



City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan 2023- 24

End of Year Report

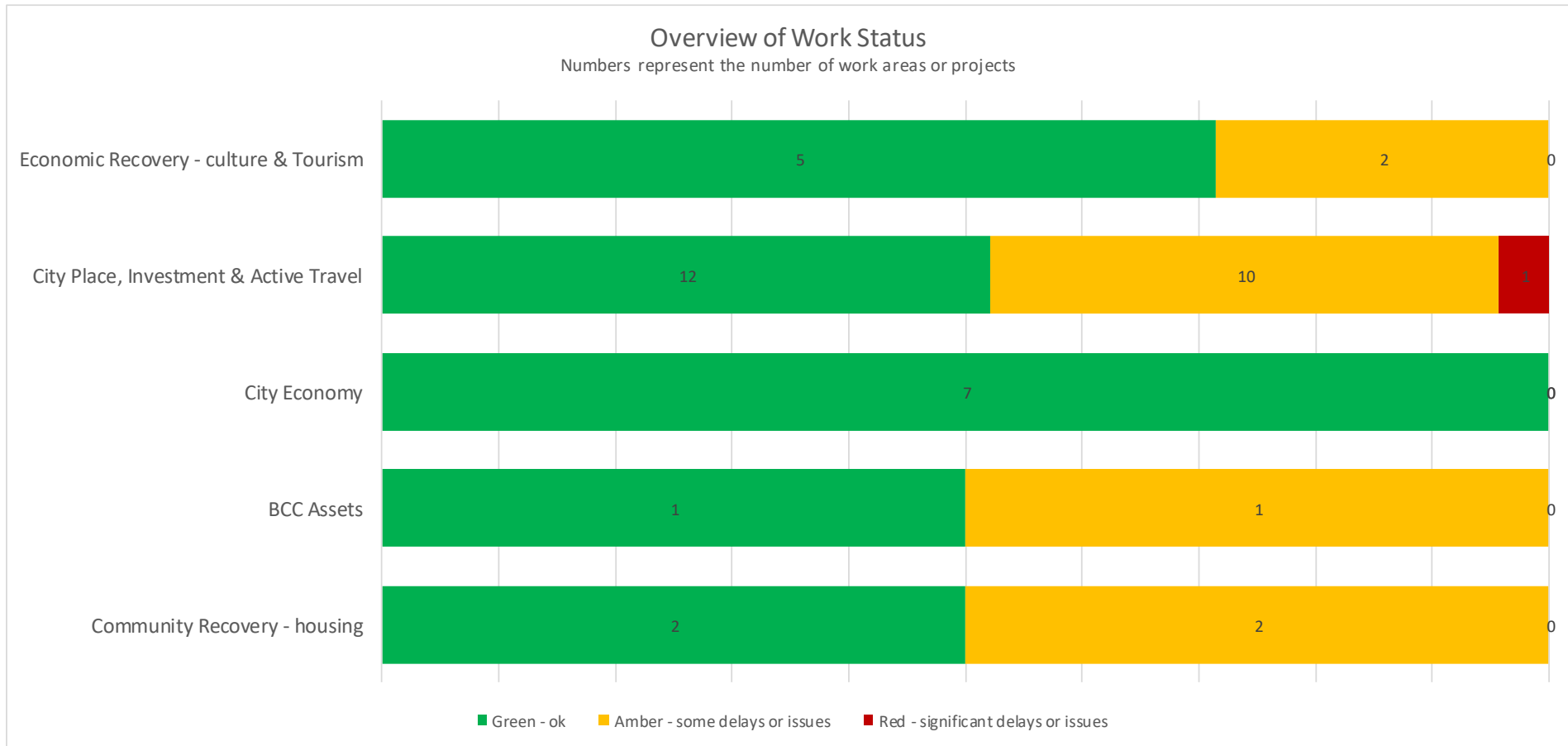


Belfast
City Council

Summary of performance

The following chart gives a high-level overview of progress at the end of the year. For each area of work, individual projects and workstreams have been allocated a traffic light rating based on the following assessment:

- Green – the actions have been delivered as expected, to budget and with no significant risks.
- Amber – there have been some delays, impact on budget or risks that have emerged.
- Red – the work has been significantly delayed; the final outcome is not as expected; significant additional budget is required; or significant risks have emerged.



2023-24 Summary of Key Achievements



Culture

- 119,135 Belfast Bike Journeys in 2023 (Calendar Year)



Tourism

- 124,000 people attended our four signature City Events



City Economy

- 260 people have progressed onto a job or better job via an Employment Academy.



City Assets

- 119,135 Belfast Bike Journeys in 2023 (Calendar Year)



City Place

- 18 applications approved for 'Vacant to Vibrant', to convert previously vacant city centre properties to become occupied.



Community Recovery (housing)

- Launched the process which seeks procurement for a long-term partner for the delivery of £630m GDV housing led placemaking regeneration.

2023-24 Key Programmes of work – End of Year Report

1. Inclusive Economic Recovery

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<p>Cultural Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the 'A City Imagining Plan' (GREEN) • Implement “Music Matters” Music Strategy (GREEN) • Progress Belfast 2024 Year of Cultural Celebration for Belfast (AMBER) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural multi-annual funding including support for Arts/ Heritage organisations and Festivals/Events – 56 organisations supported. • Four Pathfinder awards for organisations not in receipt of core public sector support. • 21 Community Festivals supported in partnership with Department for Communities. • 22 organisations supported through Arts and Heritage small grants. • Access and Inclusion grants in partnership with the Department for Communities. • 10 organisations supported through Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants. • Creative Bursaries for 16 individuals. • Establishment of a Green Arts Forum to advance and promote sustainability in the sector. • 6 partnerships with key sectoral organisations. • A partnership with Theatre and Dance NI, including funding for 7 recipients, across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector, as part of the INVEST programme. • Partnership with Craft NI to develop Craft NI Gallery including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 19 Belfast events for Craft Month. • A partnership with Thrive NI to continue the Audience Panel, representing 200 members, and provide tailored advice to embedding people-led approaches within cultural organisations. • A partnership with Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to deliver Open Heritage Belfast and other events, advocacy, advice & support. • Delivery of the Belfast Canvass Project and city animation projects across 30 sites across the city. • Continue with support to increase participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people through initiatives such as the Gig Buddies programme and a new partnership with the University of Atypical. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and funding for the Music Heritage Programme supporting 4 organisations to work with local musicians, citizens and communities in a developmental process that will lead to a showcase of contemporary traditional music as part of Belfast 2024. • Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board. • Micro-bursaries pilot programme supporting 17 musicians with costs incurred within their artform. • Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. • Gradam Ceoil bursaries for young musicians. • Financial support for the delivery of the NI Music Prize. • The Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues through a partnership with Music Venue Trust. • Promotion of our UNESCO City of Music status via dedicated Belfast Music marketing channels. • The development of a digital music support service developed in collaboration with Music Connections. • Partnerships with other UNESCO Cities of Music, including international exchanges with London, Ontario in Canada and Hannover, Germany.

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
	<p>In addition, there are a range of initiatives due to launch in March and April 2024, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launch of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme. • A strategic review of the NI Music Prize. • Programme to develop the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment. • The implementation of Access Riders to improve disability access. • Health and Wellbeing sessions for musicians and the industry. <p>A “Go Green” toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work progressed to design and deliver “Belfast 2024” the large scale cultural and creative celebration, which will highlight and uplift the sector during the key visitor months of March to November 2024. Belfast 2024 has delivered so far; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 17 new pieces of work commissioned; 4 signature commissions. ○ 200+ events and opportunities. ○ 800+ opportunities for artists and production staff. ○ Over 100 volunteering opportunities. ○ 5 national and international collaborations and 10 international artist exchanges.
<p>City Recovery, reopening the city and support for businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalisation Fund: Physical interventions (AMBER) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant to Vibrant. Almost 400 application packs have been issued, and officers are currently working with a number of applicants, providing support to develop their proposals. A total of 18 applications have been approved with another 4 currently undergoing the assessment process, and a further 8 applicants are actively engaging with offices to finalise their applications with an expectation that these will be submitted over the coming months. A further 24 applicants are progressing with support via the matchmaking service. With the approved applications to date this has resulted in over 67 employment opportunities, estimated rates value of c£950k over the course of the lease periods and the reactivation to support 12 historic / heritage / buildings of interest.
<p>City Development and Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration Framework (AMBER) • Secure Belfast additional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the Regeneration Framework serves to underpin the lobbying case, with the interdependency to have a coherent approach to fundable propositions aligned to corporate priorities. The Regeneration Framework is currently being finalised, with officers currently testing its application. It is proposed to have further engagement with Members on the Framework, its application in the near future, with an objective of seeking agreement on city and Council priorities aligned to the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan. • The Advocacy and Lobby proposition is now being advanced supported by a detailed stakeholder engagement plan and lobbying strategy to have enhanced regeneration investment funding for Belfast in line with other cities as well as furthering the case for devolved powers. As agreed by Committee in Feb 2024 a letter has been sent to the Communities’ Minister welcoming him to his position and requesting that he would work with all stakeholders to achieve the conferring of regeneration powers to Councils with the appropriate budgets within this Assembly mandate.

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investment (AMBER) • City centre investment fund (AMBER) • Institutional investor / development partner (GREEN) • Strategic direction to major projects (AMBER) • Progress citywide strategic opportunities (GREEN) • 2 Royal Avenue (AMBER) • The Sixth (GREEN) • Regeneration Assets (GREEN) • Belfast Campus (GREEN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the city centre investment fund is ongoing. This is aligned with the Council’s corporate priorities and cognisance of the city’s development aspirations as set outlined the Belfast Agenda. • Council launched the process which seeks procurement for a long-term partner for the delivery of £630m GDV housing led placemaking regeneration in October 2023. This includes the inclusion of significant identified Council lands in the city centre, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity, with the potential for further sites across the city to be identified over the course of the partnership. Through this process Council are seeking a long-term partner to fund, develop and where appropriate to own and manage assets delivered through the partnership as part of a comprehensive regeneration scheme. The process is in line with the scheduled procurement programme. The Selection Questionnaire and de-selection stages have recently concluded, with 3 bidders now progressing through to the imminent Competitive Dialogue stage. The process is continuing in line with the procurement programme and is currently on schedule, with recommendations to be brought back to Members later in the year and with prior updates as this work progresses. • Officers continued to engage on major private sector led regeneration schemes through the established Project Reference Groups to ensure alignment with Council’s strategic corporate priorities. Specifically, in relation to Tribeca, decision by SP&R Committee in Jan 2024 agreeing that officers carry out further work in relation to the possibility of vesting and / or acquisition of the site by agreement including seeking a valuation of the site. Cross departmental work is ongoing in respect of this, noting that aligned to a NOM Castlebrooke met with Party Leaders and Party representatives in February 2024. Correspondence has been issued to the Ministers and Permanent Secretaries of the Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure and Department for Economy, as agreed by Council in respect to the decision of SP&R around carrying out further work in relation to the possibility of vesting and / or acquisition on this site. • As reported to CGR Committee in Mar 2024, feasibility assessment including planning appraisals are currently being undertaken, these will be brought to Area Working Groups, with updates to Area Working Groups from May onwards. As agreed by CGR Committee in Mar 2024 an All Party Housing Led Regeneration Round Table meeting is being arranged which will provide an opportunity for Members to have a focused informed discussion and to consider ongoing activity, potential opportunities and the work of the Community Planning, Housing Led Regeneration Group. This will build on the engagement of previous City Growth and Regeneration workshops on Housing Led Regeneration which took place in Jan 2022 and Jan 2023 and allow an opportunity for specific Committee Plan priority updates. • An update in relation to ongoing work in relation to 2 Royal Avenue was reported to the SP&R Committee in February 2024. This included the principles for acquisition; the current meanwhile use and the options and work undertaken to consider future uses including the need to consider the long term sustainability of the building and financial implications for Council; the LGBTQIA+ hub application to PEACEPLUS for space on the First Floor; and agreed to commence a without prejudice market wide Expressions of Interest (EOI) exercise for the ground floor of the building for both small occupiers to support and complement the current meanwhile use (until Dec 24) and a ground floor occupier(s) for longer term post 2024, cognisant of the proposed first floor PEACEPLUS Funding application. Work in respect of this EOI has commenced with an update to be reported to a future meeting of the Committee on the outcomes. DfC funded capital works to the rear of the buildings including opening up of the space at the rear with a new entrance and activation onto Bank Square improving connectivity from Royal Avenue to Bank Square were completed in March 2024. • Work on the Sixth was also progressed via the BelTel LLP, which has included the recent submission of a renewed planning application that preserves the asset redevelopment potential. • Ongoing management of the Regeneration Assets in line with the objectives of the CCIF. • The Council are supporting the transition of CCRF in line with the opening of the Belfast Campus and transition to BAU. We continued to support the UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum, including its transition in line with the opening of the Belfast campus.

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<p>Increase tourism spend through sustainable tourism products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver year 2 of the 10-year Tourism recovery plan “Make Yourself at Home” (GREEN) • Deliver the Annual Events programme (AMBER) <p><i>The Amber rating is in the context of Fleadh and Euros and associated resource dependencies on multi agency partners, Casement etc)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52% of all visitors to NI came to Belfast. Overall, the city accounts for 32% of all overnight stays in NI and the city generates 40% of the region’s tourism spend. Belfast’s tourism and hospitality sectors directly support over 19,000 jobs in key tourism sectors such as Accommodation and Food Services, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation and Transportation. • The following activity has been delivered against the strategic theme of Grow Belfast: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Officers have undertaken management of the Visit Belfast contract in respect of the delivery of business and leisure marketing and visitor servicing, to support the aim of increasing visitor numbers, dwell time and spend, thereby supporting tourism jobs, economic impact and social benefits across Belfast. Work has been ongoing to deliver the KPI’s set for marketing of Belfast as leisure and business tourism destination, with agreements reached on a five-year extension of the Lease Sharing Agreement with Visit Belfast and a three-year sharing agreement with Translink for the operation of a ticketing desk within the Belfast Welcome Centre. ○ Visit Belfast has generated c. £117m for the local economy, securing £1.6m towards the marketing and visitor serving of the City Region. ○ Visit Belfast has dealt with 612,701 enquiries (year to date) generating £14m to the local economy. ○ Visit Belfast’s web and social media activity has generated circa 1.9m web visits, 40m social media impressions and 3.1m social media engagements inc. 11.5m video views. PR and comms have generated 157m WOTS, with an equivalent media profile worth £500k AVE. ○ Visit Belfast has delivered 9 campaigns, generating a minimum of 92.3m impacts, generating 314,342 bed nights securing £47.5m to the local economy. Of particular note was the 2023 Christmas campaign. With a reduced budget of £120k, it was a digital led campaign in ROI and GB, achieving significant results contributing over £25m to the local economy and a ROI of £1:209. ○ Visit Belfast has also won the Business Tourism Team securing the Best Conference Destination – International, 2023 (C&IT Awards). ○ The Visitor Servicing Team also secured the NI Travel and Tourism Award for Best Tourist Information Centre for the 19th time. ○ The organisation is now ranked joint second for the best performing DMMO out of 100 destinations and Belfast is ranked 11th out of 100 city destinations, increasing the city’s overall score by 2% this year in the Global Destinations Sustainability Index. ○ Officers have also continued to deliver the Conference Subvention Programme in partnership with TNI and VB. Our Subvention Scheme has contributed to supporting business tourism with an economic impact of £35.8m, equating to 76,172 bed nights and 29,261 delegates. • Under the strategic theme of Position Belfast officers have been working with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to strengthen the position of Belfast in national and international markets through marketing campaigns and PR activity. We have also worked to strengthen Belfast’s position as a Gateway city and a must-see urban destination on the island of Ireland by capturing GB and ROI city break market and attracting a greater share of out of state visitors to Ireland - primarily through contract management of Visit Belfast targeting leisure and business visitors. • Under the strategic theme of Experience Belfast, officer developed the Neighbourhood Tourism Programme, a new 2-year £500,000 investment programme (approved by Committee in June 2023), including £250,000 to develop and enhance market-led tourism products and experiences across the city, with a view to promoting enhanced visitor footfall, dwell time and spend across the city’s neighbourhoods and sharing tourism’s economic and social benefits to communities throughout the city. Throughout December 2023 to February 2024, officers have delivered sectoral engagement (internal and external) to identify needs, gaps and opportunities which has informed the investment criteria whilst aligning with ‘Belfast Stories’. • Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme - Belfast’s first Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Seminar was developed and delivered on 20th February 2024 at Titanic Belfast. Attended by over 100 delegates, the Seminar enabled experts and activists in access and inclusion to share their expertise and experience with an audience of businesses, decision makers, policy makers and influencers. A range of resources were developed and launched at the Seminar and have been added to the new Tourism NI eLearning Platform to ensure wide audience reach. The overall

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	<p>programme is supported via a partner advisory group including Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, BCC and the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. It attracted an additional £15k sponsorship from TNI and financial support from Visit Belfast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Drink Tourism Programme - Delivery of Belfast Food and Drink Programme 2023-24 progressed in line with targets over the year, with over 100 businesses benefitting through participation in the programme throughout the period. The programme attracted 40% of total project cost funding support from DEARA via the NI Regional Food Programme as well as in kind support from the Network Committee. The focus on year two has been to support the industry through the Food and Drink Tourism Network, which is represented by 16 businesses, to support sectoral growth and strengthen Belfast’s position as a food tourism destination. Funding was secured from the NI Regional Food Programme, administered by the DAERA, to support delivery costs of specific Programme elements. • Audit of and Production of Development Plans to enhance the Visitor Experience at Council-owned Tourism Assets: Make Yourself at Home identified the need for Council to utilise existing assets across the city to drive the visitor experience. • Enhancing the Visitor Experience - work has progressed with an experienced provider to develop and implement a phased, prioritised Visitor Experience Action Plan to enhance the visitor experience over the next decade and outline key tourism projects which may be suitable for development and introduction to market within 1, 2 and 5 years. • Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing - officers have progressed work on initial assessment of existing tourism signage to identify essential repairs and update of interpretation, including for example Belfast Zoo, Belfast Castle, Cathedral Quarter and city centre and this work will be completed in Q1 2024. • Under the strategic theme of Sustain Belfast, officers have worked with Visit Belfast and a range of partners on the Global Destination Sustainability Index. Belfast has now completed its third year of benchmarking, and is now rated 11th out of 100 destinations, increasing its year-on-year score by 2% and maintaining our place within the top 20 cities. This assists in ensuring Belfast is globally competitive in securing conferences and business events for Belfast, resulting in associated economic benefit and sectoral support. • Green Tourism Accreditation - Officers have supported and enabled the tourism industry to commence their sustainability journey to increase their sustainability credentials through the implementation of the Green Tourism Accreditation Programme. This has provided access to the GreenChecktool, enabling tourism businesses including accommodation, hospitality providers, events and attractions to complete assessments and take steps to achieve accreditation. Cultural organisations and festivals have also had access to the programme, resulting in 75% of hotel rooms in Belfast being accredited. 100 businesses are now members of Green Tourism and of these, 50 have completed accreditation. Within the previous 12-month period, officers have worked a range of tourism providers to encourage them to gain their bronze accreditation and Visit Belfast continues to work towards achieving its silver accreditation. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Young World - this major event was successfully delivered by the Tourism and Events Team with summit partners during October 2023, with delegates and corporates in attendance from over 190 countries which profiled Belfast on an international stage through world media and was a memorable week for all involved. The event attracted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1,952 international delegates (2,903 total visitors) ○ 282 speakers across all stages ○ 95 journalists ○ 187 partner organisations from corporate, government and NGO sectors ○ 137 delegates from NI who are now lifelong Ambassadors. ○ 155 volunteers over the course of the event, providing 2,198 volunteer hours. ○ 410 pieces of high-quality coverage across NI, ROI, and GB markets, including front page and full-page spreads across print and broadcast media and media attention from EWS, ITV, Monocle, Sky News, CNBC, PA Media, Channel News Asia.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation of the event reported that 39% of non-NI delegates travelled within NI after the Summit. These delegates rated their travelling experience in NI 4.62 out of 5. Partner Executives reported an average rating of 4.25 out of 5 for Belfast event venues; 4.17 out of 5 for the city's accommodation; 3.67 out of 5 for its transport links; 4 out of 5 for its culture/entertainment and 3.54 out of 5 for its food/beverages. • The team delivered 3 large-scale city events (Maritime Festival 2023, Christmas 2023 and St Patrick's Day 2024) attracting local audiences and out-of-state visitors. • The Maritime Festival was successfully delivered in September 2023, including an audience of 80,000, securing TNI funding of £60,000. In lieu of a large-scale creative piece (Council decision), a Maritime village including craft, food and science fair was delivered as part of the wider programme. The out-of-state marcomms reach was 6,764,000 impacts with the overall Visit Belfast campaign being over 9.5 million impacts. Organic social media on Facebook also had 58,811 Impressions. • Christmas Switch-On Event (November 2023) - The 'Let's Glow Belfast' Christmas Lights Switch-On successfully took place on Saturday 18th November 6.30pm-7.30pm, with a celebration of local music, theatre and dance, compered by the Cool FM Breakfast Team (media partnership) with Lord Mayor and special invited guest Dáithí Mac Gabhann officially switching on the lights. The free event (ticketed via Visit Belfast) attracted in excess of 10,000 citizens and visitors. Following on from 2022's model of uplifting the Christmas programme in 2 Royal Avenue, the Winters Den opened on Saturday 18th November and continued to Sunday 7th January 2024. The Winters Den season featured a selection of free entry festive activities. The Winter's Den attracted footfall of 30,255 between 18 Nov-13 Dec. The event evaluation found that 51% of attendees rating the overall event between 8 and 10 out of 10, including 19% who rated it as '10 - Extremely good'. At the other end of the scale, 14% gave it a rating between 1-3; 92% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast; and 83% of respondents stated the Let's Glow Belfast event improves the reputation of Belfast as a place to visit. • St Patrick's Day 2024 - Council Officers have responsibility for direct delivery of the parade and have engaged widely to ensure community participation and co-design. Once finalised, a full event debrief will be presented to a future committee meeting. • Belfast 2024 - the Events Team have worked in-year with the Belfast 2024 to support the operational roll out and delivery of the cultural programme. This is an ongoing workstream. • The events team were successful in their bid to host the Oireachtas na Samhna Festival in 2025 and are establishing the appropriate working and governance groups to support its delivery. • Euros 2028 – officers have continued to work towards the delivery of this event in 2028 • As part of the international events programme for 2025-2028, Officers continue to participate in the ongoing bidding process for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann for 2026 and 2027.
<p>Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 'Starting a Business' services (GREEN) • Support social enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the new Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) with council as the lead partner for the region. Successfully launched the new multi-million pound scheme in November 2023. • Enterprise awareness activity: 1759 individuals were engaged with a specific focus on underrepresented groups including people with disabilities, individuals who are economically inactive, females and young people. We also enabled test trading opportunities for 18 new businesses through our dedicated start up space at St George's Market and many of those are seeking to trade at the market on a more regular basis or are exploring alternative retail outlets for their products. • Start a business activity: Since the launch of Go Succeed in November 2023, we have received 573 enquiries from individuals wishing to start a business in Belfast. This has progressed through to 278 completed diagnostics directly leading to business plan development and 1-1 mentoring. • Support for Social Enterprises and Co-operatives: 57 organisations were supported with one-to-one mentoring, advice, and guidance. Four of these organisations were new co-operatives. The Social Enterprise and Co-operative Support programme has facilitated 28 events/workshops

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<p>and co-operatives (GREEN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide ‘Growing a Business’ services (GREEN) 	<p>with over 350 attendees including a regional networking event, virtual global best practice visit and workshops. The Social Economy Incentive Fund launched again in September 2023, with an available pot of almost £50,000 to support social economy businesses to bring forward their business growth plans. 30 applications for support were received, 14 of which were shortlisted to pitch with 11 winners selected. In recognition of our work, Belfast City Council won ‘Council of the Year’ at the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland Awards in October 2023 for the second consecutive year. Most recently we applied to Social Enterprise Northern Ireland to become recognised as an official Social Enterprise Place, part of a SENI & SEUK initiative and are awaiting the outcome of this. In March 2024 we launched the public ‘Social Economy Directory’ on the Belfast City Council website and have 40 organisations registered on this across the city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing a Business: Since November 2023, we have supported 348 existing businesses with growth support. Under the service, we have also provided 20 masterclasses, engaging almost 420 Belfast based attendees. We have also successfully launched and administered grants to businesses to remove barriers to growth; to date 29 businesses have been supported to a value of almost £100,000. ● City vibrancy: in January 2022, we launched the Vibrant Business Destinations programme in partnership with DfC. This two-year pilot aimed to support local business associations to develop and deliver interventions to drive footfall and create vibrancy in areas outside of the city centre. Ten associations have now been supported to develop area-based action plans, with each organisation accessing funding to the value of £40,000 to deliver local marketing activity, events and small-scale environmental improvements. The programme is currently in the closing stages and a final report will be brought back to Committee for review and consideration. Officers are also engaging with DfC to explore the potential for future support. ● Innovation Factory: the centre averaged 62% occupancy over the course of the year. Whilst the occupancy rate has dropped back a little from the previous year, we have seen an increase in the price per square foot which is helping with financial performance. Over the past year, 261 businesses engaged in masterclasses and events at the centre. As part of their social and economic regeneration activity, 43 work placements have been facilitated by IF tenants, and a series of school engagement activities took place involving 586 young people. ● Scaling and growth: in partnership with Catalyst and Invest NI, the Way to Scale programme supported 10 SMEs to participate on a series of bootcamps to transform their businesses and support them to scale and grow to a turnover of more than £2million. 10 were supported to participate in a one week residential at MIT and access a peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst. We also put in place support for businesses in creative and digital industries and financial services sectors to build capacity and access opportunities for finance to support the growth and development of their businesses. In partnership with Digital Catapult, the Creative Digital Capacity programme supported 52 companies through a series of workshops, networking and mentoring activity. Through the BRCD supported Digital Transformation Flexible Fund, £135,000 has been allocated to 9 Belfast based SMEs, to support them implement new digital technologies and solutions into their business to support new product and service development and to ensure long term digital sustainability. ● Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor work: as previously reported to the committee at their December meeting the new staffing resources continue to progress the agreed action plan. The committee approved the Partnership and Collaboration agreement, and this was signed in January 2024. Staff from the Enterprise and Business Growth unit have worked closely with DBEC staff to progress several initiatives particularly feasibility studies funded by the Shared Island unit. This includes identification and consideration of appropriate external funding bids to progress this work, such as under Shared Island and Peace Plus.
<p>Support City Markets (GREEN)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● St George’s Market attracted over 1 million visitors and was awarded the Best Large Indoor Market in the UK at the Great British Market Awards, beating 20 other UK markets. ● Twilight Market took place over two evenings at the end of October and attracted over 25,000 visitors.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Christmas market took place from 18 November to 22 December 2023. It attracted in excess of 1 million visitors (actual figure: 1,026,267) over that period. This was slightly up on 2022 numbers (1,015,565) and similar to 2018 footfall estimates (1,083,692). Overall spend generated (not just spend on the market – survey respondents referred to the money that they spent/planned to spend in the city during their visit) was in the region of £60million.
<p>Promote and market the city inter-nationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning the City to Compete (GREEN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers supported the branding of the Renewed Ambition Partnership to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP), which aligns to our collective public and private sector commitment to creating spaces and places where people want to invest, live, study, work and visit, and delivery of the BCRPP associated programme of activity. The launch of the 2023/24 programme took place on 14 Nov which brought together representatives from the public, private and third sectors to discuss the importance of place in the context of city regeneration and development, including the role that city regeneration and investment can play in increasing city vibrancy and delivering inclusive economic growth. Officers supported the delivery of the BCRPP 2023 / 2024 structured Programme of Activity which included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Dublin Showcase Event which took place on the 6th March. This event was organised in association with the Urban Land Institute, Ireland Chapter, and showcased the city region, highlighting the positive aspects of the city and city region as well as the real estate investment opportunity. Over 120 investors, developers and partners were in attendance at the event, with follow up on-going. Leading a Belfast City Region delegation of over 30 representatives to MIPIM on the 12 – 15th March which included a concentrated programme of activity including investor engagement, participating on panel discussions and co-hosting a UK Cities Dinner with Liverpool, Cardiff and Department for Business & Trade. Follow up is on-going. Through our investor support activity, we continued to provide advice and connections to potential investors, including supporting the Northern Ireland Investment Summit which took place in the ICC Belfast on Wednesday 13 September 2023. This event was delivered by the Department for Business and Trade, in partnership with Invest NI and the Northern Ireland Office and attended by over 200 international investors from countries all around the world. Officers provided keynote presentations at industry conferences including Recharge 2024 -a hospitality and real estate focussed conference which took place in Belfast in January 2024, and attended the UK Cities & Partners Reception, February 2023. This event was organised in conjunction with City of London Corporation and convened a senior delegation of city leaders and institutional investors at Guildhall London to explore ways in which the UK can unlock long-term large scale capital investment. The Building Impact Report was shared with Committee following the Committee meeting in August 2023. Work is on-going to support the implementation of the report recommendations. Monitoring and analysis of valid planning applications to inform the City Development Tracker continues on an ongoing basis. Ongoing maintenance and updating of the Invest in Belfast website with information on Belfast, the key growth sectors and specific investment and development opportunities. Continued roll out of the investment CRM system, ongoing maintenance and management.
<p>Future City Centre Programme and Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Future City Centre (FCC) Programme was revised and a monitoring framework developed to measure the implementation of the programme. Work continues to develop a communications plan to support and amplify the positive messaging around the city centre linked to the FCC Monitoring Framework. Recent progress includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation from Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce to the City Centre All Party Working Group in March Supporting Queens University in consultation and engagement events in March 2024 with students on their lived experience of the city centre which will be fed back through Community Planning structures Completion of the Southwest Quarter scheme involving 4 business cluster & community grant schemes alongside an environmental improvement/connectivity scheme on Gt Victoria St & Shaftsbury Sq.

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to progress the Future City Centre Programme (GREEN) • BCCRIS - Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (AMBER) • Developer Contributions (GREEN) • Regeneration Projects (GREEN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Completion of the 5 Cs Revitalisation scheme involving improving streetscape with imagery and lighting ○ Final stages of completion on the final Entries project within this Phase, focusing on reopening Sugarhouse Entry. ○ Completion of DfC funded capital works to the rear of 2 Royal Avenue involving opening the rear space and activating the building onto Bank Square, improving connections to and from Royal Avenue, Bank Square and the wider Castle Street area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of priorities and projects identified within Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy continue to be progressed via BCC and other private /public sector partners. • Committee received an update in respect of Developer Contributions (historical contributions) in April 2023. These continue to be monitored and scheme proposals utilising the contributions are being delivered in line with the Section 76 agreements. • The Joint Regeneration Group (BCC, DfC, DfI, NIHE) met on a monthly basis to co-ordinate the public sector approach to Housing-Led Regeneration, A Bolder Vision, public realm projects, refresh of the Belfast Agenda and the FCC programme. Updates were provided to Committee in February 2024 in relation externally funded active travel enabler, South West Quarter and Grey to Green. • The council continued to lead the City Development Board with a focus on the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated emerging draft action plans aligned to the newly identified priorities of the City Development Board, ie, Housing Led Regeneration; Future City Centre Programme and Citywide Regeneration; Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel and supported the public consultation for this which closed on 2 October 2023, and engagement with the Board and sub groups around this.
<p>City Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion the Council's preferred position for major infrastructure projects. (AMBER) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continued to provide civic leadership and strategic input to the major city infrastructure projects, representing Council on citywide boards, enabling, facilitating, and influencing major infrastructure development and investment. In Nov 2023 Committee agreed the Council's response to the consultation on the Eastern Transport Plan, and Officers have continued to engage with DfI in the development of the Eastern Transport Plan to ensure alignment with the LDP process and A Bolder Vision. • Committee received a presentation at the Special meeting of Committee in Nov 2023 from DfI Roads on their Autumn Report. • Committee received a further presentation at the Special meeting of Committee in Jan 2024 from Translink on the Belfast Grand Central Station/ Weaver Cross developments including details of the street works program and public transport interventions as well as the communication plan and further stakeholder engagement. Committee subsequently agreed in Mar 2024 to receive a further presentation (and future presentations as appropriate) in relation to the development including an update on the Belfast Grand Central Station construction timelines including public realm works, Planned Traffic Management activities, Closure of Great Victoria Street Station and Planned Summer railway closures.
<p>Committee Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Zoo (GREEN) • Belfast Bikes (AMBER) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance at the Zoo has been on a par with previous years. Footfall has remained steady, and income is likely to increase by year end. A range of events and initiatives took place to increase footfall in the off-peak season which had a positive impact on income i.e., Boo at the Zoo, Wildlife Wonderland and NI Science Festival and animal encounters. Work has been ongoing around the proposed Elephant transfer with a visit from Burgers Zoo taking place in December and a visit to Burgers from Belfast being scheduled for the spring. • There were 119,135 Belfast Bike Journeys 2023 (Calendar Year). Performance has been down during this period resulting in reduced income over the period. Poor weather and increased vandalism with the lack of a sponsor thought to have been responsible for the downturn in performance. A new sponsorship deal has been negotiated to go live in the new financial year. The current contract with NSL has been extended to allow for a transition period once a new operator has been procured. A new tender is scheduled to be published in the spring.

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<p>Belfast Stories (GREEN)</p>	<p><i>Expert Teams</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus for 2023 was the procurement of the design teams to deliver Belfast Stories. In 2024 the design teams will develop the concept design for the Belfast Stories experience and build and prepare the Outline Business Case (OBC) for submission to TNI and DfE to secure the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) contract for funding. Gleeds was appointed in October 2023 to lead the Project Management and Design Assurance Team (MAT). This team includes project managers, cost consultants, business case consultant and design assurers. Following an International Design Competition, an architect led Integrated Design Team (IDT) was appointed in October 2023 consisting of Snøhetta and Todd architects and ARUP engineering and technical consultants to support the design development process. <p><i>Belfast Stories Experience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Experience Design Team (EDT) has been assembled to develop an interpretive masterplan for the site and develop the concept design for the Belfast Stories experience in 2024. The collection of Belfast’s stories underpins the concept and a stories gathering pilot was launched in October 23 to consider story collection. <p><i>Inclusive Economic Growth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast Stories is piloting the BCC Inclusive growth Toolkit to see how we can support greater social mobility, more inclusive labour markets and more inclusive places and services. Social value delivery plans have been received from the professional services teams with opportunities for paid employment, apprenticeships and student placement/trainees. The Belfast Stories Members Working Group was established in October 2023 to support ongoing Member engagement. Two meetings have been held to date and the group continues to meet quarterly. The Stories Network was established in Mar 2024 to support wider stakeholder engagement, with the objective of creating a safe and open space for ongoing dialogue, debate and challenge that will help shape the programme as it develops. Sustainability expertise is being provided by Arup with input from BCC Climate Team ensuring the project maximises the opportunity for net zero carbon exemplar for the city. <p>Note a report has been produced which summarises Belfast Stories progress - the Story So Far Report - which can access via https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/9582/widgets/27494/documents/55443</p>
<p>Access, Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Travel and Connectivity (AMBER) A Bolder Vision for Belfast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Members All Party Roundtable discussion took place on 25 January 2024. Discussion focussed on the Belfast Agenda priority area of CAST and the Waterfront Framework. This group will continue to meet to prioritise and position the delivery of Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel. Council continues to take a civic lead on A Bolder Vision (ABV). With the re-establishment of the Executive the governance groups have been reconvened to finalise the Strategy in line with Council Priorities and the emerging Eastern Transport Plan, which reflects heavily the work of ABV. A number of early projects have been delivered under the banner of ABV including the Waterfront Promenade Framework, Sugarhouse Entry, the delivery of the Green to Grey programme and Active Travel Enablers, Little York Little Patrick Street, the 5C’s and Blackstaff Sq. Work continues, including with private sector & public sector partners to develop a pipeline of projects to deliver out the objectives of ABV.

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<p>(AMBER)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car Parking Strategy (RED) • Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 (GREEN) • Waterfront Proposition – Belfast Waterfront Promenade (GREEN) • Belfast – Cork Harbour Cities (GREEN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As agreed by CG&R Committee in June 2022 the refresh of the Car Parking Strategy is deferred pending the finalisation of the LDP & ETP. The Car Parking Working Group has been reconvened in light of the adopted LDP and consultation on the Eastern Transport Plan (former BMTP). Officers continue to work with DfI to establish the implications of the emerging ETP work on the Car Parking Strategy. • The Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 project is underway including regular attendance and reporting to the UP2030 consortium and liaison partner, Mapping for Change. An update was brought to the consortium conference in November 2023 in Lisbon. Further to the initial strategic and thematic workshops, engagement has taken place with strategic partners, partners and representatives from the geographical areas covered within the pilot, Falls, Sandy Row, Markets, Donegall Pass and Linen Quarter; a series of visioning workshops are scheduled for April to agree the thematic visions and objective setting for the project and begin work on the adaptive pathways to identify the short/long term sequence of actions that would be required to deliver the vision. In addition, further engagement is scheduled over spring/summer including workshops with BCC staff, young people and residents. Alongside this, work has taken place on the geospatial analysis of the pilot area, using interactive mapping software to overlay current information on the area such as CENSUS data, tree data, deprivation data etc. as well as projected climate impacts such as flooding and heat risk to help steer and inform the work of the project through the pillars of climate neutrality, resilience and a fair and just transition. • Officers have continued to support the Waterfront Task Group on the Waterfront Proposition – Belfast Waterfront Promenade including the launch in December 2023 which involved the Chair of Committee. The Consultation on the Framework was launched also in December 2023 and closed on 31 January 2024. A working group is now in place to deliver on the Actions of the Framework doc including feasibility work complete on the ‘Under the Bridges’ & ‘Sailortown to Queens Island’ footbridges. • Work is ongoing with stakeholders in Cork following on from the Shared Island initiative to support the feasibility bid for the Cork Belfast Harbour Cities proposal with the agreed prioritised project for the Belfast Dockside Regeneration as the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Active Travel Bridge. Work continues to identify funding opportunities to further develop and deliver these projects.
<p>Educational underachievement (GREEN)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GCSE Maths and English Support Programme was delivered with 238 GCSE Eng/Maths places allocated.
<p>Access to employment (GREEN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Employment academies. • Improving demand side support: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 816 Employment Academy participants who have started this year. • There have been 331 Employment Academy participants who have completed training. • There have been 251 participants have had a successful outcome – obtaining a job or a better job as a result of an Employment Academy. • There have also been new delivery agents recruited and new programmes developed during the past year. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People 1st delivering new bespoke academies to help support migrants in to paid employment within the Health & Social Care sector. Additional funding and resources have been allocated to this provision to help reduce barriers and maximise the impact of this largely untapped talent pool. ○ Stranmillis delivering Level 4 training for 100 x classroom assistants which provides access to a ‘better job’ or a pathway to higher education. ○ Gaelchursai delivering 6 x new employment and upskilling academies which help to support people leaving an Irish Medium education setting to move into employment or a ‘better job’.
<p>Upskilling opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway to Choices Services – There have been 867 residents supported (120 with a disability); 88 progressed into employment and 170 moved into further education/training.

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<p>(GREEN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress the Belfast Labour Market Partnership (LMP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridges to Progression (Supporting Young People) – There have been 134 young people supported (target 120) – 51% of participants seeking help with their mental health. Scoping/Research completed – There have been three projects completed researching Employer Navigation Service, People-based Approaches and Place-based Approaches. Jobs Fair - 850 participants, 64 employers, 85% intended to apply for a job

2. Community Recovery (housing)

Strategic Priority, Work Area (Year End RAG status)	2023-24 Progress
<p>Maximising housing development and regeneration opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCC Housing-Led Regeneration Programme (AMBER) • Citywide strategic opportunities (AMBER) • Strategic City Centre Cluster Sites (GREEN) • City Centre Living Vision (GREEN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been ongoing work with city partners to overcome obstacles to increasing residential development, including City Centre living. A joint People & Communities and City Growth & Regeneration Committee workshop took place on 20 February 2024 with the NIHE in relation to housing supply and demand. • The CG&R Committee in March 2024 agreed to convene an All-Party Round Table regarding Housing-Led Regeneration work strands across the city that will provide an opportunity for Members to have a focused and informed discussion around this strategic priority, with representation from Party Group Leaders or their nominees. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility assessment including planning appraisals are currently being undertaken in respect of the Citywide Strategic Site Assessments. These will be brought to Area Working Groups, with updates from May onwards. It is worth noting that this forms part of wider work with the Housing Led Regeneration Group which is also assessing other public sector lands inc NIHE and DfC lands and this wider assessment work will also be brought to Members aligned to the governance mechanisms for the other public sector bodies. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reframed Inner North-West Development Brief was re issued in March 2024 with a deadline to return in June 2024. • Council launched the process which seeks procurement for a long-term partner for the delivery of £630m GDV housing led placemaking regeneration in October 2023. This includes the inclusion of significant identified Council lands in the city centre (formed part of the initial Phase 1 Strategic Site Assessments), as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity, with the potential for further sites across the city to be identified over the course of the partnership. Through this process Council are seeking a long-term partner to fund, develop and where appropriate to own and manage assets delivered through the partnership as part of a comprehensive regeneration scheme. The process is in line with the scheduled procurement programme. The Selection Questionnaire and de-selection stages have recently concluded, with 3 bidders now progressing through to the imminent Competitive Dialogue stage. The process is continuing in line with the procurement programme and is currently on schedule, with recommendations to be brought back to Members later in the year and with prior updates as this work progresses. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Centre Living Vision work has now completed. This is supporting an evidenced based approach to building a sustainable city centre residential vision; producing clear recommendations acknowledging the role of Council and its partners in delivering this vision; recognising the current and emerging social, demographic, economic and political landscape of the city and region; considering demand, supply, community and social infrastructure, urban design, viability and case studies from elsewhere. As agreed by CGR Committee in March 2024 the summary findings and recommendations on this City Centre Living Vision will be brought to HLR All Party Round Table.