



Subject:	Review of Belfast Agenda and maintaining focus on delivery
Date:	12 May 2021
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development John Greer, Director of Economic Development

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 this report is update the committee on the recent reconfiguration of the Belfast Agenda Delivery Boards and the proposed approach and timeline for refreshing the city's community plan and the role of Members in helping shape this.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Note the reconfiguration of the Belfast Agenda Delivery Boards as set out within this report;(ii) Note the clear alignment and synergies between the Boards and work of the Committee;

	<p>(iii) Note the role of Elected Members in inputting and shaping the refresh of the Belfast Agenda over coming months; and</p> <p>(iv) Note the role that Elected Members will play in refreshing the community plan detailed in section 3.9.</p>
3.0	Main report
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p><u>Reconfiguration of Belfast Agenda Delivery Boards</u></p> <p>Members will be aware, that in order to ensure that the vision and ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda (community plan for the city) are translated into action and mobilised city partners to support delivery, four cross-sectoral delivery Boards had been formed (i.e. Growing the Economy and City Development Working and Learning Living Here Resilience and Sustainability). The Committee will have received regular updates on the programmes and achievements being released through the BA Delivery Boards, particularly from a Working and Learning and Growing Economy & City Development Boards.</p> <p>As the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have begun to emerge, there is a need to understand how our city economy and communities are likely to be impacted by COVID-19, and what we need to focus on to rebuild in the coming months and years. Clearly, the pandemic is not over and there will need to be sustained efforts to protect the safety and health of our citizens, while at the same time balancing the need to stabilise and rebuild our economy and city. In this context, and as part of the review of the Belfast Agenda, there is a need to take stock and reassess the focus of Community Planning and the work of the Boards over the coming weeks and months. This is not to say that the ambitions and commitments set out within the Belfast Agenda should not remain at the core of our work. However, in order to address challenges that will continue to emerge as a result of the pandemic we may need to pivot our collective focus and seek to prioritise and accelerate key interventions and programmes.</p> <p>The Community Planning Partnership agreed that there is greater alignment and fit between the focus of the Working and Learning Board (e.g. Skills development educational attainment), and economic focus of the exiting Growing the Economy and City Development Board. This approach provides the opportunity for the development of policies and interventions to create a skills pipeline that is intrinsically linked to economic development policy as well as demand and labour market intelligence. It also provides the opportunity for the development of a focused City Development Board that would examine the key priorities needed to drive city wide regeneration and development.</p>

3.4	<p>In summary, it was agreed that the Working and Learning Board and the Growing the Economy strands of the Belfast Agenda are brought together into a single board (i.e. Jobs, Skills and Education Board) alongside the creation of a standalone City Development Board.</p> <p>Focus of Boards</p>
3.5	<p>The key areas of focus for the Boards, as agreed by the Community Planning Partnership are set out below and clearly align with the work of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. The Boards provide a platform to create enhanced collaboration and provide a focus on action and delivery. Each of the Boards are examining and defining the specific deliverables that will be progressed in the context of community planning, enhancing the potential for collaborative gain, and the development of an 18-24months+ action plan.</p> <p>Jobs, Skills and Education Board</p>
3.6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enterprise & Business Growth - We are aware of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on many of our local businesses, social enterprises, co-operatives, and employees. Important that we strengthen the current system and bring forward an integrated approach to supporting businesses, sustaining jobs and creating new employment opportunities within the city including the arterial routes and key neighbourhood economic hubs. We will seek to adopt an inclusive approach to innovation and broaden the participation in and benefits from an innovative economy. 2. Supporting tourism, culture, arts, entertainment and hospitality - The prolonged and uncertain nature of the pandemic and the range of measures and restrictions brought forward has had a devastating impact upon the vitality and functionality of these sectors – key economic and employment drivers for the city and wider region. It will be important that we seek to protect and rebuild these important sectors (like many other sectors) during and emerging from the pandemic. 3. Skills and Employability – Working across partners to ensure local people gain the necessary skills to remain in or enter the local workforce. We will also work with employers to better match the demand for and supply of skills and provide a responsive and targeted approach to providing employability support for those furthest removed from the labour market. We will also seek to identify and maximise digital pathway opportunities to increase skills development and access to employment. 4. Educational Underachievement – There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has further widened many of the inequalities which already existed across the city and has adversely impacted upon vulnerable people and families. Seeking to alleviate

educational inequalities and underachievement within the city will continue to shape our plans and delivery over the coming years.

3.7 **City Development Board**

1. **City Regeneration and Investment** – We will work in partnership to identify and unlock major regeneration schemes for the city and maximise the associated benefits of such investment for local people and communities.
2. **Housing Led Regeneration** – Maximising the opportunities to continue to work with partners to explore and identify opportunities for the strategic use of public and private land assets and funding mechanisms to accelerate housing development, including city centre living and deliver mixed-tenure homes across the city. Significant housing stress exists across the city and there is an opportunity to consider how we can bring forward schemes which contribute to the growth ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda and create sustainable communities (mixed-use developments providing community infrastructure, amenities, and open/green spaces).
3. **Access, Connectivity & Active Travel** – Alongside the need to bring forward a long-term transportation plan for the city, there is a need to focus on joint objectives and a targeted delivery approach across partners to accelerate opportunities to enhance accessibility, connectivity and active travel across the city. This is not only important to connect people to employment opportunities and investment hubs, but is important from a climate resilience perspective and will also create healthy, shared, vibrant and sustainable environments that promote health and emotional wellbeing.
4. **Future City Centre Programme** – The scale of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the future viability of the city centre is clearly challenging, with retail and hospitality industries in particular suffering. A thriving city centre is critical in terms of jobs and economic recovery for the city as whole, and for the wider region. It is clear that Belfast, in line with other cities need to consider the purpose of the city centre and how it can adapt to becoming a multi-purpose location, combining retail and hospitality with business, residential, cultural, community and other facilities, alongside new ways of working and embracing innovation and digital technology. The NI Executive have established a new High Street Task Force and it will be important that the Board consider the key challenges and opportunities.

3.8 Belfast Agenda Review

Members will note that there is a legislative requirement and timescale for review of the city's community plan (Belfast Agenda) which is required by November 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption on normal working arrangements have understandably impacted

upon the timescales for the review of community plans across local government. A detailed report outlining the planned process, including significant engagement and co-design with communities, city partners and elected Members. Attached at **Appendix 1** is the copy of the detailed report considered and agreed by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. In summary, the co-design approach we adopt needs to be flexible to reflect the outcome of prior engagement ensuring we listen to and reflect the specific needs of each area of the city.



<p>3.9</p> <p>3.10</p>	<p><u>Role of Elected Members</u></p> <p>Elected Members will be engaged at each stage of the review process through the All Party Working Group on Community Planning. In addition, it is recommended that all Elected Members will have the opportunity to shape the priority framework and plans for the new 4 year period through Party Group briefings. In addition, Elected Members will also be supported by our Marketing and Communications team who will be provide ongoing support via a communications toolkit to enable them to engage their constituents to make their voices heard.</p> <p>While the specifics regarding engagement events will be finalised with partners, it is expected that there will be a series of thematic and/or local-area virtual workshops. This will provide a further role for Elected Members to provide a leading role within their communities to shaping the city’s future plans.</p>
<p>3.11</p>	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.</p>
<p>3.12</p>	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural need implications in this report.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Review of the Belfast Agenda - SP&R Report - April 2021</p>