

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 10th October, 2018

## MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lyons (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff, Councillor Howard;  
Aldermen Haire, Kingston and McGimpsey; and  
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Corr,  
Dorrian, Hussey, Johnston, Kyle,  
Mullan, Murphy, O'Donnell, O'Hara,  
O'Neill, and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor Attwood.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Lead Officer, City Regeneration  
and Development; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor Graham.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Expression of Sympathy**

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, expressed his sympathy and condolences to Councillor Graham on the recent death of her mother.

**Presentation**

**Invest NI**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Steve Harper, Executive Director for International Business at Invest NI, to the meeting.

Mr. Harper explained that the International Division in Invest NI involved both attracting inward investment, from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and promoting outward trade from Northern Ireland to the rest of the world. He outlined Invest NI's International Strategy for 2017-2021 and explained that their three key focuses internationally were supporting businesses which were exporting for the first time, assisting existing businesses in scaling up their export intensity, and working with businesses to ensure that they would stand out in international markets.

He provided the Committee with an overview of the aims of the Strategy, such as supporting and encouraging 30,000 to 40,000 additional jobs, and increasing business expenditure on Research and Development by £160million to £200million, and how they aligned with the NI Executive's Programme for Government.

The Committee was provided with the Invest NI companies' sales by sector for the Belfast City Council area, which illustrated that the top three sectors were Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing (28.7%), Agri-food (21.5%) and Financial, Professional and Business Services (21.2%).

Mr. Harper stressed to the Members that a challenge for Invest NI, and the NI economy as a whole, was encouraging more companies to export their product, as 71% of NI exports were carried out by 50 companies. He explained that 30% of its customers were selling to only one market, and that Invest NI's contacts in overseas markets were vital in that regard. He reminded the Committee that Invest NI was continuing to promote a £1billion portfolio of NI Regeneration Investment Projects to investors, with the pitch book having been launched at MIPIM UK in October 2017.

The Committee was advised that Invest NI was due to open a Trade, Investment and Innovation Hub in Dublin, London and Brussels in April 2019. He explained that the Hubs would be used to present the benefits of investing in NI to potential investors. He presented the Committee with an extensive list of the various international businesses which had made significant investments in Belfast, in sectors such as manufacturing, legal services, business services, financial services technology development, new software development and cybersecurity development.

The Members were advised that Invest NI was refocusing on its NI diaspora engagement, both through NI Connections and by increasing its relationship with the Department for International Trade (DIT), to ensure that Northern Ireland had access to investment opportunities in the UK, as well as educating potential investors on the benefits of Northern Ireland. Mr. Harper stated that, post-Brexit, Northern Ireland would be in a unique position given its proximity to both the UK and European markets.

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In response to a number of questions from the Members, Mr. Harper undertook to circulate information on the number of jobs which had been created over the past ten years in the north, south, east and west of the city.

A Member stated that it was disappointing that a site in west Belfast had been converted into allotments instead of attracting investment, and creating jobs, in the area.

Mr. Harper outlined that Invest NI sought to attract investment to the city as a whole and that, in general, large multi-national companies wanted offices in the city centre.

In response to a Member's question regarding international students who studied in Belfast, and the fact that many cannot work here after graduating due to UK immigration rules, Mr. Harper explained that Invest NI were continuing to lobby the DIT regarding the two year extension rule. He added that Invest NI now had a full-time employee in the United Arab Emirates promoting our tertiary education sector to potential students.

In relation to the organisation's preparations for Brexit, he advised the Members that Invest NI had dedicated Brexit planning information on its website and that it was in the process of organising roadshows to help NI businesses mitigate the risks and maximise the opportunities of Brexit.

After further discussion, the Chairperson thanked Mr. Harper for his attendance and he retired from the meeting.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following two items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion of the items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

**Primark/Bank Buildings – Business Recovery**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the measures that the Council was taking to support the economic recovery of the city centre after the recent fire at Bank Buildings. He advised the Members of the current status of the Business Recovery programme, including the number of applications which had been received and those which had been completed.

The Committee was also advised of a proposed animation programme for the city centre in the period leading up to Christmas.

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The Commissioner for Resilience reminded the Committee that Belfast had access to significant guidance, expert knowledge and shared resources through its membership of 100 Resilient Cities.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided.

**Belfast Region City Deal - Update**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy presented the proposed Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) negotiating position to the Committee, including the Council's financial contribution.

The Members were advised that the agreed geography for the BRCD included the Belfast Travel to Work Area and therefore included five other Council areas.

The Strategic Director explained that the agreed objective for the BRCD was "more and better jobs; inclusive growth; improved skills and growth of domestic business and Foreign Direct Investment".

The Committee noted the update, and the approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting of 21st September, for:

- the proposed Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) negotiating position;
- the Council's overall contribution to the deal of £38m for the development of the Destination Hub visitor attraction; and
- the attendance of the Lord Mayor, the Party Group Leaders and the Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at a BRCD event in Westminster on 24th October, 2018.

**Growing Businesses and the Economy**

**Working and Learning and Growing the Economy**

The Director of Economic Development outlined to the Members the progress which had been made over the period 1st April – 30th September, against a series of targets under 'Working and Learning' and 'Growing the Economy' in the Belfast Agenda.

**Working and Learning**

He advised the Committee that officers had undertaken extensive engagement with employers to extend the Employment Academies into sectors with labour market gaps, namely hospitality, transport, childcare, health and social care and construction.

He explained that work was currently underway to pilot schools-based Employment Academies which aimed to improve outcomes for young people who were at risk of not completing their education or underachieving, by creating a pathway to a job or an apprenticeship.

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The Members were advised that a new initiative, 'Access to Opportunity', would provide financial support to address practical barriers for those who were out of work and wanted to enter employment, such as assistance for interpretation, sign language and childcare costs.

During discussion, a number of Members stated that assisting with someone's childcare costs or linguistic needs should not be underestimated.

The Director highlighted to the Committee that, as part of the Council's effort towards supporting the long-term unemployed in entering the labour market, match-funding had been awarded to five European Social Fund (ESF) projects and, since 1st April, 577 participants had achieved accredited qualifications, with 375 people having entered employment as a result of the interventions.

He provided the Members with an overview of a number of other work streams and development activities which officers were engaged in, including work on the City Youth Pledge, development of the Employability and Skills strand of the Belfast Region City Deal, and working with officers in Planning and Building Control to ensure that employability and skills provisions were integrated into the Draft Developers' Contributions Framework.

### **Growing the Economy**

The Director advised the Committee that, in conjunction with Invest NI, officers had been working to draw down European Regional Development Funding for Belfast in order to support the Council's activities to encourage more business start-ups and to help existing businesses to grow.

In respect of the Innovation Factory (IF), he pointed out that the target of 145 jobs had already been exceeded, with officers continuing to work with the IF to ensure that the target of 55% occupancy would also be achieved by December 2018.

He stated that an Enterprise Framework for the city was being facilitated by the Council in partnership with the Business Growth and Enterprise Working Group. He explained that the Framework would be discussed at Party Group Briefings later in the year and that it would shape future collaborations and initiatives, in line with the Belfast Agenda commitments.

The Members were advised that the Council would again work with its public and private partners to deliver a programme of activity during Global Entrepreneurship Week, between 12th and 18th November, including a Female Enterprise Challenge.

As well as supporting the regional 'Go for It' programme, the Director explained that the Council had also supported students in starting a business, and made specific interventions to encourage the development of new social enterprises, cooperatives and businesses with high growth potential.

He provided the Committee with an overview of the two-year pilot 'City for Investment' service which proactively worked with investors, both indigenous and Foreign

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Direct Investment, to provide connections to help their businesses succeed in Belfast. He outlined that, to date, the service had supported 50 businesses, created 1000 new jobs and attracted £1.25million investment to the city.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- the Council's performance and contribution to delivering against the Belfast Agenda ambitions to Grow the Belfast Economy, focusing on the current support for Business Start-up and Growth, as well as Employability and Skills; and
- that, over the six-month period, the Council had directly and indirectly:
  - supported the creation of 1868 jobs;
  - 1905 individuals had been supported through employability interventions;
  - 1554 young people had engaged through career support activities; and
  - 1243 businesses had been supported to either start, grow or develop their international profile.

**Belfast - City for Investment**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 Members will be aware of work under way to support both indigenous investors and Foreign Direct Investors (FDI), in their expansion and relocation plans in Belfast. This report aims to update Members further on areas of work being advanced across a number of areas including:**

- 1. The ‘Belfast: City for Investment’ support service to investors;**
- 2. Building on our networks and partnerships in collaboration with NI Connections and Belfast Partners**
- 3. Strategic development of our lead prospecting services for business expansion and investment attraction; and**
- 4. Next steps and future models for consideration.**

**1.2 Across each of these strands, the opportunities for partnership and co-ordination with key agencies such as Invest NI, NI Connections and Belfast Partners are summarised. This report should be considered alongside the presentation being delivered to Committee by Invest NI.**

**1.3** The report makes key recommendations for the continued development and expansion of Council's support in this area. These initiatives will be tested further through the current pilot period (18 months from April 2018) and evaluated and presented back to Committee at a later date for fuller consideration.

**2.0** Recommendations

**2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- Note progress of 'Belfast: City for Investment Service';
- Consider developing a Belfast Connections Network in collaboration with NI Connections and Belfast Partners. If agreed, an outline plan to be tabled back to a future meeting of Committee;
- Note that future resources towards a client management approach will be considered based on the learning developed from the Belfast: City For Investment Pilot.

**3.0** Main report

**3.1** The 'Belfast: City for Investment' support service to investors

A paper was tabled to August 2018 Committee framing services currently available under the 'Belfast: City for Investment Service'. These are:

- Soft landing service;
- Welcome Service and Accessing Networks;
- Support with planning;
- Sector specific support and skills academies;
- Supplier and Supply Chain opportunities; and
- Internationalisation and export opportunities.

**3.2** Currently there are 50 enquiries being Client Managed by Council's Economic Development Division who are availing themselves of this menu of provision. These are categorised as Early Stage / Pre- Investor (26), Committed (11) and Established (13). This is a flexible service being delivered as an 18-month pilot concluding September / October 2019 and the learning will be used to inform the estimates setting process for 2019/20.

**3.3** This service provides added-value to the support administered to clients by Invest NI. Since agreeing a 'collaborative investment support protocol' with Invest NI in March 2018, we have worked collaboratively on 12 FDI inward

visits to Belfast. One of the companies is Eirtech Aviation, an Irish-based Company with headquarters in Shannon and offices based in Dublin. In June they opened a composites repair centre on Queen's Road, Belfast with support from Invest NI. They hope to create 124 jobs over the next 4 years in the city. The Lord Mayor, Chair of Committee and Senior Management have met with four of the largest Inward Investors over the same period and civic input has contributed significantly to communicating an energised and vibrant city, helping to land the investment. Officers continue to work with Centres of Excellence such as NI Advanced Composites and Engineering Sector (NIACE) to identify sector-related investment. This led to the one key investment opportunity, which, if realised could secure £63million investment into the city and 172 jobs. Officers are currently supporting this business during phase one of the project setting up a facility in the Harbour with a launch event scheduled for 2018.

**3.4 Other activities include:**

- Collaboration with the Agents' Forum which is managed by the City Regeneration Team to develop a new guide for investors interested in identifying, setting up and establishing an office in Belfast
- The recent opening in the Council's Innovation Factory (IF) of an office by McGinnis Consulting – this tenant will create at least ten new jobs with positions that will offer an average salary of £40,000 in the financial and professional services sector.

**Building on our networks and partnerships towards a 'Belfast Connections' model**

**3.5** Following an independent review, NI Connections was brought in-house to Invest NI to maximise existing networks and relationships. It is promoted as a stand-alone network, acting as a vehicle to connect with diaspora with the aim of helping start-up businesses to start-up and scale up, sell outside of Northern Ireland, attracting inward investment and selling NI globally.

**3.6** Target Markets for trade development are demonstrated by Invest NI's International Office Network in Europe (Brussels, Dusseldorf, Dublin & London), India, Middle East and Africa (Bangalore, Dubai, Erbil, Jeddah and Mumbai), Americas (Boston, Chicago, New York and San Francisco) and Asia Pacific (Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo).



- 3.7 The Head of NI Connections is actively working with the Council towards a collaborative approach, which will include re-launch of a website with co-ordinated web content (estimated Oct 2018), appropriate representation on a partner forum and identifying and engaging strategic diaspora. Part of the longer-term NI Connections development will include 'coming back' to NI. NI Connections are also looking to work collaboratively with councils where there is sectoral and geographic alignment to jointly pool resources for in-market events in order to maximise impact and reduce overheads.**
- 3.8 The Council's current Sister City linkages borrow significantly from the learning gained from the Friends of Belfast Network. Each of the Sister Cities has a lead contact who acts as the liaison point for the Belfast City Council lead. The contact also agrees an annual action plan with the Council, in line with our mutually agreed areas of focus. Targets for the year are established and regularly reviewed with the lead contacts. Each of the individuals acting as lead contact point in the relevant cities is a well-networked individual and provides the Council and its partners with access to relevant contacts in the fields of economic development, education, culture and investment.**
- 3.9 The changing role and collaborative approach being adopted by NI Connections presents an opportunity to formalise a diaspora of Belfast Connections on a voluntary basis to support NI Connections activity. In addition Belfast City Council has renewed its relationship with Belfast Partners as agreed by Committee in March 2018. Belfast Partners manages a network of Belfast and N. Ireland diaspora in London and Dublin and are launching into Berlin in 2019. This diaspora resource provides connections to business opportunities for Belfast based companies to export and potential investment opportunities into Belfast. It is expected council will work with Belfast Partners and NI Connections to expand into new geographies.**
- 3.10 To initiate this process it is suggested that Officers compile a list of connections in the following locations: London, Dublin, Boston, New York, Chicago, Nashville, San Francisco and Shenyang. Belfast Connections would consist of selected individuals invited to be a strategic partner of the Council. These would each champion investment and economic growth in the key growth sectors. Secondary commitments would be secured by an email subscription service sitting within 'Belfast: City For Investment' webpage and actively promoted internationally keeping Belfast's diaspora updated on strategic development and opportunities at home.**

**Strategic development of our lead prospecting services for business expansion and investment attraction**

- 3.11 The OECD report on Belfast completed in mid-2008 recommended the need to form a new delivery vehicle that could bring together the required delivery agents and seek to overcome the fragmented position that existed at that time. However, a central question within the review was whether it was appropriate to set up such a vehicle at the time or whether it would be better to wait until the recommendations from the Review of Public Administration and other related activities had been implemented.
- 3.2 The issue of what role the Council should play in attracting and managing FDI has been looked at a number of times. In 2017, following the transfer of additional powers and in the context of growing ambitions for the Council to take a lead in city development a further review was undertaken. In 2017, OCO and Webb Advisory concluded a report, which assessed and recommended how the Council could establish a menu of city support and investment advice service. The OCO report discounted, at this time, the fully fledged service for a number of reasons;
- Perceived duplication of effort between Invest NI and Council and potential to confuse the market.
  - Availability of skills, and experience to deliver investment promotion directly at a city level; and
- 3.13 The 'Belfast: City for Investment' Service Pilot will test demand for a future evolving service and make future recommendations to committee. The development of a future service, whether that be maintaining the existing 'Belfast: City for Investment Service', enhancing it or developing it to a full Belfast Investment Vehicle must be considered based on current performance in attracting and securing investment as well as cost implications.
- 3.14 Statistical analysis completed as part of an OCO review evidenced that Belfast is performing well in terms of investment attraction. Belfast receives a significant share of FDI projects per 100,000 residents, when compared with other UK cities. Belfast ranks 2nd with a yearly average of 6.8 projects per 100,000 local residents.
- 3.15 Invest NI has repeated a strong first year in its 2017-2021 business strategy with an outturn of nearly 11,000 additional jobs within the first year. These are jobs that businesses have

already created, and two thirds of these are companies located outside of Belfast. They are half way to achieving their four-year sales target alone. In 2017/18 it supported 23 businesses to invest for the first time, one of the highest results in five years.

**Next steps and future models for consideration**

**3.16 The current Belfast: City for Investment pilot will be evaluated to inform future strategic development of the service. The principles to be considered as part of the evaluation will include:**

- **How to develop a tiered pathway of support for investors through the service**
- **The development of portfolio of support to retain investors in the city and encourage continued expansion;**
- **How to prioritise enquiries for the service aligned to the city priorities, economic and social merits of the investment;**
- **How to further develop the city proposition based on the requirements and support needs of previous enquiries.**
- **An assessment of the data gathered through the pilot to identify any gaps in service provision for investors or to identify if there is a need for a standalone or more robust service provision for investors.**

**Financial & Resource Implications**

**3.17 Progress of the initiatives detailed within this report are included within the 2018/19 Workplan for Economic Development and International Relations. Learning from the Belfast: City For Investment pilot will be factored into the estimates setting process for 20/21 service enhancement and development.**

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

**3.18 Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and considerations given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development. Officers will work closely with the Equality Good Relations Team on this activity.”**

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During discussion, a number of Members stated that the previous Friends of Belfast approach had had some success in attracting inward investment.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the progress that had been made with the 'Belfast: City for Investment Service';
- agreed to the development of a Belfast Connections Network in collaboration with NI Connections and Belfast Partners, and also agreed to look at the former work of the Friends of Belfast, with an outline plan to be submitted to a future meeting of Committee; and
- noted that future resources towards a client management approach would be considered based on the learning developed from the Belfast: City for Investment Pilot.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**East Bank Development Strategy Masterplan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- **update Members on proposed changes to the draft East Bank Development Strategy (EBDS) as a result of comments received during the public consultation exercise and subsequent Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Screening(s) of the draft Strategy;**
- **present the final draft of the East Bank Development Strategy for approval.**

**1.2 The relevant documents are available on modern.gov:**

- **Appendix 1: Strategic Impact Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement.**
- **Appendix 2: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Requirements Report.**
- **Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) Screening Report.**
- **Appendix 4: Rural Needs Impact Assessment.**
- **Appendix 5: Summary of proposed amendments to the draft East Bank Development Strategy.**
- **Appendix 6: East Bank Development Strategy (final version for publication).**

## **2.0 Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the SEA, HRA and EQIA adoption statement, requirements and screening reports at Appendices 1,2 and 3;
- Note the proposed amendments to the final draft of East Bank Development Strategy summarised in Appendix 4; and
- Approve the East Bank Development Strategy to support and complement existing planning policies as they apply to this part of the city centre.

## **3.0 Main report**

### **Background**

**3.1 In June 2017 Committee approved the draft East Bank Development Strategy for consultation. The 12-week consultation period commenced on 7th July and ended on 29th September.**

**3.2 In December 2017, Committee considered a report on the public consultation process which summarised the 190 responses received and provided feedback from statutory agencies. Responses from the public were generally supportive. Principle areas of concern which were expressed related to:**

- The proposal to relocate the Titanic Rail Halt in the absence of further transport modelling and feasibility being undertaken;
- The lack of a specific land allocation for affordable/social housing within the Sirocco site;
- A perception that the movement diagram and spatial plan included in the document were unduly prescriptive.

**3.3 In terms of statutory agencies, almost all were supportive. DfI Transport Strategy Division's response was non-committal subject to further traffic modelling being undertaken while DfI Rivers noted that the document needed to say more about how to address present-day flood risk to the proposed development as well as the impact of future climate change and in particular, potential sea level rise due to climate change.**

- 3.4 In light of the comments relating to flood risk and others received relating to protected habitats and environmental considerations, the Council conducted an SEA Determination (a 'screening' process) in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and has concluded that an SEA (Environmental Report) and HRA is required. It was agreed that further equality and good relations screening would be conducted in parallel with the proposed consultation processes on the SEA and HRA.

**Further Public Consultation**

- 3.5 A 12 week public consultation on the SEA, HRA and EQIA was undertaken between 12th February – 7th May 2018 using the Council's Consultation Hub (Citizenspace). One, on-line response from a member of the public was received which was broadly supportive of the findings in the consultation documents. NIEA provided a detailed response to the SEA and HRA reports and their comments have been incorporated in the SEA Adoption report available on modern.gov as Appendix 1. The Adoption report has been used to amend the finalised Strategy to place more emphasis on encouraging sustainable development and respecting the natural and historic environment.
- 3.6 The MP for East Belfast requested that a meeting be arranged with a number of community groups on 12th April 2018 to discuss the EQIA Screening document. No formal response to the consultation was submitted following the meeting. Issues discussed included the following;
- The importance of fostering Good Relations as development proposals emerge for sites on the East Bank, for example Sirocco;
  - Improved connectivity between the city centre and local communities, across the River Lagan is welcomed;
  - It was suggested that improved connections between Rotterdam Court and Bridge End would create inclusive space and provide a safe connection to the proposed footbridge;
  - Concerns were raised over the potential re-location of the Titanic rail halt. It was reiterated that this is a long-term aspiration and suitable transport studies would need to be carried out to ensure viability of the proposal;
  - Concerns were raised about the location and allocation of housing within the Sirocco site. The idea of shared space within the site was welcomed.

- 3.7 Two briefings also took place with the local councillor for Short Strand. While no formal response to the consultation was submitted following the briefings, issues raised included:
- The importance of improved connectivity between the city centre, Short Strand and other communities in East Belfast: this would include the provision of another footbridge/cyclebridge across the Lagan;
  - The provision of social and affordable housing within development sites in the EBDS area which include significant residential proposals: this is felt to be essential to create sustainable communities with a range of housing tenures and types to meet a range of housing needs.
- 3.8 On 8th August 2018, the findings of the SEA, HRA and EQIA were reported to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and a final draft of the EBDS was presented for approval. Councillors asked that approval be deferred to allow for party group briefings to take place. These briefings have now been completed. No additional amendments to the Strategy are proposed.

#### Key Issues

##### Environmental

- 3.9 A number of the amendments to the EBDS set out in Appendix 4 arise from the SEA/HRA consultation process. These have not been reported to Committee previously and are explained in more detail below.
- 3.10 The EBDS needs to make expressed reference to the SEA Environmental Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) that accompany it. A sentence to this effect has been inserted at the end of the 'Context' section, p9. It reads as follows:
- 3.11 *'Furthermore, the East Bank Development Strategy has taken into account the key findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).'*
- 3.12 The EBDS refers to a range of specific projects related to the placemaking themes and conceptual proposals for this area. These include: key transport and movement projects; key development sites projects; and key public realm projects. Each of these projects was subject to strategic environmental

assessment and, where appropriate, mitigation was outlined. It is considered appropriate for the EBDS to expressly refer to the key findings of the Environmental Report within the pages of the EBDS.

- 3.13 The most significant amendment is to include a fifth placemaking theme at p14, Section 2.0 of the document order to act as a counterweight to the pro-development thrust of the four Placemaking themes in the draft document that underpin the regeneration of the area. It reads as follows:

**Encourage sustainable development and respect the natural and historic environment.**

- safeguarding against any deterioration in water quality at the Lagan Estuary and Belfast Harbour by reviewing wastewater treatment capacity and, if appropriate, phasing growth.
- Protecting against the threat of pollution to marine life in the harbour and birdlife in the designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Belfast Lough by incorporating effective storm drainage management measures such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).
- Ensuring that potential on-site and adjacent off-site sources of contamination do not pose an unacceptable risk to environmental receptors, notably groundwater, surface water and future site users.
- Striking a balance between the desire to energise the waterfront with new development/activities and the requirement to respect the aquatic environment. This chiefly relates to: the protection of biodiversity from noise and disturbance; safeguarding water quality from spillages; and preventing marine litter.
- Promoting a modal shift from use of the car to walking, cycling and travel by public transport. This is necessary in order to improve air quality and to reduce noise levels for people living and working in and near this area.
- Ensuring that the new urban grain proposed for this area acknowledges its industrial heritage.
- Emphasising the need for new development to reduce emissions by various means, including use of gas energy, renewable energy (solar panels, biomass, CHP) and heat efficient design in the construction of buildings.

- 3.14 In addition to the new theme, The wording of the first placemaking theme has been modified to read as follows:



*'facilitating the optimum development of key sites.'* This is to replace the wording *'maximising the potential of development sites'*, which could lead some to interpret that maximum development in this area is the overriding goal at all costs, even at the expense of the environment.

- 3.15 To reflect NIEA comments related to waste-water capacity, the following text after the final sentence in the 'Phased Implementation' subsection of Section 4.0, p14 has been added.

*'If appropriate, this will include addressing wastewater treatment capacity in the East Bank via review and phasing of growth.'*

*Planning Considerations*

- 3.16 The Council recently approved the progression of the draft LDP Plan Strategy for public consultation. However, it will still be some considerable time before we are in a position to bring forward the site specific Local Policies Plan (LPP) setting out details at a more local level and a providing significant element of the spatial articulation to the adopted policy.
- 3.17 The process for the development of the LPP is likely involve a review of documents and frameworks, such as the East Bank Development Strategy. The LDP Plan Strategy may then provide a container for such documents to be brought forward as a form of Supplementary Planning Guidance and thereby give weight to the principles or elements of the Strategy as a more detailed articulation of LDP policy. This, subject to a consultation and adoption process at that stage, would provide for more weight to be afforded to the document in the decision making process for planning.
- 3.18 Until the adoption of the Plan Strategy the EBDS and similar documents have limited statutory weight in formal planning decision making. However, it should be recognised that they can, in common with other documents, still be material to and enhance the consideration of development proposals especially where additional or more up to date data informs the context for a decision.
- 3.19 In recognition of the timing of the approval of the EBDS in relation to the imminent public consultation process on the LDP Plan Strategy, it is proposed to amend the 'Forward Planning' section of the Strategy. The following text has been included:

*'Following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy, the Council will be in a position to review the East Bank Development Strategy with a view to bringing it forward as more formal planning guidance. This would provide the East Bank Development Strategy with greater weight in the decision-making process as a more detailed articulation of LDP policy'.*

**Affordable Housing**

- 3.20 Amongst the supportive comments received from NIHE part of the public consultation exercise during summer 2017, was a suggestion that a reference be included in the final version of the Strategy that an indicative proportion of affordable housing (20%) should be required in residential proposals across East Bank.
- 3.21 The inclusion of an indicative target for affordable housing will be considered as part of the imminent public consultation on the LDP Plan Strategy. To avoid predetermining the outcome of further consideration on this issue, it is proposed that the final EBDS does not include a defined percentage for affordable housing at this time. As stated in paragraph 3.14 above, the Council will be in a position to review this issue following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy with a view to bringing it forward as more formal planning guidance.
- 3.22 In terms of planning applications received before that point, NIHE's input will be sought as a statutory consultee with regard to the appropriate level and type of affordable housing required and negotiated with the applicant during the planning application process.

**Equality, Good Relations, Rural Needs**

- 3.23 The EQIA screening exercise which addresses Section 75 and Good Relations considerations concluded that all necessary adjustments and accommodations in relation to Section 75 have been made to the Strategy to this stage of its development. Should any matters arise from the consultation or during successive stages of implementation then appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that appropriate mitigation is applied and Section 75 issues will be mainstreamed into the fabric of the policy. The screening document also notes that 'proposals will be brought forward under the scheme mindful of the need to be sensitive to any traditions or events associated with local communities. Section 75 scrutiny will be applied as and when appropriate to avoid an adverse impact on good relations locally and including any proposed housing developments'.

- 3.24 The Rural Needs Impact Assessment found that the strategy involves the development of an inner city area and will have no direct impact in rural areas. By improving transport links to the city centre there will be indirect benefits for those from rural communities.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

- 3.25 None. The cost of publication and promotion of the EBDS will be met from existing budgets.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications**

- 3.26 Equality, Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment have been considered through the screening exercises available as Appendices 3 and 4 on modern.gov and the results explained in paragraphs 3.22-23 above.”

In response to a Member’s request, the Committee agreed that the Council would engage with Translink to discuss the potential relocation of the bus depot from the Short Strand, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

**Positioning Belfast to Compete**

**International Relations Update and 6 Month Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- Update Members on the delivery of the International Relations Framework, focusing on activity over the last six months since March 2018;
- Seek approval to engage in early planning activity for a potential second Nashville in Belfast programme to take place in June 2019, subject to financial resources and partner buy-in; and
- Seek the approval for the attendance of the Chair of the Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or their nominees) as well as the Lord Mayor (who has been officially invited by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh), at the EUROCITIES AGM in Edinburgh on 28-30 November 2018.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the range of activities and outputs associated with the International Relations Action Plan for the current financial year, covering the period April 2018 to September 2018**
- **Approve officer engagement in the early planning activity for a potential second Nashville in Belfast programme to take place in June 2019, subject to approval of financial resources as part of the 2019/20 estimates process, and subject to partner buy-in and collective agreement on objectives and outcomes**
- **Approve the attendance of the Chair of Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or their nominees) at the EUROCITIES AGM in Edinburgh on 28-30 November 2018**
- **Note that the Lord Mayor has also been invited to attend the event by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and agree that the Lord Mayor attends as part of the Belfast delegation**
- **Note that the costs associated with attendance at the event will not exceed £1,500.**

## **3.0 Main report**

**3.1 In March 2018, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the International Relations Action Plan for the financial year 2018/19. This report provides an update on the high-level outputs over the last six months, focusing on activity with our Sister Cities of Shenyang, Boston and Nashville.**

## **3.2 Shenyang**

**Key activities with the Sister City of Shenyang in China include:**

- **Delivery of a tourism showcase in Shenyang in early September 2018. This was the first time that the city had undertaken in-market tourism promotion activity in the city. The Council was supported by our partner Visit Belfast who had organised the event in conjunction with a local partner on the ground. A full report on the outcomes from the event including leads and key opportunities is currently being compiled and will be shared with the Committee at future date, as part of the future planning work.**

- The city recently hosted two Summer Schools connected to the Belfast-Shenyang Sister City arrangement. The China Medical University-Queen's University of Belfast Joint College and Ulster University welcomed 14 students into its Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. In addition, the Lord Mayor of Belfast sent a congratulatory message to the first cohort of graduates from the China Medical University which is a QUB campus, based in Shenyang.

### 3.3 Boston

- The first ever Belfast – Mass Challenge pilot programme took place in Spring 2018. Ten companies in the fields of analytics, life sciences and the creative and digital sectors participated. For many of the businesses, this was their first entry into the US market and they all benefitted from significant insights into both trade and export development opportunities. In addition to the three-day intensive programme based in Mass Challenge, companies learned from experts about how they would need to tailor their products to the US market. They also met with representatives of the Mayor's office in Boston. These companies now have access to business networks and contacts across the global network of Mass Challenge locations. The Council is currently working with Catalyst Inc and Invest NI to consider the next steps for participating companies and, based on the evaluations from the participating businesses, is considering the merits of engagement in the programme for additional businesses
- In May 2018, Belfast hosted an inward business mission from Boston which has led to strong investment interest (still in the pipeline but confidential at this stage). During the visit, the British American Business Council of New England announced their intention to bring a business mission to Belfast in April 2019. Belfast City Council will work with Invest NI to support this visit and organise a range of business-to-business meetings as well as briefings with city leaders
- Belfast City Council led a delegation to Boston in April 2018, which included representatives from Ulster University, QUB, real estate investment companies and a number third sector organisations. This mission led to the endorsement of the Sister City relationship by the British Consul General. The programme also

included the launch of the inaugural Women's Friendship Four tournament which will come to Belfast in January 2019 and there were additional meetings to explore the potential of developing a Boston-Belfast Sister City philanthropic fund.

- Plans are at an early stage of development with a view to connecting the city's two teacher training institutions with schools in Boston, focusing on the teaching STEM subjects in the primary school curriculum.

#### 3.4 Nashville

- A special deputation to Belfast by elected representatives and representatives from academia and the business community in Nashville took place in May 2018. The inward delegation at this time was the biggest to date with 44 participants. The focal point of the activity was the 'Nashville in Belfast' programme. The purpose of this activity was to promote the city's longest standing Sister City relationship. Sister Cities Nashville invested \$60,000 in the project and Belfast City Council also allocated £20,000 towards the programme. A full Return on Investment report has been compiled on the project but key outputs are noted below:
  - 18 public events across a number of cultural disciplines (film, music, food, art and heritage) developed and delivered by city stakeholders
  - Extensive media coverage through Radio Ulster (including 5 live broadcastings) and pre-event publicity through interviews with Nashville delegates.
  - Delivery of Study Abroad seminar in partnership with all main tertiary education providers to an audience of 70 young people from across the region informing them of financial support available to enable studying in the United States
  - Delivery of 'Doing Business in the US' seminar by Invest NI to promote and provide information as to how local businesses can access and export to the American market.
  - Side programmes developed for the Nashville delegation with representatives from the business, tourism and education sectors
  - Development of a chef bursary scheme with direct financial intervention from Nashville chef Michael King, being administered through Food NI.

- 3.5** Based on the success of the initial event, partner organisations have expressed a willingness to work with the Council in a follow-up event. Plans are at a very early stage, with additional work required in order to be clear about the objectives of the event and the expected outcomes. However it is expected that, where possible, the Council will encourage partners to fund activities within their own resources where it meets their objectives, with the Council funding focusing on the promotion and marketing of the activities in order to drive footfall and maximise PR coverage for the city. Given that the budgets for the next financial year have not been approved, there has been no financial commitment to this work by the Council at present but it will be considered as part of the estimates process. An indicative date of June 2019 is being considered, as this ties in with music convention which a Nashville-based promoter is planning for Belfast at that time. Additional information on these proposals will be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee for information and approval.
- 3.6** One other area of collaboration between organisations in Belfast and Nashville is in the field of legal services. Work continues in establishing formal links between the Law Society and the Nashville Bar Association and both associations are keen to progress educational exchanges for legal sector representatives.
- 3.7** Proposed attendance at EUROCITIES AGM (28-30 November 2018)
- Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been a very proactive member of the EUROCITIES network for over 15 years. This network comprises over 140 cities across the European Union and has good access to the European Institutions. It offers member cities the opportunity to benefit from those connections in order to understand and influence policy, and can help identify transnational partners for engagement on areas of mutual interest.
- 3.8** Although our direct engagement in the network has reduced as the interest in international relations has expanded, the network remains a useful mechanism for maintaining a watching brief on key European urban policy developments.
- 3.9** EUROCITIES hosts its AGM in one of the member cities each year. The 2018 event takes place in Edinburgh on 28-30 November 2018. The theme for the event is 'Creative Competitive Cities'. City representation and network voting rights at this event are restricted to senior elected officials.

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It is proposed that the Chair of Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or nominees) attend the AGM. The Committee is asked to note that the Lord Mayor has also been invited to attend this event by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. The Lord Mayor has indicated that she would be available to attend the event. The costs associated with attendance for three delegates will not exceed £1,500 and this has been accounted for in the current International Relations budget.

**3.10 With regard to priority activities for the coming six months, the key activities in the diary to date include:**

- Support in progressing the delivery of the fourth Friendship Four ice hockey tournament (incorporating a business and education showcase). This event will take place on 23 and 24 November 2018 and will attract an estimated 1,000 visitors travelling to Belfast from America, Canada and the rest of UK. The event typically generates 4,000 bed nights in the city – made up principally of the teams and officials.
- Support in progressing the delivery of the second Basketball Hall of Fame competition. This event will take place on 29 November – 1 December 2018. With 8 teams participating in this year's event, there will be 210 players and officials with an estimated 5,000 out of state visitors anticipated. In addition to event participants and supporters, there will be an inward delegation from Boston. Details of those participating are currently being finalised but they are likely to include legal, government and business representation.
- Council engagement in the fourth UK-China Regional Leaders Summit. This will take place in Dalian in mid-October 2018. Dalian is a city in Liaoning Province – the same province that Belfast's Sister City of Shenyang is located. Derry City and Strabane District Council will sign a Sister City Agreement with Dalian at this time. The purpose of this event is to further cement economic, academic, tourism and cultural links between NI and the Liaoning Province under the MOU signed by First Minister Foster in December 2016.

**3.11 Financial & Resource Implications**

Costs associated with attendance of the Chair and the Director of Economic Development (or their nominees) as well as the Lord Mayor are contained within the existing International Relations budget. Costs associated with the 2019 Nashville in



**Belfast programme and other future activities will be built to the 2019/2020 estimates, and will be considered as part of the estimates process.**

**3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

**The International Relations Framework 2016-2021 has been equality screened. Activity undertaken by the International Relations Unit does not have a direct rural impact and activity within Nashville in Belfast 2019 will take into consideration accessibility of and promotion to the city's urban and rural populations."**

During discussion, a Member requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting detailing the reasons why the agreed outward delegation to attend a conference on Health and Life Sciences in Nashville in August, 2018, did not go ahead, in order that lessons could be learned for the future.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined in the report and further agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting, providing a review of why the outward trip to attend the conference in Nashville did not proceed.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Airport Security –  
Councillor Mullan to raise**

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed to invite representatives from both the George Best Belfast City Airport and the Belfast International Airport to attend a future meeting, in order to discuss the recent reports in the media relating to long security queues at the International Airport, and also to discuss the impact that Brexit would have on both airports.

**Youth Employment Academy –  
Councillor O'Hara to raise**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor O'Hara requested that the Committee considered the following proposal:

"The Committee commends the employability and skills initiatives adopted by the Council to help people gain employment. Those initiatives included sectoral Employment Academies which, in partnership with employers, trained people who were out of work to apply for specific job vacancies.

In line with this successful model, and as part of the City Youth Pledge, it agreed to pilot a Youth Employment Academy to support people aged 16+ to access part time employment (8-16hour posts) in retail and hospitality."

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The Committee agreed to adopt the motion.

The Committee agreed to the proposal.

Chairperson