

Key actions for 2013/14

City Leadership

1) Launch the Belfast Masterplan and develop implementation mechanisms for the associated projects.

The work to date is being used to inform the Core City Centre Regeneration Framework that is being produced by Urban Strategies together with Deloitte and Arup.

2) Support the implementation of the Local Investment Fund.

We are continuing to Support the implementation of the 64 Local Investment Fund as part of the Council Investment programme.

3) Support the strategic development of the University of Ulster North City Campus.

The Council is represented on the Strategic Advisory Forum, which is a public sector working group designed to facilitate the development of the university which is planned to be operational by 2018. Various sub-groups have been established to take forward the detail of the project and the Department participates on the transportation, employability and campus regeneration plan sub-groups. We also continue to highlight the importance and impact of the University relocation for the city centre.

4) Implement a framework for marketing the city and developing International Relations.

The international Framework and action plan 2013/14 has been developed and agreed by Council and key actions are being delivered. We signed an MOU with Shenyang and are arranging an inward and outward trade mission. We secured a 100% funded grant from UKERI to provide skill development for companies who want to trade with India. We signed a sister city agreement with Boston and are developing an action plan. We completed a trade mission to New York.

5) Host the Global India meeting in June 2013.

This has been completed and a detail report was submitted to Committee in September 2013.

6) Develop a portfolio of projects as a basis to secure EU funding for the Greater Belfast area for 2014-2020. A target figure will be developed once the new EU Programmes are open.

This is complete and we secured £2.5M ERDF money over the next 7 years. We are now lobbying for ESF money for Belfast and identifying opportunities for Interreg and Peace money from Europe. We are investigating other opportunities for EU funds.

7) Lead the NI EU Regional Forum

BCC continues to lead this 100 member strong platform for collaboration on EU matters along with Co-chair OFMDFM. The work of the Forum is regularly cited as best practice elsewhere in Europe. We helped to secure £275k to establish a capacity fund for four members and to recruit an administrative support post.

8) Plan for and influence the Local Government Reform, in respect of community planning, and the transfer of functions relating to planning and regeneration, enhanced local economic development, devolved EU funding and transfer of community assets.

Work is continuing and the priority is on delivering a smooth transition of services in April 2015. Progress is being reported to and monitored by the STC especially with regard to key decisions.

9) Develop an Integrated Economic Strategy and associated action plan.

The strategy is due to be submitted for committee consideration and, subject to approval, public consultation in the summer.

10) Deliver the City Development Conference and use the outputs to inform the future approach to State of the City Debates

Belfast: Future City Conference was held on 22 May 2013, with 176 attendees from all sectors across the city. The conference provided the opportunity to launch the review of the Belfast City Masterplan for consultation and to agree a number of city-wide outcomes around the themes of centre city, neighbourhoods, digital city and low carbon city. This formed the start of an ongoing engagement process with city stakeholders around key issues that will inform city development and a future community plan. The next major event is planned for June 2014.

11) Prepare for the transition of community development functions and plan for the implementation of the Belfast Community Investment Programme (BCIP) for the city (with DSD).

This project is now being managed within the broader project work for the LGR transfer of Regeneration.

12) Co-ordinate responses for the Department and Council on strategic planning/ transportation policies or issues.

Work is continuing on strategic issues and proposals in response to external factors and project priorities. This has expanded to include work on the LGR transfer of Planning responsibilities. Other responses have been prepared for Planning Policy Statements, and infrastructure proposals. This has been supplemented by ongoing participation on strategic planning /transport issues groups.

13) Co-ordinate responses to physical regeneration plans.

Work is continuing on strategic regeneration proposals including plans in response to consultations and project priorities as required. This has been supplemented by ongoing participation with established project steering groups.

Environment

14) Develop an investment proposition for the Renewable and Low Carbon Technology sectors.

We are still waiting for the commitment to fund the development. This needs to be confirmed so that we can be sure of the scale and scope of the development and hence develop appropriate proposals to attract potential businesses to the site.

15) Agree a detailed implementation plan with partners and Committee for implementation in 2015 of the Belfast public bike hire scheme.

Council has appointed NSL, whose consultancy arm, Project Centre, worked on the London Bike Hire scheme. NSL is set to deliver and maintain the scheme, with Nextbike providing the bicycle infrastructure and management system. Up to 30 docking stations will be provided as part of the first phase of the scheme. Detailed design will happen over the three months (starting in May) and construction of the docking stations is due to take place from November 2014 to February 2015.

Economy

16) Manage the development and funding of increased convention centre and exhibition centre space at the Waterfront Hall.

The letter of offer from NITB for the Waterfront Hall extension was received on 28 March 2014. A presentation of the plans was given to Committee on 18th Feb 2014 where a number of Members queries were clarified. This presentation confirmed that the plans would not impact on the existing public walkway which lay adjacent to the River Lagan (although there would be disruption during the construction due to health and safety requirements). It also outlined the energy efficiencies which would be incorporated within the design of the extension and indicated that the materials used would have a life expectancy of 50 year.

17) Lead on the delivery of an innovation centre.

There are three main aspects to the project: the build, community engagement and the operator model. A planning application was submitted in April, 2014 following 3 public consultations events. The capital contract is now out to tender. The Letter of Offer for the project is anticipated for the end of June. The operator model is being defined with a view to starting the procurement process in July, subject to committee approval.

18) Lead on the delivery of a creative/digital hub programme.

The project is undergoing a revised economic appraisal, which was submitted to InvestNI in May. They will give further consideration to funding and we expect a response by July. Property negotiations are currently ongoing.

19) Super-connected Broadband – raise awareness of the opportunities and stimulate demand among the business community for high speed internet; and administer and promote the voucher scheme to help with connection costs.

The letter of Offer for £300k has been secured to create demand for superconnected broadband. The project specification is now being developed with the aim to go to tender over the summer. Digital Services and the Economic Development Unit have agreed the parameters of the project to ensure that the marketing and other work is coordinated and complementary. Digital Services have now started advertising the scheme.

20) Secure funding and deliver the community access aspects as part of the super-connected broadband project.

The service is currently finalising the specification details with regard to the PC's. Once finalised this will enable wider usage. (e.g. Youth Media projects). We are currently recruiting for a project co-ordinator who will, as part of their remit, co-ordinate the roll out of an animation programme. The appointment will be made in the coming weeks.

21) Commission a City Centre Regeneration Strategy in partnership with DSD.

Urban Strategies together with Deloitte and Arup have been appointed to develop a regeneration and investment framework. This is due to be delivered in September 2014. Their research to date will be used to inform the City Centre Conference in June 2014. This will encourage increased engagement and allow us to test the direction of travel.

22) Directly create jobs by working with local partners to deliver targeted employability initiatives across the city including HARTE and the Belfast Enterprise Academy.

This year (2013-14) the Economic Development programmes helped to create over 370 jobs. This is a significant increase from last year when we helped to create 232 jobs. Various initiatives in the Markets helped local traders to create a further 9 jobs.

23) Work with partners to develop and deliver a city-wide employability and skills strategy and action plan.

Discussions are ongoing with key stakeholders and particularly DEL over the future strategic implementation of European Social Fund and the Council's role. We are still waiting for final confirmation of roles and budgets post LGR before developing a detailed strategy and action plan. This will then inform the Economic Development Unit's action plans for 2015 onwards.

24) Provide targeted business support interventions through a series of workshops and 1-2-1 mentoring, to improve business competitiveness and productivity and to generate business efficiencies.

The various business improvement programmes run by Economic Development were attended by almost 1,070 businesses and over 4,900 people.

25) Develop and implement a city wide retail support plan.

To inform the next stage of retail support, an independent evaluation of the Council's previous interventions was commissioned in December 2013. The results from this evaluation were submitted to Committee on the 18th March 2014. Committee approved the overall recommendations, which were to adopt a co-ordinated programme of activity within Council linking in with area working groups and other initiatives to ensure effective delivery of service and avoid duplication.

26) Support initiatives to increase awareness of Council tendering opportunities and build capacity among Belfast companies to tender for public procurement opportunities.

A number of specific contracts have already been highlighted within defined procurement category areas where training/workshops can be targeted. Ongoing workshops are being held with local suppliers particularly those who: have not been successful in the tendering process; or have not submitted a bid (or registered within the category). We are also delivering a programme of Procurement workshops that commenced in September 2013 and are timetabled for completion in 2015. These include "Introduction to procurement" (10 workshops) and "Consortia building" (7 workshops).

27) Develop a social clause policy and support implementation through council contracts.

The current position is to screen contracts with a minimum labour value of £250,000 and contract duration of at least 6 months for the inclusion of social clauses in line with CIFNI standards. An options paper is being considered by CMT. It gives options for the overall approach to social clauses; monitoring and management arrangements, and ongoing performance reporting.

28) Deliver Council's contribution to major events - the World Police & Fire Games 2013, Irish Dancing Championship 2013, prepare for Giro d'Italia in 2014, Tall Ships 2015 – and the annual programme of events.

2013 saw Belfast successfully host the World Police & Fire Games and preparations are well advanced for the Giro d'Italia in May 2014. In total, over 240,000 people attended our events this year. The value to the economy is estimated to be £7,750,000.

29) Develop Belfast's tourism product and deliver actions within the Integrated Tourism Strategy and action plan.

We have completed the majority of actions within the original Tourism Framework. We have appointed a consultant to develop a new framework to run until 2020. They have started their consultation with key stakeholders and presented to committee in April. A first draft is due for June/July which will be brought back to committee. Subject to committee approval we will then go to public consultation.

30) Market Belfast by supporting the marketing and visitor servicing activities of Visit Belfast.

The number of attendees at conferences secured by Visit Belfast this year was 24,000. It is estimated that the expenditure by those attendees was £30.2 Million. Other success include securing 60 cruise ships for 2014, generating £5.7m spend by leisure visitors through activity in the GB marketplace, and dealing with 534,515 enquiries via the 3 Tourist Information Centres. Areas under-performing include advertising equivalent from PR due to the lag time between press visits and coverage (though they are still expecting to reach targets by year end); and the value of accommodation booking fees from conferences, as delegates tend to negotiate better rates directly with hotels so there is no commission. Overall Visit Belfast's performance has remained on target for 2013/14 period.

31) Deliver on the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre.

The Welcome Centre relocated to Donegall Square North in December 2013. The technologies incorporated in the centre embrace a 'best-in-class' approach to ensure that visitors see more, experience more and enjoy more. The centre now has the capacity to meet the demands of an increasing number of tourists coming to Belfast.

32) Develop culture and arts by investing approximately £2M in cultural and artistic activities including the 'City of Festivals' and Creative Legacies.

50 festivals were supported together with 53 art & heritage projects. There were 126 different grants to 92 different organisations. These figures take into account groups who were funded in 2013/14 and who received funding again in 2014/15. In total £2,268,000 of TC&A grants, which includes £585k of grants for Creative and Cultural Belfast. The funded projects are cross community and cross city.

33) Improve and develop the city markets at St. George's and Smithfield in the context of supporting tourism and small businesses.

The strategic review by Deloitte has been completed and their paper was presented to and approved by Committee on 18th February. It was agreed that Market Staff would submit detailed and budgeted solutions for each of Deloitte's recommendations. In addition various other improvements have been implemented including: a storage policy; reviewing the waiting lists to speed up allocations; new signage on the building; revisions to the public recycling in consultation with Traders; social media training for Traders; St George's Christmas market with significant marketing effort; session with Visit Belfast to increase their focus on St George's; and various ongoing joint council marketing initiatives such as Restaurant Week, Belfast 400, Llamas Fair, etc.

St George's was awarded 'Best Large Indoor Market' by NABMA for 2014 and is the final 3 (out of more than 6,000 nominations) for Radio 4's Food and Farming award in the Best Food Market category. Markets footfall, across all BCC markets, for the year is estimated at 1,671,000.

34) Manage the new Markets Policy.

A review has been completed following the first year of operation of the policy. An options paper will be presented to Committee to address the issues that have emerged. Since the policy launched, six applications have been made and two have gone onto be regular markets.

35) Work towards the introduction of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

On 27 March DSD announced 7 areas that would benefit from capacity building support through a new BID academy. 3 of these areas - City Centre, Cathedral Quarter, and Lisburn Road - are in Belfast. A project plan is being developed to determine how we work in partnership with these areas to develop business plans and to agree strategic priorities.

36) Deliver a programme of events at the Waterfront and Ulster Hall.

The end of year attendance figure was just over 344,000, which is down from just under 366,000 last year. In addition to the ongoing challenges presented by the current economic climate, a number of our clients have restructured / reduced their event programmes across the board and this has impacted on performance at our venues. Diary availability at the Ulster Hall is also a perennial challenge. In order to bolster future performance, management will continue to identify ways in which to increase venue hires, own shows, conference business and implement appropriate marketing initiatives to grow event awareness and ultimately visitor numbers.

37) Implement the Integrated Cultural strategy

We have reviewed progress against the action plan to make sure that it will be fully delivered before the end of the strategy As reported elsewhere, we have also continued to distribute over £2.3M of grants as part of the strategy. Monitoring returns suggest that that the programmes we help to fund have generated participation figures of approximately 200k. We have also been working with the Grants Unit to ensure the successful transfer of the administrative aspects of culture and arts grants.

38) Secure World Host status for Belfast, working with the hospitality and retail sectors

A Destination Belfast manager was appointed in January 2014. They will be responsible for delivering the actions to achieve World Host Status. The main programme is due to launch this June and will be completed by June 2015.

39) Increase international business opportunities by organising the Belfast Tech Mission to west coast USA in October 2013

The Tech Mission took place in October 2013. This was the first business mission led by Council to the west coast of America. The mission provided an opportunity for 20 companies to travel to San Francisco and San Jose to showcase and network with leading companies, investors and venture capitalists. The mission achieved a number of significant successes for local businesses including:

- One who surpassed its Kickstarter £100,000 fundraising target during the mission*
- One announced a new \$800,000 funding round*
- Another established a partnership with PayPal and will roll out their software in the US in 2014*
- One company secured 5 new US based clients while another secured its first US client as a result of the mission.*

A number of other participating companies have also secured additional investment in their companies since returning from the mission.

People and Communities

40) Deliver the Renewing the Routes Programme 2012-16.

There were contract delays for Oldpark 2 and Andersonstown 4 , which delayed mobilisation but the work is now proceeding. The revised completion date is July 2014. This has created knock on delays for Lisburn Rd 1 and Castlereagh 2. A draft action plan for both roads will be presented to committee in June 14.

41) Support plans to restore and revitalise the Lagan Canal Corridor.

This project is now being taken forward by the Council's Property and Projects department. They have commissioned a feasibility study which is being completed by SLR Global Solutions.

42) Resource support for Community Development local activity (including management of an outcomes based £1.748m grant programme). Invest approximately £860,000 in community-based advice services per annum via 5 city-wide advice consortia.

We distributed 514 community based grants that were worth just over £2,760,000 this year which includes the investment of advice services to a value of £860,000.

43) Provide support for community engagement within Council e.g. training, skill development, raising confidence and access.

Community development toolkit training has been provided to a range of community organisations across the city on general governance, strategic planning and financial management to name a few. Additionally, the Community Sector Training Programme was delivered across all parts of the city on improving outcomes approaches, collaborative working and planning, neighbourhood planning, investment readiness, governance and risk and strategic and business planning for community groups of which there were 439 participants.

44) Manage and increase usage of community centres and other facilities.

Our 22 community centres achieved the PQASSO quality standard. BCC are the first local government authority to achieve this standard in N.I. One of the positive factors in working towards this award was a concentrated investment in developing a marketing and communications strategy with the facilities team. This work has helped to reverse the decline in attendance figure and helped us achieve a 3% growth this year. Total attendance for 2013-14 was 548,840. Usage (occupancy) levels continue to be strong. We exceeded target and showed slight growth from last year with a final figure of 74.6%.

45) Develop and introduce a new volunteering framework to support over 70,000 volunteering hours per annum in community facilities.

Our work to promote volunteering opportunities has been successful. We exceeded target and helped to create nearly 73,700 volunteer hours across the city.

46) Delivery of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Hannahstown Rural Development programme application.

Phase 1 is now complete. Phase 2 is now underway and is scheduled for opening at the end of June 2014.

47) Establish the potential impact of the Welfare Reforms.

It has been noted that the full impact of the reforms is unlikely to be realised until 2018; however the ongoing review of evidence is being used to inform the work of services such as the launch of the tribunal service.

48) Develop a mechanism to bring together key players from across the City to raise awareness of the impact and scale of poverty and identify ways to address it.

A Civic Forum was held in early 2014. This identified four priority themes: food, fuel, finance and jobs. A report is being prepared based on the work of the forum and will be presented to committee in September. It will provide a basis for further engagement with the sector later this year.

49) Deliver a coherent inter agency and inter departmental approach to working with the Traveller community.

We are continuing to co-ordinate the Belfast Interagency Forum. We also continue to work alongside An Muniá Tober and Bryson House to develop and deliver Traveller support services in the city. The newly appointed Traveller Liaison Officer has been working to establish close working relationships with forum members and is working to develop strategic work priorities, co-ordinating a range of sub groups and carrying out a Traveller needs assessment in the new Belfast area.

50) Propose a Council wide consistent criterion based framework for managing neighbourhood assets. If agreed, implement for the service.

Our project work is complete and a report was prepared for the Assets Board. This report included three broad strands of recommendations: management influences, outcomes and an overall framework. Associated work based on the recommendations is now being progressed as part of the asset transfer activity under LGR.

51) Implement the inter-departmental framework for children and young people (CYP).

The corporate CYP framework is awaiting CMT strategic review. The operational testing phase referenced in the framework paper has been incorporated in the annual business planning for the CYP unit, which pilots the proposed outcome approach on play and young people services in order to refine the best approach to support the development of CYP services across council. The CYP profile is in place and evolving as normal business.

52) Ensure Council compliance with Child Protection requirements.

The Council rolls out child protection training to staff and volunteers; carries out regular reviews of policy and procedures and incorporates changes in legislation and the external environment.

53) Provide a city-wide play service targeting need and developing new approaches for delivering play.

The play services provides a range of programmes providing play opportunities in a range of environments that include play centres, voluntary community centres, underground car park and parks. The service provides an outreach programme to support community run playgroups and parent & toddler groups and targets children from different ethnic backgrounds and abilities.

54) Deliver a comprehensive citywide summer programme.

The summer programme provided 106 summer schemes through our direct managed centres and grant aid programme which was attended by 9369 children. The programme was enhanced by a central events programme that supported 3000 children and young people.

55) Build the capacity of Youth Forum members to increase the participation of children and young people in the city and neighbourhood life.

The Council's Youth Forum completed training and successfully delivered with officers the Future Cities events '#LiveLouder' and 'Digi Dragons'. These events were ways the young people identified would enable participation and interests and celebrated the talents of young people themselves. The events also involved Youth Forum members consulting their peers through an Ipad survey and mood walls to capture and understand more fully young people's opinions on a future Belfast. The Youth Forum successfully targeted both young people, youth organisations and schools and were able to use the winners of each event to celebrate the future is bright with the talent the young people showcased through music and in identifying digital solutions to support mental health and the environment.

Recruitment has been advertised widely including a radio campaign to appoint the new Youth Forum ambassadors for next Youth Forum. There will be a number of activities for the outgoing Youth Forum up to the Summer as well.

56) Research and develop proposals for a Council Integrated Schools programme.

A children and young people's profile has been developed and a survey was completed to identifying existing council provision. Our review of this information suggested that it was not appropriate to take forward this programme at this time. It will be reviewed post LGR.

Better Services

57) Ensure compliance with all corporate process requirements including, audit reports, WIRES, risk management, IIP, etc.

We continue to monitor all requirements for audit and report them at Departmental management meetings. We have updated the department risk register. Processes for WIRES have been developed and implemented. 98.5% of Health and Safety recommendations have so far been implemented.

58) Implement a coordinated approach to grant management through the Grant Unit.

The Grant Unit has now taken over responsibility for the administration and monitoring of a number of Corporate Grants (13 smaller and 2 large) with a combined value of approximately £3.5m. These include areas such as Sports, Park Events, Good Relations, Community Safety, Culture and Arts, Community Art and City Events. The next stage is to transfer responsibility for administration and monitoring of a further 3 large grants and 2 small ones for Community Services with an approximate value of £2.5m. These will open in June 2014 to be awarded by April 2015.

An Organisation Fit to Lead and Serve

59) Use, promote and support evidence based planning via the use of CityStats and other local information.

We have developed new profiles for children and young people, the 2011 Census data and the new post LGR boundary areas. We are also managing the GIS programme for Council. We continue to provide CityStats training and have been developing statistical training as part of the Members capacity building and induction programme. We have helped with the resident survey and incorporating the IBM Smart Cities single metric recommendations.