



Subject:	TEO High Street Task Force – Call for Evidence
Date:	8 th December 2021
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Deirdre Kelly, Programme Manager

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 to update Members on the TEO High Street Task Force ‘Call for Evidence’ exercise.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note that the final draft response to the TEO High Street Task Force Call for Evidence will be submitted to DfC as the secretariat for the High Street Task Force in line with the closing date on 6th December 2021.Note that as part of the Call for Evidence process a workshop is being held in Belfast on 6th December 2021.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the final draft consultation response of the 6th December (as enclosed at Appendix 1) as the Council's final response pending Council ratification.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At the meeting of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 10 th November 2021 Members were updated on the then recently launched High Street Task Force Call for Evidence which is the first stage of an ongoing public engagement process, and forms part of the work of the Task Force in identifying the challenges and issues that our high streets face.
3.2	The report presented to Members in November highlighted that The Executive Office launched the High Street Task Force 'Call for Evidence' on 25 th October 2021. The Committee subsequently agreed that <i>officers prepare a draft response which would be brought via Party Leaders Forum on 25th November, with the final response brought back retrospectively to the Committee, at its meeting in December.</i>
3.3	As agreed by Committee, the draft response to the Call for Evidence was presented at Party Leaders Forum on 25 th November 2021. Party Leaders were largely content with the response although requested a small number of additions This involved the need for relevant legislation to address vacancy and dereliction such as the Dilapidations Bill, as well as ensuring adequate reference to meeting accessibility needs and working with IMTAC. In addition, it was highlighted that whilst we direct efforts to diversify the high street retail should be supported to ensure its sustainability especially in the context of Belfast as a capital city. Other issues were discussed in terms of car parking and accessibility. The additional points agreed by Party Leaders have been incorporated in the final draft response as enclosed at Appendix 1.
3.4	As part of the Call for Evidence, a series of six workshops were conducted to allow in-person views to be heard and discussed. A workshop was held in Belfast on 3 rd November at the Hilton Hotel. Due to issues, including attendance a rescheduled workshop is taking place on 6 th December. At the time of writing this report a number of Council officers have registered to attend this event, as well as promoting and encouraging attendance with a wide group of stakeholders. Due to the timing of publishing this report, officers will provide a verbal update of key discussion points at the Committee meeting.
3.5	In keeping with the timetable set out by TEO, the final draft response will be submitted by the 6 th December 2021 attached at Appendix 1.

Members should note that the 14 themes identified within the Call for Evidence document, along with 46 associated questions are reflected across the ongoing programme of work aligned to the focus of this Committee including its priorities and Committee Plan, as well as alignment to other Council led programmes and priorities. In drafting responses officers drew on a number of plans, projects, programmes and strategies for example:

- Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) and associated Masterplans
- Future City Centre Programme and the key pillars within that focusing on:
 - Regeneration and Connectivity
 - Business and Investment
 - City Centre Vibrancy
 - Position the City to Compete
 - Digital Innovation
 - Clean, Green and Safe underpinned by Policy Legislation and Market Intelligence
- A Bolder Vision and Connectivity Programme
- 10 Year Tourism Strategy
- Cultural Strategy - A City Reimagining
- Vacancies Programme
- Tactics, Regeneration, eg, Entries Project
- Revitalisation Programme
- Strategic Acquisitions
- City Centre Living
- BRCD Including Belfast Stories
- Belfast Innovation City / SMART
- Business and Community Cluster Grants
- Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations

3.6

Although the above mentioned programmes, projects and strategies are not an exhaustive list in terms of where officers drew evidence from, it demonstrates that Council has an extensive intelligence base from strategy development through to programme and project implementation on areas which have a direct impact on the vitality and sustainability of our high streets.

3.7

It is also relevant to highlight the synergies of the work of the Community Planning Partnership: City Development Board, which has a priority theme of the Future City Centre

	<p>Programme as well as citywide regeneration and development including arterial routes / neighbourhood centres. Aligned to the approach which Council has taken, officers are now coalescing with CPP partners to develop a robust and strong collaborative delivery focused action plan which could help address themes coming from this Call for Evidence and as mentioned above priority areas of this Committee and Council.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Final Draft BCC Response to TEO High Street Task Force Call for Evidence Appendix 2 – Future City Centre Programme: Priority Workstreams overview</p>