



Subject:	Future City Centre Programme: Physical & Environmental Improvements
Date:	9 th September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Richard Griffin, Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update Members on the 5Cs Public Realm Catalyst Project, including design development, and the stakeholder and public engagement plan, including opportunities for direct engagement with Councillors.- Update Members on the continued progress of projects within the 'Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements' strand of the Future City Centre Programme, including the proposal for a second phase of the Entries & Lanes project.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee are requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the continued progress with the 5Cs public realm project, including proposals for further Member, stakeholder and public engagement in respect of emerging concept designs. ii. Note the proposal to bring forward a second phase of the Entries & Lanes project, including concept and design development work, with officers continuing to explore funding opportunities to deliver the physical interventions. iii. Note the completion and opening of the pop-up park at Cathedral Gardens.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Future City Centre (FCC) Programme has been developed in line with the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Cultural Strategy (A City Imagining), and has been informed by the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. Projects within the Programme are also being considered in the context of COVID-19 to ensure that it addresses the range of challenges facing the city centre, including the need to facilitate social distancing and assist businesses with enhanced external spaces.</p>
3.2	<p><u>FCC Programme: Physical Regeneration and Environmental Improvements</u></p> <p>A number of physical projects are currently underway within the city centre, which align with Council and wider city Covid recovery priorities.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Public Realm Catalyst Projects- 'The 5 C's'</u></p> <p>In November 2018, SP&R Committee granted approval to part-fund a pilot public realm "catalyst" project at College Court, College St, College Avenue utilising historic developer contributions (specifically agreed in the legal agreements for public realm) to the value of £475,650 with the remainder of funding to be provided by the Department for Communities. In October 2019, CG&R Committee agreed to proceed with design development and delivery, in partnership with DfC, of further public realm improvements in Chichester St and Callender St, utilising developer contributions (also for public realm) with a value of £293,120, subject to approval by SP&R Committee. DfC subsequently confirmed commitment of additional funding.</p>
3.4	<p>A public realm project with a total value in the region of £2m has now been developed incorporating the streets referred to above, which will include improvements to footway</p>

	<p>surfaces, street furniture, lighting and soft landscaping. The project is being delivered by the Department for Communities in partnership with Council through existing governance arrangements established by the Belfast Streets Ahead Board.</p>
3.5	<p>This project is being undertaken in the context of ongoing work to transform connectivity across the city, and will be delivered in line with the principles set out in the City Centre Connectivity Study 'A Bolder Vision', which has recently received Ministerial endorsement from both DfC and DfI. During the design development stage, opportunities to accommodate emerging best practice in terms of social distancing and enhanced active travel provision will also be explored to ensure the scheme supports short to medium term recovery, as well as longer term sustainable and inclusive growth.</p>
3.6	<p>In January 2020, DfC appointed Doran Consulting as the Integrated Design Team to take forward the project, including engagement with a range of stakeholders. Following Covid related programme delays, a presentation and webinar was hosted for Elected Members on 23rd June 2020 detailing the scope of the project.</p>
3.7	<p>A BCC Stakeholder and Engagement Group has also been formed to provide cross Departmental input into the design development process. The group comprises representation from Open Spaces and Street Scene, Planning, Resilience, City Innovation and Growth, Safer Cities, Landscape and Development, Children and Young People and the Ageing Population.</p>
3.8	<p>Initial engagement with key stakeholders including DfI has also been undertaken and will continue throughout the project.</p>
3.9	<p>With concept designs now developed for the scheme, further engagement is planned during August and September, with a Councillor virtual workshop being arranged for mid-September, which represents an opportunity for Members to engage prior to public consultation which is programmed to commence at the end of September for a period of 12 weeks.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Cathedral Gardens Pop-Up Park</u></p> <p>As reported to Committee in August a pop-up park at Cathedral Gardens was nearing completion, aimed at providing a multi-functional family-friendly space, pending development of a permanent scheme being developed. This has since been completed and was launched by the Lord Mayor on 27 August. Photographs are included at Appendix A. The provision</p>

	<p>of this park is seen as a key element in seeking to diversify the city centre and provide more family centric facilities and quality open space.</p> <p><u>Belfast Entries & Lanes</u></p> <p>3.11 As previously reported to City Growth & Regeneration Committee in August the Entries Scheme is well underway and a number of artworks have since been completed, with bespoke feature lighting installation to commence during September. The intention is to ensure these spaces benefit adjoining businesses, particularly in light of COVID-19 and requirements for social distancing. The work has received positive feedback and officers have received further requests from property owners, business tenants and residents to consider additional interventions in other city centre entries and lanes, and on streets directly adjoining businesses who are keen to maximise external space to facilitate the re-opening of businesses and facilitate social distancing.</p> <p>3.12 Work is therefore underway to begin scoping a Phase 2 Entries & Lanes Scheme with a view to development, design and delivery of additional entries and interventions, subject to funding. Potential funding opportunities for delivery may include the next tranche of the DfC Town Centre Revitalisation Fund, with other external funding opportunities also being explored.</p> <p>3.13 Entries & Lanes Phase 2 would follow the same place-making approach to enhance the permeability of the city centre and make spaces more welcoming and vibrant as pedestrian links, as well as maximising opportunities to accommodate the use of external space by businesses in line with COVID 19 recovery initiatives. Additionally, through increased footfall, a further aim would be to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Finance & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Council's contribution to the 5Cs public realm project is being provided from developer contributions (which total £768,770), subject to SP&R approval in relation to the developer contribution element of £293,120 for the public realm improvements for Chichester St and Callender St. Approval was previously given to the use of developer contributions to the value of £475,650. The remainder of funding is to be provided by the Department for Communities.</p> <p>Work to support the design development of the Entries Phase 2 Scheme will be met from the previously approved City & Regeneration budget. External funding opportunities are being explored to progress delivery.</p>

3.15	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The Department for Communities have completed an Equality Screening for the 5Cs project which is published on the Department's website. Belfast City Council Equality Screening is currently being undertaken.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix A – Cathedral Gardens