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| <b>Subject:</b>           | Ministerial response to Public Realm at Shankill Gateway and Frederick Street |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 11 November 2020  |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development                   |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration and 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 type="checkbox"/>  |
| <b>Never</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  |

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

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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>  |
| 1.1        | At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 12 August 2020 it was agreed to issue a letter to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure outlining the Committee's concerns regarding the enhancement of junctions and improving walking and cycling connectivity as part of the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Scheme. |
| 1.2        | The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the subsequent response on 26 October 2020 from the Belfast Regeneration Directorate on behalf of the Minister for Communities.  |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>  |
| 2.1        | The Committee is asked to:-   |

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|            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Note the response from the Minister for the Department for Communities enclosed with this report at Appendix 1.</li> <li>2) Agree the next step in relation to the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Environment Improvement Scheme and advise if they wish to issue any further correspondence to the Minister for Communities.</li> <li>3) Note that a response from the Department for Infrastructure on the Shankill Gateway is pending, and that the Frederick St/Great Patrick St catalyst junction improvement scheme is currently on hold pending the outcome of the York Street Interchange Review.</li> <li>4) Note that the Department for Infrastructure will be attending the Special Meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> November.</li> </ol> |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Main report</b>   |
| 3.1        | <p>At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee held on 12 August 2020 it was agreed to issue a letter to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure outlining the Committee’s concerns regarding the enhancement of junctions and improving walking and cycling connectivity as part of the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Scheme, which is being progressed via DfC. Copy of letter enclosed at Appendix 2.</p>  |
| 3.2        | <p>The original designs as submitted for planning approval, following extensive community and statutory engagement, had included alterations to the junction by removing unnecessary road infrastructure and removing additional pedestrian crossing locations while increasing pavement space and introducing additional green landscaping. This proposal would minimise the number of pedestrian crossings required to traverse the junction, and in doing so, encourage safe and active travel, and reduce severance between local communities and the city centre. This design was however superseded immediately prior to the granting of planning approval and without wider consultation, with a design that maintained the layout of the current junction.</p>   |
| 3.3        | <p>The letter to the Minister raised concerns that this change did not address the issues presented by the hard infrastructure layout of the inner ring. It further highlighted that the approved design does not take into account our collective ‘Bolder Vision for Belfast’ which provides for prioritisation of integrated walking, cycling and public transport and that we should collectively be removing severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities.</p>   |

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| 3.4 | <p>It advised that whilst Council was supportive of the investment to enhance this location it was felt there was an opportunity to bring greater benefit than the current scheme design proposes, particularly in terms of safe pedestrian and cycle movements, and reducing severance through this key junction.</p>   |
| 3.5 | <p>The subsequent response from the Belfast Regeneration Directorate on behalf of the Minister for Communities (Appendix 1) indicates that in February 2020, DfC had submitted further detailed scheme drawings for the realignment of the Peter's Hill junction. They advise that DfI did not accept the proposals for the re-design work at the Peter's Hill junction and were content at that stage to keep the existing junction layout but to resurface the area as part of the scheme. They also advised that DfI had significant future plans for a number of junction works within the city centre, which could include the Peter's Hill junction and would be happy to work with DfC to consider any improvements that could be made when carrying out that work.</p>   |
| 3.6 | <p>On the basis of this commitment from DfI for a <i>possible</i> re-design of the junction sometime in the future, DfC contacted the Planning Manager to advise that a compromise arrangement had been reached with DfI, and that DfC was content to endorse the scheme without the junction re-alignment and with only resurfacing of the junction. Full planning approval was subsequently issued in July 2020 for the following proposed works:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Public realm improvements comprising resurfacing of existing footpaths with natural stone and granite kerbs; new/replacement tree planting, street lighting, and railings /walls; new street furniture; decorative hoarding panels; realignment of roadside kerbs; improvements to pedestrian crossings and on-street parking; and all associated site and access works.</i></p> |
| 3.7 | <p>Members are asked to note that the response from the DfC outlines that the intention is to continue with the resurfacing works of the existing junction layout, pending junction improvement works from the Department for Infrastructure at some time in the future. Members should also note that since the issue was raised at the CG&amp;R meeting on the 12th August 2020, DfC have submitted to discharge some of the planning conditions associated with the planning condition for the scheme (LA04/2019/0200/F).</p>   |
| 3.8 | <p>Following on from the launch of the Bolder Vision for Belfast, a jointly commissioned and endorsed report by BCC, DfC and DfI, council officers are engaging officials of both the</p>  |

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|            | DfC and the DfI through a Junctions Working Group to bring forward and to accelerate the delivery of improved connections at the Inner Ring Junctions under the agreed principles of the Bolder Vision.  |
| 3.9        | Through this group, and with regard to the response provided by the DfC on the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Environment Improvement scheme, there remains concerns that the opportunity to address this junction during a current capital works scheme will be missed, and that there is a lack of understanding as to when, or how the junction improvement works will be delivered. Members are being asked to agree the next step in relation to the response received from the DfC officials on behalf of the Minister. |
| 3.10       | Members are also asked to note that the proposed accelerated Frederick St/Great Patrick St Junction improvement works as identified within the Ministerial letter is currently on hold with the Department for Infrastructure pending the outcome of the ongoing York Street Interchange Review.   |
| 3.11       | A response from the Minister for Infrastructure has not yet been received but will be reported to Committee at the earliest opportunity. Members should also note that the Department for Infrastructure is to present to the Special Meeting of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on the 24 <sup>th</sup> November where Members will have an opportunity to raise specific issues with the Departmental officials.  |
|            | <b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b>  |
| 3.12       | None.  |
|            | <b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>   |
| 3.13       | No implications for the Council at this stage. All considerations to be undertaken and addressed through the Shankill Gateway PREI scheme.   |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b><u>Appendices – Documents Attached</u></b>  |
|            | Appendix 1: Letter from Belfast Regeneration Directorate (on behalf of the Minister for Communities) dated 26 October 2020.<br>Appendix 2: Letter from Belfast City Council to Minister Ní Chuilín & Minister Mallon   |