



Subject:	Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework 2022 - 2026
Date:	18th November, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Deborah Colville, City Innovation Manager
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present the refreshed <i>Smart Belfast: Urban Innovation framework</i> , which sets out the objectives and programme of work from 2022 to 2026. This report outlines the purpose of the refreshed framework; the wider conditions necessary to support urban innovation in Belfast; and details of the Smart District and the associated programme of work being led by the Council.
1.2	In addition, the report seeks the Committee's approval for a number of the programme's first initiatives.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. approve the Smart Belfast urban innovation framework 2023 to 2026; 2. approve (subject to a successful award) Belfast City Council's active participation in the Ulster University-led E-Huub bid to EPSRC; 3. note the work under way with Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University on Belfast City Council's partnership on a potential £5m bid to EPSRC's Place-based Innovation Impact award programme in the Smart District; 4. note Nesta's engagement with communities and institutions on proposals for the Citizen Opportunity for Digital Innovation (CODI) programme; 5. note that a Hub-IN project roadmap is due to be published in December which include proposals for a £100,000 Challenge Fund. And the project's contribution of £10,000 to the city's Waterfront Task Group; and 6. approve the appointment of a member of the City Innovation Office to be part of the advisory board to the new Northern Ireland Public Data panel.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Smart Belfast urban innovation framework (final draft attached) is designed to stimulate collaborative innovation between the industry, innovative SMEs, academia, government and communities to help grow our economy and achieve our shared ambitions. It is based on the understanding that many of Belfast's complex urban challenges are not readily amenable to traditional public policy interventions but require novel solutions involving the co-operation of many innovation actors. In achieving these goals, the framework seeks to maximise investment opportunities, particularly those represented by the Belfast Region City Deal innovation and digital pillars.</p> <p>3.2 Following approval by the Committee in December 2021, the City Innovation Team consulted widely on a draft of the framework from January to March 2022. The findings and recommendations from this consultation, and from further engagement with Members and city partners, have now been incorporated into this final draft.</p> <p>3.3 The final framework is structured around three main elements:</p> <p>3.4 (i) The first is the Urban Innovation ecosystem. The eight 'pillars' of the ecosystem represent the conditions necessary for innovation to flourish. Belfast already has strengths in many of</p>

these pillars, but some are at a comparatively formative stage. Responsibility for growing the urban innovation ecosystem is an ongoing and collective effort among many city partners and does not rest exclusively with Belfast City Council. Our analysis of the ecosystem, its pillars, and our recommendations for action, are the basis upon which Belfast City Council will continue to engage with other innovation partners. As such the analysis will inform the Council's position regarding its urban innovation priorities with the likes of Innovation City Belfast, BCRD partners, NI Government Depts and industry.

3.5 (ii) The second element is the specific **programme of work** that Belfast City Council will lead on over the next four years. We have engaged extensively within council, and externally with city partners, in developing this programme. It is heavily weighted in favour those city strategies to which we believe urban innovation offers significant added value. We have selected initiatives that are important to our innovation partners, particularly in the private sector and our universities and colleges; and that likely to attract funding and co-investment.

3.6 (iii) The last major element of the framework is the **Belfast Smart District**. What differentiates the new framework from the 2017 edition, is a much greater emphasis on the importance of 'place-making' for urban innovation. The Smart District is very much about grounding urban innovation concepts and initiatives in a 'real-world' environment in which they can be developed, tested, stress-tested, and scaled to success across the wider city. Evidence from most other places (including Dublin, Barcelona, Helsinki, Paris, Copenhagen) has shown that an urban innovation programme that is built within a specific, managed, urban environment can offer significant dividends to both the programme and directly to the city. Belfast city centre offers a rich environment for innovation both in terms of leveraging existing planned investments, and as a place where many of the wider urban challenges are manifest at a more intimate and tractable scale. As such it is a good fit to be the location for Belfast's Smart District.

3.7 The framework describes the geography of the Belfast Smart District, and the tasks that the City Innovation Office needs to accomplish in order to make it a success.

3.8 Finally, for sake of clarity, we have structured the framework around these three separate elements. In practice of course there is no discreet separation – activities will interconnect and reinforce each other. So, for example, the delivery of any one of the programme initiatives will both strengthen the operation of the District while also contributing to the wider ecosystem pillars.

Resourcing the programme

3.9 It is expected that individual programme initiatives will be funded through a mix of co-investment by industry, third-party funding and 'in-kind' contributions. An important factor in selecting initiatives is that they can attract funding either directly or through partner co-investment. Indeed, a key objective of the framework is to be a net attractor of innovation investment to Belfast.

3.10 A key resource in this regard will be the Belfast Region City Deal. The new framework is designed to maximise opportunities for Belfast to leverage the key investments from the Digital pillar in particular (ie, the £34 million Innovation for Societal Challenge fund programme and £39 million Infrastructure Enabling Fund). An initial example of this approach in action is the £1 million 'Augment the City' immersive challenge call which will seek to draw down funding from the Digital Pillar to support digital innovation in relation to the visitor experience in the city centre (while also supporting other city deal partners in developing their own visitor experiences).

Early Smart Belfast projects

3.11 A number of opportunities have already emerged as a result of early engagement on the framework:

Health E-HUUB project

3.12 The Council has been asked to become a partner in a proposal being developed by Ulster University and University College London. The project, which is seeking funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), will focus on the discovery, translation & commercialisation of digital health technologies. 'E-HUUB' will include a network of partners spanning large industry, digital health SMEs, healthcare providers, charities. The long-term vision is to harness data and digital solutions to provide a 'digital front door' that will empower individuals across communities in Belfast to manage their personal health and wellbeing.

3.13 If the EPSRC bid is successful, the Council has been asked to provide access to the Smart District environment for trialling and to provide other in-kind support such as facilitating access to communities. The Committee is asked to approve, subject to a successful EPSRC application, Belfast City Council's active participation in the programme.

Place-based Impact Acceleration Account (PBIAA)

3.14 The City Innovation Office been engaging with both Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University on a potential Smart District-focused bid to the EPSRC's £25 million Place-based Impact Acceleration Account programme (PBIAA). The PBIAA is a strategic award that provides flexible funding to universities to enable them to drive local impacts from their research. The award is encouraging a focused place-based approach that encourages collaboration on impact between the universities, the local authority and business. It offers an exciting opportunity to drive one or more of the initiatives identified in the Smart Belfast framework.

3.15 Applications of up to £5 million must be led by a university, with the closing date of 25 April 2023. The Committee is asked to note that, as part of the Smart Belfast programme, the City Innovation Office will seek agreement with the universities over the coming months on areas of focus that can contribute to the city's policy objectives. If agreed, details on a Belfast focused bid will be brought to Members for approval prior to submission.

Citizen Opportunities for Digital Innovation (CODI)

3.16 Work has begun on the 'Citizen Opportunities for Digital Innovation' (CODI) programme. The motivating idea behind CODI is that public and city institutions need to do much more to engage with people and communities on what it means to live in a 'digitally enabled city'. It has implications for personal privacy, decision-making, planning, services, and for the future of work. City institutions also need to better support citizen participation in digital innovation initiatives. Evidence for elsewhere demonstrates that digital projects are much more likely to be successful if people are involved in their co-design. CODI also has potential as an 'on-ramp' for some people to move into more formal skills and training.

3.17 The Committee is asked to note that the City Innovation Office has commissioned Nesta's renowned Centre for Collective Intelligence Design to work with us on a seven-month pilot. With Nesta, we are talking to stakeholders who are already involved in elements of this work (eg Queen's Community and Place programme, Global Innovation Institute, Markets Development Association, Farset Labs, etc. There are also plans to trial some of the CODI concepts with communities early in 2023. Further details of the work and the proposals for scaling the CODI concept will be shared with Members following this work.

	Hub of Innovation on the Maritime Mile
3.18	Members will be aware that the City Innovation Office is managing the four-year Horizon 2020 funded Hub of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HUB IN) project in partnership with the Maritime Belfast Trust. The project, which has attracted over €600,000 to Belfast, aims to transform and regenerate Historic Urban Areas while preserving their unique cultural and social identity. Belfast is one of eight city pilots working on this project and is co-developing new community-focused business models and innovative solutions that will bring together sustainability and cultural heritage.
3.19	The Committee is asked to note that a Hub-IN project roadmap is due to be published in December and will include proposals for a £100,000 Challenge Fund to be launched in early Spring 2023. The project is also contributing £10,000 to the city's Waterfront Task Group to support prototypes that will enhance and preserve heritage and animate the mile.
	Northern Ireland Public Data Panel
3.20	The City Innovation Office has been working with the Administrative Data Research Centre NI and Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment to help determine the need for a 'public data panel' that would work with citizens to explore the potential for the re-use of health and other data. Recommendations from this work have now been accepted and a Northern Ireland Public Data Panel will now be established by ADRC with funding from SESRC/UKRI.
3.21	The new panel will provide a forum to engage with people on the socially acceptable re-use of public data in research, policymaking, and service provision. This will include the secondary use of health data to enhance diagnostics, therapeutic, medical research and SME growth. The work has informed our approach to the Citizen Opportunities for Digital Innovation (CODI) pilot which has just commenced.
3.22	The Committee is asked to approve the appointment of a staff member from the City Innovation Office to be part of the advisory board for the new Northern Ireland panel.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.23	Programme development and delivery costs have been identified in the existing City Innovation team budget. As noted in the body of the report individual initiatives will proceed based on a mix of funding and co-investment from partners.
3.24	Resources for activities associated with the Belfast Region City Deal have already been identified within the existing Council City Deal budget.

	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.25	A public consultation and Equality Screening was carried out as part of the consultation programme on the draft framework. The framework was screened out; however, any significant projects that emerge during the life of the life of the framework will be subject to individual equality screenings.
4.0	Document Attached
	Final draft of the Smart Belfast urban innovation framework