Development reminded the Committee that the City Centre Investment Fund had been launched on 15th June, 2017, seeking applications from developers with planning permission for significant office development within the Belfast BMAP boundary.

She advised the Members that a number of applications had been received by the deadline of 18th August.

The Committee was advised that Stage 1 of the process entailed the internal Investment Panel reviewing the eligibility of each project to determine if it should proceed to Stage 2.

She explained to the Members that Stage 2 consisted of the Evaluation Partner performing High Level Due Diligence of each project, scoring against agreed criteria and recommending to the Investment Panel the projects which should proceed to Stage 3, Detailed Due Diligence.

The Committee was advised that those applications which were recommended for progression to Stages 2 and 3 would be notified to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in line with the CCIF process, with that Committee required to approve recommended investments before they would progress to legal contracts.

The Director advised the Members that an Evaluation Partner had been identified and would be appointed in due course.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided.

### **Belfast Infrastructure Plan**

The Director of City Centre Development outlined to the Members that she was seeking approval to commission specialist support to develop the Belfast Infrastructure Plan and to establish a cross-agency working group to oversee the production of the Plan.

She explained that the proposed Infrastructure Plan would provide a holistic assessment of what would be required in terms of infrastructure requirements to deliver the targets of the Belfast Agenda by 2035 and would focus on key deliverables such as the economic narrative, infrastructure needs and delivery costs, transportation and connectivity, the utility infrastructure and a costed delivery plan.

During discussion, the Director confirmed that she would be working closely with the Director of Property and Projects and his team in relation to a number of city-wide issues, such as flood prevention.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

1. to commit funding to commission an external consultant to produce the Infrastructure Plan; and
2. that the City Centre Development Team would establish a cross-agency working group to co-client the funding and production of the Belfast Infrastructure Plan.

### **Belfast Bikes Update**

(Ms. A. Doherty, Planning and Transport Officer, attended in connection with this item)

The Planning and Transport Officer provided the Committee with an update on the initial stages of the strategic review of the Belfast Bikes scheme and on the actions which had been approved at its meeting on 9th August, 2017.

She provided the Members with an update on the business case, subscriptions and usage levels and sponsorship options.

A number of Members expressed concerns at the level of vandalism of the bikes across the city.

The Planning and Transport Officer reminded the Committee that, at the Members' Workshop, it had been suggested that the docking stations with the lowest usage figures were to be relocated.

A further Member stated that docking stations should be installed in residential areas to encourage use of the bikes, with an associated marketing campaign promoting the health and cost benefits, and that it should not be a scheme for the city centre.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update on the business case and the ongoing promotional activities. The Committee also agreed to the proposed actions as set out in the report.

### **Request to present to Committee**

#### **Active Communities Network and Sport Changes Life**

The Committee acceded to a request to present at a future meeting from the Active Communities Network and Sport Changes Life on the work which was being undertaken across the city to support the positive engagement and employability of young people.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**City Centre Living**

The Director of City Centre Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 8th March, it had received an update on the work which was underway to identify the key issues around liveability and increasing the residential population in the city centre. She highlighted to the Members that it was a key policy in the Belfast City Centre Investment Strategy and was further reinforced in the Belfast Agenda and the Local Development Plan.

During discussion, a Member referred to a recent planning decision on a site within the Gasworks Northern Fringe and stated that the Council should focus on actions and not words when it came to promoting city centre living.

The Director provided the Members with details of the upcoming study visit to London, which would provide an opportunity to examine examples of mixed tenure and density, as well as highlighting the quality design and wider liveability elements such as public realm, the provision of social infrastructure and models of sustainable development.

She reminded the Members that a follow-up workshop on City Centre Living had been scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 23rd October.

The Committee was advised that representatives from Planning and Place would take part in both the study visit and the workshop to ensure shared learning and a collective approach.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Department for Communities and the Housing Associations be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss the issue of city centre living in Belfast.

The Committee:

1. noted the purpose of the study visit to London on 12th-13th October;
2. noted the follow-up workshop on 23rd October; and
3. agreed that representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Department for Communities and representatives from Housing Associations be invited to attend a future meeting in order to discuss city centre living.

### **Strategic and Operational Issues**

#### **Recruitment of Operational Director posts – Place and Economy Department**

The Chief Executive explained to the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed, at its meeting on 23rd June, that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee should determine the composition of the two selection panels for the recruitment of the posts of the Director for City Regeneration (Operational) and the Director for Economic Development (Operational) within the new Place and Economy Department.

The Committee was advised that the recommended Panel should comprise the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees) plus a third elected panel member from a political party not already represented, who, along with Council Directors, would balance the two panels in terms of gender and community background.

She explained that all Panel members would be required to attend four selection panel meetings per post as part of the recruitment exercises and would also be required to attend prior training on non-discriminatory Recruitment and Selection techniques. The Committee noted that the timeframe for the recruitment exercises was likely to commence in October 2017.

The Members were reminded that the recruitment exercise for the new Strategic Director of the Place and Economy Department was ongoing.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

1. that each selection panel would comprise the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees) and a third elected panel member from a political party not already represented by the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson;
2. that a DUP Member would sit on the Panel for the recruitment of the Director of Economic Development;
3. that an Alliance Party Member would sit on the Panel for the recruitment of the Director for City Regeneration; and
4. that the Council would deploy suitable professional and technical expertise from other Councils, if required, to be voting members on the selection panels for these new posts, in line with the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.

#### **Car Parking - Income Generated**

(Mrs. S. Toland, Assistant Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item)

The Assistant Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 14th June, it had requested that information be submitted detailing the income which had been generated by each Council-owned car park in the city

She advised the Members that, on 1st April 2015, the Department for Infrastructure (formerly known as the Department for Regional Development) had transferred its off-street car parks (excluding Park and Ride/Park and Share car parks) to local councils. As a result, Belfast City Council had initially become responsible for the operation of 30 of those car parks, although this had since reduced to 29, due to the expiration of a short term lease for the car park at Frederick Street. The Committee was advised that 16 of those car parks were chargeable.

She outlined that, for the financial year April 2016 to March 2017, the car parks within the Council's portfolio had generated a total of £1,878,044. The Members were advised that the costs associated with operating the 29 car parks during the same period totalled £863,599 but that this did not include internal charges such as business administration, legal and digital services.

She explained that, in its first year of operation, off-street car parking had generated an operating surplus of £1,014,444 but pointed out that off-street car parking had transferred to councils together with the Planning function, on a rates neutral basis, whereby the surplus generated by parking was off-set against the cost of the Planning function to ensure no overall financial gain or increased cost to the Council or its ratepayers.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Operational Amendments to Christmas Lights Switch-On and St. Patrick's Day**

(Mr. G. Copeland, City Events Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The City Events Manager explained that he was seeking the Committee's approval for operational amendments to the Christmas Lights Switch-On and to St. Patrick's Day.

It was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the 2018 St. Patrick's Day element of the report, for one month, to allow a presentation from Fáilte Feirste Thiar at the next meeting, following publication of its report on St. Patrick's Day 2017.

The Committee considered the undernoted section of the report in relation to the Christmas Lights Switch-On 2017 at the City Hall:

**“3.2 Members may be aware that the switching on of the city’s festive lighting dates back to the early 1970s. Over the years, the staging of the Belfast Christmas Lights Switch-on has become a bye-word for the start of the Belfast Christmas Festive period. Hundreds of thousands have attended the event over the years, with an annual audience of over 10,000. As the event has grown additional elements have been added in order to cope with crowd numbers and in doing so provide a safe and welcoming space.**

**However, since the introduction and growth of the city’s very successful Christmas Market it has become apparent that the complexity of setting up for two major events, the Christmas Market and Switch-on, requires a change in approach to increase the level of safety for all.**

**Therefore, Members are asked to note that Officers, with the endorsement of the Council’s Events Advisory Panel (non-statutory advisory group made of a range of Council Officers, PSNI, BCCM, Department for Infrastructure (Roads), NI Ambulance Service, NI Fire & Rescue, etc.) would intend to apply for road closures along: Wellington Place; Donegall Square North and Chichester Street from 21:00 hours, on Friday 17 November to Sunday 19 November, at 07:00 and restrictions to traffic in Donegall Square East. This arrangement would restrict vehicular movement to contractors (involved in the Christmas Lights and Christmas Market build) and require the Council to work with partners such as Belfast City Centre Management, PSNI, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Translink and the Department of Infrastructure (Roads) to enforce such road closures.**

**The intended outcome would be to reduce the level of pedestrian and vehicle interaction in an area that is heavily congested even before the Christmas Market and Lights Switch-on construction has started. This interaction has become an area of grave concern with many pedestrians taking risks at road junctions where temporary layouts are in place, often ignoring directional signage, advice of stewards and breaking through directional barriers.**

**Given these issues, Officers, and members of the Events Advisory Panel are now of the opinion that the current traffic/pedestrian management arrangements present an**

**unacceptable level of risk to the many pedestrians, motorists and other road users during the final set-up for both the Christmas Market and Switch-on. These amendments have been notified to Belfast City Centre Management and Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Therefore, Members are asked to support Officers in their efforts to increase the levels of safety in an area of the city that experiences exceptionally high vehicular and pedestrian footfall even before the staging of the city's two biggest Christmas festive events."**

In response to a Member's question, as to whether one lane of traffic could be closed instead of the entire road, the City Events Manager explained that this had been trialled the previous year but had been unsuccessful as a number of people ignored the closures and it was felt that it presented an unacceptable level of risk to the many pedestrians, motorists and other road users during the final set-up of the Christmas Market and the Switch-on.

The Committee agreed the proposed road closure arrangements for the 2017 Christmas Lights Switch-on, which would take place on Saturday, 18th November, and for such changes to be utilised for all future Christmas Lights Switch-on events, subject to the Council's Events and Festivals strategic review.

### **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

#### **MIPIM 2018 and Marketing Belfast Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **"1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Committee on MIPIM 2018 and on-going marketing activities to promote Belfast to the investment and development community.**

##### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to;**

- Note the approach to MIPIM 2018 including activities currently being undertaken to promote Belfast to the investment and development community;**
- agree to the attendance of the Deputy Lord Mayor at the European Waterfront Cities Network at the EXPO Real in Munich, from 4th - 6th October 2017; and**
- agree to the attendance of either the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominee) at the MIPIM UK event in London, from 18th - 19th October, 2017.**



**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 The Belfast Agenda highlights the Council's ambition to attract 1 billion of investment into the city, along with medium term goals to develop 1.5m sq of Grade A Offices, and 2,500 hotel bed spaces by 2021. Delivering this ambitious agenda requires a further step change in how we position and promote the city. Belfast continues to grow in global awareness and popularity as a place to do business. In order to capitalise on this growing awareness, Belfast needs to remain visible to the international investment and development community and ensure our city narrative and messaging are clearly articulated to this target audience.**

**3.2 Belfast at MIPIM 2018 will build on the success of the Belfast delegations to MIPIM in 2016 and 2017. Following our participation at the European Cities Event at MIPIM 2017 the Council has been invited to participate at the European Waterfront Cities Network at EXPO Real in October 2017. Estates Gazette will also host a Belfast Question Time in October. To support these activities, a marketing pack is being developed which incorporates the new Belfast brand tailored to the business community. This pack will include a brochure, sector factsheets, presentation pack and standalone investment website.**

**3.3 An update on marketing activities currently being undertaken to promote Belfast as a destination for investment, development and regeneration is outlined below.**

**MIPIM 2018**

**3.4 MIPIM is the international market for real estate professionals. The next exhibition will be held at the Palais de Festivals, Cannes, France from the 13–16 March 2018.**

**3.5 Belfast at MIPIM 2018 will build on the success of the Belfast delegations to MIPIM in 2016 and 2017. These put Belfast firmly on the radar of investors and developers who had not previously considered the city as a location for doing business.**

**3.6 CGR Committee in April 2017 provided:**

- **Approval for officers to scope out options for re-positioning the Belfast stand at MIPIM 2018 to an area of higher footfall;**

- In principle approval that the existing £60,000 investment be enhanced, subject to officers presenting more detailed proposals at later Committee and;
- Authorisation for officers to commence procurement for consultancy support for programming, event management, communications, and design.

- 3.7 Unfortunately, Reed MIPIM, the MIPIM event organisers, have been unable to offer an alternative location for the Belfast stand. The Belfast stand at MIPIM will therefore be situated in the same location as 2016 and 2017.
- 3.8 BCC is in the process of finalising the appointment of consultancy support to assist with event management; PR, marketing and communication; sponsorship and stand design for MIPIM 2018.
- 3.9 Following feedback from delegates and key learnings at MIPIM 2017, we have created a number of key objectives for MIPIM 2018. These include reducing the number of events on the Belfast at MIPIM stand, increasing Belfast's presence on main conference agenda, participating at events hosted on other stands, including DIT, and co-hosting events with other cities.
- 3.10 The Chair of the MIPIM Steering Group and appointed consultancy will be liaising with potential sponsors and partners to secure their participations and financial support for MIPIM 2018.
- 3.11 Discussions are on-going with Reed MIPIM to include the Belfast delegation on the main conference agenda and with DIT to participate at events in the UK Government Pavilion.

Marketing pack to promote Belfast to the international investment and developer community

- 3.12 A key channel to promote Belfast as a destination for investment, development and regeneration will be digital media and international conferences and events attended by BCC and city partners. The launch of the new Belfast Brand is an opportune time to refresh all BCC marketing material for the investment and development community. It is proposed that we create a marketing pack; to include a brochure, sector factsheets, presentation pack and standalone website. This pack will be used at International conferences attended by BCC (including MIPIM Cannes, MIPIM UK, Real Expo), outward visits by BCC to our sister

city networks (including Boston, Nashville, China etc) and for inward visits from prospective investors.

- 3.13 All material will incorporate the new competitive positioning and visual identity for the City of Belfast. The new identity is based on the brand idea – ‘Belfast. Energy Unleashed’, tailored to the business community.

**International investment and development conferences**

- 3.14 *European Waterfront Cities Network at EXPO Real, October 4-6th 2017*

Belfast City Council has been invited to participate at the European Waterfront Cities Network at EXPO Real in October 2017, this follows our participation at the European Cities Event at MIPIM 2017. There are a number of events planned over the two-day conference, including open and private events. BCC will participate in a panel discussion at the Urban Innovation and Investment Seminar, a Waterfront Cities Network Meeting with participant cities and a City Leaders’ summit. Officers are awaiting information about timetable and number of delegates required and will provide verbal update to Members at Committee.

- 3.15 *MIPIM UK, October 18-19th 2017*

Belfast City Council has been invited to attend the launch of the Northern Ireland Portfolio by Invest Northern Ireland and DIT. Confirmation of attendance is subject to receipt of additional information about the launch.

- 3.16 *Estates Gazette Belfast Question Time, 5th October 2017*

Question Time is Estates Gazette’s premier debate and networking event. Following a successful event in 2016, it will be returning to Belfast on the 5th October.

- 3.17 **Financial & Resource Implications**

The cost for this work is accounted for in existing provisions.

- 3.18 **Equality and Good Relations**

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Visit by Lord Mayor of City of London**

The Director of Development advised the Members that the Lord Mayor of the City of London, the Right Honourable Dr Andrew Parmley, would visit Belfast from the 10th – 11th October.

He advised the Committee that the role of the Lord Mayor of the City of London was to support and promote the United Kingdom's financial and professional services.

He explained to the Members that officers had been working closely with Invest NI to maximise the opportunities of the visit and highlighted the following elements of the Belfast programme:

- a business roundtable in the Citi Headquarters building on the morning of 10th October, focusing on positioning Belfast as an investment location for financial and professional services;
- a civic reception and dinner hosted by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Nuala McAllister, in the Titanic Hotel on 10th October, to which all Members would be invited to attend; and
- a visit to the Centre for Secure Information technology (CSIT) to showcase the research and technology excellence available at the centre, which had helped make Belfast the number one location globally for US-based cyber investment.

The Director also reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 12th April, it had agreed to sponsor the London-based business network Belfast Partners which supported business development connections between the two cities. He informed the Members of an upcoming business mission to London in November which would involve a number of local technology businesses. He explained that the mission would include a networking reception and showcase event which would provide an opportunity to follow up on some of the relationships established during Dr Parmley's visit to Belfast.

The Committee:

1. noted the planned visit to Belfast by the Lord Mayor of the 'City of London and the opportunities presented by it, in promoting Belfast as an investment location; and
2. agreed the draft programme for the Lord Mayor's visit, including the civic reception and dinner in the Titanic Hotel, to which all Members of the Committee would be invited to attend.

**Conference Tourism: Economic Impact and Future Growth**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to update Members on the growth of conference tourism over recent years and the potential for future growth, as a key element of tourism development in the City.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- Note the importance and economic value of conference tourism to the city and the projected growth of this sector
- Note the importance of Conference support mechanisms such as the Subvention Scheme in attracting events
- Agree to extend the scheme end date to 2025, subject to agreement with Tourism NI and subject to resource availability.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

**3.1** Business and conference tourism is a key priority of the Integrated Tourism Strategy which was approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2015. The Strategy was developed in tandem with the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan and the proposals are aligned to support the future development, economic growth and profile of the city.

**3.2** Belfast City Council and Tourism NI both provide financial support towards a Conference Subvention Scheme which is administered by Visit Belfast. This provides financial incentives to encourage Conference organisers to choose Belfast as a destination for their event. An independent review of the scheme was conducted at the end of 2016 and, as a result, new guidelines have been developed in order to streamline the process and ensure that the fund meets the changing needs of the Conference sector.

**3.3** The Scheme has been a critical element of Belfast’s ability to attract conferences to the City. Last year, conference tourism contributed over £35million to the City’s economy in terms of spend on venues, accommodation, hospitality and leisure activities.

**3.4 Key Issues**

The investment in the new Conference and Exhibition facilities at Belfast Waterfront has been a 'game-changer' in terms of the City's activity to host large-scale Conferences and events as well as associated exhibitions. Working with local Ambassadors (principally aligned to the local universities) and with local venues, the Business Tourism team at Visit Belfast has been working to raise awareness of the enhanced facilities as well as the wider positioning of Belfast as a cost-competitive, business-friendly Conference location.

**3.4 Over the course of the last financial year, the continued efforts of those involved helped secure the following conference tourism deliverables:**

- 69 major conferences
- 25,000 delegates
- 75,000 bed nights
- Economic value of £35 million to the city.

**3.5 Some of the events recently secured by Visit Belfast for the coming years include:**

- European Conference on Personalised Medicine:  
- 1,250 delegates, 5,000 bed nights worth £1.9m in 2017
- IDF World Dairy Summit:  
- 1,200 delegates, 6,250 bed nights worth £2.4m 2017
- WHO Healthy Cities Conference:  
- 1,000 delegates, 5,000 bed nights worth £1.9m in 2018.
- British Ecological Society Annual Meeting:  
- 1,500 delegates, 4,500 bed nights worth £2.2m in 2019
- College of Occupational Therapists:  
- 1,500 delegates. 3,000 bed nights worth £1.4m 2019
- Microbiology Society Conference 2019 and 2022  
- 1,400 delegates, 5,600 bed nights worth £2.7m per conference.

**3.6 Having the physical infrastructure in place is just one element of a city's activity to attract large-scale Conferences and Events. Conference organisers also look for elements such as ease of access, alignment to Conference objectives (e.g. areas of research excellence) and the 'city welcome'. Members will be aware that the City Hall can provide a spectacular backdrop for events and the ability to provide access to the venue for Conference receptions is an important selling tool for the city.**

- 3.7 In a highly competitive, global business environment, it is important to be able to offer a 'package' of support in order to allow the city to compete favourably. Most cities have access to a Conference Subvention Scheme which can provide Conference organisers with financial incentives to secure the Conference or event for their city.
- 3.8 In Belfast, the Council and Tourism NI have been investing in the Conference Subvention Fund for a number of years. The scheme has evolved as the market has changed and as the City offer has moved on. Following some competitor benchmarking, as part of the independent review, Visit Belfast has worked with the Council and Tourism NI to revise the operational arrangements around the scheme, focusing on maximising economic return while providing optimal flexibility to Conference organisers in terms of eligible expenditure. While details are currently being finalised, it is proposed that the product offer is re-branded to demonstrate the breadth of the support services available to Conference organisers – not just the financial incentive. This may include opportunities to support familiarisation trips if Belfast is shortlisted as a host city for an event, or providing hospitality at City Hall for those events that meet the revised criteria for these functions.
- 3.9 Visit Belfast currently has a strong pipeline of £180 million of active leads and is prioritising research and sales activity into two identified sectors, namely Life and Health Sciences and Agri-Food. These sectors provide a stronger and quicker return due to the pool of Ambassador talent within the local universities. In addition to these sectors, they will continue to focus on wider economic sectors that align to areas of research and industry expertise in the City.
- 3.10 When the current Conference Subvention Scheme was put in place, the end date for financial commitments was set as 2020. Given that Visit Belfast is currently exploring opportunities to bid for Conferences beyond this date, it is proposed that the end date for the scheme is extended to 2025. This does not mean that the Council will be committing to maintaining specific levels of resources until this timeframe. Instead, it means that Visit Belfast will be able to look ahead to a wider timeframe for new business development opportunities, subject to financial resources being in place. Officers are currently engaging with Tourism NI to ensure that they can also agree to these revised timeframes.

**3.11 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

No specific equality or good relations implications.

**3.12 Financial and Resource Implications**

**At present Belfast City Council's annual financial contribution to the Conference Subvention Scheme is £200,000. This is match-funded by resources from Tourism NI. This allocation has been set aside in existing budgets for the current financial year.**

**The Council contribution to the scheme will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, in conjunction with Tourism NI and in line with available resources."**

A number of Members expressed their thanks to the hard work of the staff involved in the recent growth of conference tourism within Belfast.

A Member stated that communications was key and that the Council should promote the great deal of work which was being done to attract the conferences to the City as well as the successful outcomes and the value which is added as a result to Belfast.

In response to a further Member's question about the new brand for the City, the Chief Executive confirmed that Council press statements would be sent to all Members to ensure they were kept up to date with the key messages and information on the new City brand.

A further Member suggested, given that the Friendship Four Basketball Tournament was broadcast live to the USA, that the new logo be displayed in the SSE Arena for the duration of the tournament.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

**European Capital of Culture - Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the development of a bid with Derry City and Strabane District Council to become the UK designated city for European Capital of Culture in 2023.**



**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of this report including ongoing progress against targets and critical timelines

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Background**

Members will be aware that an update was provided to Committee in August 2017 with a follow up workshop at the Seamus Heaney Centre scheduled for 12 September 2017.

**3.2 The purpose of this workshop was to:**

- provide a detailed update on the engagement process and the associated themes for the bid
- provide an overview of programme content
- discuss the level of financial commitment required and the associated funding strategy

**3.3 Invites were extended to all Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee as well as the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Party Group Leaders (or nominees).**

**3.4 Engagement**

To date the bid has engaged with over 7,000 people across both cities. This has been achieved through attendance at events throughout the summer alongside a programme of tailored workshops. Extensive engagement has also taken place through Council's existing schemes. An online platform has also been established.

**3.5 The engagement during stage one has largely focussed on three strands:**

- One to one engagement with local citizens
- Facilitated workshops with interest groups
- Sessions with representative and voluntary organisations

**3.6 The responses to this engagement will directly shape the overall theme and brand of the bid. This theme needs to be authentic to the cities as well as having strong relevance for**

Europe. The bid is on target to have engaged with 10,000 citizens by the submission date of 27 October 2017.

3.7 Should the bid be shortlisted to stage 2 this engagement will continue with opportunities for direct participation through a series of pilot projects. A report will be taken to Committee outlining the proposed approach for the allocation of any funding to these projects.

3.8 Further awareness of the bid has also been achieved through marketing and communications activities. This activity will continue to increase in the coming months to help build momentum in the run up to the submission deadline.

3.9 Cultural Programme

As well as the civic engagement outlined above the bid team has also delivered a series of events targeting the wider cultural and creative sector. This has included:

- Information session
- 6 thematic workshops
- 4 Big Ideas sessions

3.10 These sessions have engaged with over 300 people working across the arts, heritage, sport, science and the creative industries.

3.11 A creative reference group has been established to include 4 local representatives. These members were selected following a nomination and application process. This group also includes three international programmers who have previous experience of either developing a bid or delivering a successful European Capital of Culture.

3.12 At stage one a number of indicative projects will be presented as part of the bid. In order to select these projects three strands of programme development are in place. This includes:

- Open Call: opportunity for anyone to submit projects ideas
- Commission: the identification of a number of flagship project ideas based on the themes emerging from the engagement process. A formal commissioning process would take place at subsequent stages.
- Curate: the group will identify specific gaps in the programme and make connections with smaller projects from the open call.

**3.13** The open call closed on 6 September 2017. All ideas will be retained for stage 2, however, a selection will be presented at stage one. Any individual or group who submits an idea will be invited to a follow up event in January 2018.

**3.14** Timeline

Given the timelines associated with the submission of the stage 1 bid the final proposal and financial information will be presented at a meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22 September 2017. The current critical path is available on modern.gov.

**3.15** Financial & Resource Implications

A provisional total budget of £51m will be included in the submission at stage 1. This has been benchmarked against spend by other cities who have bid for the designation. This would be made up of a variety of funding streams over a number of years. A detailed fundraising strategy is currently being developed and this will include funding from public and private sources. If shortlisted to stage 2 a full business case will be developed. At stage one it is important to demonstrate the viability of the bid and the capacity of the region to deliver a programme of the required scale. Further and specific commitment to financial support will be necessary at stage 2.

**3.16** Equality or Good Relations Implications

In advance of stage 2 the engagement plan will be equality screened and any gaps addressed. The final programme and associated strategies will also be equality screened.”

The Chief Executive explained to the Committee that only one city could be the named candidate city for the bid. She informed the Members that the issue would be considered by both Councils, separately, at an agreed date in the week commencing 25th September. The Members noted that a Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would be held to consider the issue.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**International Relations - Update**

(Ms. L. Leonard, European and International Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of the report is to:**

- Update Members on the delivery of the International Relations Framework, focusing on activity over the last six months since April 2017
- Seek approval for the delivery of further activity within the 2017 – 2018 Action Plan until the end of the current financial year.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the range of activities and associated outputs of a range of International Relations actions over the course of the first half of this financial year as well as the plans for the period September 2017 - March 2018
- Agree to the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Committee (or nominees) and the Lord Mayor at the business mission and business networking event in the City of London on 22-23 November 2017.
- Agree to the attendance of the Chair of Committee (or her nominee) and one officer at the 2017 Commonwealth Local Government conference in Malta on 21 – 24 November, 2017, at a cost not to exceed £1,500;
- Agree to the attendance of the Lord Mayor and Director of Development (or their nominees) at the launch of the 2018 Friendship Four Tournament in Boston in January 2018, at a cost not to exceed £3,500.
- Agree to provide financial support of up to £5,000 towards the annual Chinese New Year event in Belfast.

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Members will recall the November 2016 approval of a new International Relations Framework for the period 2016 - 2021.**

**3.2 The aim of this Framework is to continue to promote Belfast on the international stage with other stakeholders as a place to visit, study, work and do business. The Framework will deliver primarily on the formal relationships already in existence through the Sister City Agreements with Shenyang, Boston and Nashville, the Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin, and developing relationships with London. New areas of opportunity will be considered on their merits and relevance to Belfast.**

**3.3 Members will be aware that, at the 8 March 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, an update report on International Relations activity for the previous six**

months was presented and the outline plans for the coming period were set out for endorsement. This report provides an update on the activities and associated outcomes over the six-month period from April to September 2017 and identifies a number of priority actions for the coming six months, until the end of the current financial year. These activities have, in the most part, been led by Belfast City Council working in partnership with stakeholders in government, education, tourism, business, culture and sport.

3.4 The key deliverables for the period April-September 2017 are set out on modern.gov. Highlights include:

- City visit to Shenyang, focusing on educational linkage opportunities. The Lord Mayor was accompanied by representation from Belfast Metropolitan College and both universities and all are currently pursuing opportunities for collaborative research, training and student exchanges
- Hosting of the first ever visit to Belfast by the Nashville Healthcare Council, with plans underway for a wider trade mission from Tennessee State area in the coming year
- Hosting of a multi-sectoral business mission from Boston in June 2017. Some concrete leads are already progressing, including collaborative engagement between the MAC and academics from Harvard University.

3.5 The coming six months will see a number of inward and outward visits as well as ongoing engagement and contacts to follow up on leads from previous visits. The majority of these activities have already been approved by this Committee and the budgetary resources have been set aside within the agreed Departmental budgets. However, there are a number of additional activities that will require the approval of this Committee.

3.6 The outline plans for September 2017-March 2018 include:

Shenyang

- Attendance at the 3rd Annual Shenyang Smart Cities Summit on 21-23 September 2017. This will be an opportunity to showcase the Belfast Smart Cities

Roadmap and pipeline projects. It is anticipated that the cities of Belfast and Shenyang will reach agreement during the summit to develop and deliver a collaborative Smart Cities project

- Belfast City Council will seek to host a second inward business mission from the London Chinese Chamber of Commerce with Invest NI in late 2017
- Belfast City Council will support Chinese New Year 2018 in partnership with the Chinese Consulate General and Confucius Institute. The organisers have approached the Council to seek a contribution of £5,000 towards the celebrations. These will be held in Belfast City Hall and will involve a series of performances and local outreach events. The celebrations will take place over the period end of January to mid-February, 2018. Members are asked to consider this request for support, which has not yet been approved by this Committee.

#### Nashville:

- Nashville has confirmed that the City will lead an annual cross sectoral delegation to Belfast each Autumn. Officers are currently developing a programme for this visit from 2-6 October 2017. The Nashville delegation will consist of more than 12 representatives across a range of sectors including business, academia and legislature. Members of the Committee will be invited to meet the delegation over the course of the visit
- Ongoing support for student exchanges between Belfast schools and their Nashville counterparts, starting again in January 2018
- Visit to Nashville in late September 2017 by a creative industries and music business delegation, in partnership with the Nashville Entrepreneurship Centre
- Ongoing engagement with the Country Music Awards (CMA) to explore the potential of livestreaming the awards in Belfast or other broadcast opportunities, as well as the potential for some live music events in the city. This may form part of a future cultural celebration programme that will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration and endorsement.

#### Boston

- Belfast City Council will hold a Belfast in Boston Week from 16-20 October 2017 showcasing tourism, cyber security, European Capital of Culture and Resilient

Cities cooperation. A programme for this visit is currently being finalised in conjunction with the Belfast lead contact in Boston as well as Invest NI. The visit will coincide with a global entrepreneurship event that will be taking place in Boston at the same time and there will be opportunities to profile Belfast-based entrepreneurs

- Belfast City Council will host 25 Boston delegates during the annual International Homecoming from 2-6 October 2017
- Belfast City Council is donating an organ donor arts sculpture to Boston on 3<sup>rd</sup> December as part of the global cities initiative to celebrate organ donorship
- Ulster University will enter into a collaborative arrangement with Emerson College, Boston on Animation
- Belfast City Council will co-host the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Friendship Four Ice Hockey Tournament and Gala dinner in November 2017
- Belfast City Council will co-host the inaugural Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Invitational Tournament in December 2017. In parallel with the event, the Council will host a business mission from Massachusetts
- The MAC will play host in October 2017 to a Beckett production that has been developed by a Harvard-based academic team
- Boston Visitor Convention Bureau Boston and Visit Belfast will co-operate to promote the Norwegian Airlines Belfast to Providence flight
- The Lord Mayor has been invited to launch the 2018 Friendship Four event in Boston in January 2018. Previous Lord Mayors have also attended this event which is an important element of raising the profile of the event. This visit will also provide an opportunity to start the process of engagement with potential new teams for future events. The Committee is asked to approve the Lord Mayor's attendance at this event, along with one officer at a maximum cost of £3,500. This budget has been set aside within the current Departmental budget.

#### London

- Belfast City Council to host a visit by the Lord Mayor of the City of London in October 2017. This will provide an opportunity to promote the City as a location for business and professional services investment

- **Belfast City Council has sponsored the London-based Belfast Partners network. The network will host a series of events in the course of the next six months to encourage business-based collaborations between companies located in both cities and will collaborate with the Council on a number of these. The events will include a business mission and networking event in London on 22-23 November 2017. Recruitment will close soon for participating businesses and it is likely that 8-10 local companies take part in the mission. In addition to individually-organised programmes, the companies will take part in a networking reception in the City of London on the evening of 23 November. Given the opportunities for networking, business-to-business connections and city promotion, it is recommended that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee takes part in this visit. The costs will not exceed £1,000 and will be met from within existing Departmental budgets.**

#### **Wider Engagement**

- **Belfast has been nominated as the host city for the 2019 Commonwealth Local Government (CCLG) conference. This event takes place every 2 years and draws attendance from local authorities from across the Commonwealth area. The 2017 event takes place in Malta on 21 – 24 November 2017. As part of the promotion and engagement process associated with positioning Belfast possibly as the 2019 host city, it is proposed that the Chair of Committee (or nominee) and one officer attends the November 2017 event in Malta. The costs associated with attendance will not exceed £1,500.**

#### **3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

**Costs associated with the above activities have been set aside within the existing Departmental budget.**

#### **3.8 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

**The new International Relations Framework 2016-2021 has been equality screened and approved.”**

During discussion, the European and International Relations Manager confirmed to the Committee that they were aiming to get more schools involved in the exchange with Nashville.



In response to a Member's comments regarding the promising work which was being undertaken by the China Stakeholder Group, the Director of Development agreed to circulate the minutes of the Group to the Committee.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Growing Businesses and the Economy**

#### **Other Voices Proposal**

The Director of Development provided the Committee with an update on the Other Voices event which was to be held in Belfast between 26th and 28th October. He reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 14th June, it had approved financial support of £40,000 towards the event.

He explained that planning work for the event was well underway, with the Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts having been chosen as the hub for the concert and wraparound events. The Members noted that it was intended that the 2017 event would be a precursor to a larger multi-annual project based in the city to help position Belfast as an attractive, smart and creative city region which was a great place to live, work, visit, invest and do business.

The Committee was advised that the event was currently broadcast on RTE's television and digital platforms and had more than 16million views and more than 7,000 followers on YouTube.

The Director informed the Members that the event included a significant outreach programme, providing a number of engagement opportunities for local residents, young people and those involved in the cultural and arts sector. He outlined that four community engagement events targeted at young people would be held in venues in the North, South, East and West of the city, focusing on the opportunities for skills development and employment in the creative sector as well as demonstrating the impact of technology on all walks of life. The Members were advised that organisers would work with the Council as well as local schools and youth groups to encourage participation from key target groups.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided.

#### **Employability and Skills Framework: Council Support for Economic Inactivity**

(Mrs. L. Toland, Economic Initiatives and International Development Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

##### **1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- Update Members on the upcoming European Social Fund (ESF) kl. call and to seek approval on the proposed Council approach, subject to funding availability in the coming financial years
- Seek in-principle approval to continue development work with partners on a number of Employment Academies and additional skills development initiatives for economically inactive individuals, subject to funding availability in the coming financial year
- Update Members on engagement with the sector to develop a Digital Skills support programme for young people and their teachers and youth leaders
- Seek approval to invest in the expansion of Ulster University's Legal Innovation Centre to support the growth of the legal services technologies sector.

## 2.0 Recommendations

### 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the update on the upcoming ESF funding call
- Approve the recommended approach for Council with regard to the upcoming ESF funding call as outlined in 3.14-3.17, subject to funding availability in the coming financial years
- Seek in-principle approval to continue development work with partners on a number of Employment Academies and additional skills development initiatives for economically inactive individuals, subject to funding availability in the coming financial year;
- Approve the proposed approach for a Digital Skills Programme working in partnership with Makematic
- Approve the proposal and associated budget to support the expansion of Ulster University's Legal Innovation Centre to create a globally-recognised Centre of Excellence;
- Note the approval of the activities listed above is dependent upon Legal Services agreeing a suitable form of Legal Agreement with the parties to be funded.

## 3.0 Main Report

### Key Issues

- ### 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council, with its key partners, developed an Employability and Skills Framework for the

City. This sets a number of targets around improvements in employment rates and skills levels for Belfast residents.

**3.2 The Framework notes the need for interventions across a range of areas including:**

- **Economic Inactivity: deep-rooted challenge which has a disproportionate impact in some areas of the City. Economically inactive individuals often face multiple challenges in finding work, including health problems, childcare, lack of relevant skills**
- **Upskilling of people in low-level, low-paid work: in an increasingly flexible labour market, it is important to consider how people not only move into employment but also move up the skills ladder – and have the associated benefits in terms of increased income**
- **High skills: research indicates that there will be a growing need for higher level skills in the workplace. There is a need for greater focus to ensure greater alignment between growth areas and skills investment in order to ensure that the City remains globally competitive.**

**3.3 The Belfast Agenda also identifies the themes of ‘Growing the Economy’ and ‘Working and Learning’ as two of the fundamental pillars of future City development. The Belfast Agenda includes a number of commitments including supporting an additional 50,000 jobs in the City by 2035, ensuring that every young person leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential and increasing the proportion of the working age population with Level 2 and above skills, in line with future labour market developments.**

**3.4 Over the last year, the Council has worked with partners to develop a number of collaborative initiatives to address some of the challenges identified above. Given the scale of the challenge, activities have focused on the economically inactive at this stage. However, there have been investments across all areas. Some of the headline outcomes to date include:**

- **Over 3,600 residents have accessed employability interventions of whom approximately 750 have entered employment/self-employment**
- **Over 550 training accreditations have been supported of which over 200 are at level two qualifications or above**

- Almost 4,000 young people have participated in enterprise engagement and skills development activities in schools across the City
- Working in partnership with key stakeholders a range of job fairs have been held attracting over 2,800 attendees
- 150 individuals have benefited from work placements across all Council departments.

3.5 There are a number of emerging opportunities for Council engagement in new activity that require the authority of this Committee in order to proceed. These include:

- Collaborative investment in European Social Fund (ESF) projects to work with targeted economically inactive individuals
- Development of additional 'Employment Academies' in areas of job growth, including hospitality, construction and social care
- Development of high growth skills area to create 'niche' areas for the City. These include legal technology through the newly-established Legal Technology Centre.

3.6 In order to present the 'full picture' of the City challenges in this area and the proposed Council approach to address these challenges – in conjunction with partner organisations – a report will be presented to the next meeting of this Committee to give a clear overview and to set out the overall direction of travel.

3.7 Collaborative investment in European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) provides funding for activity to help key target groups (long-term unemployed, economically inactive, those not in education, employment or training (NEETs)) to find work. On 11 September 2017, the Department for the Economy will release the final funding call for the ESF Programme 2014-2020, for projects to be delivered from April 2018 to March 2022. The available budget for this call is expected to be approximately £176 million over the four-year period, incorporating match funding from private and public sector sources.

3.8 The last call for projects took place in 2015 and funded projects will conclude in March 2018. Up to 65 projects are being supported across Northern Ireland with approximately 50% of these operating from and/or within the Belfast area. Members will be aware that the Council is currently match

funding five of these projects (providing up to 35% of project costs). These projects are:

- LEMIS+ delivered by the LEMIS Partnership
- Jobworks project delivered by Springboard
- SPEC Programme delivered by Women's TEC
- The Connect Programme delivered by Women in Business
- Pathway to Work programme delivered by Workforce.

3.9 The Council is also funding a number of stand-alone projects, not currently in receipt of ESF. These are:

- Training for Employment project delivered by Lenadoon Community Forum
- Community Employment Programme delivered by Shankill Women's Centre.

3.10 Across the three-year delivery timeframe (April 2015 – March 2018) these projects are expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- Around 10,000 individuals engaged into employability-related support
- 2,000 individuals moved into employment (almost 700 jobs supported per year).

3.11 The Council investment over a three-year period has been £720,000 against total expenditure of over £11 million. This represents an overall cost per job of £5,500. The cost per job to the Council is £360. The rest of the match funding comes from the ESF support or from other match-funding investment.

3.12 As part of the Council's due diligence process around its investment in these projects, a review was undertaken to consider the impact of the projects and to look at how future engagement with ESF could contribute to the Council's commitment to address the challenge of economic inactivity in the City. Key findings from this review included:

- The projects have been effective in engaging the hardest to reach and those within the most deprived communities. Almost 60% of participants were from the top 10% most deprived wards
- Project participants are typically presenting multiple barriers to employment including a lack of self-confidence, mental health issues, limited/no work experience, lack of affordable childcare, poor

employability skills. This means that the support mechanisms need to be flexible to meet the needs of these individuals. There also needs to be better engagement with local support services e.g. healthcare providers

- ESF funding can only cover costs associated with training up to Level 1 (GCSE grades D-G). This makes it difficult to address the low skills issue identified above
- There is a growing challenge of Mental Health issues: while needs are increasing, there is insufficient support available to meet demand.

3.13 The fact that ESF is administered by the Department for the Economy (DfE) through an open call means that the Council can only have limited influence on the selection process and funding allocations. Nonetheless, the level of resources available represents a significant investment in provision and there are opportunities to consider how the Council can work alongside selected projects as part of the solution to addressing economic inactivity in the City and the challenges set out above.

3.14 Officers have already been approached by a number of potential projects with a view to seeking match funding from the Council. Recognising the limitations highlighted above, as well as the need to concentrate resources on areas of most need, it is proposed that the Council continues to provide match-funding support for ESF but that it focuses investment on a small number of projects that demonstrate the potential for maximum impact, in line with Belfast Agenda commitments.

3.15 In order establish a transparent process for projects that may be seeking Council match-funding, it is proposed that Officers organise an information event outlining how requests will be assessed. Details of criteria will be provided. It is recommended that these include:

- Scalability of delivery such as city-wide provision
- Alignment of provision to local area needs
- Assessment of ability to deliver on targets (taking account of existing provision in the area)
- Prioritising economic inactivity client groups (e.g. lone parents)
- Provision of wrap-around services (e.g. health support, childcare)
- Partnership/collaborative approaches

- Progression routes (to further support/into employment)
- Employer engagement support (enterprise support for start-up projects)
- Financial sustainability
- Minimum targets for helping people into employment/self-employment.

**3.16** The closing date for applications is 13 October 2017. At that point, project applicants will be expected to indicate that they have engaged with potential match funders albeit that the commitment is not binding until a match funding certificate is signed (this only happens once the project receives a Letter of Offer). It is therefore recommended that Officers make an assessment of projects seeking match funding from the Council based on the above criteria. A report will then be presented to a future meeting of this Committee outlining the proposed projects to be supported, including the financial allocation recommended for each.

**3.17** It is proposed an annual funding allocation of up to £250,000 will be set aside by the Council for these match-funded projects. Based on investment in previous projects of this nature, this investment has the potential to support around 700 unemployed and economically inactive people per year to find a job. This will be an annual funding requirement, for a period of up to four years. The funding allocation has to be agreed on an annual basis, subject to performance.

**3.18** Employment Academies and wraparound support

One of the major shortcomings of ESF is that it can only provide training up to Level 1 and wraparound services such as personal development support or aftercare mentoring may be limited. Likewise, the level of employer-led intervention is variable across projects and small-scale project delivery agents do not have employer connections at the appropriate level. To overcome this, the Council has been working on a number of sectoral 'Employment Academies'. These are targeted interventions based on available job opportunities. Employers are involved in the design process and guarantee all participants an interview for available jobs. Candidates are recruited from ESF and other employability interventions. Whereas the average employment outcomes for ESF projects are around 25%, the seven Hospitality Academies delivered by the Council and its partners last year achieved an into-employment rate of 60%. This meant that, from the 100 programme participants, 60 are now in employment.

**3.19** Based on the success of the Hospitality Academy model, officers have been approached by employers from other sectors including social care and construction. These employers are willing to provide an employment pipeline of available job opportunities and will guarantee participants an interview for the posts. There will also be a large-scale Hospitality Academy programme with a number of the flagship new hotel investments in the City over the coming six months. The Hospitality Academy alone will provide employment opportunities for up to 175 unemployed and economically inactive. In addition, the other Academy programmes (construction and social care) will help at least 100 individuals to move into employment through these interventions over the next 12 months.

**3.20** Development of Digital Skills

At the August 2017 meeting of City Growth & Regeneration Committee, approval was given to ring-fence a budget of £60,000 for the development of Digital Skills in young people. Officers noted that they would engage with key organisations already involved in activity in this field to look at how the Council could best support this agenda.

**3.21** Following engagement with relevant providers, there is an opportunity to add value to a regional Digital Skills campaign being delivered by Makematic and funded by Bank of Ireland. This programme aims to build the capacity of Teachers and Teaching Assistants in order to improve the quality of digital skills education for young people. The current programme is limited to online support, however, with additional resources from the Council, there is an opportunity to add value by supporting more schools across Belfast to access the content as well as providing in-school support and workshop sessions to share best practice.

**3.22** The proposed added value programme would also incorporate participation by community groups and provide the opportunity for pupils to compete in digital skills challenges culminating in showcase events. It is expected that up to 200 young people will be engaged in these challenges enabling young people to practically utilise digital skills. Through this project, it is proposed that a minimum of 30 schools (primary and post primary) and community organisations across Belfast will be engaged. Development of this project is being undertaken in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Executive's Urban Villages Programme. It will also link with the Council's Superconnected Communities programme as well as the technology



programmes proposed as part of the 'Other Voices' event in Belfast at the end of October 2017 and places will be set aside in the Other Voices programme for participants from the Makematic initiative.

**3.23 Legal Innovation Centre: support for expansion**

The Financial, Business and Professional Services sectors are identified as key growth areas within the Belfast economy. One emerging niche area within this wider sector is that of legal technology. This growth is being driven by technological advancement, globalisation and regulatory reform in the industry.

**3.24** Belfast is already home to a number of global legal practices. Many are moving from providing back and mid-office facilities towards establishing Centres of Excellence that can service their international operations. This expertise is being developed in conjunction with local education providers – either through joint skills development initiatives or through new areas of research and development.

**3.25** In response to growing demand, Ulster University established a Legal Innovation Centre to bring together research into the application, development and impact of new technology as well as opportunities for training current and future lawyers in legal technology skills. This is a unique collaboration between the Computer Science and Legal disciplines at the University. It was established in February 2017 and has been funded through private sector investment (Allen & Overy and Baker McKenzie) along with Invest NI. Since its launch, the Centre has gained local and international recognition, and is already working with both foreign direct investors and indigenous legal companies.

**3.26** The private sector funding has supported researchers to work on a number of targeted projects. However this means that there is limited scope for future business development to support the future growth of the Centre. Following engagement with the Centre Management Team, an opportunity has been identified for the Council to invest in the expansion of the Centre.

**3.27** This investment would align with the Council's aspirations to support the development of key growth sectors through the expansion of indigenous companies as well as attracting new foreign direct investors. The Committee recently agreed that this should be one of the priority areas of focus within the Committee Plan. This would involve an investment of £50,000 to support a research resource for a period of 18 months. The Council investment would be

matched by resources from other private and public sector partners. The deliverables from this investment will include an increase in the number of local and international clients; enhanced international profile of the Centre and opportunity for the City to develop a niche area of expertise (this is currently the only Centre of its type in the UK) in a sector that demonstrates significant growth potential in highly-skilled and well-paid jobs. There will also be opportunities for collaboration with local ICT and legal companies, allowing them to diversify and develop niche skills and products which may be able to be exported to other markets. This is a similar model to the Centre for Secure Information Technologies (CSIT) which is based at Titanic Quarter and Members recently received a presentation on the work of this organisation.

**3.28** Members will be aware that FDI investors have a ‘wish list’ of elements that they look for in a potential investment location. These include talent as well as research and innovation capability as well as issue such as quality of life and accessibility. 70% of research and development undertaken in the local universities is of world-class standard. In some disciplines (e.g. cyber), this figure stands at 90%. The Council support will help towards the development of a Centre for Excellence which will help to attract more investment into Belfast.

**3.29** Equality and good relations implications:

The investment to support economic inactivity will focus on under-represented groups as well as disadvantaged groups. Efforts will be made to ensure that programme delivery takes place all across the City and that it is accessible to all. Economic Development Officers and delivery partners will work closely with the Council’s Equality and Good Relations Officers to ensure compliance.

**3.30** Financial and resources implications:

The financial implications of each of the elements above is as follows:

**3.31** European Social Fund

It is proposed that up to £250,000 is set aside from within the departmental budgets for 2018/2019 to support the priority projects, subject to agreement of the budget estimates for this coming year. Please note the levels of funding proposed are in line with current departmental funding levels. It is also

proposed that in-principle support of £250,000 match funding is set aside for a further three years (2019/2020; 2020/2021 and 2021/2022), subject to satisfactory performance and subject to budget availability in each of those financial years.

#### **Employment Academies Support**

It is proposed that a maximum of £250,000 is set aside for the Employment Academies for the financial year 2018/2019. Please note the levels of funding proposed are in line with current departmental funding levels. This will be an in-principle allocation, subject to partner engagement and the ability to deliver employment opportunities in each of the sectors. It will also be subject to agreement on the budget estimates for the coming year, as part of the rates process.

#### **Digital Skills**

Budget allocation for digital skills has already been approved by City Growth & Regeneration Committee. The £60,000 budget allocated for this activity is available within the existing Departmental 2017/18 budgets.

#### **Legal Innovation Centre**

A budget of £50,000 is required to support the expansion of Ulster University's Legal Innovation Centre. The financial resources have been set aside as part of the programme to support key growth sectors in the 2017/2018 Departmental budget."

A Member stated that it was important to retain the use of local grassroots groups, which were able to engage with the hardest to reach groups within local communities.

The Economic Initiatives and International Development Manager advised the Committee that, while the Council had limited control on the selection process and funding allocations, it could look at targeting certain geographical areas or specific target groups.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

### **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

#### **CG&R Financial Report - Q1 2017/18**

The Chief Executive presented the financial position of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to the Members. She advised them that the Quarter 1 (Q1) position for the Committee was an under spend of £128,000 (2.6%), with the forecast year end position being an underspend of £461,000 (2.9%) which was within the acceptable tolerance which was 3%.

The Committee was advised that the current position related to vacant posts across a number of services and receipt of additional income of Off Street Car Parking charges.

**D**  
**804**

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee**  
**Wednesday, 13th September, 2017**

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

Chairperson