



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Belfast Innovation District</b>
<b>Date:</b>	18th December 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jayne Brady, Digital Commissioner

<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>Sometime in the future</b>	<input 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 or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To outline plans for the development of a world-class 'Innovation District' that would seek to attract talent and investment and support the wider aims of the new Belfast Digital Innovation Partnership (BDIP) and to seek Committee approval for funding to support a twelve-month development programme for the District.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree that the Council contributes £50,000 to the development phase of the creation of an Innovation District (as part of a total BDIP co-investment of £325,000).
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The new 'Belfast Digital Innovation Partnership' (BDIP), which includes the Council, Queen's University, Ulster University, Belfast Harbour, Invest NI, and Catalyst, is seeking to exploit the

	<p>power of digital innovation to enhance wider regional productivity and generate more and better jobs for all.</p>
3.2	<p>It aims to foster the conditions in which our most exciting SME clusters can grow; our workforce are re-skilled for new jobs; and the world-class research of our universities can translate rapidly into innovative new businesses, products and services.</p>
3.3	<p>In doing so, BDIP partners are also committed to nurturing an urban environment through the development of a Smart District in which industry, academia and the public sector can collaborate on urban challenges such as climate change, technological disruption and the health of our communities. The Covid-19 crisis has not only amplified these challenges and opportunities but has greatly accelerated the time scales against which this environment should be developed.</p>
3.4	<p>The Smart District covers three initial zones that offer rich environments for our innovation community to collaborate on research, for businesses to form and scale; for investments to flourish and next generation urban services to emerge. (See attached Summary Booklet presented to Members in June 2020) The first project underway in the programme is the development of the an Innovation District – a 400 acre area that will extend from the new Ulster campus in the city centre, along Queen’s Island, to include the Northern Ireland Science Park and Queen’s University’s ECIT campus. This will be a world-class, inclusive, mixed-use urban environment for research, innovation, entrepreneurialism and investment.</p>
3.5	<p>The location is already primed as a digital innovation multiplier. There is already a substantial knowledge economy activity with Catalyst supporting a community of over 200 innovative SMEs, and a number of international companies in areas such as fintech and cybersecurity.</p>
3.6	<p>There are also plans for major physical investment both public and private sector investors that can contribute to the ambition. These include proposals for four university centres of excellence which will be partially funded by the Belfast Region City Deal; plans for an advanced wireless network; the city investment in the ‘Sixth’ building; and the opportunities represented by the new Ulster University campus.</p>

3.7	<p>Lessons have been drawn from elsewhere and show that a successful district requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City wide collaboration with strong, influential leadership of the type that BDIP is offering;</li> <li>• An acknowledgement of the power and importance of ‘place’ and the need to place inclusion and community and its heart;</li> <li>• An internationally recognisable brand that reinforces and aligns with the city’s own vision</li> <li>• A strong business model with adequate resources to mobilise effectively.</li> <li>• Proximity of businesses and academia to be able to collaborate and cluster</li> </ul>
3.8	<p>Drawing on the success of similar innovation districts in other cities (including Dublin, Liverpool and Eindhoven) the Belfast district would offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An internationally high quality location acting as a beacon for talent and inward investment</li> <li>• The critical ‘density’ to sustain a world-class ecosystem for start-ups, SMEs, academia and multinationals</li> <li>• A place-based multiplier for sustainable, high productivity jobs for the region and for neighbouring communities</li> <li>• A driver to enhance the existing quality of life in the area - a ‘go to’ location for residents, workers and visitors.</li> </ul>
3.9	<p>Following a series of partner workshops, BDIP partners now wish to commence with the delivery of a twelve-month programme to fully develop the Innovation District proposition.</p> <p>This would include three major strands of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating the commercial proposition and brand strategy</li> <li>- Building an approach to citizen inclusion and skills</li> <li>- A programme for cluster growth (likely to include fintech, Greentech and Healthtech)</li> </ul>
3.10	<p>Partners have costed the twelve-month development programme at £325,000 which would fund the necessary resources, staffing, and technical support. Members are asked to agree that Belfast City Council will contribute £50,000 to this programme budget.</p>
<b>Financial and Resource Implications</b>	
3.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £50,000 will be financed from the existing Smart Cities budget.</li> </ul>

3.12	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b> None
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Smart Cities Booklet