

Belfast City Council

Annual Report 2017



Belfast
City Council



Contents

Foreword	5
The city we serve	6
Who we are and what we do	8
Our vision and priorities	9
Reporting back on progress	9
Belfast Residents' Survey	10
Awards and accolades	12
Governance: how council makes decisions	13
Resourcing our activities: financial summary	14
Corporate themes:	
Grow the economy and ensure inclusive growth	17
Improve the experience of living here	25
Support access to opportunities	31
City development	35
Moving forward, preparing for the future:	41
Belfast Agenda	42
Local Development Plan	43



Foreword

From the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Chief Executive.



As we reflect on 2016-17, we have much to be proud of as a council and a city.

Belfast is brimming with potential. We're continuing to attract interest from developers and investors, our tourism sector is booming, and our educated, youthful workforce is aligning its skills with the city's emerging and fast growing industries. And, as the only part of the UK with a land border with the EU, we're preparing for both the opportunities and the risks that Brexit may create.

Positioning ourselves as a competitive city in the global market remains key to many of our other ambitions. The more compelling we make our city offer, the more likely we are to boost foreign investment and tourism; to encourage the emergence of a skilled, well educated workforce; and to harness innovation and growth among our indigenous businesses. Now we want to go further, using our position as regional driver to help spread many of these benefits beyond Belfast to the wider region.

Operating within new city boundaries since April 2015, we're continuing to streamline and improve our day-to-day service delivery, from street cleaning and waste collection to the provision of parks, open spaces and community and leisure services.

We know that our residents and visitors value clean, attractive open spaces and a well-planned, properly maintained city. And we believe in creating a sustainable, integrated city that's capable of adapting and responding to future needs.

We want to tackle the challenges associated with deprivation and inequality by reaching out to the most marginalised parts of our city, supporting healthier life choices and playing our part in

removing barriers to educational and employment success.

We also understand the value of a well-connected network of communities, where people feel able to participate in civic life and benefit from practical and physical improvements to their lives and their sense of community and place.

Our 2016-17 Corporate Plan objectives relating to the economy, community life, city development and working and learning were all developed within this context.

We set these objectives because they addressed what matters most to people, in areas where we believed we could make most difference short term, or where we could carve out a way forward for the future.

So, our objectives included a mix of strategic, long term activities where progress will be slower to manifest and more specific 'quick wins' where success can be demonstrated within the year. Together, this range of improvement objectives helps to illustrate both the breadth and the depth of the council's efforts to respond to the opportunities and challenges ahead.

It's important for us to take stock of our progress to help us make the right choices about where to concentrate our future efforts. This document provides a snapshot of how we've performed against these objectives over the past year.

Suzanne Wylie
Chief Executive

Councillor John Hussey
Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

The city we serve

Belfast is on the up. We're a city of opportunity and ambition. This is the context within which Belfast City Council is delivering services and driving improvement.

A snapshot of our current position shows that:

Promoting the city's strengths



Belfast is the employment hub of the region, with around 31% (220,190) of all jobs in NI based in the city.



The city has an employment rate of 70.8% and accounts for 18.3% of the total NI employment figures.



Belfast is home to 10,100 VAT registered businesses with a start-up survival rate of 55.3%, above the UK average.



20,000 inward investment jobs were secured in the last 10 years with software and IT services topping the list, at more than 40% of the total.



Belfast is the world's number one destination for both financial technology investment and for US foreign direct investment in cyber security.



Between 2013 and 2015 209,091 business visitors made overnight trips to the city.



Belfast's tourism industry is booming, with over 1.4 million overnight visits contributing £278 million to the economy and supporting 17,000 jobs.



Over the last year the city welcomed 7.8 million passengers through our two main airports and 145,000 passengers on 82 cruise ships.

Enjoying the city's benefits



Belfast, with a city population of 338,907, is the capital of Northern Ireland; more than 670,000 people live within the wider metropolitan area.



The city is ideally placed within 90 minutes' drive to Dublin and a one hour fly time to London - served by 230 weekly flights.



Belfast is Europe's most business friendly city of its size and the world's top destination city for financial services technologies investments.



The city is home to both Queen's University, ranked in the top 1% worldwide, and Ulster University, placed in the top 150 new universities worldwide.



Belfast has been ranked 8th in a list of the top UK cities to live and work and is among the cities with the lowest cost of living in the world.



Residents and visitors enjoy access to 47 parks across the city, 15 of which have been awarded 'Green Flag' status.



Belfast was ranked one of the top places to travel for food in the world by National Geographic in 2016.



Belfast is a key location for international film making, including the world famous 'Game of Thrones' HBO series which pumped £166 million into the local economy.

“Belfast is superb value for money, delivering a youthful, cosmopolitan atmosphere in a compact, friendly city.”
(Mercer, 2016)

Optimising the city’s potential



Belfast is home to some of the happiest people in the UK. The EU’s 2016 Flash Barometer of quality of life rated only Newcastle upon Tyne ahead of Belfast among UK cities.



The Mercer 2015 Quality of Living rankings listed Belfast as 5th in the UK and 63rd overall out of a total of 230 cities around the world.



39% of Belfast’s workforce is educated to degree level or beyond.



We have one of the youngest populations in Europe with 41.5% under the age of 30 and 18.5% under 15 years of age.



More than 80,000 students attend Belfast’s three further and higher education institutes.



Belfast is a city of talent. 34.9% of the working age population has a university degree or higher and in 2016 79.1% of students achieved A*- C GCSEs making NI the top performing region in UK.



Across Europe, NI has the highest achieving primary school pupils in Maths and the second highest in literacy.



Life expectancy at birth in Belfast is 78.3 for males and 82.3 for females, in comparison with 79.1 years and 82.8 years respectively in the rest of the UK.

Developing the city’s infrastructure



Helped to deliver significant investment in the city, through the proactive processing of strategic planning applications for office, hotel and purpose-built student accommodation, with a potential construction value of around £300 million.



Two new hotels, providing 98 new rooms opened in the last year. A further six are now in construction and 13 have secured planning approval.



We benefit from the highest access to superfast broadband in the UK at 83% and are served by a 100-gigabit per second telecoms link with Europe and North America.



The NI Executive has committed to implement a corporation tax rate of 12.5% (matching the Republic of Ireland) from April 2018.



Belfast became host to the first Google Innovation Lab in Europe in 2016.



Belfast introduced a free public Wi-Fi network as part of our Super Connected scheme, peaking at 1 million users in December 2016.



Our City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy aims to attract £1 billion investment by 2030, with a £18.7 million fund to start Grade A private sector office developments.



We continue to deliver a £325 million physical investment programme across the city, ensuring that our physical programme also enables other quality of life improvements.

Who we are and what we do

Since local government reform in 2015, and the reduction in the number of councils, Belfast City Council remains the largest of Northern Ireland's 11 local authorities. We now serve an extended boundary area and a population of 339,000 residents, as well as the thousands of people who travel to the city to work, study and visit each day.



With a gross expenditure of £196 million in 2016-17, Belfast City Council's 2,300 employees, led by 60 councillors across 10 electoral areas, carry out six principal roles:

- a civic leadership role to ensure a better quality of life for our citizens;
- provision of a number of services and facilities including planning, parks and leisure, refuse and recycling and community services;
- promoting the arts, tourism, community and economic development;
- regulating and licensing activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection, building and public safety;
- a representative role on a number of bodies and boards, including education and health; and
- a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other government bodies and agencies on issues such as planning, water, roads and housing.

We now have a new role in leading community planning in Belfast – which requires key partners to agree and take forward a joined up plan for the area. We have additional economic development powers – and, crucially, we are also now the planning authority for the city.

With these new powers at our disposal we can now deliver real change.

Our vision and priorities

Our vision and priorities reflect the broad range of activity we undertake.

This incorporates direct service delivery, advocacy and influencing roles, partnership working and the internal support structures that allow us to plan, resource and manage our activities appropriately.

In May 2016 we agreed our corporate plan, setting out our main areas of work and 11 specific improvement objectives for the year ahead. These were by no means an expression of all that we would do for the city. As one of the key players in improving quality of life, we're committed to continuous improvement in all that we do on an ongoing basis.

Our improvement objectives offer a statement of intent about specific areas that we believe will set the foundation for further work, enable other stakeholders to more easily progress their ambitions and best reflect our overall strategic ambitions for the city.

They sit within four broad priority areas:

1. Grow the economy and ensure inclusive growth,
2. Improve the experience of living here,
3. Support access to opportunities; and
4. City development.



Reporting back on progress

Our progress against these improvement objectives is contained within this Annual Report. We have also recorded other significant achievements throughout the year.

Our Corporate Plan is also aligned to the longer term aspirations and plans identified in our community plan – the Belfast Agenda. We share these ambitions with a number of partners and we each have a unique contribution to make. We're working to establish where the council has most to offer and where we are most likely to maximise our impact in taking the city forward.

This will also help us decide the improvement objectives for our 2017-18 Corporate Plan.



Belfast Residents' Survey

We regularly consult our residents and other stakeholders to help inform the development of our future priorities and objectives. This includes a survey of a representative sample of our residents from all parts of the city. Some of the key feedback from our most recent survey, carried out at the beginning of 2017, is outlined below.



Living in Belfast

92% of respondents agree that Belfast is a good place to visit.



91% of respondents feel safe in the city centre during the day.



87% agree that Belfast has a vibrant and attractive city centre.



85% agree that Belfast is a well-connected city.

82% agree that Belfast is a welcoming and inclusive city.



81% agree that Belfast is an economically thriving and prosperous city.



76% of respondents believe that 'people in Belfast share in the economic success of the city'.



75% believe that people in Belfast are treated with equality and respect.



Local areas



91% are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.



87% agree that their local area has a strong sense of community.



82% agreed that their local area is clean and attractive.



82% agree that their local area has good parks and green space.



Rating the council's performance



81% agree that the council makes Belfast a better place to live.



74% agree that the council shows good leadership for the city.



76% agree that the council should have more power and responsibility for delivering services and developing the city.

Awards and accolades

Here's a selection of some of the awards we won in 2016-17.



St George's Market was voted **Best Market 2016** in the Observer Food Monthly Awards and **Best Market Attraction** at the 2016/17 NABMA awards.



Chief Executive, Suzanne Wylie, was awarded **Outstanding Business Woman of the Year** at the annual Women in Business Awards.



Belfast was rated **Best city in the UK** in the Guardian and Observer Travel Awards.



Girdwood Community Hub was named **RICS Project of the Year 2017**.



The Belfast Waterfront won **RICS Commercial Project of the Year 2017** and an **Accessibility Design Award** from the William Keown Trust.



Our Super Connected initiative received a **Good Governance Award** at the inaugural Public Finance Innovation Awards.



Belfast Bike Scheme awarded **Best Integrated Community Hub** at the Cycle Planning Awards 2016.



Ulster in Bloom Award for recognition of biodiversity efforts at Mary Peters Track.



Britain in Bloom gold award in the large city category.



Our student entrepreneurship programme, Belfast Enterprise Academy, was highly commended at the **Enterprising Britain Awards 2016**.



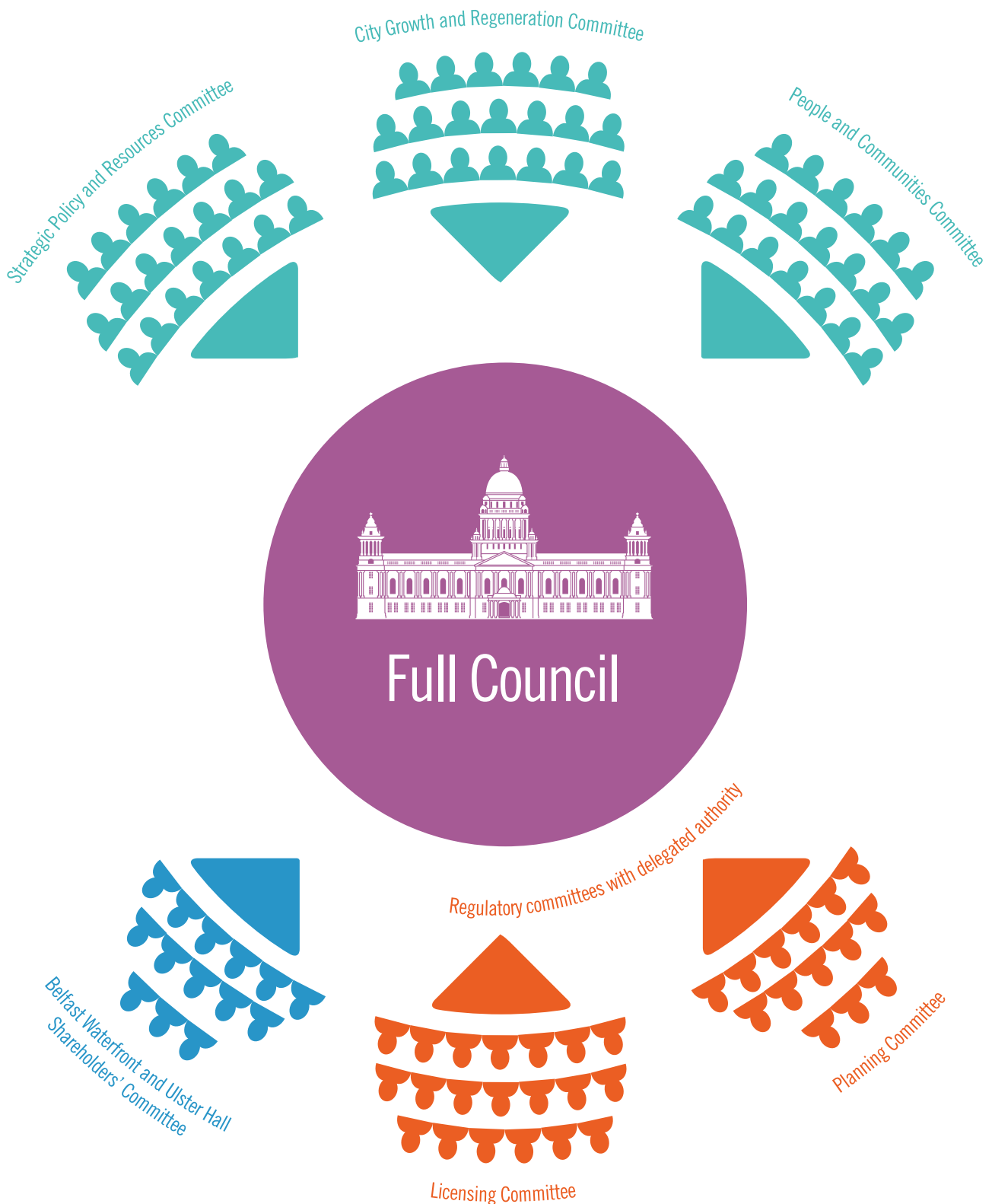
Best Local Authority Recycling Initiative award for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management.



Retained **Green Flag accreditations** for the quality of 15 of our parks and open spaces.

Governance: how council makes decisions

The work of Belfast City Council is overseen by the committee structure illustrated below.



Resourcing our activities: financial summary

Where our money comes from

Each year, we must ensure that we have the resources we need to deliver services to the standard expected by our ratepayers.

To do this, we submit details to our committees, for approval, of what we hope to do and how much

this will cost. This helps us understand how much money is required and, taking account of other sources of income, what 'rate' needs to be set for the city to raise the required money.

Belfast City Council gets its money from three key areas:

- **rates** from householders and businesses
- **grants** from central government
- **fees and charges** from services we deliver such as leisure, planning, waste disposal and building control

The council receives 75% of its income from district rates. The remaining income is raised through grants, fees and charges.

Approximately two thirds of the rate income comes from businesses in the city (non-domestic) and one third from households (domestic).



Business rates

The district rate is set and agreed by the council and helps pay for the services and facilities we provide, including:

- waste collection/disposal;
- street cleaning;
- indoor and outdoor leisure facilities;
- parks and recreation areas;
- regulatory/licensing services;
- community development;
- developing the economy; and
- supporting tourism and the arts.
- planning



Domestic rates

As well as this we delivered over £2 million cash savings through our Efficiency Programme.

Actual

District rate	£146,630,000
Fees and charges	£21,440,000
Grants	£13,720,000
Other	£14,270,000
Total income	£196,060,000

Where our money goes



	Actual
Bins and recycling	£29,800,000
Cemeteries and crematorium	£2,290,000
Community Services	£4,030,000
Capital Financing	£18,090,000
Council Management	£35,440,000
Councillors	£4,060,000
Culture and Heritage	£6,280,000
Economic Development	£7,390,000
Environmental Health	£13,650,000
Leisure	£28,190,000
Maintenance of properties	£8,730,000
Other services	£5,990,000
Planning and Building Control	£7,080,000
Street cleaning and public toilets	£12,190,000
Tourism	£5,280,000
Urban regeneration and community development	£7,560,000
Total expenditure	£196,050,000



**Grow the
economy
and ensure
inclusive
growth**

Grow the economy and ensure inclusive growth

“Growing the economy and creating more and better jobs”

Growing the economy and creating more and better jobs is crucial to achieving our ambitions for the city and delivering many of the outcomes we’re striving towards.

Belfast needs to become a confident, connected, competitive and cohesive city that delivers for the local population while also extending the benefits of its progress to the region. Belfast is the driver for the wider Northern Ireland economy and its success, as the region’s capital city and key business, employment and infrastructure hub, is critical to the success of Northern Ireland.

Over the last year, we’ve made significant progress towards creating a stronger and more resilient

economy. We’ve worked with partners to attract investment to Belfast, support employability and business growth, strengthen business relationships and promote tourism.

As well as being named the number one destination globally for financial technology investment Belfast is also the number one city in the world for US foreign direct investment in the cyber sector. We’ve also been named most business-friendly city of our size in Europe for two years running. Tourism continues to grow as the city becomes a ‘must see’ destination for international and domestic visitors.





Attract investment to Belfast and maximise the impact of the 'city region'

Highlights 2016-17:

- Bid for a game-changing City Growth Deal launched at the House of Commons in London in November 2016, to increase the city's powers and enable Belfast to grow, prosper and attract further investment.
- Led a delegation of 79 representatives from 38 organisations and raising a total of £300,500, to MIPIM 2017, building on the successful partnerships established at the 2016 event. Expressions of interest were recorded from 20 significant developers / investors, with 350 contacts overall. In February 2017, following initial contact from MIPIM, Signature Living announced their intention to invest in five hotels in the city, with two purchases, Crumlin Road Courthouse and the Scottish Mutual Building, already complete.
- Completed infrastructure works at Giant's Park (the North Foreshore – the city's former landfill site) to facilitate the creation of Northern Ireland's first Cleantech Hub, an innovative business cluster for companies working in the environmental sector. This multi-million pound development, part funded by Invest NI and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will create an estimated 330 jobs in green technologies and generate in the region of £88 million private sector investment for the city.
- Developed Belfast's International Relations Framework: we will work with city partners to proactively position Belfast on the international stage to attract more trade and investment, increase visitor and student numbers and build the necessary networks to support growth.
- Refocused our international relations efforts to strengthen existing Sister City relationships with Boston and Nashville in the USA and Shenyang in China and build on our strategic city partnerships with London and Dublin.
- Supported the development of three Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) to enable businesses to collectively invest in additional improvements to their area. The 'Belfast One' BID, covering around 1,200 properties in the main retail core and bringing in around £1.1 million of additional expenditure every year, became operational in April 2016. The city's second BID in the Cathedral Quarter, Destination CQ, became operational in October 2016 and covers around 600 businesses and organisations, bringing in around £1.7 million investment over the next five years. Work is underway to develop the city's third BID for the Linen Quarter.

Support the creation of more local employment opportunities through improved business growth in Belfast and strengthen business relationships



Highlights 2016-17:

- Opened the £9.1 million Innovation Factory, with accommodation space for up to 382 employees and 100+ small businesses in September 2016. So far, the Innovation Factory has delivered 127 business growth interventions to tenants and users and attracted 160 entrepreneurs to participate in nine events delivered by local economic development stakeholders. This project was part funded by ERDF and Invest NI.
- Helped to establish 584 new businesses, create 900 new jobs from start-ups and business growth and support 2,200 people through our business support and networking activity across a range of programmes.



Starting a business

- Developed 501 business plans for clients and created 380 jobs through the Regional Business Start Programme “Go for it”.
- Supported 27 organisations on a programme to create and grow social enterprise and co-operative businesses.
- Supported 36 graduates on Belfast Enterprise Academy, a specific programme aimed at graduates to encourage them to start their own business, resulting in 11 new businesses and nine new jobs.
- Worked to bring local businesses together through the Belfast Entrepreneurs’ Network (BEN), enabling them to create new contacts, share business ideas and avail of new and exciting business opportunities.
- Delivered events to support enterprise across under-represented groups including a Women in Business conference and a dedicated Syrian refugee business start-up programme.

Growing a business

- Delivered “Output Belfast” a music showcase event at South by Southwest, with 750 people attending and potential sales of £185,000 identified by participating companies.
- Supported key business events and conferences including Audio Visual Arts Festival, BelTech NI, Digital DNA and Belfast Partners.
- Provided 280 hours mentoring to 33 companies on a successful tendering programme, which contributed to £367,800 in tenders being won.
- Supported 89 businesses on a dedicated business growth mentoring programme, providing participants with up to 28 hours tailored one to one mentoring towards growing their business.
- Worked with Belfast’s key growth sectors and other partners to enhance the city’s economic growth and competitiveness; including the world recognised Centre for Secure Information Technology (CSIT) on the development of a Cyber Security Strategy for Northern Ireland.



Initiate an integrated approach to inclusive growth and tackling poverty

Highlights 2016-17:

- Worked with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to develop a manifesto on shared prosperity and reduced poverty in Northern Ireland.
- Screened all of our physical contracts to include social and community benefit clauses promoting corporate responsibility and supporting access to employment for disadvantaged groups, such as those included within the contract for our new Innovation Factory and the new Olympia.
- Facilitated seven focus groups with young people aged 13-18 across the city, with 68 young people attending. Led by our Belfast Youth Forum, these groups gathered views on the causes and impacts of poverty in the city, as well as young people's solutions for government. The young people collected and analysed data to create and launch a report entitled 'Poverty: It's not a choice.'
- Provided additional funding to the Citywide Tribunal Service to support their invaluable work across the city.
- Hosted the annual Northern Ireland Council for the Homeless Christmas lunch at Belfast City Hall, attended by more than 100 homeless people and refugees.
- Delivered the Affordable Warmth Scheme, to address fuel poverty in the most vulnerable households in the city in partnership with DfC and the NIHE, approving more than £2 million of grants and installing 1,372 measures to improve 646 homes.



Improve the tourism offer to attract more tourists to Belfast

Highlights 2016-17:

- Hosted almost 9.5 million visitors to the city; the visitor economy is now worth an estimated £450 million annually.
- Opened the £30 million Belfast Waterfront extension, a dedicated world class exhibition and conference facility. 50 conferences are projected for 2016-2021 generating 94,000 delegate days.
- Hosted 77 conferences in 2016, many in the newly-extended Belfast Waterfront, generating 75,000 bed nights for our hotels.
- Generated in excess of £8 million in additional economic activity for Belfast through our City Events programme, attracting almost 330,000 visitors to a series of high profile public events.
- Commenced proposals for a major new interactive, authentic cultural and visitor attraction - the Belfast Story – to act as a distinctive, visible and confident expression of the city's cultural heritage.
- Enjoyed a record breaking year at St George's Market with more than 1 million people visiting, including almost 46,500 visitors to the two Twilight Markets which featured more than 140 local food and craft retailers and 15 local restaurants.
- Delivered a range of events in support of NI Year of Food 2016 including the 'Focus on Food' conference. Belfast was named as one of the top places to visit for food in 2016 by the National Geographic Traveller magazine.
- Continued work to develop a new £1.3 million dedicated visitor attraction in the City Hall that will chart the history of Belfast from quiet hamlet to the vibrant, innovative, attractive city it is today. Opening in May 2017, visitors will be able to journey through 16 rooms in the east wing of City Hall which has been divided into six separate zones highlighting different city aspects.
- Attracted over 215,000 visitors to Belfast Zoo over the last 12 months.
- Supported a range of community tourism projects through our Local Investment Fund (LIF), including the new Eastside Visitor Centre in east Belfast and the development of a cultural trail for Fáilte Feirste Thiar Ltd in west Belfast.



**Improve the
experience
of living here**

Improve the experience of living here

“Working with local people to improve their neighbourhoods and their experience of living in Belfast”

According to our research, the things that matter most to people in Belfast are feeling safe, having access to employment opportunities, improved health and wellbeing and tackling the inequalities that exist across our city.

Communities and people are the lifeblood of our city. The vast majority of our resources are dedicated to ensuring that vital, everyday services

are delivered to the highest standard. Quality of life in Belfast depends upon the attractiveness, cleanliness and safety of our city and its neighbourhoods.

Belfast is also a culturally rich city, playing host to a wide range of festivals and arts, music, sports and cultural events in which the majority of our citizens are actively engaged throughout the year.

Improve the living experience in our neighbourhoods, including community relations between neighbourhoods

Highlights 2016-17:

- Continued to deliver a range of projects under our £9 million Local Investment Fund (LIF), designed to support local neighbourhood capital projects. More than 130 projects have now been approved including new sports provision, environmental improvements, training facilities and refurbishment works. During 2016-17, 23 projects worth £2.3 million were completed, bringing the total projects completed to date to over 50.
 - Established a Community and Neighbourhood Services Department to ensure that local people get integrated, flexible and responsive service delivery.
 - Resourced 121 community organisations through our Community Development large grants programme and 150 organisations through our small grants programme.
 - Provided £2.9 million in community grants to 287 recipients.
 - Facilitated 117 community clean ups involving 1,661 volunteers who undertook environmental enhancement projects, allowing local communities to take ownership of their own locality.
 - Invested in our neighbourhoods by delivering a range of local events including Rose Week,
- Spring Fair and the Autumn Fair, attracting a total of 90,555 visitors.
 - Organised ‘Party in the Park’ with our Belfast Youth Forum, a free event to mark National Play Day, attracting over 400 young people aged 12-18 to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.
 - Continued to support safer, shared and confident communities by providing more than £85,000 to 23 groups and organisations through the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP) Small Grants Scheme.
 - Delivered a range of community relations projects impacting at a neighbourhood level, including a shared space programme at Girdwood Community Hub.
 - Delivered a range of initiatives including the DiverseCity programme helping people to learn more about the people, places and communities that make our city.
 - Provided over £360,000 to support 160 organisations and developed projects to build meaningful, sustained and purposeful relationships through our Good Relations support and grant aid.
 - Submitted an application for Peace IV funding to support the delivery of the Belfast Local Action Plan.



Create a sustainable, vibrant and animated city

Highlights 2016-17:

- Continued to deliver our physical investment programme worth in excess of £325 million including:
 - Belfast Waterfront Conference and Exhibition Facility: expected to generate a £100 million return for Belfast over a five year period.
 - Connswater Community Greenway: completed works on the innovative transformative £40 million project. The project comprised the development of 16 km of new foot and cycle paths, improved green spaces, 23 new or improved bridges including Sam Thompson Bridge and James Ellis Bridge, 5km of flood walls and embankments, six new tourism and heritage trails and CS Lewis Square.
 - Olympia Leisure Centre and Spa: opened one of the most modern and advanced leisure facilities in Northern Ireland, with a 25m pool and teaching pool, 120 station gym, four court sports hall, a luxurious day spa and state of the art exercise studios. 350 new members in the first month, more than 200 children signed up to swim lessons and in excess of 500 children participating in activities over the big launch weekend.
 - Invested in our parks, open spaces and playgrounds: including playground refurbishment programmes at Cregagh; Jubilee Park; Alloa Street; Wedderburn; Grove; Glencairn; Ardoyne; Springhill Site A and Castleton; upgrade works at Roddens Crescent and Mount Eagles Playground and Twinbrook Wildlife Park; new playground and MUGA at Whiterock; and a new MUGA at Springfield Avenue.
- Continued to deliver our £14.1 million Playing Pitches strategy. A range of projects were completed in 2016-17 including a new pitch and pavilion at Woodlands, new pitch at Ormeau, new pitch and upgrades at Musgrave and new pavilions at Victoria and Ballysillan. Works on new pitches and pavilions at Falls Park and Cherryvale are due to commence during 2017/18. A new pitch was also completed at Sally Gardens, with a new pavilion currently being built.
- Secured and progressed Heritage Lottery Funding including funding for the Tropical Ravine at Botanic Gardens, the City Cemetery and Templemore Baths.
- Continued work on a range of projects under our £28.2 million Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), designed to support partnership projects across the city. 12 projects have now been approved in principle, with works on the first major project, Willowfield Church Halls in east Belfast, recently completed.
- Introduced a four year core multi-annual funding programme with approximately £1.4 million invested, supporting 56 arts and cultural organisations in the city.
- Supported 33 community festivals across the city through the Community Festivals Fund with match funding being provided by the Department for Communities (DfC).
- Invested £160,000 in small grants for arts and heritage projects across the city.
- Continued developing a Strategic Waste Plan to reduce the amount of waste generated, contributing to a city recycling rate of approximately 40% for the past year.
- Continued to exceed our city-wide street cleanliness targets maintaining a street cleanliness level of 75.





Reduce health inequalities

Highlights 2016-17:

- Invested £105 million under our Leisure Transformation Programme to help ensure that everyone in the city is given the opportunity to enjoy healthier lifestyles. Seven new leisure facilities will be developed across Belfast, each with its own unique selling point to encourage people to access leisure facilities across the city.
 - The next phase of the programme will see the redevelopment of Andersonstown Leisure Centre, the Robinson Centre and Brook Activity Centre with works due to commence in summer 2017. We're also progressing plans at Templemore Baths, Avoniel, the next stage of development at Girdwood and plans to open a new city centre gym in Autumn 2017.
- Awarded £80,000 to 14 projects, targeting under-represented people and groups living in areas of disadvantage through the Active Belfast Grants Scheme.
- Continued to deliver a range of sports development initiatives and programmes including Clubmark Club accreditation scheme, Support for Sport funding, Every Body Active 2020 and the Belfast Sports Awards and Forum.
- Provided services to almost 1.9 million leisure centre users, with over 27,000 members at our 14 leisure centres.
- Welcomed 2,300 children to our leisure centre holiday schemes and more than 15,000 children at community centre play schemes.
- Supported the development of programmes including parkrun, attracting 800 to 1200 participants every week at organised runs in four council parks.
- Worked with Extern and the Welcome Centre to roll out a Street Management Strategy, providing additional support for homeless people in Belfast and support for those people identified as having complex problems.
- Awarded 18 small grants to combat isolation amongst older people, benefiting 1,297 isolated older people.
- Installed defibrillators in six of our parks, with a further eight planned for other parks.





Computer Science Building

Support access to opportunities

Support access to opportunities

“Improving opportunity and quality of life for people in Belfast”

Quality employment is a recognised means of improving life and applies to people living in Belfast as much as any other city. It is also a key means by which we can begin to reduce economic inequality. That’s why removing barriers to employment for local people was a key focus for us this year.

Employability and skills are pivotal to unlocking opportunity and driving economic growth across the city.

We’ve now developed a 10 year Employability and Skills Framework which sets a vision of ‘Realising the potential of Belfast’s people and its economy by transforming skills, employability and aspiration, resulting in higher levels of business growth, employment and income’. The overarching target for this framework is to increase the city’s employment rate to at least 70% by 2025. This would mean moving over 17,000 additional Belfast residents into

work. One of the most significant factors to achieving this target will be addressing our high levels of economic inactivity and long term unemployment. It also includes ambitions to reduce the proportion of the working age population with no qualifications and to increase numbers with level two qualifications and above and level four and above.

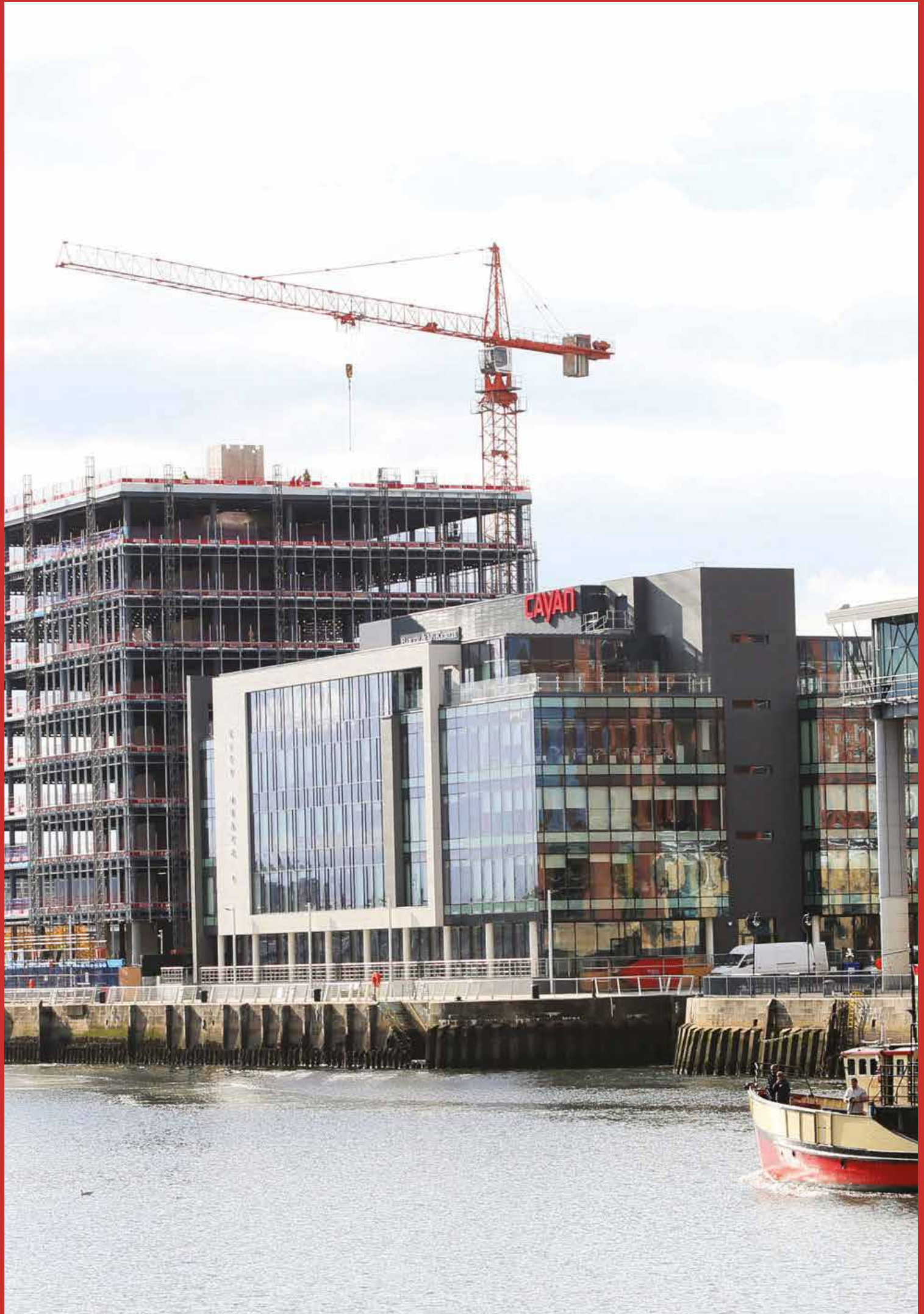


Improve employability outcomes for people in Belfast

Highlights 2016-17:

- Developed the academy model to target employability and skills training and launched the Belfast Hospitality Employment Academy (BHEA), a new pilot project recognising the expected employment growth in the hospitality sector arising from the investment in the Belfast Waterfront and scale of hotel developments. To date 53 people have participated, with 21 entering employment.
- Worked with the Department for Communities and other partners to promote access to employment opportunities through job fairs, attracting more than 2,800 individuals.
- Supported over 3,000 residents through our employability interventions of which almost 700 have since entered employment/self-employment. We’ve also supported more than 200 level two qualifications through European Social Fund and other supported projects.
- Provided active outreach to engage unemployed people and increase access to services in disadvantaged areas.
- Maximised employment and training outputs from major regeneration and development schemes in the city.
- Supported a six month pilot project run by the Active Communities Network (ACN) to engage 200 young people across areas of significant deprivation and challenge who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- Supported a 24 week multi-disciplinary, sports based engagement programme ‘e-hoops’, targeting 60 young people aged 16-24 in disadvantaged areas and helping them to develop positive skills.
- Engaged 100 14-16 year olds in the schools outreach initiative - the Honour Roll Programme (Sports Changes Life), targeting those at risk of leaving education or in need of additional support, motivation or guidance in a combination of sport-based and personal skills development sessions.
- In total, we’ve created 145 apprenticeships, 84 placements, supported 37 trainees and 73 people employed through our ongoing work to promote social clauses.





City development

City development

“A world-class city for the future.”

Belfast is at the heart of a metropolitan area with strong ambition.

The transfer of planning powers means that we can now shape spaces and places in Belfast with city partners. The launch of our City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (CCRIS) in 2015, combined with the recovering economy and a step change in our international marketing, has stimulated a significant upsurge of new development. The strategy outlines an exciting vision to develop a world-class city centre for the future, aiming to attract £1 billion of investment to the city.

A thriving city centre is vital to the prosperity of the whole city and the region. City centres are where investment impact can be maximised, where rates

are generated and where momentum can be built to support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Around two-thirds of all jobs in Belfast are located in and around the city centre, so everything that we do to enhance the centre will benefit the city as a whole. From new Grade A offices, hotels and student accommodation, to a new city centre based university campus, Belfast is transforming and moving forward.

All Belfast's communities have a direct interest in an economically thriving city. We're on a journey of regeneration and revival; and our city centre, now revitalised by world-class hotels, bars, restaurants and cultural attractions, is a daily reminder of how far we've come already.

Promote and position the city to compete

Highlights 2016-17:

- Commenced creation of a City Narrative for Belfast, in partnership with key players, taking account of the city's unique characteristics and history to embody the ongoing changes taking place and capture a shared future ambition.
- Awarded membership of the '100 Resilient Cities' global programme which will provide access to international expertise and funding for a Belfast Commissioner for Resilience to work with partners on the design and implementation of an urban resilience strategy.
- Invested heavily in our digital infrastructure, with the city now boasting the highest density of fibre in Europe and the best availability of superfast broadband in the UK.
- Worked with the city's digital sector to develop a Smart Belfast framework that will encourage innovative solutions to tackle traditional urban challenges, improve public services and support growth of the city's knowledge economy.
- Introduced the Belfast Wi-Fi, a free public network for citizens and visitors as part of our Super Connected scheme which 372,320 users have accessed in the last year – more than 1,000 distinct users per day, transferring over 268 Terabytes of data, equivalent to 67 million photos.

- Extended the Belfast Wi-Fi service by installing a further 74 Wireless Access Points outdoors throughout the city centre having achieved a landmark 1 million users in December 2016.
- Planned implementation of a series of focused events; activities and promotions to leverage investment and development through the city centre marketing programme.





Develop and maximise the benefit of our infrastructure

Highlights 2016-17:

- Continued to deliver our physical investment programme across the city worth in excess of £325 million including:
 - £185 million capital programme,
 - £105 million Leisure Transformation programme to enhance the leisure offer,
 - £28.2 million Belfast Investment Fund to support landmark capital schemes,
 - £18.7 million City Centre Investment Fund to revitalise the city centre,
 - £9 million Local Investment Fund to support community based capital projects; and
 - £4 million Social Outcomes Fund to support social enterprise growth.
- Dealt with 14% more planning applications in 2016 than the previous year, with continuing pre-application discussions on strategic areas across the city centre including the Transport Hub, Royal Exchange, East Bank and the former Sirocco site.
- Identified car parking as a major challenge for the city centre and began working with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to develop and implement a car parking strategy.
- Helped to deliver significant investment in the city, through the proactive processing of strategic planning applications for office, hotel and purpose built student accommodation with a potential construction value of around £300 million.
- Facilitated more than 223,000 journeys in the last year through our Belfast Bike scheme which now has a total of approximately 10,000 annual and casual users.
- Continued to run the city's three largest industrial estates at Boucher, Gasworks and Duncrue, generating over £7 million in rent per annum with over 200 tenants.



Drive physical regeneration of the city centre

- Approved the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, which was subsequently adopted in part by DfC, as a policy document to guide city centre regeneration and created a city centre development team to deliver it.
- Agreed an £18.7 million Investment Fund to bring forward city centre development projects in partnership with the private sector.
- Completed, ahead of programme and within budget, the first Grade A office accommodation since the economic downturn. 9 Adelaide, a £27 million investment, is the council's new corporate accommodation, and houses over 750 council staff.
- Approved digital city mapping VUCity to provide 3D visualisations of Belfast, to enhance our marketing of investment opportunities and assisting planners by providing information about prospective views, height, massing and density.
- Actively engaged with public and private developers on key city projects including:
 - **Grade A offices:** supporting development of an additional 1.5m sq. feet of Grade A office space by 2021 through our City Centre Investment Fund, will be utilised to provide financial support on commercial terms.
 - **Hotel developments:** working to develop 2,500 new bed spaces in the city. There are currently six hotels in construction, with a further 13 in planning and we're actively engaging with developers.
 - **Residential:** actively working with potential investors to develop additional city centre residential space and working with public and private partners on mixed use proposals or pilot schemes.
 - **North-East Quarter:** with a planning application expected in June 2017, this major mixed use development covers 11 acres of the city centre. The proposal includes Grade A offices, retail, residential, a boutique hotel, and public realm improvements.
 - **Sirocco:** this significant city centre site is now in new ownership. Pre-application consultation took place in April and May on a mixed used scheme consisting of office, residential, hotel, apart-hotel, restaurant, café and local retail and car-parking in advance of a planning application submission anticipated during summer 2017.



- **Queen's Quay:** this site has a non-statutory masterplan dating back to 2013 proposing its redevelopment. Expressions of interest for the site, owned by the Department for Communities, were sought in early 2017. Council will be engaging directly with DfC regarding this site via the Department's project governance and using the council's emerging East Bank strategy.
- **Belfast Telegraph building:** purchased by council in 2016, as part of an innovative joint venture with the private sector, this site adjacent to the £250 million Ulster University development, will provide a major anchor to the Inner North area of the city centre.
- **Transport Hub:** a £175 million project which will double the number of platforms, release 1m sq. foot of development space and create a new gateway for the city. The redevelopment of the Hub will have a significant impact on the city.
- **York Street Interchange:** a proposed £165 million development to provide direct flow between the Westlink, M2 and M3 – the three busiest roads in Northern Ireland. Council is currently working with DfC to take forward a masterplan for the area.
- **Sailortown Masterplan:** In 2016 the Department for Communities issued a masterplan for the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown area. Finalised mainly in anticipation of the York Street Interchange, this remains an important plan in the context of connecting the city core with the developing City Quays area. The City Centre team will continue to work on this with the Department via their project governance and our joint regeneration working group.
- **Infrastructure:** developing a wider infrastructure strategy for the city centre during 2017-2018.
- **Masterplans:** facilitating the development of a series of masterplans including East Bank and the Linen Quarter.



**Moving
forward,
preparing for
the future**

Moving forward, preparing for the future

The council will continue to develop much of the work outlined in this report. We'll also consider the other major plans and strategies in place for the city and region including, for example, the Programme for Government, the Community Plan and the Local Development Plan while taking account any emerging plans to address the implication of Brexit.

Belfast Agenda - Belfast's first community plan



Community planning is a new responsibility arising from local government reform. It's about making sure that a range of public services work together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people.

Over the past two years, we've been asking people what kind of city they want for the future. From our 'Belfast Conversation', we

learned that they want a city that provides a high quality of life for everyone who lives here and for the city to be a great place to work, study, visit or to set up and grow business. We've also gathered information about expected future needs in the city and where we expect future priorities to lie.

The Belfast Agenda has been produced by a partnership of organisations involved in delivering public services across our city, including health, education, housing and policing as well as partners from the business sector and voluntary and community sectors. It's intended to be the city's overarching strategic plan for improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing of all Belfast's citizens and will set direction for other strategies and plans, including partner organisations' corporate plans.

The Belfast Agenda will set out our joint vision and long-term vision and ambitions for Belfast's future, as well as identifying a number of priorities for action over the next four years, 2017-2021.

The final Plan will be launched later this year.

Our ambition is 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 per cent reduction in the life expectancy gap between neighbourhoods

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

Priorities

Growing the economy

Creating jobs and investment in the city.

Living here

Creating a great city and neighbourhood living experience.

City development

Creating the right infrastructure and regenerating our city.

Working and learning

Supporting growth and connecting people to opportunities.

Local Development Plan



Significant work is also underway to create the Local Development Plan (LDP) for Belfast which will shape the city's physical development in future years. Working with local people, we're creating a clear vision of how Belfast should develop and what it will look like in the years ahead. While the Belfast Agenda will set out the framework

to support inclusive growth and improve services for residents and businesses, the LDP will set out how the council area should grow and how this growth can be accommodated through delivery of the Belfast Agenda outcomes.

The LDP will:

- Provide a 15 year plan framework to support economic and social needs in the city, in line with regional strategies and policies, while ensuring sustainable development,
- Facilitate growth by coordinating public and private investment to encourage development where it can be of most benefit to the wellbeing of the community,
- Allocate sufficient land to meet the needs of the city; and
- Provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, including the public, to have a say about where and how development within the local area should take place.

The first stage of the plan preparation has been completed with the production of and consultation on the Preferred Options Paper (POP).

Vision

The POP sets out the vision for Belfast to be a globally successful, dynamic, smart 21st century regional city that's environmentally resilient, with a vibrant economic heart. Bustling with sustainable mixed-use businesses that attract investment, talent and visitors; and surrounded by thriving well-connected neighbourhoods where people love to live.

A strong local economy will support progressive, healthy, safe and vibrant communities and provide a gateway to opportunities locally, nationally and worldwide.

Our strategic aims

Creating a vibrant economy

A strengthened Belfast as the regional economic driver.

A smart connected and resilient place

Improving connectivity and supporting the efficient movement of people, goods, energy and information to create a dynamic, innovates 21st century city with the capacity for adapt to environmental challenges.

A green and active place

A protected, enhances and attractive natural setting reinforcing uniqueness and accessibility to all who live, work and enjoy our city.

Shaping a liveable place

Promoting development that enhances the health and wellbeing of communities, neighbourhoods and places.

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