



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>City Centre Recovery and Revitalisation Programme</b>
<b>Date:</b>	5th June, 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the activity to date to support the City Centre Revitalisation Programme.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. the update on the City Revitalisation Programme in terms of planned objectives and the key strands of activity to be taken forward; and</li><li>2. that further updates will be brought back to Committee for Members' consideration as the overall programme and specific proposals are further developed in the context of the budget envelopes previously agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22nd February 2019.</li></ol>

3.0	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p data-bbox="264 228 443 259"><b>Background</b></p> <p data-bbox="264 277 1509 658">The major fire at the Bank Buildings on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018 resulted in the forced closure of 22 businesses inside a cordoned off area. It also had a hugely negative impact on traders and businesses within the immediate vicinity of the cordon, with 95 businesses assisted through the Primark support fund. Located on the intersection of four key shopping streets – Royal Avenue, Donegall Place, Castle Street and Castle Place, the cordon effectively cut the city centre in half. To mitigate against this, the Council, working with a number of stakeholders put in place a significant city recovery programme aimed at assisting impacted traders and driving footfall into the city centre.</p> <p data-bbox="264 730 1299 761"><b><u>Impact of the City Recovery Programme Phase 1 Activity (pre-Christmas)</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="264 779 1509 1115">Since the immediate aftermath of the fire and in the run up to Christmas, the Council working with a range of stakeholders (including Bid One, BCCM, BCTC, Visit Belfast, DfC, and retailers) put in place a City Recovery Programme to increase footfall and encourage shoppers and visitors back into the city centre. This addressed issues around wayfinding and connectivity; physical and environmental improvements; large scale attractors and a supporting animation programme; all complimented by a bespoke marketing and communications campaign, #YourBelfast. Further information on this is available in Appendix 1.</p> <p data-bbox="264 1187 1059 1218"><b>Key success measures of the City Recovery Programme</b></p> <p data-bbox="264 1236 1474 1317">3.3. Following the implementation of the City Recovery Programme, feedback and evaluations of these activities identified a number of key success measures:</p> <ul data-bbox="316 1335 1509 1986" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="316 1335 1509 1671">- <i>Footfall</i>: The key issue following the fire was the localised reduction in footfall, especially Royal Avenue and Donegall Place. However, overall footfall in the city centre generally increased each month in 2018 compared to the same month in the previous year. December '18 saw an increase in footfall of 17% on December '17, with January '18 up 13% on the previous year. Royal Avenue was up over 20% in the week prior Christmas compared to the previous year, and Fountain Street and Ann Street were both up over 60% in the same week.</li> <li data-bbox="316 1688 1509 1986">- <i>Retail trading / Sales</i>: Information provided by BCCM showed retail sales in Dec 18 vs Dec 17 indicated a small net growth overall; 61% experienced sales that were the same or higher than Dec 17. The growth was largely driven by multiples whilst independent retailers experienced similar sales to last year. Overall, the hospitality sector performed better than retail; 79% experienced sales that were the same or higher than Dec 17.</li> </ul>

- Animation programme: Council commissioned Cathedral Quarter Trust to programme animation activity at key locations (particularly those worst affected areas) which involved approximately 75 local creative, arts and community cultural organisations attracting hundreds of additional visitors to the city centre.
- Independent Market Survey: This highlighted that the additional animation programme, the large scale attractions and physical improvements encouraged visitors into the city centre, enhanced their stay and increased the likelihood of revisits.
- Marketing and Communication Campaign: A significant campaign of city marketing and communications activity was led by BCC, Visit Belfast and several other city partners. Overall, the campaign was successful in delivering increased year on year results over the 8 week period of the Christmas Campaign (ie +16% trips, +122% bed nights and +4% spend).
- #Your Belfast Reward App: Involving over 200 local businesses and over 75 different incentives, there were 5902 total unique installations of the app and 6334 total QR scans in a 3 week period.

#### **City Revitalisation Programme**

3.4 Following the successful delivery of the temporary City Recovery Programme immediately following the fire and in the period up to Christmas, the decision was taken to refocus this activity into a City Revitalisation programme, which would align more closely with the existing strategies to enhance and develop the city centre (Belfast Agenda, Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy etc). Further information on the programme objectives and detail of the key work strands is available in Appendix 1.

3.5 An update on the activity within the strands of work for the City Revitalisation Programme as previously agreed by Members is set out below.

#### **Physical and Environmental Improvements**

##### **i. Pop up Park**

3.6 Members will wish to note that a number of the physical and environmental improvements have already been deployed in the city centre. The temporary 'Pop Up' Play Park specifically designed for children to encourage exploratory play and learning in a safe and welcoming environment was opened in Castle Place by the Lord Mayor on 22 March. As noted in the cordon update below, the early reopening of Castle Junction has meant that the Pop Up Park has been removed to allow vehicle access to Castle Place. DfI control the roadway and had

granted the Council a temporary licence until end May (or removal of cordon) for purposes of locating the pop up park. A separate report is being brought to this Committee on this issue.

**ii. Belfast in Bloom**

3.7 The enhanced Belfast in Bloom project is expected to begin roll out later this month adding greenery and colour to the city centre. With a feature piece planned at City Hall, it will also extend to enhance tubs, planters and hanging baskets in the city centre. The thematic displays will feature maritime related designs in early summer, progressing to music themed features later in the summer.

**iii. Deep Clean and Graffiti Renewal**

3.8 The deep clean and graffiti removal using a new hot water washer has begun in the priority city centre areas affected by the fire. A dedicated team has been put in place with work initially focusing on the removal of graffiti from hard surfaces and the underfoot cleaning (pavements/granite) and the gable walls. Officers are continuing to explore options to address the graffiti on shutters, although there are some issues around liability which are being considered.

**iv. Bank Square Canopy**

3.9 Members will be aware in the months immediately following the fire, the area around Castle Street and Bank Square in particular faced a number of challenges including access and delivery requirements, ongoing building works and wayfinding to direct people to the area. This made animating and programming the space difficult. Despite these challenges, key environmental improvements were rolled out such as planters and lighting fixtures along with a number of successful animation events including the Cinema on the Square, Fire and Ice performances, and City of Music events.

3.10 The Castle Street area will continue to be significantly affected for the foreseeable future due to the continued closure to traffic of Castle Street and Bank Street, and the continued use of Bank Square as a delivery route for local traders. A key project for the City Revitalisation programme is exploring the creation of an outdoor covered space for retailer-led themed events and other animation activity in Bank Square. In order to test the viability of a permanent covered space, two one-month long pilots are planned over the summer and autumn (June/July and September/October) using a temporary canopy to encourage visitors and shoppers to spend time in the area. Officers are working with local retailers to develop a series of events which already includes a continuation of Council's successful Summer Music in the City Programme and plans by Bid One for a weekend of music during the Golf Open weekend. Appendix 2 and

3 provides further details on the draft programme to date. Engagement with local traders to develop and enhance this is currently underway. If the temporary pilot programme is successful, it is intended to bring formalised proposals for a longer term more permanent solution that involves the Council, DfC and traders.

**v. City Dressing and Lighting Strategy**

3.11 Following engagement with city stakeholders, a coherent City Dressing and Lighting Strategy is also currently under development alongside city partners, aimed at providing a coherent approach towards lighting and dressing throughout the city centre. It is intended that the strategy will provide the foundation on how specific lighting schemes can be brought forward on a phased basis, subject to future funding. To feed into the lighting element of the strategy, initial pilot projects have been identified at Castle Street and Castle Arcade and discussions are also underway with city partners in terms of an approach for enhanced Christmas lighting.

3.12 In addition, as part of the city dressing approach in the strategy, it is likely that proposals will include a thematic /seasonal approach to city dressing. To support this, new cordon designs are being developed and are being implemented in May 2019 to bring life to the static cordon around the Bank Building. It is anticipated that the draft City Dressing and Lighting Strategy will be complete later in the year and will be brought back to Committee for consideration by Members.

**vi. Entries and Lanes Strategy**

3.13 One of the key issues identified in the pre-Christmas Recovery Programme was the connectivity and permeability of the city centre and its impact on wayfinding around the city centre following the fire. To address this, and following research in other cities, there is an opportunity to support and enhance permeability via an Entries and Lanes Strategy which offers the opportunity to improve the connectivity, resilience, tourism, city character, marketing and alternative uses for the existing entries. A Four Phase strategy is proposed:

1. Phase 1: Enhance existing entries between High Street and Ann Street (2019-20)
2. Phase 2: Enhance existing entries at Castle Arcade and Wineceller Entry (2019-20)
3. Phase 3: Enhanced Lanes at Church Lane, Wellington St and Callendar St (2020-21, subject to budget)
4. Phase 4: Reopening Entries ay High St Entry, Sugarhouse Entry and Fountain Mews (longer term, subject to budget)

The procurement for design consultants to support Phase 1 and 2 is currently underway and it is anticipated that a consultant will be appointed in early summer. Following a period of

engagement and design scoping, it is hoped that the capital works for Phase 1 and 2 will begin late autumn and run until the end of the financial year. Preparatory work for Phases 3 and 4 can also be progressed but the capital works element will be subject to funding.

### **Animation/ Events and Programming**

3.14 Members will be aware that as part of the Recovery Programme, there was a significant animation programme in the lead up to Christmas. Going forward in the City Revitalisation Programme, it is proposed that the focus will be on existing activity, scaling up investment and focusing on affected areas while creating a sense of 'experience' through 'must see' events that are unique to the city centre.

3.15 Activities that have been enhanced to date include:

- Extending the Festival of Fools event beyond Cathedral Quarter into the city centre, link to the Marathon and other bank holiday activity
- Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival: expansion of the programme for the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the event to include a number of high profile performances
- Expansion of the Maritime Festival: there is a range of activities focused on the quays and Titanic Quarter area. However the event is also being expanded to include other locations such as St George's Market

Other proposals planned going forward include:

- 148<sup>th</sup> Open Golf: focal point of activity at City Hall to incorporate crazy golf, golf simulators and family-friendly golf-themed activities. Also exploring potential for a "music hub" at Bank Square from mid-July to mid-August, incorporating a range of musical performances, in partnership with the businesses in the area
- "Taste the Island" – exploring opportunities to tie into this Tourism Ireland campaign showcasing local food and drink produce as well as the best of local restaurants
- Support for an expanded "Culture Night" to become a "Culture Weekend" – this is scheduled for weekend of 20-21 September. The Friday event will focus on the Cathedral Quarter area while the Saturday event will involve the retail and hospitality core in the city centre.

### **Marketing and Communications**

3.16 In response to the feedback received through our regular stakeholder engagement with retailers and key city partners, and along with research which identified a decline in the day trip market, Visit Belfast have been commissioned to work with city stakeholders and Council to develop a new 'Make it Belfast' advertising campaign to support the City Revitalisation

Programme. Over the coming months, the campaign will advertise the city online, on the radio, in the press and on outdoor channels with a focus on families, young/young at heart to:

- Re-engage local consumer interest and inspire visits through positive messages
- Uplift image and attractiveness of Belfast city centre as a premier retail day trip destination
- Maximise campaign reach and penetration to targeted segmented audience
- Address perceptions and local visiting patterns
- Promote positive Belfast experiences, great value and access

3.17 The advertisements feature people who work in our shops, restaurants and bars and focuses on the city's character and energy, highlighting that a visit to the city - be it for shopping, eating or socialising - is always unique. Stakeholders identified that May and August were the most optimum times for the campaign to run taking into consideration other activities and plans they had in between these times. A highly visible promotional mix of ambient, bus T-sides, selected adshels, outdoor 48 sheets, radio, digital, video, social and national and local press will be used throughout the campaign to promote and inform the target audience. Where appropriate, Council will uplift the campaign via our existing external communication channels.

3.18 "Make it Belfast" campaign went live on Monday 13 May with radio advertising, followed by outdoor, digital and press advertising from w/c 20 May for the next six weeks. Social media will run throughout May up to the end of August to ensure an "always on" approach to the campaign. It is planned that there will be an additional burst of advertising in late July which will continue up to the end of August with further radio, outdoor, regional press, digital and programmatic display and film advertising. Supporting material including a "**Make it Belfast**" campaign toolkit is under development for use by all stakeholders to further strengthen and add value to the campaign.

**Update on the cordon**

3.19 As Members will be aware, in addition to the Castle Place walkway, two further walkways opened at the end of February and March this year, which have increased access around the cordon from Castle Street, via Fountain Street to Donegall Place. This access enabled a number of closed businesses to reopen in recent weeks including Zara, Abacus Beads and most recently Tesco which reopened on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May. All business now have access to their premises and only one business remains closed.

3.20	<p>The façade retention schemes were complete by the end of April, with the cordon at Castle Junction reduced earlier than anticipated at the end of May. This allowed a wider opening at Castle Junction to open on 23 May which allows single lane traffic between Royal Avenue and Donegall Place. Translink Metro Services were able to resume on the morning of 23 May as well. Appendix 4 and 5 provide further details on the new city centre access arrangements and the Castle Place traffic management plan following the latest reduction of the cordon.</p> <p><b><u>City Currency</u></b></p>
3.21	<p>As announced on 8th May, the pilot of the Belfast Coin initiative was launched. Following the pilot, Belfast is set to introduce its own city currency via an app later this year as a result of a successful application by the Council to be part of a global challenge through the 100 Resilient Cities network. Belfast Coin will be an incentive-based digital currency aimed at rewarding positive actions by residents, as well as encouraging economic growth and helping to achieve environmental goals while working alongside other global cities to learn from each other about urban problem solving and sharing best practice. The pilot will see Council work with a range of partners and stakeholders across the city to allow the currency to be used as payment in shops, restaurants and other business in response to shopping local, recycling, volunteering and taking part in civic activities.</p> <p><b><u>Community Safety within City Centre</u></b></p>
3.22	<p>Council officers have been proactively working with key city centre partners, including BIDs, DFC, DOJ, BCCM, Cathedral Quarter Trust, Linen Quarter and retailers, to explore and identify how we can create an enhanced sense of safety within the city centre. This has resulted in co-funding being secured from DoJ, Cathedral Quarter and Linen Quarter and BIDs for two new beat officers.</p> <p><b><u>Footfall figures</u></b></p>
3.23	<p>There continues to be ongoing challenges around footfall in the city centre. In April, footfall marginally improved in the city centre as a whole, up 0.7% on the previous year to date. However, Royal Avenue continues to be impacted by reduced footfall compared to the same month in the previous year (-32.3% on Apr 2018) and Donegall Place was also down in April compared to the previous year (-4.1%). Nearly all areas (except Fountain Street) saw an improvement compared to the footfall figures reported in March, though this in part will be as a result of the Easter holidays in April. Across NI, footfall is up 0.8% on the year to date, and up across the UK as a whole by 0.2%.</p>

### **City Centre Regeneration Taskforce**

3.24 Members may wish to note that all the activity related to the City Revitalisation Programme noted above is set within the context of a wider regeneration strategy and action plan for the city centre and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy forms the basis of this. It contains a number of policies, projects and special action areas aimed at driving the regeneration of the city centre whilst ensuring connections to adjoining communities. As Members are aware, in the aftermath of the Bank Buildings fire a City Centre Regeneration Task Force was established jointly chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and the Council's Chief Executive, which aims to support a collaborative public sector response to drive and resource the city centre revitalisation efforts in the long-term.

3.25 The priority areas of focus emerging from the City Centre Joint Regeneration Taskforce are set out below which mirror the recurrent themes identified by businesses and the representative organisations within the city.

- City Resilience – a medium to long term city centre recovery plan involving various stakeholders and the continued need to drive forward and support the retail, office, tourist and city centre living product.
- Re-imagining and Diversification – recognising the need to diversify the city centre, including provision of family centric activities, enhanced tourist and cultural offering, city centre living, enhancing the evening economy etc.
- Infrastructure and Connectivity – enhance public realm and open space ensure permeability and connections through the city, transport and car parking issues etc.

3.26 The objectives of the emerging City Revitalisation Programme seeks to take account and align with these priority areas of focus.

### **Finance and Resources Implications**

3.27 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22 February 2019, followed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 6 March 2019, considered and approved a report setting out an overview of the broad proposals for the City Revitalisation Programme and associated budget allocations across the identified strands of activity totalling £2.505m. The key strands detailed and for which updates are provided in this report are funded from within the overall budget noted above.

3.28	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Background on Programme to date</p> <p>Appendix 2 – DRAFT Programme for Temporary Canopy, Bank Square July/August 2019</p> <p>Appendix 3 – DRAFT Programme for Temporary Canopy, Bank Square September/Oct. 2019</p> <p>Appendix 4 – DfI City Centre access arrangements May 2019</p> <p>Appendix 5 – DfI Castle Place Traffic Management Arrangements May 2019</p>