

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 12th April, 2017

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Graham (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, McGimpsey, L. Patterson and Spence; and
Councillors Beattie, Boyle, Dorrian, Dudgeon,
Hargey, Johnston, Kyle, Magee,
McAteer, McDonough-Brown, Mullan,
O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. D. Durkan, Director of Development;
Ms. N. Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Howard.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd April.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Beattie declared an interest in Item 3a, Presentation from Belfast Power Ltd., in that he was a Member of the Harbour Commission and he did not take part in the discussion.

Alderman McGimpsey and Councillors Dorrian, Johnston, Magee, McAteer and Mullan declared an interest in Item 4a, Gasworks Masterplan, in that they were Members of the Planning Committee, and Councillor Boyle declared an interest in the same item in that he was a Member of the Markets Development Committee. Upon receiving advice from the City Solicitor, the above mentioned seven Members left the room for the duration of the discussion on the item.

Matters Referred Back from Council

Notice of Motion - Credit Unions

(Councillor Attwood attended in connection with this item)

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The Committee considered the following Notice of Motion which, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the Council had referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 3rd April, 2017:

Proposed by Councillor Attwood and
Seconded by Councillor Kyle

“This Council notes the importance of credit unions, as member-owned financial co-operatives, democratically controlled by their members, which ensure people in local communities have access to credit at affordable rates.

The Council notes that there are 158 credit unions in Northern Ireland, with 93 as part of the Irish League of Credit Unions and 42 with the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions.

The Council notes that there is an opportunity, in line with its commitment to develop co-operatives, to develop a partnership/joint venture with credit unions to deliver projects with social value including but not limited to social and affordable housing.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to engage with the credit union movement and investigate innovative models for project delivery.”

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Councillor Attwood was in attendance in relation to the Motion and he was invited to the table.

During discussion, the Committee was advised that a meeting had taken place with the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of City Centre Development in relation to the possibilities outlined in the motion.

The Director of Development advised that he was content to engage with the Credit Union movement, given the work that the team carried out in supporting co-operatives.

The Committee agreed that representatives from the Credit Union movement be invited to attend a future meeting.

On-street Car Parking Charges: Response from Minister

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, had passed the following motion on On-Street Car Parking Charges, which had been proposed by Councillor Armitage and seconded by Councillor Long:

“This Council expresses its concern at the 16% increase in on-street car parking charges in Belfast, from £1.20 per hour to £1.40 per hour, announced by the Infrastructure Minister. This decision will adversely affect City Centre retail trade and will advantage the out-of-town shopping centres which are able to offer free car parking.

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The Council agrees to seek an urgent meeting with the Minister to ensure that there is improved consultation with all stakeholders, including the Council, regarding the transportation issues within the City, including for those who use cars and public transport and those who cycle and walk.”

It was reported that a response had now been received from the former Minister for Infrastructure. In his response, the former Minister advised that, given the limited timeframe in advance of the election, he was unable to attend any additional meetings but that his officials were available to attend any proposed meetings.

The Committee noted the response from the former Minister.

The Committee was informed that TransportNI had recently advised that it was unable to attend the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10th May or 14th June to present its Spring Report.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to hold a Special meeting, provisionally on Wednesday, 7th June, with representatives from the Department for Infrastructure being invited to attend to discuss the above mentioned transport issues in the City and also to receive the Spring Report from Transport NI.

Presentations

Belfast Power Limited

(Councillor Beattie declared an interest in this item, in that he was a Member of the Harbour Commission and he did not take part in the discussion.)

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that the Department for Infrastructure was responsible for processing the planning application from Belfast Power Limited, given its regional significance, and that the City Solicitor had previously advised that the Council’s Planning Committee would have a consultative role. She reminded those Members who were also Members of the Planning Committee that the City Solicitor had provided advice that he had no objection to them attending the presentation but that it might be appropriate for them to either not take part in any debate or to refrain from voicing opposition or support for the proposal.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. Ciaran Devine, Director of Belfast Power Ltd., and Mr. Ryan McBirney, Project Manager at Strategic Planning, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Devine explained to the Committee that he and his brother, Stephen, had co-founded the parent company Evermore Energy, and also owned Belfast Power Ltd. He advised the Members that Evermore Energy had successfully developed Northern Ireland’s largest renewable energy power station, Lisahally Combined Heat and Power Plant in Londonderry, for £83million. He outlined to the Committee that the company wanted to develop a similar project in Belfast but had found that there was a need for a much more substantial low-carbon power station.

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Mr. McBirney outlined the proposal for their second project, a state-of-the-art, gas-fired power station at the Belfast Harbour Estate which would connect to Northern Ireland's main gas supply at Knocknagoney. Mr. Devine explained to the Members that, when operational, it would generate low-carbon electricity for over 500,000 homes and businesses throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr. Devine explained to the Members that the Belfast Power Station represented a new era in low-carbon energy generation in Northern Ireland and he outlined a number of economic and environmental benefits which it would bring. He outlined that they were currently securing £280million of private investment and that the station would create over 700 jobs during construction and 50 full-time, highly skilled roles when the plant was operational. The Committee was also advised that, when operational, the plant would significantly reduce Northern Ireland's CO2 emissions as well as helping to achieve security of electricity supply.

In response to a Member's question, Mr. Devine advised the Committee that the proposed Power Station would be significantly more flexible than older power stations, in that it could use wind power when available and that it would revert to gas-power at other times to safeguard constant supply.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Information contained in the following four reports is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

East Bank Draft Masterplan (Restricted)

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. Chris Birkett and Mr. Andrew Gibbins, Arup Consulting Belfast, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Gibbins outlined to the Members a number of the objectives which they sought to achieve through the transformation of the East Bank area. The Committee was advised that this was an integrated strategy to guide the future development of the area, co-ordinate individual investments and projects and which would deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.

He reported that the East Bank area provided key access between the east of the city and the city centre but that traffic was often congested and highlighted that there was a real need for improved connectivity.

Mr. Birkett outlined to the Committee a number of phases which would seek to rationalise and rebalance the highway infrastructure, enabling strategic access and transform the pedestrian, cycle and public transport experience. He highlighted to the Members a number of key phases which included the introduction of Belfast Rapid Transit, Queen's Quay highway improvements, the removal of the flyover bridge and the creation of a Bridge End Boulevard. He emphasised to the Committee that the

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development of the Sirocco and Queens Quay sites was pivotal to the achievement of the strategy.

In response to a Member's question regarding car parking provision, Mr. Birkett outlined that they were looking at more sustainable transport options for the site, such as good public transport links and park and ride connections. The Chief Executive added that this would be considered through the Car Parking Strategy.

In response to a further Member's question, the Director of City Centre Development confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the current owners of the Sirocco site in relation to the draft masterplan.

After further discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

Restricted Items

Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan

Please note that, in accordance with Standing Order 47 and Section 41(1)(b) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the Chief Executive has received a valid Call-In requisition signed by 9 members of Council in relation to the following decision.

(Ms. C. Reynolds, Estates Manager, attended in connection with this item)

Upon receiving advice from the City Solicitor, Alderman McGimpsey and Councillors Boyle, Dorrian, Johnston, Magee, McAteer and Mullan declared an interest and left the room for the duration of the item. The City Solicitor identified that a planning application directly impacted by this item was scheduled for hearing by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 13 April 2017.

The Estates Manager advised the Committee that the former Development Committee, at its meeting in June 2005, had approved the appointment of Consarc to draw up draft proposals for the potential use of 6.5 acres of the former Gasworks site, adjoining the Gasworks Business Park, which had become known as the Gasworks Northern Fringe.

She advised the Members that, since the 2009 Masterplan, the adjoining NIE site on Stewart Street had recently been secured for the site's inclusion in the Council's Masterplanning exercise. She provided the Committee with an overview of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and reminded the Committee that Consarc had been re-appointed in April 2015 to engage with the local community to revise the Masterplan, taking account of the introduction of a much wider housing requirement in the BMAP housing designation.

She reported that, following engagement with various statutory agencies, including the Planning Service, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, TransportNI and

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further community consultation, Consarc had since provided a revised Masterplan for the Gasworks Northern Fringe.

She outlined that, taking account of both the BMAP housing designation and the original Masterplan's exclusive commercial proposals, the revised draft Masterplan proposed the introduction of residential uses to produce mixed-use proposals.

The Members were advised that the revised plan had been submitted to the Planning Service through the Pre-Application Discussions (PAD) process in order to establish the requirement for further consultants reports which would be needed to support any further submission to secure a formal outline planning permission.

The Chief Executive advised the Members that she wished to amend the recommendations within in the report to the following:

The Committee is requested to:

1. note the updated position in relation to the emerging Gasworks Northern Fringe Concept Masterplan;
2. note that a pre-planning process was being pursued; and
3. agree to submit an Outline Planning Application for mixed use development, including a PAD process.

During discussion, a Member expressed concern that a planning application within the Gasworks Northern Fringe site would be considered by the Planning Committee the following day, despite the Masterplan having not yet been completed. Whilst the Member stated that she did not want the entirety of the site to be used for social housing, she expressed concern that the application did not align with the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and was contrary to advice from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Hargey
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara

That the Committee agrees not to submit an Outline Planning Application as the Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan has not yet been completed

On a vote by show of hands four Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to:

1. note the updated position in relation to the emerging Gasworks Northern Fringe Concept Masterplan;
2. note that a pre-planning process was being pursued; and

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3. submit an Outline Planning Application for mixed use development, including a PAD process.

**International Events – UEFA Super Cup, 2019
and World Irish Dancing Championships, 2022**

The Director of Development reminded the Members that major events required a long lead-in time in terms of the bid development process and the preparations associated with hosting large events. He reported that there were two upcoming international events over the next five years which had specific time-bound requirements due to bidding deadlines, namely, the UEFA Super Cup in August, 2019 and the World Irish Dancing Championships from 9th – 18th April, 2022.

The Director outlined that, while a review was ongoing of the funding of events and festivals in the city, the rationale for bringing these requests to the Committee ahead of the finalisation of the review was that the bid deadlines for both events were ending in the next few months. He highlighted that, given the Council's previous successes in hosting major international events, engagement with partners to mobilise the Team Belfast approach to these events was important to allow sufficient time to be given to developing a strong and compelling bid.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. agreed to provide in-principle support, of up to £200,000, towards the 2019 UEFA Super Cup and up to £400,000 towards the 2022 World Irish Dancing Championships, subject to the availability of resources, and authorised officers to commence with the bidding process for these events; and
2. noted that, should Belfast be short-listed for these events, a report would be brought back to the Committee to secure the relevant resources associated with hosting the event in the City.

EU Capital of Culture - Update

The Director of Development provided the Committee with an overview of the due diligence which had been completed on the opportunity to submit a joint bid with Derry City and Strabane District Council to become the UK host of the European Capital of Culture 2023.

He outlined details of the bidding process and advised the Members that there were six assessment criteria which had been set by the European Commission, which included a demonstration of a long-term cultural Strategy, a European Dimension and Cultural and Artistic Content.

The Director outlined to the Committee a number of the potential risks which such a large scale event carried and advised the Committee that, after consideration of each of the risks, many had been identified as manageable given the extensive experience, knowledge and capacity within both Councils.

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The Members were advised that an options matrix had been completed and that a joint bid between Derry and Belfast, branded as Belfast-Derry or the Derry-Belfast bid had emerged as the strongest option.

After discussion the Committee:

1. noted the update on the progress to advance a joint bid with Derry City and Strabane District Council to host the European Capital of Culture in 2023; and
2. noted that officers were currently working on the development of a workshop for Members and would send out invites and additional information as soon as possible.

Request to Present to Committee

McCadden Design - May Committee

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from McCadden Design at its meeting on 10th May on the design concepts for the Belfast brand.

Growing Business and the Economy

Committee Plan - Summary Feedback of Workshop

The committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 **The Committee held its annual planning workshop on 6th March for Members to shape the upcoming work and agenda of the Committee and the new Corporate Plan, informed by the Council’s budget setting process for 2017/18. The workshop also provided the opportunity to consider the role that the Committee will play in ensuring that the Council’s contribution to delivering the Agenda is maximised.**
- 1.2 **The Belfast Agenda has at its core a commitment to inclusive growth. The Committee is familiar with the four main priorities in the Belfast Agenda which demonstrate the centrality of growing the local economy to improving quality of life in Belfast. It sets out an ambition for growth and opportunity that includes four headline goals to focus collaborative efforts on economic and social growth of Belfast so that by 2035:**
 - **Our city is home to an additional 70,000 new residents**
 - **Our urban economy supports 50,000 more jobs**
 - **There will be a 50% reduction in the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods**

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- Every young person leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential

1.3 The Committee has already noted that delivering the ambitions in the Belfast Agenda will require a significant uplift in the investment and resource commitment from the Council to ensure that, along with partner organisations, we develop appropriate support, services and programmes to grow the economy, improve the skills base, support city development and enhance the 'lived experience' in the city.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and provide any additional comments;
- Agree that officers use this information to compile a revised Committee Plan for 2017-18, for consideration at its meeting in May/June 2017;
- Agree to receive a presentation from the West Belfast Area Learning Community (ALC) at an upcoming meeting of the Committee outlining activities to improve educational attainment in the wider west Belfast area.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for:

- The development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards regeneration and growth of the city in the context of outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy decisions.
- Oversight of the exercise of Council functions in relation to economic development, urban development, tourism, culture & arts, European and international relations, car parks, city markets, city events, Belfast Castle, Malone House and Belfast Zoo.

3.2 With input from Prof Neil Gibson (UUEPC) the workshop provided an opportunity to set the Council's ambitions and Committee's progress and priorities within the current economic context and outlook. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Review the performance and achievements against the Committee Plan in 2016/17; and
- Translate the priorities of the Belfast Agenda into a work plan for the Committee to deliver in 2017/18.
- Appendix 1 contains a copy of the presentation on the Economic Outlook (Ulster University Economic Policy Centre - UUEPC) and the remaining presentations are in Appendix 2.

3.3 It has been recognised that to deliver on the city ambitions there is a need for a step change in what we do and how we work. The Committee has agreed to an uplift in investment in 2017/18 to enable preparatory and developmental work to be undertaken in order to significantly enhance the small business and investment services and align this with the planned employability and skills programmes, including the Belfast Works Programme which focuses on developing skills and employment opportunities for those furthest from the labour market and the Smart Cities Framework. This was supported at the workshop which emphasised the importance of supporting city growth, regeneration and community involvement to demonstrate that the Council is directly leading and delivering on inclusive growth for Belfast.

3.4 The key priorities and issues raised at the workshop are summarised under the priorities in the draft Belfast Agenda.

3.5 **Growing the Economy – Summary Key Priorities and Issues**

The following key priorities and issues were highlighted:

- Create a comprehensive & co-ordinated Business Support Service
- Develop an ‘Enterprise Framework’ to encourage a culture of enterprise to make Belfast a great place to do business
- New ways of doing business – collaborative opportunities, partnerships, investments , building on what works ‘Plug & Play’
- Continue to invest in the City Delegation to MIPIM
- Attract and support investment into Belfast by establishing a City Investment Advice Service (and concierge service)
- Build on the city’s relationships across the UK, Republic of Ireland and internationally to promote and position the city as a place to do business, invest in and visit
- Use the expertise of the Economic Forum to support a balanced approach to investment and targeting; e.g.

promoting and supporting existing high-value, large employment sectors (such as retail and manufacturing) versus small scale sectors with high potential (such as Cyber Security) and; to consider alternative economic models that may enhance inclusive growth

3.6 The Committee recognised that attracting investment and high value sectors to Belfast generates wider city and community economic benefits. However, the need to strengthen efforts to reduce economic inequalities and tackle poverty was emphasised and would assist in defining the Council's approach to inclusive growth. Discussion also highlighted the value of building strong relationships with the business sector and engaging communities in designing programmes and partnerships to grow the economy.

3.7 Working & Learning

The following key priorities and issues were highlighted:

- Develop the employability pipeline, including Belfast Works, and build on the 'academy model' focusing on key employment sectors and opportunities created by growth in hospitality/retail and social care
- Build stronger links with schools, communities and families to address educational inequalities and support the transition to employment; e.g. create mechanisms to recognise and share learning from those schools that are performing well; use community facilities for educational workshops, careers advice etc.
- Engage with and understand the experience of those who are furthest from the labour market to identify realistic solutions and pathways to employment
- Leverage the power of the city's anchor institutes to maximise social clauses, opportunities through public procurement and the supply chain as well as employment opportunities
- Create a culture where 'all jobs matter' and are valued

3.8 The Committee reinforced the need to address the skills and employability challenges within the city and supported the proposal to seek enhanced devolution of powers and finances through a City Growth Deal to support an integrated skills and employability programme. However, the Council's key role in engaging with communities was emphasised in addressing and bridging gaps to secure regeneration as well as growth. A City Growth Deal should include investment in communities.

3.9 City Development

The following key priorities and issues were highlighted:

- Deliver the key regeneration projects in the City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy in a way that creates local opportunities and connects the city and its communities e.g. the Linen Quarter and Transport Hub; North East Quarter; Titanic Quarter and East Bank etc
- Animate the city through a targeted programme of events, activities and interventions including interim uses to revitalise the city as a welcoming, social, cultural and liveable city
- Develop a ‘liveability strategy’ to encourage city centre living, support diversity and connections to existing city centre communities
- Boost the City’s reputation as a visitor destination for leisure and business tourists – enhancing the cultural offer, delivering the Integrated Tourism Strategy and connecting the infrastructure e.g. Belfast Waterfront, community tourism trails, Titanic Belfast etc.
- Create a new world class visitor attraction in the city – the ‘Belfast Story’ visitor attraction
- Deliver the city car parking strategy to increase connectivity and accessibility
- Promote and position Belfast as a place to do business, invest and visit – delivering the place positioning strategy and building on the successful ‘Team Belfast’ approach at MIPIM

3.10 Regeneration powers are critical to developing and growing the city, combined with the need to improve the city’s infrastructure (sewage, roads, digital etc) in order to service an increased city population. As a landowner the Council also has a role in leading by example to regenerate and make better use of its own sites. The housing market and housing needs were considered vital to promoting city centre living and growing the population. Central to success is connecting and engaging with communities to understand the lived experience of the city to ensure that strategies and plans address the issues that matter to people.

3.11 A holistic approach to designing and developing interventions, programmes and plans will be key to tackling the city’s challenges and issues in a way that makes a real difference to the quality of life and experience of the city. Increasing the city’s competitiveness is vital to deliver on the

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Belfast Agenda and will require a partnership approach at all levels to ensure that communities are connected to the opportunities for growth and benefit from that growth. The key elements of the Committee work plan over the next 12 months will therefore be based on the following:

- City growth, regeneration and development;**
- Further developing the skills and employability programme;**
- Developing and delivering a comprehensive small business service;**
- Revisiting the transfer of regeneration powers;**
- Engaging and connecting communities;**
- Understanding the city– getting beneath the statistics**
- Exploring new ways of working to co-design and co-deliver solutions;**
- New approach to events, festivals and culture**

- 3.12 This approach will be vital to grow and develop the city in an inclusive way that benefits all communities. A Committee Plan will be presented to Committee in June.**

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.13 The Committee Plan will be developed in the context of the cash limits previously agreed by Committee and approved by Council in February 2017.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.14 Programmes and activities contained within the Committee Plan will be subject to appropriate equality and good relations considerations.”**

In response to a Member’s question regarding the promotion of city centre living, the Director of City Centre Development reminded the Committee that this issue would be covered in the upcoming study visit to Leeds and that she would circulate details of an upcoming seminar on that topic to the Members.

In response to a further Member’s question regarding the potential impact that Brexit might have on the City, both socially and economically, the Chief Executive advised the Committee that a piece of work in relation to this was ongoing and would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in the coming months. She explained that, pending that Committee’s approval, a report would then be submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Employability and Skills - Annual Workplan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on the work undertaken to date to support employability and skills development in the city;
- Seek Member endorsement and budgetary approval for priority initiatives, set out in 3.10 to be led by the Council in partnership with other organisations with the aim of responding to economic opportunities and addressing key employability and skill challenges.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the employability and skills activities undertaken within the 2016/17 financial year and progress achieved to date;
- Note and approve priority actions identified for development and delivery in 2017/18 and approve expenditure of proposed budgets;
- Agree to development of partnership structures to facilitate the delivery of priority actions where there is alignment of purpose and where there is an opportunity to share resources.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast is a major source of employment not only for the resident population for also for the wider region; over one third of all jobs in Northern Ireland are located within the city. As the economy evolves and becomes more knowledge-based and service industry-focused, it is essential that skills development activity – at all levels – is informed by the needs of the changing marketplace.

3.2 Forecasts suggests that only 1 in 6 of new jobs (16%) in the future will require no or low skills levels (below level 2). At present, more than 30% of the working age population in Belfast fits within this skills profile. The challenge, therefore, is to consider how the current workforce can be skilled up and how the education and skills provision for those not yet in the labour market can be tailored to ensure that there is greater alignment between skills supply and demand.

- 3.3** One of the most significant challenges to the city's economic competitiveness is the high level of economic inactivity. Current figures suggest that this is around 31% of the population that could work but that are not active in the labour market. In some areas of Belfast, this figures rises to more than 40%. The reasons behind these figures are numerous and complex. The group is made up of a number of different 'segments' including students, lone parents and those unable to work due to reasons of ill-health. Changes to the benefits regime mean that there is some protection for these groups up to 2020. However, after that, there will be a much greater focus on trying to move these individuals into the labour market, and there may be benefit penalties for not doing so. Given the geographically-focused nature of these statistics, the impact on local communities could be significant. It is therefore critical that interventions are developed now to support this target group to move towards employment where possible, taking account of the multiple challenges that they may face in moving back into work. There are, of course, a number of interconnected issues that contribute towards an individual's ability to enter the labour market such as; poor health and wellbeing; family culture; lack of or absence of skills; mobility issues; low paid jobs; access to childcare etc.
- 3.4** The long term vision for Belfast, as outlined in the Belfast Agenda includes an ambition to create a successful economy where everyone can reach their potential. To deliver upon this commitment, a twin track approach is required: supporting economic growth but ensuring that that growth is inclusive and that the benefits are accessible across the City. Over the next four years, the Belfast Agenda targets reflect this commitment: ambitious targets for economic growth focusing upon new job creation and private sector investment alongside targets to reduce the economic inactivity rate, increase skill levels and address educational inequalities.
- 3.5** The ambitions of the Belfast Agenda are reflected in wider regional policy including the Draft Programme for Government 2016-21 (PfG) and the NI Industrial Strategy: Economy 2030 (see separate report). Both strategies incorporate commitments to grow the economy whilst also ensuring that growth is undertaken in a sustainable and inclusive manner, benefiting society as a whole. The PfG also highlights the opportunity to develop place-specific approaches by working with Local Government. One of the initiatives proposed is the development of 'Local Works' creating a pathway to employment for those who are economically inactive.

- 3.6** As Members will be aware, approval has been given for Officers to develop a Council-led employability pathway model. This would provide a full programme of support and intervention which would take key client groups from a place where they are not job-ready to gaining employment in jobs that have been identified by developing close working relationships with employers across a range of sectors. The model focuses on an employer-led approach with interventions designed to equip participants with the skills required for specific employers/industries. Given the wide range of target groups and the complexity of issues that they face in finding a job, this model will require significant investment if it is to produce results of the scale that is required to address the economic inactivity challenges set out above. However, there are opportunities to consider how existing programme activity can be re-orientated to deliver elements of the pathway model. Likewise, there is an opportunity to engage with DfC to see how they might contribute resources to delivery in the context of its commitments in the draft PfG to develop a series of 'Local Works' proposals.
- 3.7** While the Council has increased its financial contribution towards employability and skills activity in recent years, it still has a limited budget in relative terms and does not have statutory responsibility for education, employment or skills development activities. As a result, it will be essential to engage with government partners to look at how we can influence their investment in this area. The statutory requirement through Community Planning for partners to work with the Council on an agreed plan for the area provides an unprecedented opportunity to work directly with key private and public sector partners and the employability and skills proposals are high on the list of priorities within the Belfast Agenda.
- 3.8** As Members will be aware, at the 24 June 2016 of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, a ten year Employability and Skills Framework for the city and associated year one action plan were approved. The Framework creates a structure for the delivery of employability and skills commitments contained within the Belfast Agenda. It is focused around four main aims, namely:
- Aim 1: increasing access to employment by supporting development of lower and entry levels skills and by addressing barriers preventing access to jobs;

- Aim 2: generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors;
- Aim 3: facilitate career progression routes across all skill levels;
- Aim 4: develop a culture of entrepreneurship at all levels.

3.9 Activities delivered in year one have focused on interventions primarily associated with aims 1 and 4 of the framework, in recognition of the scale of challenge in these areas, and given that the Council now has statutory responsibility for entrepreneurship and business start. Key activities delivered to date are outlined in Appendix 1.

3.10 Draft Action Plan – 2017/18

In 2017/18, activities will focus on delivery of the aims of the Employability and Skills Framework as well as the Belfast Agenda's 'Working and Learning' and 'Growing the Economy' priorities. In line with the Employability and Skills Framework aims, the draft programme of activity is set out below:

Aim 1: increasing access to employment by supporting development of lower and entry levels skills and by addressing barriers preventing access to jobs

- Continued support for the five ESF and two match-funded employability projects (as set out in 3.9 above) into their third and final year of delivery targeting the unemployed and economically inactive. Through these projects, it is expected that over 3500 residents will be engaged in the 2017/18 financial year with over 800 progressing into employment. In tandem it is also proposed to independently review all match-funded projects to assess their value for money and alignment to Belfast Agenda and Employability and Skills Framework priorities. The purpose of this review will be to inform the Council's position with regard to a future ESF funding call. Indications from the Department for the Economy suggest that the final call will open for applications in Autumn 2017. Projects will run for a period of three years and will be operational from April 2018. The costs associated with this work will be £240,000.
- Commence phase 1 delivery of the Belfast Employability Pathway Model targeting employers within key sectors including healthcare, retail, construction, hospitality and public sectors.

The pathway will be designed to meet the specific skills requirements of each individual sector and, where applicable, will be designed to avail of existing employability provision such as Council match-funded ESF projects and/or existing FE provision. However, it is recognised that bespoke pathway models and/or additional investment in existing provision may be required to create models of delivery which meet industry needs. This is likely to necessitate new forms of partnership working. It is anticipated that over 250 individuals will be supported into employment through this activity. The costs associated with the development and delivery of the model will be £255,000.

- To address educational underachievement of young people, it is proposed to complete delivery of early engagement interventions for those who are furthest removed from the labour market, based on learning gained through the delivery of sports based pilot projects, expected to complete in summer 2017. Current projects are aiming to engage with over 350 young people who are or are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Upon completion a review of activity will take place to inform future client groups and optimal approaches for engagement. It is proposed that a new early intervention programme will be developed and is expected to be operational from late Autumn 2017. The costs associated with delivery of the new interventions will be £50,000.

- Feasibility work will be undertaken in this financial year to explore options for the introduction of a ‘city pledge’ for young people. This is in line with the commitment in the Belfast Agenda to ensure that every young person has a positive destination. This will be part of a research budget of £30,000 that will be used to explore this area of work as well as the review of ESF activity and research into graduate employment/underemployment.

Aim 2: generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors

- We will work with the major further and higher education institutions to ensure alignment of course provision to meet industry needs. We will do this by engaging with the organisations to share the analysis from our sector development work, for example the emerging Cyber Security Action Plan. The budget allocation for this activity will be met from the sector development plan budget already approved by this Committee
- Through our new Investor Support Service, we will work with Invest NI to engage with new employers to identify specific skills challenges and invest in support services to ensure that there is an adequate skills pipeline
- We will support skills development initiatives within micro and small businesses in order to support staff development and retention. This activity will be supported through our Small Business Support Plan which is also being presented to this Committee for approval.

Aim 3: facilitate career progression routes across all skill levels

- We will continue to work in conjunction with the Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy to organise large scale (city centre-based) and localised job fairs, including the Skills NI career fair. The costs associated with this work will be £20,000.
- We will work with employers as part of the employability pathway to explore the potential for 'next steps' training for individuals once they access the entry level employment opportunities. This work will help to create ongoing demand for the entry level jobs and will ensure that individuals feel the financial benefit of moving into employment. The costs associated with this work are part of the budget set aside for the employability pathway work.
- We will continue to support the Council's ambition of becoming a Learning City through the ongoing work

with the Belfast Strategic Partnership's Lifelong Learning Group and exploring the potential of becoming a UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning.

Aim 4: develop a culture of entrepreneurship at all levels

There is more detail on the enterprise support activities within the separate report on Small Business Support Activity that is being presented to this Committee for endorsement. However, some of the highlights include:

- Working with Derry City and Strabane District Council on a City Business Start-up programme, focusing on key growth areas across both cities
- Targeted outreach activity for specific areas and key target groups: we will work closely with locally-based organisations to develop bespoke enterprise outreach sessions for key groups such as women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, young people. This will sit alongside our mainstream provision.

3.11 Across all of these activities, the theme of *inclusive growth* will be critical. We will continue to work to drive maximum social and economic benefit of investment decisions by the Council and other Anchor Institutions by implementing a 'Social Value Procurement Framework'. We will also work closely with colleagues in the Planning and Place Department to look at opportunities for generating opportunities for employment-related developer contributions.

3.12 Officers are also currently working on a number of education-related activities which will look at how the challenges around low skills and poor educational attainment can be addressed much earlier in a young person's life. Details of these proposals will be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee for endorsement.

3.13 **Financial & Resource Implications**

The recommended budget allocations for each of the elements set out in 3.10 are summarised below. These are already contained within existing revenue estimates.

Please note: enterprise support activities (Aim 4) will be supported from the Small Business budget – see separate report:

Match funding of 5 ESF projects and 2 other	£240,000
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employability projects. Projects to be funded will include: - ESF projects: LEMIS + (£80k), Springboard (£35K), Women's Tec (£35K) Women in Business (£15K) and Workforce (£25K) - Non-ESF projects: Shankill Women's Centre (£25K) and Lenadoon (£25k)	
Belfast Employability Pathway Model	£255,000
Early engagement interventions	£50,000
Career progression activities	£20,000
Research activities: ESF independent review, city pledge and graduate under/unemployment	£30,000

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Programmes have and will continue to be designed to help remove barriers to participation and promote equality of opportunity.”

During discussion, a Member asked how the Council could assist those young people who were furthest from the job market to develop entrepreneurial skills outside of a classroom setting. The Director advised the Committee that his department had worked with Catalyst Inc. on a number of events called 'Nights of Ambition', which brought 160 16-18 year old schoolchildren to an event in St. George's Market which enabled them to hear from and engage with entrepreneurs in an informal setting. The Director advised that he would be happy to look at engaging with the Youth and Community Sectors in relation to encouraging similar schemes for those groups.

A further Member suggested that Principals from a number of local schools be invited in to discuss the significant disparity in attainment levels between different schools.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Small Business Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed direction of travel for Council-led Small Business Support activity, focusing on actions to be delivered in the 2017/18 financial year. It sets out the thematic work areas which have been

framed by the NI Programme for Government, the Industrial Strategy for NI and The Belfast Agenda. The work programme significantly contributes to the Council's priorities of Growing the Economy, Working and Learning, City Development and Living Here. To ensure that activity can commence as soon as possible, this report also seeks delegated authority for approval of tenders to support early delivery.

- 1.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the Employability and Skills year two Action Plan report, also tabled to this Committee. Members should note that the Starting a Business work stream delivers against Aim 4 of the Employability and Skills Framework 'to develop a culture of entrepreneurship at all levels'.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the work programme for 2017/18 as detailed within the report
- Approve the budgets referenced against activity in Section 3 of the report (reference 3.5–3.9). A summary of the budgets is available on modern.gov.
- Give delegated authority to the Director of Development to proceed with procurement to deliver the scope of services set out in this report, subject to engagement with the Central Procurement Service and Legal Services.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Officers have been prioritising programmes and activity for 2017/18 financial year to deliver against key performance indicators identified in the Programme for Government (PfG), the draft Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Belfast Agenda. Primarily, these indicators relate to Jobs and Business Productivity. Members will be aware that the draft Belfast Agenda four year stretch goals to 2021 aim to:

- Create 15,000 new jobs;
- Attract £1 billion private sector Foreign Direct Investment;
- Support 4,000 small business start-ups;
- Double the economic value of out-of-state tourism; and
- Welcome 1.5 million overnight tourist stays per year.

3.2 The Council delivers a range of business support activities focused on Starting a Business, Growing a Business and Investing in Belfast. In 2016/17, this work helped deliver the following:

- 584 new businesses established**
- 900 new jobs created (from start-ups and business growth)**
- 2200 people supported through our business support activity**
- 20 social enterprises established.**

Priority activity for 2017/18 under these three themes will include:

3.3 Starting a Business

The Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland includes a commitment to driving inclusive, sustainable growth. It contains the ambition to be a more enterprising region with a culture of new business development. It aims to grow private sector output by 35%, creating 80,000 new jobs by 2030. Within the same time period it aims to put Northern Ireland in the top three most competitive small advanced economies increasing the annual spend of R&D to £1.5bn. Belfast accounts for 20% of the overall population, but 31% of all jobs in Northern Ireland. Its success will therefore be critical to achieving these ambitions.

3.4 The proportion of people who think they have the skills to start a business is lower than other UK regions although research also suggests that businesses remain in existence for longer than many other parts of the UK. Fear of failure is also significantly higher and starting a business is not viewed as a good career choice by more Northern Ireland residents than in most other parts of the UK.

3.5 In 2016/2017, Belfast City Council supported 584 start-ups, supporting around 650 jobs. In 2017/2018 we aim to increase this figure to 697 start-ups. It is proposed that this will be achieved via the additional support activities for 2017/2018 noted below.

- Investment in additional enterprise outreach activity: Officers have developed a programme of enterprise outreach and engagement activity to target under-represented groups across the City who that facing specific barriers in starting a business. A budget of £85,000 has been set aside for this work.**

- **Development of an enterprise framework for Belfast:** Officers recently met with local enterprise development stakeholders (12 organisations represented) to consider how the challenging business start-up targets set out in the Belfast Agenda could be achieved. The framework will consider where Belfast needs to aim, if it is going to benchmark itself against cities that have a vibrant start-up scene. It will also consider the 'mix' of businesses that is likely to emerge (sectors etc.) and will outline the support structures required to bring these forward so that the speed of development is increased and the business productivity is improved. The costs associated with the development of the framework are £20,000.
- **Financial incentivisation and cashflow management:** from our engagement with new-start businesses and young companies, one of the challenges that they constantly reference is access to finance and cash flow. We also understand that, particularly in the early days of a business, access to finance can be critical. Banks are often averse to lending at this point, particularly if a company or an individual has no trading history. We are currently exploring a financial incentivisation scheme for new start businesses. This would work alongside mainstream support and is likely to be focused on individuals from specific target groups (e.g. NEETS), particular geographical areas (e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal Areas) or business sectors. We are currently carrying our due diligence work on this funding model to ensure that there is no deadweight (i.e. that it acts as an incentive as opposed to supporting those that would already set up anyway). Likewise, it needs to add value to other financial supports available and should not distort the market. At this point, we have set aside £100,000 for this incentivisation scheme in the financial year 2017/18.
- **A Pilot City Business Start-up Project:** In addition to the mainstream regional business start-up programme ('Go for It') Derry City and Strabane District Council and Belfast City Council aim to pilot a longer-term intervention aimed at City based start-ups. This programme will target key City Centre based business start-up sectors across both Cities such as Fashion, Tourism, Markets, Food and Retail. It will reduce risks associated with start-up by providing sector specific mentoring, incentivised start-up such

as access to a commercial kitchen for food businesses or unit rental voucher schemes for areas of the City with high vacancy rates for retail. This will be a one year learning pilot and the impact will be assessed for consideration of future ERDF funding for a potential future three year programme. We have set aside £100,000 for this programme in the current financial year and this will be matched by £100,000 from Derry City and Strabane District Council.

- Targeted support programme for high potential start-ups: this Committee previously approved support for a new High-Growth Start-Up programme aimed at new (0-2 year old) businesses in the City that have the potential to grow, employ staff and consider opportunities to export (Venture for Success). This programme is currently being procured and will be in place by Summer 2017. The programme will focus on businesses operating in a number of key sectors that have the greatest potential in terms of higher level salaries, alignment to FDI and potential to be supported by research excellence at the Universities. These include:
 - Creative and Digital Industries
 - Financial and Professional Services
 - Advanced Engineering
 - Clean Technology
 - ICT and Electronics
 - Life and Health Sciences.
- Delivery of mainstream start-up programme 'Go for It': the Council is continuing to deliver the Regional Business Start-Up Programme (Go For It) via the interim contract with Oxford Innovation for Business Start-up and Growth Services. This is being delivered successfully in partnership with the Local Enterprise Agency Network until such times as the new regional programme is procured (estimated to be June 2017). Officers have liaised with each of the Local Enterprise Agencies delivering this programme and they are in agreement to continue with the interim approach until such times as a new regional programme can proceed. Belfast City Council is nearing completion of a Management Information System which has been developed for Councils to collectively monitor business start-up activity across NI under the programme. This programme and associated budget were previously approved by the Committee.

- Officers are currently supporting private sector businesses in the Tech start-up sector who independently wish to set up a collective forum to help support and shape future support provision in this area. There are no budgets associated with this activity. Officers are facilitating events and providing in-kind support through their time to get the projects off the ground.
- Other key services such as graduate business start-up and social enterprise/co-operative start-up will continue throughout 2017/2018. 50 students will be engaged in enterprise awareness activity under the graduate start-up programme. Additional support will be given to 30 of the 50 graduate entrepreneurs to further develop their businesses, resulting in the creation of 10 new jobs. The Social Enterprise and Co-operatives programme will engage 50 individuals/organisations in social enterprise/co-operative awareness activities and provide 30 individuals or organisations with support to establish a Social Enterprise or Co-operative resulting in the creation of 32 new jobs.

3.6 Growing a Business:

A recent Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) attitudinal survey identified a gap in support for businesses who are in between start-up and growth phase. The 5 main barriers to business growth were recorded as cash flow/getting paid (48%); taxes (corporation/VAT) (45%), Competition (43%), Business Rates (42%) and cost of promotion and marketing (40%). 27% of respondents stated that there was a lack of suitable business support.

- 3.7 The latest Tech City Report 2017 details that Belfast has seen almost as impressive growth figures as London for the five year period 2011 – 2015. Belfast has seen a 37% increase in the number of Tech Businesses emerge compared to London's 42%. Access to high quality graduates, a strong digital tech community, low cost of living and desirable property prices make Belfast an attractive place to start and grow a digital tech company. It is important to note, however, that the growth in Belfast has been from a much lower base than in the case of London. To help maintain this momentum, the following additional support activities for 2017/2018 are proposed:

- **Increasing access to public procurement opportunities:** At a previous meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, Members approved a programme to help companies access the opportunities arising from public sector procurement. Intertradelreland have now offered to provide Belfast businesses with access to similar support through their existing support programme. This will include workshops on key procurement issues, input from procurement professionals in key public sector organisations (including Belfast City Council) and access to Meet the Buyer events. This will mean that we will still achieve the original targets as set out (30 participating companies each year) but the financial contribution will be significantly less than the £60,000 already approved by the Committee. This approach has been reviewed and approved by the Council's Legal Services and it is intended to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Intertradelreland for a period of 3 years for a core programme. The budget for procurement support in 2017/18 is £36,000. The remainder of the budget originally set aside for this work has been reallocated to export growth support (see below).

- **Supporting exports and international trade activity:** Officers are proposing to collaborate with NI Chamber of Commerce through membership and corporate sponsorship which will position the Council to positively engage with the private sector and avail of the mainstream support available to Chamber members. This will also provide links to the International Chamber of Commerce Network which will support the International Trade and Export Activity and may include engagement in NI Chamber events and missions. This partnership will also involve engagement with Invest NI to ensure that companies can have access to their suite of programmes to help them develop their export potential. There will be an opportunity to consider how this tri-partite arrangement can make use of the World Trade Centre licence which the Council still has access to and which provides a link to more than 300 similar centres all across the world. Another strand to this work will be enabling businesses to access business opportunities created through linkages with Belfast's Sister Cities. The budget for this work is £86,000.

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- **Growth sector support:** The Centre for Secure Information Technology (CSIT) who presented to a previous Committee meeting is continuing to develop a Cyber Security strategy for Northern Ireland. Officers will work closely with the sector and delivery partners, to contribute to the achievement of actions contained within the draft strategy. We are also working with Invest NI and other partners on action plans for other growth sectors and these will be presented to the Committee in the course of the coming year. These sectors will include Financial Technology (Fin Tech), Legal Services, Life & Health Sciences and Creative Industries. The combined budget for this work is £145,000.

- **Creative and Tech Belfast development and profiling:** The Output Belfast brand has developed considerably over the past three years. It has become synonymous with the City's interactive, convergence and music sectors. Officers propose to work more strategically with our public sector sponsors such as Invest NI, Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI and Generator NI and private promoters such as Digital DNA, BelTech, TechXplore and Audio Visual Arts Conference to collectively deliver a programme of activity throughout 2017/18. Activity under the banner of 'Output Belfast' will include further development of our presence at SXSW in 2018 and will have the dual purpose of showcasing Belfast talent and providing capability support to business participants. Austin City Council has agreed to collaborate with Belfast City Council in showcasing joint tech business collaborations at SXSW in 2018 and we will invest in specialist support to prepare businesses to maximum advantage of the opportunities presented. Officers are also engaging with Generator NI (the Industry support body for music) to support an Output Belfast presence at MIDEM in Cannes and The Great Escape in Brighton throughout 2017 /18. These are key international events and they provide an opportunity to profile the City and its business and cultural assets in a way that reflects the emerging Place Positioning work. The budget for work is £110,000.

- **Development of new business accelerator models:** one of the current challenges for the business base in Belfast is the need to increase the number of high growth businesses. These companies need dedicated and specific support to move them to the next level.

We have explored some models, including an accelerator model developed in our Sister City, Boston. 'Mass Challenge' is a no-equity accelerator which brings a cohort of businesses on a three to four months intensive programme. Participating companies receive support including office space, intensive training, world-class mentoring, access to in-kind benefits. In this model, they also compete for a share of more than \$2M in equity-free prizes globally. Mass Challenge currently has accelerators in UK, Boston, Israel, Mexico and Switzerland and are interested in exploring the NI marketplace. If it was to proceed, this accelerator would complement existing Council support activities, such as the Innovation Factory. It would also support the work of other activities, such as Start Planet, Propel and E-Spark. A budget of £60,000 has been set aside for this work, but it is likely to require additional investment from other sources.

- Provision of generic business growth support: The Committee has already agreed to support the Council's generic business growth programme. This will be funded by ERDF and will provide targeted business mentoring to any business at the post-start stage with an ambition to grow, regardless of their sector. This support will provide a seamless transfer from the existing Start Up support programmes and the level of mentoring time available will be commensurate with the growth potential of the business. The budget for this piece of work is £46,000 net to Council and will benefit from £104,000 income from ERDF and Invest NI.

- Innovation Factory development: The Council will continue to work closely with the Innovation Factory operator to ensure that we remain on track to meet our occupancy and income targets. A report to the March Committee noted the key performance indicators for the year 2 business plan for the centre. By March 2018, the Innovation Factory is projected to have an average occupancy level of 24% and should be well on the way to achieving the job creation target of 187 jobs by 2020.

3.8 Investing in Belfast:

Members will be aware that the Council has been engaging much more significantly in international activity over the last number of years. The review of the International Relations Framework identified the need to focus on a number of themes

in key locations. This included business opportunities: both from FDI and also trade development opportunities. Many of the trade and export development opportunities are set out in the 'Growing a Business' section above.

- 3.9 Members previously agreed that, in order to shape the Investor Support Service that the Council may develop in conjunction with other partners, a research piece should be commissioned to identify the optimal approach and structure of the service. OCO Global have now been appointed to undertake this commission. This work is scheduled to be completed by June 2017 and a report will be brought back to Committee on completion. It will set out the menu of support to be provided as part of the Council's Investor Support and Concierge Services. The budget for this work was already approved by this Committee. A budget of £90,000 has been set aside for delivery of support activities in 2017/18.

3.10 Finance and Resource Implications

- Financial: The budgets for each of the individual support elements are set out in the body of the report 3.5 – 3.9. A summary of the proposed budgets is attached at Appendix 1. These are already contained within existing revenue estimates.
- Human Resources: Management are currently working with the Human Resources Team to ensure that there is access to the appropriate resources and skill sets to deliver the additional activity.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications

We are currently undertaking research to inform levels of under-represented groups in entrepreneurship and business start activity across Belfast. Marketing activity and support will be targeted to encourage increased participation by under-represented groups. Tailored support will be adopted where possible including interpretive services, translation services and specific support for persons with a disability as necessary."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Industrial Strategy - Consultation Response

The Committee agreed the draft response to the draft Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland (Economy 2030), a copy of which was available [here](#) on the Council's website, and noted that it would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in April for its approval.

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Cinemagic - Request for Funding

The Director of Development advised the Committee that Cinemagic was an organisation which worked with young people to develop skills within the growing film and television sector.

He outlined that Cinemagic had recently been working on a number of projects across Belfast, including activities focused on the Urban Villages areas of the City and, to date, had engaged with 30 youth groups and schools in all areas of the city. The young people had created original films from idea generation and script development right through to casting, production co-ordination, directing and cinematography, having shadowed professionals in each of these specialisms.

The Director highlighted that Cinemagic's ethos was to ensure that the young people accessing these opportunities were predominantly those from the more deprived neighbourhoods.

The Committee was advised that, in June 2017, Cinemagic planned to bring a group of young people from the west coast of the U.S.A. to Belfast for a collaborative project with young people from Belfast. He explained that they would work together to produce a film to share their experiences of living in their City environments and engaging around their hopes and ambitions for the future.

The Director outlined to the Members that the overall cost of the programme would be an estimated £32,000. The Committee was advised that Cinemagic had successfully secured £17,000 from The Ireland Funds to support costs associated with supporting the international visitors and were requesting a contribution of £15,000 from the Council towards the wider programme costs. He advised the Committee that the funding was available from within existing budgets.

The Committee:

1. noted the request to support a joint educational project between young people from Belfast and their counterparts from west coast USA in Summer 2017; and
2. approved a financial allocation of £15,000 towards the costs of the programme.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

MIPIM Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

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1.1 To report the outcome of Belfast's delegation to the MIPIM international property exhibition in March 2017, and to set out key recommendations to support future delivery.

2.0 Overview and Recommendations

2.1 The 2017 delegation built on the success of 2016, with a larger and more cohesive city partnership, and a stronger investment proposition. Belfast is now firmly on the radar of investors and developers who had not previously considered the city as a location for doing business.

2.2 The Belfast Agenda highlights the Council's ambition to attract 1 billion of investment into the city, along with medium term goals to develop 1.5m sq of Grade A Offices, and 2,500 hotel bed spaces by 2021. Delivering this ambitious agenda will require a further step change in how we position and promote the city. Committee are therefore asked to consider the following recommendations:

- I. Authorise officers to scope out options for re-positioning the Belfast stand at MIPIM 2018 to an area of higher footfall.**
- II. Approve in principle that the existing £60,000 investment be enhanced, subject to officers presenting more detailed proposals at later Committee.**
- III. Authorise officers to commence procurement for consultancy support for programming, event management, communications, and design.**

3.0 Key Outcomes

3.1 In February 2017 Belfast secured its first major success from last year's delegation, with an announcement from Signature Living to bring forward 5 new hotels in the city, including a George Best themed hotel. This was quickly followed through with the purchase of the Crumlin Road Court House, which Signature intends to develop as a four star hotel.

3.2 Council are still progressing conversations with investors and developers first engaged in 2016. However, this has now been supplemented by meetings with an additional 20 financial institutions and investors that we engaged last month, along with 350 contacts collated overall. Of particular note are meetings with potential investors into the new Transport Hub, including those who would have the scale, track record and expertise to consider investment into the adjacent 12-acre regeneration site, Weaver's Cross.

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City Delegation & Events Programme

- 3.3 A total of 79 people attended MIPIM as part of the Belfast delegation (up from 53 in 2016) with 38 organisational sponsors contributing £240,350 of private finance (up from 23 sponsors contributing £163,000 in 2016). This represents a 50% increase in one year and highlights the success of the strong public-private partnership that has been created across the city. It is worth noting that the Council contribution of £60,000, whilst vital for leveraging wider support, was only 20% of the combined budget, thus providing excellent value for money for the rate payer.
- 3.4 The enhanced delegation now includes a wide cross-section of interests, including developers, investors, banks, property agents, professional services, universities and government bodies. The collaborative approach adopted by Council has opened up more opportunities to meet investors and developers through partnership networks.
- 3.5 Belfast's pitch for 2017 was focused around seven key pillars: talent, tax, technology, location, high growth clusters, track record and quality of life. These were woven into a narrative involving 20 presentations on stand including:
- *Home of Thrones*: to highlight the unique success and strength of our creative industries.
 - *City of Millennials*: focusing on young people, and the opportunities to study, work and live in the city.
 - *Connected City*: highlighting the success of FDI, in particular technology investment.
 - *Ready for the World*: showcasing international events held in Belfast, with particular focus on the joint bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup.
 - *The Business of Tourism*: outlining the outstanding success of this growing sector, and the investment opportunities going forward.
- 3.6 Belfast City Council also had the opportunity to attend a number of wider conference events. These included an International Waterfront City Summit; the Estates Gazette City Vision Panel; the Department for Trade Regional Cities event. Members took part in high profile roundtable discussions, and the Chief Executive delivered a key note presentation highlighting anticipated opportunities in Belfast following Brexit.

- 3.7** A series of eye-catching events helped animate the stand and attracted significant external interest; including the use of the Throne from Game of Thrones which attracted over 2,000 delegates. This success reinforces the need to create high profile marketing initiatives for future years.
- 3.8** Feedback from the delegation was extremely positive. Participants were impressed by the leadership and organization provided by Council, and the quality of speakers and events. They confirmed that having the structure of the stand and organisation allowed them to get on with 'doing business' out at MIPIM, which helped leverage the impact that Belfast was able to make.
- 3.9** A comprehensive survey will be conducted as part of the contract of the existing appointed consultants in early April, to collate and consider delegate feedback in more detail. However, the overarching feedback from the delegation was that 2017 was more successful than 2016; and that we must keep pushing our city forward to international audiences as a collaborative group.

Media Strategy

- 3.10** Over 90 press articles about Belfast have been published (up from 29 last year), and this is likely to increase with anticipated features in trade and business press. We also issued 1,194 tweets and retweets in 10 days around the event, with 2.38m impressions achieved (almost 10 times higher than 2016). The overall financial and reputational value is currently being researched to quantify the media coverage achieved.
- 3.11** Five principal releases were made during the event: relocation of HMRC, Citi expansion, Signature Living hotel Investment, support for Belfast co-hosting Rugby World Cup and the DoF Investment Fund Announcement. These were a significant driver in generating interest in Belfast from print, broadcast, trade and online media.
- 3.12** Delegate communications were supported by a specially developed Belfast App, which highlighted key events and contact information. This was accessed by the majority of delegates and generated peak traffic of over 400 views per day. In addition the Belfast proposition was featured in a comprehensive brochure, which profiled every sponsor in the delegation.
- 3.13** The build up to MIPIM 2017 also enjoyed significant impact. Two key note events were held, a marketing event at the

former Belfast Telegraph building in December 2016 that attracted almost 100 potential delegates; and promotion of the Council's wider Go To Market Strategy at the Belfast Waterfront in February 2017. This attracted over 150 people and generated a number of positive broadcast features about investment in Belfast, and the physical development of the city.

- 3.14 The positive messaging about the city, which is permeating the MIPIM audience more deeply year on year, is changing both indigenous perceptions about Belfast and encouraging an international audience to start looking at the city for investment opportunities.

Context – Other Cities

- 3.15 It was noted that at MIPIM 2017 many of the regional cities from the UK significantly improved and increased the size of their stand, substantially raising their profile.

This looks set to continue and emphasises our need to continue to build on the success of MIPIM 16/17 and seek to continually improve and raise our profile.

Officers have also been informed that Dublin are likely to attend MIPIM in 2018 after an absence for a number of years.

Future Focus

- 3.16 In the immediate future officers will be following up expressions of interest from investors to arrange a schedule of visits to the city, and to translate this pipeline into tangible investments. We will continue to integrate city centre investment activity with our existing international marketing strategy; and to develop shared messaging alongside strategic partners in both the public and private sector.
- 3.17 The strong public-private partnership of the City Delegation is the cornerstone on which our success is based. The 50% growth in delegates and private funding between 2016 and 2017 highlights the growing credibility and cohesion that City Leadership has brought. Council need to nurture and develop this relationship on a continuous basis, creating an enduring city partnership that goes above and beyond the immediate needs of the delegation to MIPIM.
- 3.18 With the 50% growth of the Belfast delegation, and the growth of Council ambitions for the City, serious consideration should be given to the size and location of the Belfast stand.

The 2017 was twice the size of the year before, but was still limited in its ability to host larger groups and discussions and provided limited facilities for individual networking. In addition, while the Belfast programme successfully animated the stand, the location could be more prominent to obtain an increase in passing footfall and the opportunity for additional engagement.

- 3.19 The growing ambitions for 2018 underpins the requirement to start planning as soon as possible to ensure we can continue to deliver effectively, going above and beyond to ensure the best profile for our city and business opportunities for our Belfast delegation.

3.20 **Financial & Resource Implications**

Finance: Members are asked to note that a balanced budget is projected for the 2017 MIPIM fund of £300,000 (80% of which was raised from the private sector). Although excellent value for money, both in terms of partnership support and investment outcomes, the overall spend illustrates the high level of funding required to effectively market the city on the international stage.

- 3.21 Resources: To help resource the step change in our investment focus, the city centre team has recruited a senior marketing manager to co-ordinate MIPIM and all investment related marketing activity on a permanent basis. Members are asked to note that significant external resource is still required: including design and construction of the stand; PR & marketing; and the cost of preparatory events. Subject to approval from Members, these will be funded through the public-private budget outlined above.

- 3.22 **Equality and Good Relations**
None.”

After discussion, the Chief Executive advised the Committee that update reports on any further outcomes from MIPIM would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Events and Festivals Update (tabled)

The Committee considered the undernoted report and the associated Appendix which was available on modern.gov:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 At the February 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, the City Events Programme for 2017/18 was approved. This sets out the key events to be organised and delivered by the Council’s City Events Unit. These include the Titanic Maritime Festival, Halloween and St Patrick’s Day.

1.2 At that meeting, Members asked for additional details on other events and festivals supported to include events and festivals supported and delivered by the Council as well as those supported financially by the Council but delivered by others. Members also asked for performance indicators against the range of support provided by the Council.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to present an overview of events and festivals supported through the various Council funding streams and to set out the outcomes from this investment across the different funding streams.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the details of Council support for festivals and events through the range of funding streams set out in section 3 of the report.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Members may be aware that the Council supports a range of cultural, sporting and activity-based events through a number of grant programmes and funding streams. An overview of the grant schemes, as well as the available annual budgets is set out below:

Programme/funding stream	Aim/purpose	Overall budget allocation 2016/17
Core Multi-annual funding	Core multi-annual funding supports the core activities of arts and heritage organisations who deliver on the four	£1,450,592 (of which £424,000 was core funding to festival organisations)

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Programme/funding stream	Aim/purpose	Overall budget allocation 2016/17
	themes of the Council's Cultural Framework	
Community Festivals Fund	Joint funded by BCC and DC, this fund recognises the role that festivals can play in increasing social cohesion, celebrating cultural identity and strengthening community relations. The focus is on community-level events	£167,031 (of which 50% is provided by DfC)
Parks Events Grants	This grant scheme aims to encourage more people to get involved in our parks and create a sense of ownership	£98,121
Sports Events Grants	Aimed at attracting major sporting events and assisting organisations with the delivery of these. Also aimed at increasing the number of events in the City's sporting calendar	£90,849
Arts and Heritage Project Grant	Aims to support one-off arts and heritage projects that are new and that align with the Council's Cultural Framework	£36,178 to festivals and events-related activity; overall allocation was £160,000
Active Belfast Grants	Support for events to raise awareness of the benefits of remaining active	£24,785

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Programme/funding stream	Aim/purpose	Overall budget allocation 2016/17
Family friendly grants	Support for events to encourage participation by families	£15,337
Festival of Learning events	Promoting events to encourage lifelong learning	£26,933
Bonfire Grants	Supporting events to increase capacity or raise awareness in relation to issues of cultural expression	£52,835
City Events (organised directly by Council)	Provide a year-round programme of city events to attract residents and visitors and to generate economic impact for the city	£917,000
PCSP Grants	Support for activities to prevent, reduce or address ASB	£4,713
Good Relations Grants	Supporting positive relationships within communities to address issues of sectarianism and racism	£45,900 towards events - overall allocation was £286,278
Summer Intervention Fund	Supporting interventions to divert young people from involvement in conflict at times of heightened tension	£16,200 towards events: overall allocation £75,335

3.2 The breadth of activity taking place under these various funding mechanisms is significant. Each of the funding programmes has a set of agreed criteria against which applications are assessed. Likewise, the impact measurements for each of the funds will vary, depending on the objective of the particular funding programme. For example, while the City Events Programme run directly by the Council will measure economic impact in terms of visitor spend and bed nights, some of the smaller scale events will measure participant number (volunteers etc) as well as audience numbers. It is also important to note that, in most

cases, the Council is only making a contribution to the overall costs of an event, as opposed to fully funding the event.

- 3.3** A breakdown of the various events and festivals funding programmes including the measurements used to assess their impact is attached as Appendix 1. Note – these figures are for the 2016/17 financial year. Some of the highlights include:
- Council-managed City Events programme generated in excess of £8million in additional economic activity for Belfast, attracting almost 330,000 visitors.
 - 15 festivals and events supported through Core Multi-Annual Funding (CMAF) for the period 2016-2020. Members should note that this funding provides core costs to the organisation to support their development work, rather than directly funding the festival activity. The cumulative total of this investment is £424,000 annually.
 - 33 festivals and events funded through the Community Festivals Fund in 2016/17. A total of £167,031 allocated. These events attracted a combined audience figure of almost half a million people (482,541) and almost 50,000 participants (46,140).
- 3.4** Members will be aware that a strategic review of City festivals and events is currently underway. The purpose of this review is to consider how the Council, working closely with partners such as Tourism Northern Ireland, Arts Council for Northern Ireland and the Department for Communities can invest in a programme of events and festivals that can support the Belfast Agenda – which each of these organisations has also signed up to.
- 3.5** In parallel, a review of Council investment in grant activities is also under way. This review will consider – among other issues – how grant funding can contribute to supporting a vibrant programme of events in the city centre and in local communities. The review will also cover issues such as streamlining of processes and measures to ensure consistency around grant management.
- 3.6** While this latter review may bring about some changes in the focus of funding to support event activity, it is important to note that a number of the grant schemes are match-funded by other partners. As such, there is limited flexibility for the Council to make any significant changes to these grant funds without prior consent of the other partners. Given that many

of these are regional programmes, the ability to set local criteria is limited.

3.7 Financial & Resource Implications

The funding allocations for each of the grant streams are approved annually by the relevant Committee. The fund administration is managed by the Central Grants Unit.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications

All of the grant schemes are screened for equality issues. A number of the grant schemes focus directly on improving good relations.”

During discussion, a Member expressed concern that the current funding system for events and festivals was complex and confusing. The Director of Development confirmed to the Committee that a review of funding for events and festivals was ongoing and also pointed out that a simultaneous review of the nineteen different funding streams across the Council was taking place and that they would both be aligned to the Belfast Agenda.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Culture and Arts - Annual Action Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose or summary of main issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Seek approval for the activities set out in the year 2 delivery plan of the 2016-2020 Cultural Action Plan including approval to enter into relevant legal agreements and Service Level Agreements with named delivery partners.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and;
- Agree the year 2 delivery plan (2017/18) of the 2016/2020 Cultural Action Plan including the associated budget requirements, as set out in Appendix 1.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

The Cultural Framework was launched in October 2012. This Framework was created in consultation with the culture, arts and heritage sectors across Belfast and an action plan for 2012-15 has been delivered. A report in April 2016 also set out a further four year action plan (2016-2020) which helped re-focus efforts on areas of opportunity, in line with the original framework.

3.2 The vision for 2020 was that: ‘everyone in Belfast experiences and is inspired by our city’s diverse and distinctive culture and arts. Arts & Heritage are valued for enriching quality of life and creating wealth and the city’s culture and creativity is renowned throughout the world.’

3.3 The framework contains four main priorities for action, namely;

- Distinctly Belfast
- Attracting audiences
- Inspiring communities
- Strengthening the sector.

3.4 The support is delivered through a range of mechanisms including grant funding, development work with key bodies such as the Festivals Forum, Visual Arts Forum and strategic investment in areas such as audience development. Key to successful delivery of this framework is the ongoing need to work in partnership with city stakeholders including government agencies and the cultural sector itself.

3.5 Some of the priority activities delivered in 2016/17 are set out below.

Key Successes 16/17

- Approximately £1.4m invested in supporting 56 key cultural organisations through Core Multi Annual Funding
- Successful Festivals and Visual Arts fora are operating in the City
- 33 Community Festivals supported across the city through the Community Festivals Fund with match funding being provided by the Department for Communities (DfC)

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- £160,000 invested in supporting 29 culture, arts and heritage grants
 - City as a Gallery initiative delivered on behalf of BCC by PLACE. A programme of free events ran along a route from Botanic Gardens in south Belfast to the Waterworks in the north. Events included photographic exhibitions, art trails, art collages in café's, sculpture, music and temporary art installations
 - Irish premiere of outdoor spectacle Mù performed on 16 October in Ormeau Park as part of the International Festival
- 3.6 The Belfast Agenda identifies the contribution culture and arts to the city helping to improve quality of life, drive the economy and make Belfast a shared, welcoming and proud city.**
- 3.7 A vibrant and animated city is an essential element of strategies to improve the quality of life for the city residents. Equally it is a key element of the investment proposition for a city, focusing on a diverse cultural offer involving a mixture of indigenous talent and international events. Cultural Tourism is also a critical element of Belfast's tourism offer and one of the key customer segments in the city is the 'culturally curious'.**
- 3.8 The year 2 delivery plan has been drawn up to support the implementation of the 4-year action plan (2012-16) and is included at appendix 1. The plan has taken into consideration the range of actions to be delivered over the 4 year period and has identified a number of priorities to be delivered in 2017/18. As in previous years, partnership working is essential to the development and delivery of actions within the cultural framework and action plan. As government resources come under increasing pressure, it is important to retain focus on the cultural sector and to explore new partnerships and ways of doing business.**
- 3.9 Across each of the 4 themes, some of the proposed actions for 2017/18 include:**
- **Distinctly Belfast:**
 - **Deliver a 'Cultural Animation' programme in partnership with other internal departments including the City Regeneration Team and City Events.**

- **Inspiring Communities**
 - **Deliver an artist in residence programme in a number of key locations across the city, funded through the Peace 4 programme.**
 - **Develop a capacity building programme to enhance the skills of the sector across a number of key areas including marketing, product development, strategic and financial planning and social enterprise support.**

- **Attracting Audiences**
 - **Develop and deliver a tailored programme on audience development based on the baseline research undertaken by Audience NI to:**
 - **Establishing a framework for capturing audience information for festivals, events, galleries and community arts organisations who do not operate box offices**
 - **Work with a number of key organisations including the Festivals Forum to create opportunities for collaborative marketing and clustering to increase the profile of events across the year and increase ticket sales**

- **Strengthening the Sector:**
 - **Establish Memorandum of Understanding with key partners including Arts Council of Northern Ireland, to agree a range of targeted interventions that will enhance the sustainability for the sector.**
 - **Deliver a skills development and training programme that promotes innovation amongst the sector in partnership with a number of key organisations such as Arts & Business.**

3.10 One of the key areas for consideration in this year's delivery plan is how the sector can be mobilised and brought on board as part of the development phase for the European Capital of Culture bid for 2023. If the bid is to be successful, the Council may need to consider the level and focus of its current investment in the sector as the Capital of Culture designation requires mobilisation of cultural assets in the run up to the year and notes the requirement for consideration of legacy after the event. The Council is working with the Arts Council

to consider how collectively, we can make investments that will support the resilience and sustainability of the city's flagship cultural infrastructure

3.11 Targets set out in the Cultural Framework Action Plan 2016-2020 will be monitored on a quarterly basis and reported back to Committee annually. Data collated will include number of participants, number of events, geographical breakdown of attendees/participants in events.

3.12 Financial & Resource Implications

The Year 2 Delivery Plan will be supported by 2017/18 Tourism, Culture & Arts budget. The funding required has been set aside in the departmental budget for 2017/18 which has been approved by this Committee.

3.13 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The full Cultural Framework Strategy was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. This updated action plan will continue to be monitored accordingly."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Cyber Security Events

The Director reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 11th January, the Committee had received a presentation from Mr. S. Wray from Deloitte and Mr. D. Crozier from CSIT on the scale of the Cyber Security sector in Belfast as well as the potential for its future growth. At that meeting, Mr. Crozier had referenced a number of Cyber Security events which the City was due to host and Members asked that information on the Conferences be submitted to the Committee.

The Director provided the Members with details on two Cyber Security events which would be taking place in Belfast, namely:

- the Appsec Conference, between 8th and 12th May, at the Belfast Waterfront. It was Europe's biggest web security conference. The conference programme will consist of over 50 software security talks, 3 days of training courses and associated social events; and
- the CSIT World Cyber Security Technology research summit, within the framework of the Appsec Conference, from 9th-10th May, and would bring together the international research community, industry leaders, government policy makers, startups and SMEs from around the world. The theme for the 2017 summit was "Security for a future digital society" and would focus on planning for future cyber security challenges.

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The Committee:

1. noted the contents of the report; and
2. agreed to contact the Head of Economic and International Development if they wished to attend elements of either programme.

Routes Europe Conference

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 11th January, an update was provided on the upcoming Routes Europe Conference which would be taking place in Belfast between 23rd and 25th April, 2017. The Committee had acknowledged the opportunity presented by the event to showcase Belfast to a global business audience as well as the potential of delivering new air routes for Belfast. It was agreed that a further update would be submitted to the Committee, setting out the programme for the event and providing the Members with an opportunity to identify relevant elements of the conference which they might wish to attend. The Committee was advised that the overall programme was available on modern.gov.

The Members were advised that the main Conference would take place in the Belfast Waterfront, a welcome reception would be held in Belfast City Hall and a gala networking event would take place in Titanic Belfast.

The Committee:

1. noted the update on the Routes Europe Conference which would take place in Belfast for the first time on 23-25 April 2017;
2. agreed the attendance of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, or their nominees, one Member from each party and up to two additional Committee Members to attend the City Hall welcome reception on 23rd April and the Titanic Belfast reception on 24th April 2017; and
3. agreed to contact Maggie McNally if they wished to attend any of the wider conference sessions.

Operational Issues

Ciclovia 2017

The Director of Development reported that Ciclovia was an international health and community based initiative which closed a part of the City to traffic on a given day, for a specific period of time, whereby cyclists were given the opportunity to ride through the traffic free zone of the City. He outlined that, following the successful delivery of Ciclovia Belfast over the last two years, planning was now underway for the 2017 event.

The Director advised the Committee that the first Ciclovia Belfast event had been held in October, 2015 and had attracted over 1,500 participants, with double the number of participants having taken part the following year.

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The Director outlined to the Members that, since its inception, the event had been delivered with partnerships as a central part of its ethos. He advised the Committee that it was anticipated that those agencies which had a cycling specific brief, such as the Department of Infrastructure's Cycling Unit, Sustrans and NI Greenways, would again be key partners for the 2017 event.

He advised the Members that Ciclovía Belfast had a direct economic impact on those businesses which were located on or near the route, with feedback from retail units and hospitality facilities reporting significant increases in trade on the day.

In addition to the Council's involvement with the Belfast Bikes Scheme, the Members were also advised that the event aligned to a number of Council priorities as set out in the Belfast Agenda, including measures to reduce health inequalities, improve the transport infrastructure and to invest in the city and its neighbourhoods.

The Committee agreed to provide £10,000 of sponsorship towards the costs of the event, noting that funding had been set aside in Departmental budgets.

Belfast Car Parking Strategy

After brief discussion, the Committee agreed:

1. to defer consideration of the item to allow further discussion to take place; and
2. that the issue of car parking in the City be added to the agenda for the Special Committee meeting, provisionally scheduled to take place on 7th June, with representatives from the Department for Infrastructure invited to attend.

L'Arche Conference

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a request for funding for the L'Arche Federation Assembly which will take place in Belfast in June 2017.**

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the contents of the report**
- **Agree to provide financial assistance of £20,000 towards the cost of hosting the L'Arche International Federation Assembly event in Belfast in June 2017.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Members will be aware that business tourism is an increasingly important sector in the City. Following investment in the Belfast Waterfront, the sector is growing in significance. Last year, over 70 major conferences took place in Belfast, generating an economic benefit of £45million to the City.

3.2 L'Arche is a global network of residential homes built around the needs of people with learning disabilities. There are 150 L'Arche communities in 37 countries across the world. L'Arche Belfast is based on Ormeau Road and the organisation operates a number of projects including supported living schemes for those with learning disabilities, Root Soup – a catering social enterprise and Green Buds – a community allotment scheme.

3.3 The International Conference for all L'Arche members – the Federation Assembly – takes place every five years. The 2017 event will take place in Belfast on 20-27 June 2017. It is expected that more than 500 members will attend from the 37 countries where L'Arche has a presence.

3.4 The Federation Assembly will focus on scoping out the work programme for the organisation in the coming five years. It will look at how the organisation can serve more people, elect new inspirational leaders and celebrate the way in which people with learning disabilities are being championed and supported in many countries. This will include focusing on some of the work that is taking place in Belfast and that can be replicated all across the world.

3.5 The event will take place at Queen's University Belfast and delegates will travel to all parts of the City to visit relevant projects and to see how organisations in Belfast are supporting those with learning difficulties. Delegates will stay at the Queen's student accommodation (Queen's Elms). The overall cost of hosting the event is around £600,000. More than two thirds of this budget is spent on local facilities and activities, meaning that the event is a significant income generator for local hospitality businesses such as accommodation, transport, and catering as well as AV equipment and printers. In line with estimates from other conferences, the combined spend of delegates attending the event is likely to generate around £150,000 to the local

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economy. This means that the total investment in Belfast from this event will be around £750,000.

3.6 The majority of the income to cover the costs will come from delegate fees, fundraising and sponsorship as well as income from Charitable Trusts and support organisations. However, the organisation has a deficit in its budget and has approached the Council to seek funding support of £20,000 towards the costs of hosting the event in Belfast in June 2017.

3.7 **Financial & Resource Implications**

L'Arche has asked Belfast City Council to provide £20,000 support towards the costs associated with hosting the event in Belfast in June 2017. This budget is available within the city development stream of the departmental budget that was approved by this Committee and by Council in February 2017.

3.8 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**

This event supports the inclusion of those with learning disabilities.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairperson