



Subject:	Request to Present findings of the Retail & Leisure Performance Strategy
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Richard Griffin, Development Manager / Catherine McKeown, Regeneration Project Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	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	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Committee to receive a presentation on the findings of the Retail & Leisure Performance Strategy prepared by Pragma Ltd in support of the Council's Future City Centre Programme which includes the emerging programme of work to address vacant properties in the city centre.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to receive a presentation from Pragma Ltd in relation to the findings of the Retail &amp; Leisure Performance Strategy. It is proposed that this presentation is made at the June meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>The Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) provides a vision for retail in Belfast City Centre as <i>“providing a regionally competitive retail offer and a shopping experience that is unmatched anywhere else in Northern Ireland”</i>. To support and develop this BCCRIS Belfast Council, in conjunction with the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, commissioned Pragma in 2018 to undertake a Retail Analysis of the city centre aimed at identifying the challenges and opportunities facing the city’s retail sector and to inform recommendations on how best to address these. This analysis was reported to Committee in September 2019, with the subsequent Action Plan reported to this Committee in February 2020.</p>
3.2	<p>As reported to Committee previously the key findings of the Retail Analysis identified the Catchment and Shopping Patterns of the city centre, identifying a lack of point of difference causing low sales densities along with a higher-than-average vacancy figure within the Primary Retail Core (PRC). The report did identify the PRC’s higher than average percentage of independent retail (51% of city’s retailing units) has a positive point of difference within the PRC although the Trading Gap Analysis identified the potential to increase the current non-grocery sales by 23%, providing a realistic estimate of potential turnover growth worth £114m.</p>
3.3	<p>The Retail Analysis Report also identified the critical role of retail in the PRC in terms of having the potential to be a driving factor for improving the city centre’s performance and supporting the further development and long term sustainable of this economic driver. To support this, and in conjunction with Pragma the Retail Analysis Action Plan was presented to the CG&amp;R Committee in February 2020, where the Committee approved the implementation of the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme. The FCC now forms an integral part of the CG&amp;R Committee Plan and subsequent updates are brought to members on a regular basis on the key themes of the FCC – i.e. Physical Regeneration and Connectivity; Business &amp; Investment; Vitality; Digital &amp; innovation; Positioning the City to Compete and Clean, Green &amp; Safe. This work includes programmes such as the Vacant to Vibrant scheme, Housing Led Regeneration, Strategic Acquisition of key assets, the Entries, Grey to Green, the Bolder Vision and Positioning the City to Compete.</p>

3.4	<p>Since the implementation of the Future City Programme the city centre, and national and international retail as a whole have continued to feel the impacts of local and global issues such as the Bank Buildings fire, the Covid Pandemic and a further increase in the trend to online shopping and rising inflation.</p>
3.5	<p>In light of this Officers have been working with Pragma Ltd to undertake a review of the 2018 Retail Analysis, taking into account the dramatic change in landscape to produce a detailed report containing the evidence-base in relation to existing Retail / Leisure performance in the city centre, gaps, potential demand, challenges and opportunities. The report will inform both strategy and implementable recommendations for the FCC.</p>
3.6	<p>It is proposed that a presentation will be made by Pragma, alongside officers, at the June meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to update Members on the report findings and recommendations.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Finance &amp; Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices – Documents attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>