



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	RDS 10 Year Review Consultation
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Shaping Our Future Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2025 10 Year Review consultation document was launched by the Minister for Regional Development on the 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2011. The RDS is an overarching spatial framework to influence the future distribution of activities throughout the Region to 2025. A public consultation process was initiated, requesting for comments to be submitted by the 31 <sup>st</sup> March.
1.2	The revised document will replace the RDS published in 2001 and amended after a 5 year review in 2008.
1.3	During the consultation period, information events are planned across the Region, with two events being held in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast on 26 <sup>th</sup> January from 2pm to 4pm and from 6pm to 8pm.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>In February 2009, the Council engaged with Department Regional Development (DRD) on initial consultation on the RDS 10 yr review and submitted preliminary views to inform and assist the RDS review process. The initial submission outlined seven key strategic themes which the City Council considered of critical importance and should be incorporated in the revised RDS, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- countering the depopulation of the city</li><li>- strengthening Belfast as the hub of the region's economy</li><li>- connecting the city with the wider region</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhancing and developing the city centre</li> <li>- addressing the challenges of the inner and middle city</li> <li>- protecting and enhancing the natural assets of the city</li> <li>- linking the vision to policies and actions</li> </ul> <p>2.2 The revised RDS identifies the following key challenges on climate change, rebuilding and rebalancing the economy, population growth, the location of jobs and houses, infrastructure provision and the protection of our natural and built environment.</p> <p>2.3 A summary of the main issues outlined in RDS consultation document is attached in Appendix 1. Elected members may wish to note the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The importance of Belfast City is recognised “as the heart of a Metropolitan Area, as the driver for regional economic growth; it remains the regional focus for administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities”.</li> <li>- Paragraph 4.26 recognises the pockets of deprivation within the city – 35% of the City’s population experience deprivation.</li> <li>- The consultation document identifies a number of key developments as opportunities to open up significant opportunities for rapid growth in Belfast , including: Titanic Quarter; Sirocco Quays, University of Ulster campus; Royal Exchange and City Quays. The Council may want the document to consider the inclusion of additional sites including the North Foreshore.</li> <li>- The Council would welcome the identification of the following priorities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regenerating inner and middle city areas with a focus on urban villages and public hubs as places for community facilities and services, and opening up opportunities to benefit from investment.</li> <li>2. Reinforcing the quality of the City centre shopping and business area and making it accessible to all by creating attractive and accessible links for inner city communities.</li> <li>3. Ensuring all citizens of Belfast benefit from wealth creation</li> </ol> </li> <li>- The Council welcomes Strategic Guidance 4: Grow the population of the City of Belfast</li> <li>- The consultation document states that “a precautionary approach needs to be taken in relation to future major retail development proposals based on the likely risk of out of centre shopping developments having undesirable impacts on city centre”. The Council considers that strategic guidance protecting the regional retail function of Belfast City Centre needs to be strengthened restricting the continued growth of out of town centre retail.</li> </ul> <p>2.4 The Council considers that the RDS should play a critical role in setting the context for the continued development of Belfast as the driver of growth for the region. It is welcomed that the consultation document recognises the importance of Belfast as the regional focus and also identifies the issue of continued population loss in the city.</p>
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2.5	<p>The Council considers it essential that the RDS maintains the balance of future growth in favour of Belfast as the driver of growth and provides formal linkages to any linked Investment Strategy proposals such as the transportation plan, infrastructure proposals and the emphasis on public transport provision and connectivity.</p> <p>The Development Department will prepare a response taking account of the issues and comments raised by elected members along with responses from internal consultation with Council departments.</p> <p>Members should note that DRD are holding public events to provide information and clarification on the RDS 10 year review. This presents the opportunity for the Council to contribute through both officer and political participation at the events and highlight issues needed to influence the final RDS and ensure the potential for the continued development of Belfast.</p> <p>Members may wish to attend one of the events scheduled in Belfast on the 26<sup>th</sup> January in the Waterfront Hall from 2pm to 4pm and from 6pm to 8pm. In addition it is suggested that Council officers arrange briefing sessions with elected members prior to the DRD consultation event to discuss the review document.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	There are no resource implications

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Members are requested to:
5.1	Note the two consultation events on the RDS 10 year review to be held on the 26 <sup>th</sup> of January and the opportunity for elected member participation at the events.
5.2	Agree for officers to schedule elected member briefing sessions prior to the consultation events on the 26 <sup>th</sup> January.

