

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 12th September, 2018

## MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lyons (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff, Councillor Howard;  
Aldermen Haire, Kingston and McGimpsey; and  
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Corr,  
Dorrian, Dudgeon, Graham, Hussey,  
Johnston, Kyle, Murphy, O'Donnell,  
O'Hara, O'Neill, and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Mrs. G. Long; Commissioner for Resilience; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Also attended: Councillor Collins.

### Apologies

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

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th August 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 September.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### Restricted Item

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion of the item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

**Bank Buildings - Verbal Update**

(Mrs. L. Caldwell, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications, attended in connection with this item)

The Chief Executive provided the Committee with an overview of the current status of the cordon around the Bank Buildings and the possible options in relation to the remaining structure of the building.

She provided the Members with information relating to the measures which the Council was working on with Primark to ensure that the public and adjacent building users were protected from any danger arising from the remaining structure and to encourage increased footfall and support local businesses.

The Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications advised the Committee of a new campaign, entitled #YourBelfast, to encourage people to support the retailers in the city centre in light of the cordoned off area. She provided the Committee with a preview of the advertisements and explained that the campaign would be launched through various media platforms on 14th September.

The Committee provided the Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications with some additional suggestions for the campaign.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update which had been provided.

**Matters Referred Back from Council/Motions**

**Motion - Belfast Rapid Transit**

(Mr. S. Dolan, Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd September, had considered the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Heading:

“This Council notes the introduction of the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) to the City. This £90 million investment is intended to lead to an improvement of connectivity in Belfast and in public transport for citizens. The Council notes, however, that the introduction of BRT has led to a number of serious issues that need urgent redressing if the system is not to have an adverse effect on our City.

These include:

- impaired access to homes for the elderly and those with serious disabilities;
- parents unable to safely leave children to school in some locations;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

- access to local shops has been severely restricted, with car parking spaces removed without any recourse as to where this parking would go thereafter;
- double yellow lines are to be extended into residential areas, restricting access to homes and again exacerbating the parking problem;
- a severe increase in congestion, and the need to come up with solutions to this; and despite these issues being raised, the Department for Infrastructure has failed to introduce any mitigating measures.

In the absence of a Stormont Executive and, acknowledging the important role played by local government in community planning, this Council can play an important role in representing the views of this City to the Department on the relevant issues surrounding BRT. The Council believes that urgent measures are needed to solve these issues. This should be done in an open and transparent manner, involving residents and other stakeholders. Where necessary, aspects of BRT should be delayed to ensure a competent and satisfactory delivery.

To assist such an approach, the Council will host open meetings in East and West Belfast in order to listen to the concerns of residents on this issue. The Council will also arrange a deputation to the Department for Infrastructure, which will be open to Councillors from all political parties, to discuss how the above problems can be resolved or mitigated.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

A number of Members stated that they were aware of some issues along the Glider route in the west of the city, making particular reference to the difficulties faced by parents trying to leave their children to St. Kevin’s Primary School on the Falls Road.

The Development Manager advised the Committee of a response which had been received from the Department for Infrastructure, and which sought to address a number of the issues which had been raised in the motion.

The response from the Department outlined that:

- it had, in developing the plans for Belfast rapid transit (BRT), consulted with the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) in order to fully understand the needs of older people and people with disabilities;
- it had provided an exception within the bus lane legislation which allowed a vehicle to stop in the bus lane, for up to 10 minutes, to drop off or pick up a blue badge holder;
- wheelchair accessible taxis were permitted to drive in and drop off and pick up from the BRT bus lanes under the legislation;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

- it believed that the BRT glider service would help reduce existing local parking pressures as more people began to use public transport instead of private cars;
- it would seek to provide disabled parking bays along the route, where possible;
- it was engaging with the schools along the BRT routes to encourage safer and more sustainable transport;
- it had had numerous discussions with traders along the BRT routes;
- the legislation provided a loading/unloading window between 10am and 2pm, which was available to anyone, commercial or personal;
- limited waiting restrictions had been introduced to help support businesses and prevent all-day commuter parking; and
- under the Northern Ireland Highway code rule 240 it was illegal to park within 15m of a corner, whether it was marked on the ground or not.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

1. the contents of the motion; and
2. that the Department for Infrastructure would be attending a Special meeting in November.

**Presentation**

**Resilience Update**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience, to her first meeting of the Committee.

The Commissioner explained to the Committee that Belfast had joined the 100 Resilient Cities network. She advised the Members that the network helped cities around the world to become more resilient to the physical, social, and economic challenges that were a growing part of the 21st century and equipped them to become better able to identify risks before they happened, better prepared when they occurred, and more capable of recovering.

She pointed out that, while each City was unique, research had shown that they often shared a number of common factors. She provided the Members with an overview of the City Resilience Framework, which identified 12 key drivers, and which was used to determine how resilient a city was.

She outlined that, as she had just taken up her post, she was in the early stages of mapping the key risks for Belfast but, based on the Belfast Agenda priorities, she outlined the potential resilience dividends which she expected.

The Chairperson thanked the Commissioner for her presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Request to Present to Committee**

**Future Economic Briefings**

The Director of Economic Development advised the Committee that the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) would present its annual economic briefing at the Special meeting on 26th September, 2018.

He reminded the Committee that it had previously agreed that presentations from other economic perspectives would be provided throughout the year, in order to ensure that there was a rounded perspective on city challenges and opportunities.

The Director suggested that the Committee considered receiving economic briefings from the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI), the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

The Committee agreed to receive a series of economic briefings from the abovementioned three organisations and that the presentations would be scheduled appropriately during the 2018/2019 financial year.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**Better Bedford Street Project**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this summary is to update members on the Better Bedford Street 100 Day Challenge**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the ongoing ‘Better Bedford Street 100 Day Challenge’ project, which is a collaborative project involving a number of stakeholders aimed at improved place making in Bedford Street with temporary design solutions and a series of animation and event activities.**
- **Note that the project includes a programme to capture lessons learned which can be incorporated back into future urban design and animation projects within the city.**
- **Note the Council’s resource commitments in terms of officer involvement and financial contribution to the project.**

**3.0 Main report**

- 3.1** A project aimed at improving place making within areas of town and city centres has been developed by the Strategic Design Group, led by the Department for Infrastructure Planning Group, and the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment and includes local councils, private sector organisations and other bodies working to improve the built environment. The aim of the Group is *'Working together to promote successful, inclusive, well designed places which inspire civic stewardship and have an enduring positive impact on people's lives.'*
- 3.2** Bedford St, Belfast was selected for a 100 Day Challenge pilot project due to the numerous issues within the area including congestion, pedestrian connectivity, cluttered streets, lack of cycle lanes and under-utilised or poorly allocated street capacity. Through this pilot project the group is providing an example of how the Living Places planning guidance can work in practice. The guidance sets out 10 principles for better place making. The group has sought to demonstrate that temporary changes can be brought about quite quickly and plans to use this example to drive change elsewhere.
- 3.3** The focus of the project is to push collaborative stakeholder working, innovative urban design, and public and private sector commitment to improve the urban environment and provide a test bed to inform future projects. The project will aim to provide temporary design solutions in the urban environment within a 100 day period from conception to installation.
- 3.4** The project is further supported, and sponsored by the Department for Infrastructure, the Department for Communities and the Central District BID as well as a number of public and private stakeholders. Belfast City Council officers have been involved in the scoping, planning and design of the project.
- 3.5** The 'Better Bedford Street' challenge will utilise temporary urban design solutions to challenge the current situation and will serve as a testbed for innovative solutions that will help to inform emerging design solutions for the proposed Streets Ahead 5 project and other projects across Northern Ireland. It will support many of the key concepts from the Belfast City Council's Linen Quarter Masterplan.

- 3.6 The project will involve a number of different strands including:

**More Space for People**

- 3.7 DfI are currently widening the footpaths along Bedford Street by taking over 9 existing on-street parking bays for a period of 3 months. The effect on car parking within the area will be surveyed continuously throughout the project. These spaces will provide widened footpath locations that can then be utilised for engaging and useful space. The project will also endeavour to remove or relocate obstructive street furniture and remove street clutter, promoting pedestrian routes along footpaths and at key crossings.

**Engaging and Useful Space**

- 3.8 A call-out for design teams from statutory stakeholders, private sector, local businesses and students will be held to design and build innovative urban design ideas for 9 'parklets' along the extended footpath locations. Design teams will creatively animate each part of the street in its own unique way, in doing so providing colour and greenery as well as places to sit and enjoy;

**Bring the Place to Life**

- 3.9 A number of events and activities will be taking place on Bedford Street through August and September including
- Free lunchtime street music supported by Belfast City Council's 'City of Music'
  - an extension of 'Alive After 5' into the Linen Quarter;
  - providing a written history of the 'Linen Quarter Story';
  - Opening a pop-up shop 'Linenopolis' to promote innovative linen products and the Linen Story;
  - Commissioning Street Ambassadors to promote the location, hospitality and events;
  - Development of a 'Linen Festival' from 17th-23rd September which will include street music, animation and activities and an extension of Culture Night
  - General street cleaning and removal of anti-social graffiti,
  - Launching a new Corporate Social Responsibility pilot with a specific aim of reaching out to the surrounding communities.

**Learning & Informing**

- 3.10 The group has sought to demonstrate that temporary changes can be brought about quite quickly and plans to use this example to drive change elsewhere. With this in mind, preparations have been made to record the lessons learned which will be shared widely.
- 3.11 The group, supported by PLACE, local design consultants, Belfast City Council and the local universities has developed a programme to capture the lessons learned and incorporating this back into future projects. These initiatives include:
- Cameras & wifi providers placed at strategic locations along Bedford St to track pedestrian movements, crossing habits within the street, parking habits, linger points and pedestrian interaction with the street environment. Live data will be monitored against baseline data gathered prior to the project going live
  - User surveys of the street users will be undertaken through the project including pedestrian, tourist, drivers, businesses and delivery operators.
  - Social media will track and record trends and interaction with the project hashtags
  - Engagement with activities will be recorded and reported on
  - A documentary video is currently being filmed for the project & will record and report on lessons learnt throughout the project
  - A report will be presented to the Strategic Design Group to inform the future evolution of the group and the wider implementation of future public realm schemes including Streets Ahead 5
  - A report will also be presented to the WHO Healthy Cities Conference to be held in Belfast in Oct 2018

**Financial & Resource Implications**

- 3.12 Members are asked to note the allocation of officer time to contribute to the design and planning of the Better Bedford Street Challenge. Officers are currently engaging with the Better Bedford St Project to confirm the financial ask from Council. The financial commitment will be met from the City Regeneration and Development team's budget for City Animation as agreed by the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in April 2018 and will be up to a maximum of £25k for this project.



**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.13 The Project Sponsors are assessing equality, and other implications throughout the project, and have incorporated appropriate Section 75 and equality groups within the stakeholder reference groups.”**

During discussion, a Member expressed that, while they welcomed the project which was taking place in Bedford Street, there were numerous streets which were in worse condition.

The Chief Executive clarified that it was not a Council-led project and that the Council had been approached by Planning Landscape Architecture Community Environment (PLACE) and the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi).

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Growing Businesses and the Economy**

**City Youth Pledge**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee on progress against the Belfast Agenda commitment to ‘Establish a city pledge for our young people’.**
- 1.2 The work is one element of the ‘Working and Learning’ work programme for 2018/19 that was approved at this Committee on 11 April 2018.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the research findings, recommendations and proposed next steps for work on the City Youth Pledge**
- Agree that a report will be brought back to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, setting out a series of proposed actions to deliver on the Belfast Agenda commitment to help the city’s young people to achieve positive and productive education, employment and training outcomes.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 The Belfast Agenda includes a commitment that, by 2035, Belfast will be a place where everyone fulfils his or her potential and that they will be supported and enabled to do so and to make a positive contribution to city life. This will mean creating access to opportunity and removing the barriers that prevent people from achieving that potential and participating in all areas of life.**

**3.2 In order to achieve this ambition, the Belfast Agenda commitment was to 'establish a pledge that commits to developing coherent pathways for education, training and employment for our young people'.**

**3.3 As part of our research and development work to scope out the potential approach to developing a Youth Pledge for Belfast, we engaged the local organisation Include Youth to help us better understand what this Youth Pledge might look like. They examined best practice and engaged with our young people and employers to ascertain interest and potential commitment to and support for the initiative. The research has recently been completed and work is under way to articulate how the Youth Pledge may develop and what the resource commitments are likely to be.**

**3.4 The research undertaken by Include Youth involved:**

**Stakeholder engagement on the focus, content and structure of the City Youth Pledge involving partner organisations, young people themselves and employers**

**A review of best practice models for City Youth Pledges and their impact in other locations.**

**Identification of recommendations on how the City Pledge might operate in practice in Belfast.**

**3.5 A total of 174 young people from across the city and 65 adults including teachers, employers and voluntary/community representatives were involved in the qualitative research through focus groups and interviews and a further 106 young people responded to an online survey. Five consultation events were also held in Belfast City Hall.**

**Research Findings**

**3.6** The research identified a number of barriers preventing young people from engaging fully in society through education, training or employment. These included:

- **Lack of confidence, qualifications and finance prevent progression into positive post- formal education options: 73% of respondents to the online survey cited lack of confidence as the main reason for not progressing into further education while 69% suggested that the lack of money and lack of qualifications were key factors impacting on their ability to access third level education. With regard to the world of work, 61% said that the lack of qualifications was preventing them from progressing into employment, 56% said lack of work experience, 47% said not having interview skills and 53% suggested that it was a lack of confidence. Only 36% said there were not enough jobs.**
- **Undervaluation of certain education pathways and competition between providers: participants in the research suggested that some education routes were perceived more positively than others: they felt that schools sought to market themselves based on academic achievement. As a result, A-levels results leading to university entrance is often presented as the 'best' – or sometimes only – option available and many young people are left feeling ashamed, invisible and unsupported if they fail to meet the school's expectations.**
- **Access to Advice: there is evidence that many young people receive limited and, at times, poor advice about their options; the advice is often too general and variable as there is no standardisation. Also evident from our research was the lack of standardisation of careers advice, both within mainstream education, and across the alternative education projects. Those from alternative education are considerably more disadvantaged than those in mainstream education.**
- **Preparation for employment: nearly one third of 16-18 year old respondents had not met with a Careers Advisor; less than half had been taught interview skills and nearly one third of this age group did not have the opportunity of work experience for more than three days. Young people were very keen to experience work placements and could see the value in them but they were often frustrated that the placements were not for**

long enough and were not necessarily with employers they were interested in. If they are to be of value, the necessary preparation must be put in in advance both to ensure that the employer is ready to receive the young person and has a programme in place, and that the young person goes to a placement which is relevant to their career interests.

- Access to relevant support services: lack of mental health and social support for young people trying to access employment or entering into further education/training were highlighted as being a critical barrier. Self-motivation and self-confidence are seen as key: transitions can be particularly challenging for young people who have received a high level of individualised support as they often struggle to cope in mainstream educational provision
- Child and youth friendly education system: respondents felt that schools needed to be more responsive to pupils' personal circumstances and that the current provision failed to meet specific requirements – thus impacting on performance
- Financial concerns: young people felt that there were financial barriers preventing them from staying on in education (concern at student loans; expensive childcare costs). They also wanted to ensure that they would be appropriately remunerated for the work undertaken – and there were concerns about only being able to achieve minimum wage and not having access to progression routes once they find a job.

3.7 Statistics demonstrate that, of the 3,695 school leavers in Belfast in 2015, 42% went on to higher education, 26% to further education, 14% to employment and 12% to training. Only 5% were 'destination unknown' (205 individuals). On the face of things, it might appear that at least 95% of young people already go on to a 'positive destination in education, training or employment' in terms of the aspiration of the Youth Pledge. However, the recently-completed Skills Barometer for Belfast acknowledges that educational performance – particularly to GCSE level – is lower in Belfast than in all other District Council areas (although there has been a steady improvement over the last decade). 61.5% of young people in Belfast achieve 5 GCSEs including English and Maths at grades A\*-C. This achievement limits the potential for young people to move on to further and higher education and, as a result, impacts on their potential to access employment opportunities that can provide levels of remuneration beyond minimum or low wage roles. It is also important to note that achieving 5 GCSEs including English and Maths is often a

requirement for many jobs and a pre-condition for entry to many education and training courses. Finally, this research also demonstrates that young people in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) are less likely than their peers to achieve the 5GCSEs A\*-C including Maths and English. Only 41.5% of pupils in receipt of Free Schools Meals achieve this standard. This is a source of significant concern as a failure of address inequities amongst young people at an early age, and throughout their school journey, can cause a long tail of underperformance at GCSE level which perpetuates in the form of worklessness and poverty concentrated in deprived communities in later years.

- 3.8** The examples from other cities indicated that there are a number of approaches that have been tested. Some of the collective lessons learned from those experiences include:

**Need for engagement with both employers and young people: initiatives which address both supply (young people) and demand (employers) are likely to be more effective**

**All of the projects are public-private partnerships: this is critical to their success. Where the private sector has actively engaged, the levels of success in terms of job outcomes have been enhanced**

**The Local Authority has played a lead role in all instances but this has varied from place to place: in some areas, they have been the convenor; in others, the key funder**

**Some of the pledges have recognised the employers; some have been used as a 'campaign banner' for a series of initiatives focused on young people**

**Work experience is a critical element of the support that the private sector partners can offer**

**Some cities have used financial incentives – for both employers and young people**

**Many of the areas have targeted specific groups – these appear to have been identified as priority groups for other areas of work (Nottingham example)**

**A number of these initiatives have been supported by online resources.**

- 3.9** The next step is for the Council to share some of these research outcomes with partners and to agree the way

forward, including securing buy-in from partners for key initiatives. This will include our work with the five neighbouring Councils as part of the Belfast Region City Deal. These proposals will be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for agreement and decision. Based on the work to date, there are a number of principles and key findings that are likely to guide the Council's investment decisions and approach to this work:

- Work placements are critical: securing meaningful work placements will require strong engagement with willing private sector partners. We need to use all levers at our disposal to secure this buy-in from the private sector
- Young people who are disadvantaged are statistically less likely to have a positive post-formal education outcome. Early interventions will be critical to give these young people the best possible chance to achieving a positive outcome once they complete their formal education
- There are a lot of initiatives currently in the market which are supporting this work to some extent but activity is patchy. The challenge is to develop a programme of scale to ensure that all young people can benefit – regardless of where they live or what their educational outcome will be post formal education
- The Council itself has a key role to play – we are a major employer and are already actively involved in engagement and outreach work. We can use this best practice to influence others to get involved and to dispel any concerns that other employers might have about engagement in initiatives such as this.

#### Financial and resource implications

- 3.10 No specific financial or resource implications at this point.

#### Equality or good relations implications/rural needs assessment:

- 3.11 All activities will be equality screened. Consideration will be given to prioritising specific groups requiring targeted intervention and reasonable adjustments and additional support will be provided where required. Research indicates that this challenge is more significant in urban areas.”

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Economic Development confirmed that the report which would be submitted to a future meeting would include the qualitative data for Members' consideration.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Local Tourism Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on Council investment to support tourism product development all across the city, including in the city’s neighbourhoods.**

**1.2 The report also sets out the proposed way forward for intervention activities led by the Council to invest in tourism product development with the objective of:**

- **Increasing visitor spend and dwell-time and contributing towards the Belfast Agenda target of increasing the value of out-of-state tourism to £500 million**
- **Capitalising on the significant private sector investment, particularly within the hotel and leisure sectors**
- **Ensuring that the benefits of tourism investment and growth are felt across the city and that local organisations and businesses are supported to maximise these benefits.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the Committee:**

- **Notes the work underway across the Council to support tourism product development – including local tourism products**
- **Notes and agrees the proposed way forward (3.14) to support tactical investment in local areas to ensure that product development opportunities are maximised and that local organisations and businesses get the support that they need to help bring forward high quality, sustainable tourism products**
- **Considers the potential for the development of a feasibility fund to develop tourist products to concept stage. The establishment of this fund by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would need to be considered as part of the half-year finance report in November 2018.**

**3.0 Key Issues**

- 3.1** The mid-term review of the current Tourism Strategy highlighted the need for the Council and partners to enhance efforts to support high quality tourism product development in order to complement private sector investment in the hotels and wider hospitality sector in Belfast.
- 3.2** This challenge is not unique to Belfast. Tourism NI have been identifying for some time the need to bring forward additional tourism products that respond to changing visitor trends and demands. The work that is currently under way as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) includes a commitment to enhance the investment in tourism as a key economic generator. In Belfast, there are already almost 20,000 people employed in the hospitality and leisure industry and recent investment by the private sector will see those numbers grow. The sector currently accounts for around 6% of GVA. In many other successful cities and tourism destinations, the figure is almost double that. This demonstrates the fact that there is still some way to go if Belfast is to capitalise of the tourism growth potential in the city.
- 3.3** Titanic Belfast has been a game changer for Belfast in terms of the city's confidence as a tourism destination. It was voted the World's Leading Visitor Attraction in 2016. That designation helped put Belfast on the map in the highly competitive global tourism market. While the venue attracted over 840,000 visitors last year, it is recognised that many of these visitors were day trippers who came to Titanic Belfast as part of a short visit to the city but who did not stay in Belfast. This reduces the economic potential of the visitor spend.
- 3.4** The 2015 City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy identified the need for another stand-out visitor attraction in the city in order to increase visitor dwell-time and, by default, visitor spend in the city. Members will be aware that work is under way on the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the 'Destination Hub' – a unique project bringing together visual arts, new technology and media to tell the story of Belfast. The ambition is for this project to act as another 'anchor' in terms of tourism offer in the city which will change visitor behaviour from considering Belfast as a day trip location to thinking about it as somewhere that visitors think that they should stay at least one night in order to experience the breadth of the city tourism offer. If this is successful, the result will be a significant uplift in tourists



staying overnight in Belfast and having time to explore the other products and experiences on offer.

- 3.5** At the June meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, members received an update presentation from the consultancy team working on the OBC for the Destination Hub. That presentation identified a number of emerging ‘themes’ for the building – reflecting the city’s heritage and unique offer. The presentation also identified the opportunity for this investment to act as a catalyst for new products and experiences which may also reflect these themes but take a different perspective or offer a specific insight. One example might be the theme of music. Belfast has a long and diverse musical history and it is likely that, if the Destination Hub project is to progress, it will consider the importance and role of music in the Belfast Story. However there are lots of specific angles that could be developed into new products and experiences across the city including the Van Morrison story; the origins of punk; traditional music; piping; music classes and summer schools; tours of music venues. It is likely that many of these products and experiences will have their roots not only in the city centre but also in locations outside of the city centre. This offers an opportunity to support investment in the ‘local tourism’ product and to help bring that forward and take it to the market.
- 3.6** Belfast City Council has, over many years, supported the tourism industry in the city. This includes an annual investment of around £1.9million in Visit Belfast – the Destination Marketing and Management Organisation (DMMO) for the city. The Council has also invested in a range of local capital schemes to support tourism growth across Belfast. This has included investment from the Local Investment Fund (LIF), Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) and Social Outcomes Fund (SOF). An assessment of the investment to date in these schemes indicates that the Council investment will be in the region of £36million and that this will lever a further £154million from other public and private sector partners. The Council was also a significant investor in the Belfast Waterfront Conference and Exhibition Centre. This £30million development has transformed the facilities for business tourism in Belfast and acted as a catalyst to the recent wave of hotel investments in the city.
- 3.7** In addition to capital investment, the Council has also provided revenue support for local organisations working across the city to promote tourism in the city’s neighbourhoods. Only two parts of the city – east Belfast and west Belfast – have dedicated organisations that are focused

on increasing the number of tourists visiting those respective areas. These organisations are important conduits for encouraging more local organisations to develop new products and experiences targeted at tourists. Last year, funding from the Tourism Unit's budget (£80,000) was used to support local tourism promotion and engagement in east and west Belfast through Eastside Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar. The initial evaluation from that work has identified that these organisations play an important role on the ground involved in championing local tourism investment and that there is an appetite to develop the local offer further. However, in addition to the 'bottom-up' approach, it also pointed to the scale of investment required in capacity building support that is 'market-led' i.e. shares intelligence on who visitors are, when they come to the city and what they want to do and helps local businesses to bring forward new products and experiences to meet their needs. This highlights the importance of engagement with Tourism Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and Visit Belfast. Finally, a recurring theme is the need to identify and bring forward tourism product that can be financially sustainable and not continue to rely on public funding.

- 3.8** Members will also be aware that the Council has been supporting the tourism sector – and a number of other growth sectors – through investment in skills development activities. Our Hotel Academy programme has helped over 150 people into sustainable employment and we are also working with Titanic Belfast and the other tourism assets in the Titanic Quarter to help Belfast residents find employment.
- 3.9** Given the findings of the Tourism Strategy review around the need for increased investment in product development, there is a need to consider a targeted approach from the Council and partners. The proposed Destination Hub will be a critical 'anchor' that will raise the profile of the city's tourism offer. However, there is clearly significant potential for investment in high quality, authentic and sustainable product development and experience development initiatives across the city.
- 3.10** In order to inform the Council's approach to its investment in this work, Deloitte have been commissioned to develop a product development narrative and framework. This work is still at draft stage but there are a number of principles and potential assessment criteria emerging which, it is suggested, should be used to inform any future decision-making on investment in tourism products – for both capital and revenue investment.

**Future investment in local tourism: proposed approach**

- 3.11 The proposed approach is set out in the Deloitte document (see attached – Appendix 1). At this stage, it is proposed that this should be along the following lines:

**Key principles:**

- A clear focus on authentic experiences
- Use of market intelligence to develop what the visitor wants
- An emphasis on out-of-state visitors
- Collaborative planning and development to develop better experiences
- Harnessing digital technology – from website design to on-site visitor experience
- Nurturing skills
- Recognising the contribution to both economic and social outcomes (unique to local tourism).

**Potential assessment criteria**

- Is it tourism? Does it focus on key market segments: is it informed by market intelligence; is it more than regeneration?
- Does it align with the wider tourism narrative? Does it complement the key tourism themes/product areas (e.g. maritime; music; literature; outdoor leisure; 'Beyond Peace')?
- Does the promoter have the requisite skills and ability? It will be important to recognise that there are varying degrees of ability and capacity and support will need to be flexible in line with need and taking account of the Council's ambition for local tourism investment to be part of the approach to promoting inclusive growth
- Is it supported by market testing? This approach assumes a significant change to how product development initiatives currently come forward. There will be a need for the Council to invest in visitor intelligence (activities already underway with Smart Cities Team and Tourism NI) and to ensure that research and insights are made available to inform new investment
- Economic impact and viability: the starting point for engagement should be to consider how investment can contribute to specific targets (particularly Belfast Agenda targets). In addition, it will be important to consider whether Council/other public investment can

pump-prime investment as opposed to the project being reliant on subvention on an ongoing basis

- **Social impact:** it is clear that many local tourism activities are starting from a lower base than other activities that are clearly market-led. In order to demonstrate a recognition of this, it is proposed that wider contribution to social impact is considered as part of the assessment process (e.g. opportunities for local employment/training; ability to complement regeneration investment).

**3.12** The identification of the local tourism projects as ‘connectors’ to other key tourism ‘anchors’ in the city (e.g. Titanic Belfast, proposed Destination Hub) is an important part of developing a clear tourism proposition that distinguishes Belfast from other cities and ensures a coherent set of ‘experiences’ that the visit can expect to get when they come to Belfast.

**3.13** The Council is only one funder in this field and it is important to consider alignment with the approaches of other funders, particularly Tourism NI. Officers have been working closely with Tourism NI on this approach and are proposing alignment with their ‘Tourism Clusters’ model. This involves bringing together local organisations to look at how to capitalise on tourism growth and to develop new products and services as well as building skills. Tourism Ireland projections suggest that tourism is likely to grow at a rate of at least 6% in the coming year and, with an enhanced profile for Belfast on the back of initiatives such as the Lonely Planet Designation as the Number 1 place to visit in 2018, there is likely to be a commensurate increase in visitor numbers. Intelligence suggests that the overseas (USA, China) markets are growing significantly while there are specific EU countries with a particular interest in Ireland/Northern Ireland (France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands). These visitors have specific interests and requirements (e.g. language skills) and successful tourism activities need to be able to provide these services to meet demand and take advantage of consumer interest.

**3.14** It is therefore proposed that the Council develops and manages a significant programme of capacity building and information sharing to improve the quality of existing products, bring forward new products and help develop coherent packages and experiences that are aligned to visitor needs. It is proposed that the focus of activity for the remainder of the financial year will include:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

- Use of local conduits where possible to increase engagement and promote the benefits of participation (e.g Fáilte Feirste Thiar, Eastside Tourism) – up to £60,000 to be allocated
- Testing out of potential new products – support for initial feasibility to help bring forward ideas emerging from the local consultations and engagement activity and working with new capital schemes coming forward from Council funds – up to £25,000 to be allocated
- Capacity building and development work on cluster approach, in conjunction with Tourism NI - involvement of industry experts and practitioners who have first-hand experience of this activity - £45,000.

3.15 Following the initial investment, the Tourism Development Plan for 2019/20 will take account of the learning and the potential for engagement with partners on this work. It will detail proposals for engagement and activity from April 2019 onwards, in line with the proposals set out in this report.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

3.16 At present, TCA Unit has set aside £130,000 for expenditure on Local Tourism in financial year 2018/19. An indicative breakdown of the expenditure is set out in 3.14.

3.17 An indicative allocation of £4m has been set aside to match-fund projects under the Social Outcomes Fund (currently at varying stages of due diligence).

3.18 Currently, there are no Council funds available to support further capital investment in neighbourhood tourist products. Members will therefore need to consider this priority in the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the rate setting process. In the first instance, a feasibility fund would be required to develop tourist products to concept stage. The establishment of this fund by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would need to be considered as part of the half-year finance report in November 2018.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Positioning Belfast to Compete**

**Eastern Economic Corridor**

The Chief Executive reminded the Members that Belfast had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration with Dublin and that engagement was ongoing between Belfast City Council and the seven other councils along the route to support the development of work along the economic corridor.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

She reminded the Committee that it had agreed, at its meeting on 7th March, to support a conference to highlight cooperation opportunities along the corridor.

She explained to the Members that a Steering Group of senior council officials had been established to determine the content of the conference. The Committee was advised that the steering group had recently commissioned the Ulster University and Dublin City University to carry out further research to articulate the economic opportunities along the corridor. The Universities' research would form the basis of the conference proceedings.

The Committee was informed that, while the main focus of the Steering Group was the conference and the research work, it had also developed a broader terms of reference which included:

- identifying and developing collaborative projects which had economic and strategic merit for the eight local authorities of the eastern corridor;
- articulating the economic and social benefits along the length of eastern corridor between Belfast and Dublin; and
- driving buy-in and engagement with the private sector on the future development of the eastern economic corridor.

The Chief Executive explained that a key agreed outcome of the steering group meetings to date had been the aspiration to deliver a Memorandum of Understanding between the eight local authorities. She explained that the MoU would set out the scope of the joint areas of working across the corridor on infrastructure, attracting investment and jobs.

The Committee:

- noted the progress to date, including the proposed conference, which was likely to be held at the end of March 2019, and to which all Members would be invited to attend; and
- agreed that a further report be submitted to the Committee in advance of the conference, providing an update on the conference plans and the emerging research outcomes.

**Strategic and Operational Issues**

**Elite All Ireland Boxing Championships**

The Director of Economic Development advised the Committee that the Council, at its meeting on 5th March, had agreed a Notice of Motion which requested that officers would engage with the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA) to explore the possibility of bringing the All Ireland Boxing Championships to Belfast. He pointed out that a time had not been specified for the event.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

He explained that Council officers had held preliminary conversations with the IABA and that they had expressed an interest in holding the event in Belfast in February 2019. The Committee was advised that the event was usually held in Dublin and that there would be a financial ask of £69,470 from the Council or its partners if the event was to be held in Belfast, and that such a financial allocation had not been set aside in the Council budgets for this financial year.

The Members were advised that the economic impact of holding the event in Belfast would likely give a 2:1 return on the Council's investment, which the Director advised did not compare favourably with other events currently hosted in the city. He advised the Members that the Republic of Ireland's figure for the return investment in the Maritime Festival as 6.42:1.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the £200,000 of funding which was approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 5th January 2018 for the implementation of the Belfast Boxing Strategy through the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA);
2. noted that, following engagement with Officers from the Council's City Events Unit, IABA had expressed a wish to stage the Elite Irish Amateur Final event in Belfast on 23rd February 2019, with a request for a financial contribution from Belfast City Council of £69,470 towards the event; and
3. noted that the IABA Championship was not considered as part of Place and Economy's 18/19 operational plans and consequently there was no existing budget allocation to support the event; and
4. agreed that officers would continue to negotiate with IABA to build a greater understanding of the costs associated with holding the event, including options for the Council to secure income from ticket revenue.

**Zoo - Update on Review**

(Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Strategic Director of City and neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, in November 2017, consultants had been commissioned to carry out a strategic review of the operational model for the Zoo, based on the Committee's agreed options.

The Committee was advised that the consultants had since reviewed the operator models for the Zoo based upon international best practice and had carried out an expression of interest exercise to validate the findings on the relevant operating models.

He explained that the aim of the early market engagement was to ascertain how potential operators and developers viewed the opportunity to work with the Council on the

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 12th September, 2018**

operational delivery of Belfast Zoo. He explained that what was learned from the early market engagement would be used to shape the Council's procurement strategy.

The Members were advised that, of the 7 companies which had responded to the questionnaire, 4 had experience or capabilities which were relevant to the operation of a world class zoo.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to receive further detail on the expressions of interest through party group briefings.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Quarter 1 Finance Update**

The Chief Executive presented the financial position of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to the Members. She advised them that the Quarter 1 position for the Committee was an under spend of £143,000 (2.5%), with the forecast year-end position being an overspend of £90,000 (0.5%) which was within the acceptable tolerance which was 3%.

The Committee was advised that the current position related to vacant posts across a number of services, loss of Belfast Bikes sponsorship income and additional health and safety expenditure in City Markets.

The Committee was also advised that the forecast year-end position for the Council was an under spend of £1million of the budgeted net expenditure and that this had been reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 17th August.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**The Belfast Canvas Public Art Project –  
Councillor Baker to raise**

The Committee agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting exploring the options for implementing a similar scheme in Belfast.

**Airport Security –  
Councillor Mullan to raise**

The Committee noted that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Chairperson