

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 22nd September, 2021

SPECIAL REMOTE MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Brooks, Donnelly, Gormley,
Hanvey, Hussey, Maskey,
O'Hara and Spratt.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration;
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Chairperson

In the absence of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson, the Committee agreed that Councillor Gormley would act as Chairperson for the duration of the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillor Murphy (Chairperson), Alderman Dorrian and Councillors Howard, Lyons and McMullan

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentations

Department for Infrastructure - Autumn Report

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy welcomed Ms. L. Loughran, Mr. A. Darragh, Mr. D. Williams, Mr. M. McKendry and Mr. K. Monaghan from the Department for Infrastructure to the meeting.

Mr. Monaghan explained to the Committee that the Eastern Division covered the two Council areas of Belfast and Lisburn and Castlereagh and that it was one of four Divisions, each of which managed, improved and maintained the transport network and he added that it was the primary contact point for those who walk, wheel, cycle or drive.

He stated that the DfI Autumn Report referred to works which had already been completed in the Belfast city Council area in 2021/22 and set out the programme of schemes being undertaken for the remainder of the financial year.

He reported that, over the past year, DfI had continued to deliver its programmes whilst dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 and that, the capital allocations had been issued which were similar to the previous year, with funds being made

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available for blue/green infrastructure and would include walking, cycling, structural maintenance, safer routes to schools and traffic information and control. He added that resource difficulties had been an issue regarding the delivery of minor improvement programmes which posed a continued risk that some schemes may not be delivered within the financial year.

Mr. Monaghan advised the Committee that the overall budget for 2021/22 structural maintenance capital budget in Northern Ireland was £80M and, of that, £17M had been set aside for a roads recovery fund which was being used to address areas of immediate need across the road network.

Ms. Loughran referred to 'Planning for the Future of Transport: Time for Change' which had been published in June 2021, in which the Minister set out her ambition that active travel would become a pillar of change within towns and cities and contribute to reducing emissions, improving health, wellbeing and connectivity and was based on the following principles:

- To reduce the carbon impact of transport, by reducing the number of journeys and use more sustainable modes of transports;
- To increase the allocation of road space for walking, cycling and urban transport on streets; and
- Behavioural change from understanding why and how people travel.

She reported that a number of steps had been taken over recent years in Belfast, such as, pop-up cycle lanes, facilitating parklets and street closures.

She informed the Members that the Belfast Cycling Network delivery plan was being progressed and that it would be published before the end of the year. She added that work had commenced on a new suite of transport plans to secure genuine integration between the planning of land use and the planning of transport infrastructure.

Mr. Monaghan reported that a proposal had been developed for a Park and Ride site at the Tillysburn Junction, on vacant ground situated between Holywood Road and Sydenham Bypass, and that the scheme was progressing to the initial stages of planning application with a Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) submission the Planning Committee at its meeting on 5th August, 2021.

He referred to the York Street Interchange Scheme and reported that it remained a high priority for the Department and that commencement of construction would depend upon the satisfactory completion of an economic assessment, completion of the statutory process and subject to funding being made available in future budget settlements.

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Mr. Monahan outlined to the Committee, the Department's schedule of works in the following areas:

- Minor works;
- Maintenance of structures;
- Collision remedial schemes;
- Traffic schemes;
- Belfast taxi rank review;
- Pedestrian measures;
- Safer routes to schools;
- Traffic signs;
- Carriageway markings;
- Legislation;
- Disabled parking bays;
- Street lighting;
- Cycle measures;
- Traffic calming; and
- Transportation measures.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to weed spraying, leaf shedding and pruning, Mr. Monaghan indicated that there had been contractual issues which had caused a delay in scheduling, however, he invited the Member to pass a list of areas of concern to his colleagues directly, who would endeavour to address the issues.

Following further discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives from the Department for Infrastructure for their presentation.

The Committee noted the presentation.

Department for Infrastructure - Belfast Metropolitan Transport Strategy

Ms. Loughran reported to the Committee that the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Strategy was now being developed into the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and that tenders were being considered for partner consultants to assist with the delivery of all of the Transport Plans, lot one would be evaluating Belfast and lot two would cover the other Council areas in Northern Ireland.

She stated that the consultants would play a key role in working with each of the relevant councils and that the Joint Project Board which produced the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Study would be reconvened in December, 2021.

She pointed out that the Minister's 'Planning for the Future of Transport: Time for Change' document would guide the planning and design of the plan.

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Following discussion, the Committee thanked Ms. Loughran for the update and the representatives from the Department for Infrastructure retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the update.

20's Plenty for Us Campaign

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. R. King MBE, founder of 20's Plenty for Us Campaign, to the meeting.

Mr. King reported that the 20's Plenty Campaign assisted local authorities and governments to balance movement, safety and the economy to create better streets for people.

He outlined common objectives, including increasing activity levels, promoting healthy active travel options, meeting climate change obligations, reducing inequalities and lowering emissions and congestion.

He pointed out that, there were multiple mobility challenges, and referred to 36% of primary age parents that were afraid to let children walk or cycle, due to fast speeding traffic and that one in five adults, aged between 40 and 60 years old, were physically inactive.

He stated that the 30mph speed limit was not fit for purpose and did not significantly reduce overall journey time in urban areas and did not support active travel. He added that all inner London boroughs, Cardiff and Edinburgh had already set a 20mph limit and that Wales would set a national 20mph urban/village limit from 2023.

He outlined the benefits that a 20mph limit would bring, including a rise in active travel, reduction in casualties and overall safer streets. He highlighted to the Committee the key considerations to maximise the success of implementing 20mph limit and that '20's Plenty for Us' could help provide a blueprint for meeting community demand for 20mph in more places.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to note the presentation and agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure, asking her to undertake a feasibility study to introduce 20mph speed default limits on streets throughout Belfast where people live, work, shop, play or learn, with 30mph as the exception on those roads where full consideration of the needs of vulnerable users of a higher limit is given.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. King MBE for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Chairperson