



Report to: Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

Subject: Future City Conference – Planning for Growth

Date: Friday 25th April 2014

Reporting Officer: Chief Executive

Contact Officers: John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>In recognising that the core of the city centre is important to driving growth and investment in neighbourhoods, Committee will be aware that Urban Strategies (Joe Berridge), with Deloitte and ARUP as part of the consultant team, have commenced the development of a Belfast Core City Regeneration and Investment Framework which is due to be complete in September/October 2014. Urban Strategies have met with the Budget & Transformation Panel and as part of the programme of engagement a public city centre event is planned for June 2014 to make stakeholders aware of the approach, allow comparison with other cities and to test the direction of travel of the plan.</p>
1.2	<p>This is a key opportunity to reinforce the role of Belfast as the key regional driver and the importance of the city centre in planning for future economic growth and competitiveness. Members will be aware that the Council held the 'Belfast: Future City' Conference in May 2013 with around 170 attendees from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This was designed to build on the State of the City Development Debates and begin the process of ongoing engagement around priorities for city development in the context of the return of regeneration and place-shaping powers to the Council. This was well received and a conference report was made widely available in the summer edition of agendaNI. This proposed public city centre event in June clearly aligns and progresses the discussion that took place at the Future City Conference last year.</p>
1.3	<p>Members have previously noted that while the focus of this work is initially on the core city and surrounding communities it is important that it is placed firmly within the context of the wider regeneration and planning context of Local Government Reform i.e. the development of the local development plan, the community plan, and area regeneration frameworks. This report therefore sets out the proposed approach to the event in June, which is provisionally scheduled to take place on 20th June 2014.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Budget & Transformation Panel</p> <p>Urban Strategies have met with the Budget & Transformation Panel where Members highlighted a number of issues to be taken account of during their work. This included the need to ensure connectivity between the city centre and local communities in terms of accessibility and mobility and in terms of ensuring that job creation and investment benefit local residents. The importance of incorporating social clauses into investments was also cited as important to promoting and securing local employment. The issue of housing in the city centre was noted as well as the importance of creating an attractive city for tourists and residents alike. Suggestions were also made about the benefit of a city art gallery and a casino in terms of attracting tourists and spend in the city.</p>
2.2	<p>In recognising the importance of ensuring connectivity of the city centre and local communities, a separate report on the agenda deals with the procurement of expertise to support the creation of a city vision as part of the community planning work programme agreed by Members. We will ensure that the work carried out on the city centre is connected to this city wide programme so that the impact of recommendations of this work impact across the city.</p>
2.3	<p>Urban Strategies have planned a public city centre event to make stakeholders aware of the core city regeneration and investment framework and to test the direction of travel. There is merit in maximising this event to reinforce the city as the regional economic driver, This event, which will build on the positive feedback received following last year's Future City Conference will foster collaboration and engender support amongst key stakeholders for the emerging strategy.</p>
2.4	<p>The preferred date for the Belfast conference is 20th June is as Urban Strategies are involved in a major International Festival of Business Conference which will take place in Liverpool (key dates are 18 -19 June 2014). Given the leadership role Members will play in taking forward the new Council's place-shaping responsibilities, it is proposed that Members attend this conference to hear the experience of world-class practitioners and provide an opportunity to meet with Members and officials from Liverpool and Manchester Councils. Leeds has also been suggested. This would allow Members to practically explore the challenges facing towns and cities as they continue to develop, how they can link their citizens to opportunities and play an ever stronger role in driving regional and national growth using regeneration and planning powers. There is also an opportunity for Belfast to align the Future City Conference with this through scheduling and engaging key speakers to attract a wide range of stakeholders in Belfast.</p>
2.5	<p>Proposed Objectives for the 20 June Conference:</p> <p>The core city regeneration and investment plan must be set within the context of the broader city planning agenda which will include the community plan, the local development plan and the Council's new approach to city-wide and neighbourhood regeneration. The conference objectives are proposed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To launch the initial findings of the core city regeneration and investment framework and test the direction of travel - To agree 3-5 key projects/opportunities for growth for Belfast, particularly with the return of regeneration and place-shaping powers to council - To provide a focus for practitioners to share experience and ideas for Belfast's city centre development and growth - To provide a platform to inform stakeholders about the planned process to develop a city vision and community plan

	<p>There may also be an opportunity to make an announcement about a significant city infrastructure project.</p>
2.6	<p>Proposed Conference Structure The following conference sessions are proposed:</p> <p>Introduction to the regional city context – introduction from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister reinforcing the role of Belfast as a regional driver, noting the recovery in the economy and the importance of city centres in generating growth through employment, attracting business and as a key focal point.</p> <p>Belfast’s Future Growth –Professor Michael Parkinson OBE was a key speaker at the Future City Conference in 2013 and has reviewed Belfast’s competitiveness and capacity to deliver at regular intervals since 2004. Drawing together a number of key pieces of work such as Opportunities for Investment in Belfast, the impact of anchor institutions as well as the preparations for the Investment Conference scheduled to take place in Liverpool, Professor Parkinson will highlight the critical steps for Belfast and challenge us agree shared city development priorities, consider alternative resourcing plans and commit resources to deliver and shape Belfast’s future success.</p> <p>City Competitiveness and Growth – Bruce Katz regularly advises federal, state, regional and municipal leaders on creating urban prosperity. Bruce Katz is known to Belfast through his involvement in the State of the City Debates and the work on the Weak Market Cities. He is also a keynote speaker at the Liverpool conference. His recent work has focused on metropolitan cities and how networks of city leaders can work together to grow more jobs and make their communities more prosperous, by investing in infrastructure and equipping workers with the skills they need.</p> <p>Shaping the Core City: the Regeneration and Investment Plan – Joe Berridge, Urban Strategies will outline the work to date and direction of travel for the Regeneration and Investment Framework. This will be driven by the economic vision for Belfast and will include an indication of the opportunity projects and possibilities as well as alternative financial arrangements to support investment in regeneration.</p>
2.7	<p>Practitioner focussed workshops The final sessions will be informed by the work of Urban Strategies focussing on 4-5 key areas of opportunity for the core city; this is also likely to build on the city investments made through the Council’s Investment Programme 2012-15. Workshop discussions would be led by a key speaker demonstrating good practice examples from elsewhere and a local practitioner to provide the Belfast context. Initial examples of workshop topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University City – maximising the regenerative impact of the University of Ulster relocation to the city centre, and reinforcing the mutual value created through building critical relationships between universities / educational establishments and their cities. - Waterfront Developments – recognising the value and regenerative potential of the river in Belfast, this could refer to key projects/plans such as the Lagan Canals project. - Tech City/Hub – focusing on the development of the creative hub, innovation centre and Superconnected Belfast. This would also enable us to build on the success of the recent Tech Mission to Silicon Valley which included 20 local

	<p>private sector companies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism (Food/Music/Culture) – creating a strong marketing offer to attract conference visitors, the food/music scene is particularly important to sustain and promote the city centre. This would support the work currently underway with the development of the new Integrated Tourism Strategy and could build on the recent relationship and comparisons that have been made with Bilbao. Members may also wish to consider a future follow-up visit to Bilbao. - Transport/Connectivity – another theme within the Masterplan, this supports the development of Belfast Rapid Transit and reinforces the connectivity and mobility between neighbourhoods and the city centre.
2.8	<p>Leading the city Political input will be critical throughout the event. It is proposed that the Lord Mayor would introduce the event, providing the context for the city and the link with the Liverpool conference. It is suggested that specific input be provided by Chair of SP&R, to outline the challenges ahead and Chair of Development Committee, in providing an update on the Belfast masterplan and way forward. Key roles will be played by elected Members throughout the event.</p>
2.9	<p>Connecting to the broader planning agenda In line with the proposals outlined to Members at Statutory Transition Committee and at the all-Member community planning workshop on 5 March, it is recognised that while there is a need to provide focus and clarity on the 'core city' developments it is important that this is viewed within the context of the broader community planning framework. While the discussions at the event will connect to the community planning work programme the event will also sign-post this process to a wider audience.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The total cost of this event is estimated at £30,000 and has been budgeted for within 2014/15 Departmental estimates.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	Equality and good relations considerations will be taken into account in all aspects of this work.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree that a 'Future City Conference: Planning for Growth' event as outlined above should take place in June and the costs associated with the conference, its organisation and retention of expert contributors - Agree that the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Social Development should be invited to participate in the conference - Agree to nominate party representatives to attend the International Festival of Business Liverpool event on 18-19 June 2014 which will coincide with meetings with Councils in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds

6	Decision Tracking
Timeframe: June 2014 Reporting Officer: John McGrillen	