

All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

Thursday, 26th January, 2023

MEETING OF THE ALL-PARTY WORKING GROUP ON THE CITY CENTRE
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor O'Hara (Chairperson); and
Councillors de Faoite, Long and McCullagh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services ;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mrs. D. Smith, Neighbourhood Service Integration
Ms. E. McCullough, Neighbourhood Service Integration; and
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor Hutchinson.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd December 2022 were agreed.

Welcome and Introductions

The Chairperson welcomed Amy Lamé, London Night Czar, to the meeting and advised the working group of the reason for Ms Lamé's visit to Belfast, highlighting her focus on collaborative working with city partners. He then asked both Members and officers to introduce themselves to Ms. Lamé and they briefly outlined their role in the Council.

Overview Future City Centre Programme – Presentation

The Chief Executive thanked Ms. Lamé for taking the time to meet with members of the working group and proceeded to set the context. He advised that Councillor de Faoite had raised a notice of motion outlining Belfast's current position to consider a Night Czar for Belfast and he went on to outline what the Belfast has to offer as a city. Ms. Lamé thanked the

members of the working group for their time and said she welcomed the opportunity to forge strong links with Belfast as she believed they had a lot to learn from Belfast too.

The Director of City Regeneration outlined the plans for the Future City Centre programme and advised that it was reimagining and revitalising the city centre to create a healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environment where people want to live, work, visit and invest. The aim was to create a shared space that would intrinsically connect to, and support, surrounding communities, the wider city and region. She outlined the various elements that the team were focussing on, highlighting a number of 'game changers' that would help drive economic growth within the city centre. She went on to outline the six-pillar approach behind the FCC work and highlighted that behind each pillar were strands of work. She outlined a number of major developments within the City Centre that were in concept and planning stage.

The Director then outlined the plans for Belfast's newest tourism destination, Belfast Stories, and highlighted the planned location for Belfast Stories and what the hub would contain. She went on to outline a number of strategic acquisitions that included the site for Belfast Stories and detailed some of the delivery highlights achieved to date, including new active travel enabling infrastructure, Belfast Entries projects, along with many of the projects undertaken as part of the Covid Recovery effort.

Noted.

Belfast City Council's Role in the Night-Time Economy – Presentation

The Director of Economic Development gave a high-level overview of work that was ongoing to assist the revitalisation effort of the night-time economy and provided a synopsis of the work Belfast City Council had been taking forward to support the night-time economy. He outlined the governance, case studies looking to elsewhere, Belfast's purple flag status, pillars of a night-time economy strategy and alignment to current Council work strands and strategies. The Director outlined the challenges that businesses currently faced, including the availability of staff within the hospitality sector and provision of night-time transport links for residents. He added that Belfast was working towards a year of culture in 2024, where the focus would be showcasing what Belfast had to offer.

Noted.

Lessons Learned from London – Key Insights for Belfast

Ms. Lamé gave an overview of her background before being recruited to the post of the London Night Czar in 2016. As London Czar she said her approach was holistic in that she looked at every aspect of the city and those who lived, worked and leisured at night. She looked at how the city was used at night and said that the night-time economy could not be separated from daytime – it needed to be viewed as the economy. She looked at the cross-cutting priorities in the city, as well as how many people worked in the city at night, the transport links at night and the unique issues that faced cities at night. She outlined the challenges that she had faced, including changing perceptions of the city at night and working with partners to deal with the challenges, including ensuring women felt safe in London at night. She developed a women's night safety charter that had been adopted by other cities. She said this ensured consistency throughout the cities and she agreed to forward information on the charter for members of the working group to review. The Chairperson invited members

of the Working Group to ask questions and after discussion, he thanked the Night Czar for her presentation.

Chairperson