



Subject:	Belfast: Our Recovery
Date:	18 September 2020
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Resources

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<i>After Committee Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>After Council Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Some time in the future</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Never</i>	<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
1.1	To provide Members with an update on the significant work to be taken forward by the Council and working across government and with city partners to support the city and its communities to respond and recover from the Covid-10 pandemic. The strong commitment by Council to support communities, businesses and vulnerable people during these challenging times is set out in the attached draft document: 'Belfast: Our Recovery'.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note that the Committee will receive a presentation on the key elements of the Belfast: Our Recovery' plan for the city as set out within this report;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Consider and endorse the Belfast: Our Recovery' and note the priority areas of focus and the associated support, interventions and programmes committed to within the framework. (iii) Agree that Party Group Leaders' and the Chief Executive signatories be included in the Foreword to demonstrate the strong cross-party commitment and support to the city recovery. (iv) Agree that the Belfast: Our Recovery' be published as a live and evolving framework – implementation plans will be adapted as circumstances change and as informed by continued engagement with communities and city stakeholders and partners. (v) Note the intention to proactively engage with communities, central government, key decision makers and private sector to intensify the focus on our priorities for recovery and to secure the necessary support and resources to underpin our work.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>In the midst of the ongoing pandemic, authorities are rightly focused on minimising the human cost, providing relief to their communities and delivering essential day-to-day services. Another major challenge for the Council and city partners is to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their local economies, so that businesses can once again thrive and provide employment opportunities, minimise potential job losses and retain the vibrancy of local communities and the city centre.</p>
3.2	<p>Members will be aware that we are still in the midst of a significant pandemic emergency with new localised restrictions recently introduced within the city to reduce the spread of the infection rates and to manage the significant risks which exist.</p>
3.3	<p>There is clearly a significant civic leadership and convening role for the Council to bring together key partners and work with communities to respond to the current emergency situation, ensuring the necessary measures are taken to keep citizens safe, whilst retaining critical services.</p>
3.4	<p>It is evident that there will be lasting structural changes to the city's economy, its infrastructure, its environment and to its communities, and this will likely result in financial and economic uncertainty for some time. There is a significant risk that existing inequalities, including emotional health and wellbeing, social isolation, addictions and poverty will be further amplified during this period.</p>
3.5	<p>The Belfast: Our Recovery document seeks to mitigate the immediate and short-term impacts of the pandemic, including, for example job losses, the need for skilling and reskilling to access employment opportunities, risks around vulnerable people and social isolation, and</p>

providing targeted support. Emphasis is given to how we maximise the social value of our own capital investments and grant programmes to support recovery, as well as the opportunities presented by our procurement, to promote inclusive growth, support local businesses and supply chains, and create local jobs. The document also highlights the need for a people and jobs led approach to recovery.

3.6

We are committed to work alongside communities and city partners to bring forward a series of medium and longer-term interventions to build the foundations for sustained recovery. These will need to maximise opportunities to sustain and create jobs, provide skills and employment support including traditional skills, drive investment in communities creating local assets and facilities, support local businesses and create community wealth, and support key sectors particularly those impacted by the pandemic. Examples of some of the levers which we will seek to accelerate as part of recovery include the Belfast Region City Deal investment, digital innovation, focus on green stimulus, use of public land assets to bring forward mixed-use developments.

3.7

It is also important to recognise that the Recovery document does not seek to replace existing commitments and ambitions set out within longer-term strategies such as the Belfast Agenda and its review, the Corporate Plan and the Resilience Strategy, Instead, it will help shape and sharpen our focus going forward through a 'recovery lens'.

3.8

Whilst the intention is to publish the Belfast: Our Recovery following consideration by SP&R Committee and endorsement by Full Council in early October 2020, it is recognised that the document represents a 'moment in time' picture of our current understanding of the emerging impacts and opportunities for driving recovery. It is likely that as the pandemic continues, circumstances may change and our plans and priorities will need to be updated to reflect new evidence and data as it becomes available, and to be informed by continual engagement and input from communities across Belfast in identifying and co-designing interventions going forward.

3.9

The framework covers five core strands which are not being considered in isolation but in terms of they can be brought together to build the foundations for recovery and deliver sustainable inclusive growth.

- (1) Our city – safe, vibrant, connected spaces and places
- (2) Our services – adoptive and responsive to local needs
- (3) Our communities - strengthened and resilient
- (4) Our economy – resilience and inclusive
- (5) Our environment – sustainable and climate resilient

(6) Our digital innovation – transformative and leading edge

3.10 In order to help drive recovery, we must continue to build on what has already been achieved in the city and maintain our competitiveness and attractiveness in terms of investment and further develop the opportunities which we have collaboratively worked to create. It is proposed that we work with our city partners to develop a strong public private Renewed Ambition programme around the city's offering as a place to invest in line with our Inclusive Growth Strategy.

3.11 It is intended, as part of this Renewed Ambition programme, to bring forward a joint public private programme of activity, including advocacy and lobbying, to highlight the city's offer in terms of the built environment, whilst ensuring that the city evolves to meet the requirements of the local communities and those who live, work and visit here.

Community Recovery

3.12 While there clearly remains an immediate need to continue to provide emergency support and ensuring key services and assets remain operational, looking ahead it will be important that we work collaboratively and harness the energy of our communities and city partners, ensuring greater co-ordination and innovation in addressing the specific issues that communities face across the city. As we move forward, there is a need to build community confidence, capacity and resilience across neighbourhoods through a range of programmes of support.

3.12 The benefit and potential impact of this approach is clearly demonstrated through the community response hub established by the Council to support residents during the coronavirus pandemic. Working with DFC and a range of community, voluntary and statutory partners the hub provide assistance to Belfast residents, including the coordination and distribution of 110,000 food parcels to vulnerable people across the city as well as specific emotional, financial and other support services. Communities were first to respond to the pandemic and have shown the strength and resilience of the sector in challenging times. In support of this work, the Council allocated over £1.6m funding to over 280 local community and voluntary organisations to support vulnerable people and families and assist community recovery.

3.13 The Council has also continued to deliver the £6m council grants programmes, despite the financial difficulties we face, to ensure important support services and programmes are delivered across the city. We will work with central government and other funding bodies to bring forward further financial support packages for communities and the third sector to help

	<p>address many of the social challenges which will be amplified as a direct result of the impact of the pandemic. As previously discussed with Members we will also review our own internal resources and services, starting with a transformational review of community provision within the city.</p> <p><u>Engaging with communities to support recovery</u></p> <p>3.14 Engagement plans are being developed to ensure participation of communities and stakeholders in the further development and ongoing implementation of our recovery plans, this will include (but is not limited to): the identification of II area priorities for community recovery, shaping of key strategic work programmes (e.g. Climate change), and engaging at an area level to inform the upcoming review of the Belfast Agenda.</p> <p>3.15 In the current climate, Members will recognise the challenges that exist in engaging with the public due to the restrictions on public gatherings and face to face meetings. Our engagement plans will need to utilise new and innovative engagement methods, using technology to maximise participation. As a first step, Members should note that a new online Engagement platform has now been procured and is in the early stages of deployment. This new platform will form a key element of our engagement approach over the coming months and, in tandem with other engagement tools such as webinars and social media, will be an opportunity for promoting citizen participation in city recovery, shaping Council services, policies and plans, and in the wider community planning process.</p> <p><u>Financing Recovery</u></p> <p>3.16 Members will be aware that officers are continuing to work with and lobby NI Executive Departments to identify and draw down any external funding to support our recovery plans. This includes the recent £3m+ Revitalisation Capital Fund secured with funding from Department for Communities and Department of Infrastructure. We will continue to work with central government and other partners to maximise the Belfast allocation of any emerging funding programmes (e.g. DFI funding for blue and green infrastructure, DfE £17.2m investment to support apprenticeships etc, PEACE PLUS etc).</p>
3.17	<p><u>Financial and resource implications</u></p> <p>There are no resource requirements as a consequence of this paper</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>

3.18	The Belfast: Our Recovery seeks to reduce inequalities by proposing a series of measures to support recovery.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Belfast: Our Recovery