



Subject:	Belfast City Council response to NI Executive - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most - Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027
Date:	25 October 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	John Tully, Director City & Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Geoff Dickson, Strategic Planning and Policy Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 	
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 purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a proposed draft Belfast City Council response (Appendix 1) to the NI Executive - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most - Draft

	Programme for Government 2024-2027, which is provided at (Appendix 2) for your consideration.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The committee is requested to note and agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. the draft Belfast City Council response to the Northern Ireland Executive’s draft Programme for Government and agree to submit this response subject to any amendments of additional comments that the committee wish to provide. ii. to share this corporate response with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, to inform their response which is being submitted on behalf of the wider local government sector. iii. to note that alongside providing this response to the Programme for Government unit in the Executive Office, officers are continuing to develop approaches to maximise the strategic positioning of the city within the context of the emerging Programme for Government and other strategies. iv. that a letter is sent to the TEO to accompany the response from Council to the PfG.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	On 5 September 2024, the Executive agreed a draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’. Subsequently the Executive launched an 8-week public consultation on this draft Programme for Government, with the deadline for submissions 4 November 2024.
3.2	<p>The content of the draft Programme for Government 2024 – 2027 is set out below for the committee’s information. The programme’s priorities and commitments are divided into three core sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing What Matters Most - Focuses on the Executive’s immediate priorities aimed at taking care of you, supporting our businesses, and improving the lives of our workers, families and communities. • Building New Foundations - Commits to upgrading infrastructure and improving services to better connect our communities, meeting your needs today and supporting your ambitions for tomorrow with the high-quality public services you deserve. • Shaping a Better Tomorrow - Focuses on three main missions: People, Planet, and Prosperity, all rooted in a commitment to Peace. These missions are dedicated to improving life for you, your families, and our communities.
3.3	<p>1. Doing What Matters Most Today</p> <p>This part of the draft Programme for Government sets out the NI Executive’s immediate priorities, which include:</p>

- Immediate priorities for this year and throughout our mandate will be achieved by providing better support for our children and young people, enabling affordable childcare, growing our economy, increasing housing supply and tackling homelessness, taking care of everyone by improving Health and Social Care services, protecting our environment and cleaning up our water, and making our communities safer, including a particular focus on women and girls.
- Continue to grow a globally competitive, sustainable, and inclusive economy which benefits everyone.
- Focus on high-potential sectors, where there are established strengths, and the potential to be globally competitive. In areas such as outstanding sectors like cyber security, net zero, screen, financial technology, regulatory technology and health and life sciences already thriving, the NI Executive aim to build on this success, upgrade our infrastructure, grow our economy, and protect our environment.
- £150 million will be invested in the new *Enhanced Investment Zone* and we will continue to progress UK Shared Prosperity projects.
- Make sure everyone has the best possible opportunities regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, who they are, or where they live, and to enable people to live with dignity in safe communities.
- Opening doors through proposed initiatives to deliver more affordable childcare, new skills funds, and apprenticeship programmes.
- Support the delivery of high-quality education for all children and champions better support for children and young people, especially those with special educational needs, so that all children are happy, learning and succeeding.
- Public services need urgent reform. Rapid growth in both the cost and demand for public services is placing a huge pressure on public finances and is undermining service provision. Reform and Transformation programme underpinned by new structures, external expertise, and a £235 million Transformation Fund to make our public services better, more easily accessed, and more efficient.

3.4 **2. Building New Foundations**

In this draft Programme for Government the NI Executive also recognised that to achieve their outcomes they need to build the right foundations and have the right infrastructure in place; therefore, they plan to:

- Upgrade our public sector infrastructure to strengthen our communities and create opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, communities, and innovators.
- Deliver upgrades to our sports stadia and increase opportunities for local sports.

- Improve our transport infrastructure for safer, more active and sustainable travel, connected communities and inclusive economic growth.
- Deliver an ambitious programme decarbonising all housing stock in NI.
- Reducing carbon emissions in existing and new homes, engaging with consumers throughout the transition, while supporting various initiatives for energy efficiency and affordability.
- Fresh thinking and new ideas that deliver the high-quality public services you deserve and pursue opportunities to improve and grow our public infrastructure, such as water services and planning.

3.5 **3. Shaping a Better Tomorrow**

The Northern Ireland Executive also recognise the importance of shaping a better tomorrow by building a foundation for the longer-term. This will be focused on three main missions: People, Planet, and Prosperity, all rooted in a commitment to Peace.

3.6 **Programme for Government Missions**

1. **People:** Working to support everyone at all stages of their life to ensure they have the chance to succeed by improving life opportunities.
2. **Planet:** Harnessing the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonising our economy and society.
3. **Prosperity:** Improving our economic productivity while making sure that we have an economy that works for everyone, and our story continues to be an inspiration to others.

3.7 In addition to these three Missions, the NI Executive also have a cross-cutting commitment to a fourth underpinning mission of **Peace** which is intended to make sure that everyone feels the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment, and a fairer society.

3.8 **Doing What Matters Most Today**

The NI Executive have also set out nine immediate priorities which they will work to this year and throughout the duration of this mandate, these are:

1. Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy
2. Deliver More Affordable Childcare
3. Cut Health Waiting Times
4. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
5. Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs
6. Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing
7. Safer Communities

3.9	<p>8. Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment</p> <p>9. Reform and Transformation of Public Services</p> <p>Strategic Positioning</p> <p>The Committee is invited to note that as officers considered the corporate response to the NI Executive's draft Programme for Government and other emerging strategies such as the recently published Sub-Regional Economic Plan, they recognised the need to maximise opportunities so that both the regional priorities and the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda can be realised. A further report on this work will be presented to the Committee in due course.</p>
	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p>
3.10	<p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.</p>
	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</p>
3.11	<p>There are no equality or rural needs implications arising directly from this report. However, the Committee is invited to note that alongside the public consultation on the draft Programme for Government.</p>
3.12	<p>The NI Executive are also undertaking associated consultations in relation to the Equality, Childs Rights and Rural needs. These are open for twelve weeks and officers are currently considering these and will bring a further report to this Committee on the impact assessments next month.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix 1 – draft Belfast City Council response to NI Executive Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 ▪ Appendix 2 - NI Executive - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most - Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027