

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th January, 2019

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lyons (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, Kingston, McGimpsey and Rodgers;
and Councillors Beattie, Black, Dorrian, Dudgeon, Graham,
Hussey, Kyle, Magee, Mullan, Murphy, O'Donnell, O'Neill,
O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, City Regeneration and Development
Lead Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Howard.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 28th November and 5th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Dorrian declared an interest in relation to item 4, Requests to Present to Committee – Retail NI, in that he had, in his role as a DUP Party Advisor, met with the Chief Executive of Retail NI to discuss elements of Retail NI's policy agenda during the research phase but did not get the opportunity to leave the Committee room, as the matter did not become subject to debate.

Presentations

Belfast – Dublin Rail Link/Belfast – Dublin Economic Corridor

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd September, 2017, had agreed to co-fund, along with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Louth County Council, Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council a pre-feasibility study on a potential Belfast - Dublin fast rail link.

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The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reported that that ARUP consultants had been commissioned to undertake that study and that Ms. D. Emerson and Mr. P. Johnson were in attendance in order to outline its main findings.

Ms. Emerson informed the Committee that rail travel was essential for supporting economic growth, insofar as it delivered reliable and fast journey times which road transport could not match. Those cities and regions across the world which had invested in rail connectivity had derived significant benefits in terms of boosting productivity and achieving global competitiveness and prosperity for their citizens. For example, the high speed rail link between the cities of Cologne and Frankfurt had halved travel times and research had shown that small market towns situated along the route had enjoyed particularly strong economic growth.

She reported that the transformation of the Belfast-Dublin rail service would address current shortcomings around, for example, journey time, frequency and reliability and would fulfil six key strategic objectives, namely, enhancing inclusive, sustainable economic growth, increasing access to a skilled workforce and job opportunities, enabling towns and cities along the economic corridor to capitalise on their strengths, supporting increased housing and commercial development, supporting international competitiveness and reducing long-term vehicle dependence. Based upon evidence from case studies, those objectives could be met by a rail service which could achieve a sixty minute journey time between Belfast and Dublin, offer at least two trains per hour (one fast and one semi-fast), provide a connection to Dublin Airport and integrate seamlessly with public transport networks along the corridor.

Ms. Emerson pointed out that the project could potentially be funded from a mix of sources, such as central taxation/City Deal, user charges, station area income, vehicle-based charges and property-related income and confirmed that the next stage of the project would focus upon the formulation of a strategic outline business case.

In response to a number of issues which had been raised by Members, she stated that no work had been undertaken around a potential route for the rail link and that, whilst the project had not been included in any of the Northern Ireland Executive's Programmes for Government, reference had been made to it within the Republic of Ireland's National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, in the context of examining the feasibility of improving connections between Dublin and Belfast.

The Chief Executive added that the proposed rail link project would not be undertaken in isolation but would sit alongside other initiatives, such as the Belfast Region City Deal, and would complement the work being undertaken with London and Dublin to internationalise the City.

Ms. Emerson and Mr. Johnson were thanked by the Chairperson.

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy then provided the Committee with an update on the work which was being undertaken currently by the Economic Development Unit around the development of a Belfast – Dublin Economic Corridor. He reminded the Committee that the Ulster University and Dublin City University had

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been commissioned to conduct additional research around the economic potential of the corridor and confirmed that the following key points had been identified to date:

- the population along the corridor has been growing faster than on the rest of the island, although the slowest annual population growth had been experienced within the two urban centres of Belfast and Dublin;
- the working population along the corridor was approximately 800,000, with just over half of jobs based in Belfast and Dublin;
- around 40% of businesses on the island were based along the corridor;
- jobs requiring graduates were concentrated along the corridor and were projected to grow.

He reported that the research had identified also a number of key risks to the corridor, namely, connectivity and congestion, housing availability and cost, access to skills, social inclusion, regional balance and Brexit. Key strengths included attractiveness to foreign direct investment, connections to the world through ports and airports, educational attainment and projected population growth. In addition, a number of emerging themes for local government-led collaboration had been identified, around infrastructure and connectivity, enterprise support, innovation, sector specialisms and environmental management. All of the findings would, he confirmed, be presented in full at a conference being held in the Belfast Waterfront Hall on 28th February.

The Director concluded by recommending that the Committee:

- i. note the outcome of the pre-feasibility study information which had been undertaken around the potential Belfast – Dublin rail link;
- ii. grant approval to progress, along with the four other councils, to the Strategic Outline Business stage of the project, with the Council's contribution of £30,000 to be met from within existing Departmental budgets; and
- iii. note the progress in relation to the development of the Belfast – Dublin Economic Corridor, including the proposal to host an Eastern Economic Conference in the Belfast Waterfront Hall on 28th February.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following three 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

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as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2019/2020

(Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report in relation to the establishment of the District Rate and the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the year 2019/2020.

He outlined the main financial pressures facing the Council over this period, together with the efficiencies, rate base projections and growth proposals, and confirmed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had, on 14th December, agreed that the cash limit for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee should be £17,118,371. He pointed out that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would, on 25th January, be required to agree the cash limits for the various Standing Committees, along with the District Rate, and that the process was required to be completed before the legislative deadline of 15th February.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee:

- i. agree a cash limit for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2019/2020 of £17,118,371 and the individual service limits;
- ii. note the next steps in the rate-setting process; and
- iii. agree that the aforementioned decisions should not be subject to call-in, on the basis that it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

International Events 2020/2021

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Committee that the Council had, over the years, delivered a series of major national and international events, all of which had required a significant lead-in time in terms of the bid development process and the scale of the preparations.

He drew the Committee's attention to two events, namely, the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile World Rally Championship and the Union of European Football Associations Super Cup which were being planned for 2020 and 2021 respectively. He reported that the Circuit of Ireland Rally organisation and the Irish Football Association had requested the Council to support their bid, which were required to be submitted by May and February, 2019, respectively, and outlined the potential costs

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and economic return for the City, should those bids be successful. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee:

- i. note the information on the bidding and possible staging in 2020 of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile World Rally Championship and in 2021 of the Union of European Football Associations Super Cup;
- ii. provide support for the Circuit of Ireland Rally organisation to bid and host the 2020 World Rally Championship and authorise officers to engage with the organisation in that process;
- iii. provide support for the Irish Football Association to bid and host the 2021 UEFA Super Cup and authorise officers to engage with the Association in that process; and
- iv. note that, should Belfast be short-listed for the staging of these events, a report would be brought back to the Committee providing an update on the progress of the projects and detailed options for the financing of the bids.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Incidents at Belfast Zoo

(Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee's consideration a report in relation to the untimely death in 2018 of three giraffes within the Belfast Zoo.

He outlined the circumstances which had led to those deaths and confirmed that all animal deaths were subject to independent scrutiny through a post mortem process and reporting in relation to the licensing and accreditation scheme. An independent review had been commissioned to examine practices at the Zoo and to investigate allegations relating to the deaths and animal welfare, facilities and husbandry generally, as a result of a separate whistleblowing complaint. Whilst the review had made some recommendations, such as the need for improvements to facilities generally and for improved escalation procedures, given that a considerable period had passed between the deaths and senior management being informed, it had found no evidence to substantiate the aforementioned allegations and had provided assurance around operational practices. He added that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency undertook regular inspections of the Zoo, under its animal husbandry and welfare remit, and that the facility had, in April, 2018, following two on-site appraisals, attained accreditation from the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria.

During discussion, several Members expressed their regret at the loss of the three giraffes and their concern at the failure to inform senior management immediately. It was

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suggested that the Committee should in future receive regular reports on the operation of the Zoo, as had been the case under the former Parks and Leisure Committee.

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services confirmed that an investigation into the delay in the reporting of the deaths was underway and, as had been suggested, undertook to submit to the Committee on a regular basis a report on the operation of the Zoo. In response to a Member, he stressed that support had been made available for those staff who had been impacted by the death of the giraffes.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Requests to Present to Committee

Retail NI/Grand Opera House

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting presentations on Retail NI's policy agenda and on the proposed restoration and development of the Grand Opera House.

(The Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Graham, in the Chair.)

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

**Update on Bank Buildings: City Centre
Recovery Programme**

The Committee was reminded that it had, since the Bank Buildings fire on 28th August, received a series of updates on the City centre recovery programme.

The City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer reported that the covered pedestrian walkway between Donegall Place and Royal Avenue had opened on 3rd December, which had allowed eight traders to return to their business. The walkway between Castle Street and Castle junction was scheduled to be in place by the Spring and work was continuing to secure and clear the Bank Buildings in preparation for its restoration.

She reviewed the animation programme, major attractions and environmental improvements which had been put in place by the Council to drive footfall into the City centre and aid economic recovery and highlighted the fact that footfall figures had shown a significant increase in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Interim evaluations of the animation programme and the marketing and communications campaign had revealed positive results. She added that Translink had indicated that its introduction of a range of discounted fares to the City centre over the festive season had led to an increase in passenger numbers on the previous year and that it would continue to assist the recovery programme by providing value fares. She concluded by confirming that forthcoming work would include the development of the next phase of the recovery programme and that the Council would continue to engage with retailers and other stakeholders.

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The Director of Development reviewed the 'Your Belfast Rewards' scheme which, since its introduction on 3rd December, had been extended to over two hundred local businesses and over seventy-five incentives, and confirmed that discussions were taking place around expanding the initiative. He referred to the aforementioned increase in footfall over the Christmas period and pointed out that Belfast City Centre Management was due to publish later in the month a report which would give an indication of retail spend over that period.

During discussion, a Member sought information on the proposed regeneration of Castle Street, including the potential timeframe, and suggested that footfall sensors should be installed there at the earliest opportunity. A further Member highlighted the fact that, despite some four months having passed, the Council had yet to be informed by Primark of the cause of the fire in the Bank Buildings.

In response, the City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer confirmed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting regarding the regeneration of Castle Street and undertook to raise with Bid1 the potential for placing footfall sensors in that street.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that Council officers would, as part of their ongoing discussions with Primark representatives, raise the issue of the cause of the fire in the Bank Buildings.

(The Chairperson, Councillor Lyons, in the Chair.)

Update on City Development and Regeneration

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Members are asked to note that there will be an update presentation at Committee on main developments and achievements to date under both the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) and the Council's own Physical Programme, together with future thoughts and an update on an emerging area based approach to development and regeneration. The role of Members in shaping the future development and regeneration of the city is a key feature of the presentation. A copy of the presentation will be available at the meeting.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the presentation and the proposed next steps.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Members will be aware of the key role the Council plays in terms of driving forward regeneration within the city centre and across neighbourhoods through both the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) and through the Council's own Physical Programme.
- 3.2** Since the launch of BCCRIS in 2015, there has been significant private sector investment in the city centre which has been a game-changer in terms of city development and has transformed the landscape of the city core, with further development also under construction or planned. This includes new office accommodation, hotels, purpose built managed student accommodation and residential development. In addition the Council, through its own Physical Programme, which has a larger focus outside of the city centre, has invested in or helped to lever in well over £0.5 billion of physical investment into neighbourhoods across the city which has been transformational in terms of regenerating local areas. A summary of the key developments and achievements to date in the city centre and across the neighbourhoods under both BCCRIS and the Physical Programme will be presented at Committee.
- 3.3** Members will be aware that they have set challenging targets for the future of the city under the Belfast Agenda. The ongoing proposals and commitments under both BCCRIS and the Council's Physical Programme, together with the new opportunities afforded under the recently announced City Deal will see significant further investment in the city in the coming years. The successful delivery of these developments and projects will be critical in helping to achieve the targets under the Belfast Agenda and from this perspective the ongoing development of the city centre and physical regeneration in the wider neighbourhoods are inextricably linked.
- 3.4** Members will also be aware that any development or physical project is not just about the physical building or development itself but all have associated economic, social and environmental benefits both during the build duration but also critically well beyond this. It is therefore important to ensure that the benefits from the physical investment undertaken across the city to date, as well as planned investment, is maximised.
- 3.5** Over and above projects directly linked to BCC there is or will be further spend from across government that will have

various impacts on the lives of constituents and communities. It is therefore also important that Members seek to ensure that a strategic approach is taken to any future investment decisions both at a city centre and local area level. This includes looking at how we work best at an area level both internally and with partners across the city in terms of using data to assess needs at a city and area level, assessing opportunities for investment, funding and delivery of projects which will benefit and continue to transform the city.

- 3.6** The significant physical development and investment across the city, with more in the pipeline, can perhaps best be harnessed via an area based approach that exploits the wider economic, social and environmental regenerative benefits to be derived from physical development and also build greater connectivity in the city.
- 3.7** Area based regeneration including city centre development share a common motivation to create more than the sum of their parts through alignment, collaboration and partnership working. The emerging and proposed area based approach could involve exploring themes (e.g. quality of life; economic renewal); linking to priorities (education; employment; social isolation etc); identifying partners; exploring existing opportunities and existing Council services and programming opportunities.
- 3.8** An overview of the emerging proposals is included within the presentation. Importantly a key challenge will be developing a council policy context that ensures the connectivity both between the city centre and local areas but also between local areas themselves to maximise benefits, avoid duplication and critically build a shared, inclusive city
- 3.9** The investment to date, while welcome in moving the city's current baseline forward, remains some way from the targets as outlined in the Belfast Agenda. The Area Working approach could however be a key mechanism to helping to achieve these targets. It would of course require key partners, further agreement on plans/actions and aligned budgets together with relevant indicators and results. Members would however be key to setting this area agenda, keeping it focused, holding all parties to account and perhaps inspiring others to join in.
- 3.10** The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee has already asked that greater thought by Members is given to the planning of expenditure in terms of physical build programmes initially through the Area Working Groups but in order to optimise the regeneration benefits of such physical

development the view of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee (as well as the People & Communities Committee) will be important in terms of the emerging proposals around Area Working.

3.11 An overview of key developments and projects alongside proposed next steps in terms of an area based approach will be summarised in the presentation but some considerations for Members include:

- how best to maximise the regeneration impact of ongoing and proposed developments and physical projects;**
- overall thoughts on the emerging area based approach and the role of Members within this;**
- how to further involve other agencies /partners to ensure that investment, and critically the benefits from investment, are maximised;**
- how to maintain a critical mass of political support to build cohesive decision making;**
- how to remain focused on the big picture; and**
- how best to work with communities on area issues.**

3.12 If Members are interested in moving Area Working on, views on how best to do so would be welcome e.g. via Party Leaders/Party Groups/Area Working Groups/Post Election Workshops etc.

3.13 Financial and Resource Implications

**Ongoing delivery of programmes and projects.
Officer time in working up the area based approach.**

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no direct equality implications associated with this report.”

The Director of Property and Property and Projects, together with the City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer, within their presentation outlined the main achievements to date under the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and the Council’s Physical Programme and emerging proposals. It highlighted the many roles played by the Council in investment and regeneration and referred to the future opportunities afforded by, for example, the Belfast Region City Deal and private sector investment. In terms of challenges, it was pointed out that there was a requirement to identify alternative financing mechanisms, given the Council’s diminishing resources for capital investment, and for ensuring connectivity between the City centre and local areas and between local areas themselves. Reference was made also to the significant

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role to be played by Members, moving into the next Council term, in shaping the future of the City.

During discussion, Members highlighted a number of areas which should be afforded consideration moving forward, including the need to promote city centre living, to address vacant buildings along arterial routes, to develop a stronger communications plan to publicise the Council's regeneration programme and achievements and to regenerate the Grosvenor Road, in the context of the Belfast Transport Hub. It was suggested that workshops be held on a regular basis to assist Members in the overall process.

The Director of Property and Projects welcomed the comments and confirmed that Members would have an opportunity to make further suggestions in the lead up to workshops which would take place early in the new Council term.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and paid tribute to the Director of Property and Projects, the City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer and their staff on their success in delivering a wide range of projects across the City.

Clifton Gateway Public Realm Scheme

The City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 This report provides an update on the proposed Clifton Gateway project, which is a DfC led comprehensive public realm improvement scheme running from the junction of Donegall Street and Royal Avenue/York Street, north through Clifton Street and Carlisle Circus and then along the Crumlin Road to its junction with Agnes Street and Cliftonpark Avenue. (A draft, developed design has been circulated to the Committee).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- DfC proposals for a comprehensive public realm scheme running from the junction of Donegall Street and Royal Avenue/York Street, north through Clifton Street and Carlisle Circus and then along the Crumlin Road to its junction with Agnes Street and Cliftonpark Avenue; and**

- the intention to commence a programme of public consultation and engagement in the first quarter of 2019 in relation to the design proposals, which will form part of a pending planning process.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 During 2011/2012, DfC (then DSD) commissioned White Young Green and the Paul Hogarth Company to develop designs for a public realm scheme known as the Clifton Gateway Public Realm project and planning permission was obtained for various elements of the scheme. However, DfC/DSD did not progress proposals further at that time due to government restructuring and a lack of available funding. The project re-started in 2016 and a new competition to appoint a design team was undertaken by DfC, with AECOM being appointed in June 2017.

3.2 This Clifton Gateway Public Realm Project has recently come under the governance and stewardship of the DfC led Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) Public Realm Programme Board structure, which includes the Council's Lead Officer for City Regeneration and Development and the Director of Property & Projects. It is proposed by DfC that the project will be taken forward as follows in a two-stage approach, with the first part being design and the second phase being construction of the new public realm:

- (i) Stages 0 - 3 (Strategic Definition – Developed Design): estimated completion September 2019; and
- (ii) Stages 4 – 7 (Technical Design – In Use): completion and end of Defects Period estimated as January 2023.

3.3 Work to complete an Economic Appraisal for the construction phase has commenced and the project is scheduled to move to the next stage during 2019. This will include the development of designs and the submission of a planning application.

Strategic Context: Inner North West Masterplan

3.4 In November 2018, the Council approved the Inner North West (INW) Masterplan which seeks to support and shape city centre development in an area bounded by the Millfield/Carrick Hill road to the northwest, College Street to the south, Fountain Street to Fountain Lane to the south and Royal Avenue to the east. It covers 7.2 hectares or 42.4 acres and, at its northern boundary includes Donegall Street,

Carrick Hill and Clifton Street which form part of the Clifton Gateway proposals.

- 3.5 The Clifton Street junction is a key gateway into the city and often seen as a barrier for the surrounding city centre communities. It is poorly connected in terms of cycle links whilst pollution, multiple crossings and navigating a cluttered footpath characterises the pedestrian experience. The Clifton Street/Carrick Hill junction is a major challenge in terms of connecting people and improving access to the city centre, and is an issue that has been raised on multiple occasions during the INW consultation. To address these problems, the Masterplan proposes an updated pedestrian and cycle environment with a tree planted boulevard along the inner ring road as well as updated crossings.
- 3.6 Discussions have already taken place with DfC in relation to the development of an INW delivery plan following the Masterplan, which will identify short, medium and long-term projects. Of particular relevance to the Clifton Gateway is the desire to bring forward additional public realm improvements where funding permits, including at the junctions and pedestrian crossing points along Millfield and Carrick Hill. The Clifton Gateway also supports the wider aims of the INW Masterplan to improve linkages to surrounding city centre communities and create pedestrian and cycle-friendly routes that will enhance connections and provide a welcoming environment and attractive streetscape.

Detailed Design of proposed Clifton Street Gateway Public Realm: Key Issues for consideration

- 3.7 There are outstanding transport issues requiring clarification during the development of the detailed/technical design. In particular, these relate to DfI's road layout requirements for the Carrick Hill/Donagall Street/Clifton Street junction, Carlisle Circus and whether the Antrim Road will form part of the BRT2 route. Another key issue for consideration will be how best to include pedestrian/cyclist priority within the project designs, including how the design proposals strengthen the cycling/walking connections between the City Centre communities to the north of the city centre.
- 3.8 With regard to stakeholder and community engagement, AECOM has conducted initial consultations with the Council, DfI, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Utility providers. No further public consultation has taken place since 2011/12 when there were some initial discussions with community groups including the incorporation of Public Art in the

proposals. DfC propose that AECOM will re-start public consultation on the new proposals for 12 weeks from 24th January 2019 to coincide with preparatory work on the pre-application stage of submission of the planning application

- 3.9** As part of the 2011/2012 designs, fourteen potential public art locations and associated proposals were developed for the project area to complement the Cultural Corridor concept previously developed by the Council. In the intervening period, the National Lottery's Great Place scheme has awarded £237,700 to the North Belfast – Old to New project which will focus on one of Belfast's most historic areas, a one-mile stretch of North Belfast starting in Donegall Street and ending on the Crumlin Road. The aim is to focus on the area's unique built heritage and authentic character as a catalyst for sustainable regeneration, with cultural and educational organisations working together to develop a cohesive place-based plan to showcase the heritage of this part of the city. The DfC Project Team are currently investigating how best to incorporate art and culture into the Clifton Gateway project.
- 3.10** Officers are currently working with DfC to inform the detailed design of the proposed scheme and discussions include potential for sign posting of cultural heritage assets; improved lighting and opportunities for public art and enhanced soft landscaping.
- 3.11** Financial and Resource Implications
- Project is being delivered and funded via DfC.
- 3.12** Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
- No specific equality or good relations implications at this time."

During discussion, a Member referred to a public realm scheme which was due to commence on the Oldpark Road and suggested that the Council should discuss with the Department for Communities the possibility of extending it as far as the Cliftonpark Avenue/Crumlin Road junction.

In response, the City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer confirmed that the Member would have an opportunity to raise his suggestion through the public consultation process for the Clifton Gateway Public Realm Scheme, which was due to open shortly. In addition, the Council was represented on the Belfast Streets Ahead Public Realm Programme Board, which was overseeing the delivery of the aforementioned public realm schemes, and officers would raise the issue within that forum.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Strategic Review of Belfast Bikes Scheme

The Director of Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report provides a draft terms of reference for a strategic review of the 'Just Eat' Belfast Bikes scheme. The aim of the review is to carry out analysis of the current scheme network, assess options for maximising usage and consider recommendations for sustainable and inclusive growth.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the proposed terms of reference for the Just Eat Belfast Bikes and, if appropriate, agree the scope of the review. Members will receive future reports detailing outcomes of the strategic review and any associated resource implications.**

Key Issues

3.1 Scope of the review

It is proposed to undertake a comprehensive strategic review of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes scheme and make recommendations for the future management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme. In particular, the review will assess options for maximising usage of the existing network as well as potential to reduce costs and increase income from usage of the scheme. The review will also consider an approach for any potential sustainable growth of the scheme and future contract management.

3.2 Phase 1 - Assessment of the current network.

This will involve detailed analysis of the current scale, coverage and density of the network. The following factors will be considered:

- station location;**
- usage of each station – rentals and returns;**
- capacity of the station – too big or too small;**
- customer feedback;**

- review of operational issues such as vandalism, security and rebalancing; and
- Members' aspirations

3.3 Phase 2 - Review of scheme objectives

The review will carry out analysis to establish if the scheme is meeting the following objectives set at project initiation and whether any other objectives need to be added:

- To support an increase in the modal share for cycling in Belfast and reduce dependency on cars particularly for short trips;
- To improve the health of residents by encouraging a healthier way to travel;
- To give our residents and visitors greater access to places that are beyond reach on foot through an affordable, sustainable transport system;
- Support access to employment and services by linking city centre locations;
- To reduce greenhouse gas and ambient pollution emissions from road transport; and
- To improve the image of Belfast and normalise cycling.

3.4 In particular, a political decision will need to be made on the overall objectives of the Scheme and its roll-out to residential areas. If this is to be a long term objective, then finance will be needed.

3.5 Phase 3 - System review

The review will consider the design quality of infrastructure and innovation. Options will be considered with the operator and supplier on how the infrastructure and management system can be improved. The following issues will be considered:

- Infrastructure specification – bike and docking point design;
- Vandal proofing;
- App / Website; and
- Innovation in security and asset tracking.

3.6 Phase 4 – Pricing review (membership and usage charges)

A new pricing structure was introduced in April 2018. The review will involve an analysis of scheme statistics to assess how the pricing changes impacted on membership, usage and rental income over the 12 month period (April 2018

– April 2019). The review will make recommendations on any proposed adjustments to the pricing structure based on the evidence.

3.7 Phase 5 – Future expansion

The review will consider existing scheme coverage and identify options for potential expansion. It is proposed that expansion of the scheme will be considered against the following key criteria:

Supporting Network – The network will be reviewed to consider gaps in provision. Docking stations should be part of a supporting strategic network;

Sustainable growth - Docking stations should ideally be located in areas of high footfall to ensure that the areas will generate sufficient subscriptions/income and can be operationally managed within the context of the wider scheme;

Stakeholder feedback - engagement with stakeholders and a possible public survey to obtain information on usage behaviour, user profiles and ideas for future expansion;

Asset mapping - A range of assets can be mapped including public transport provision (existing and planned), car parking and cycling infrastructure; tourist sites; planned/ proposed development sites (hotels, offices, student housing etc) and leisure and community centres; and

Quantitative data analysis - A range of socio-economic and health data including population and employment density, deprivation indices etc

3.8 Phase 6 - Financial Sustainability

The business model for any future expansion (capital and revenue) is a key element of the review. This section will consider the estimated costs of designing, building and operating any future expansion. This will involve the exploration of any potential revenue generation options which may be viable and any potential funding sources.

3.9 On-going contract management

It is proposed that the current contract for on-going operation and management of the scheme is reviewed. The current contract was awarded to NSL in April 2015 for an initial period of six years subject to annual renewal up nine years. In addition, there is a separate contract for the sponsorship of Belfast Bikes which will also be subject to the review.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

Any resource implications associated with the proposed recommendations will be highlighted in future reports.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.11 None.”

During discussion, it was suggested that consideration be given to using developer contributions to fund the expansion of the scheme, to securing one-off sponsorships from businesses and to involving organisations, such as Men Sheds, in the maintenance of bikes. Various locations across the City were also identified as potential docking stations.

The Director of Economic Development indicated that these issues would be taken into account as part of the strategic review process.

After discussion, the Committee approved the terms of reference for the strategic review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme and noted that it would receive at its next meeting details of the proposed timeframe for the review.

Department for Communities’ Access and Inclusion Capital Programme

The Committee was advised that the Department for Communities had invited councils across Northern Ireland to administer its Capital Inclusion Programme Access and Inclusion Capital Programme, which sought to improve access to arts and cultural activities by people with disabilities across Northern Ireland.

The Director of Economic Development reported that £750,000 had been allocated in total to the programme and that applicants could, on the basis of demonstrable need and potential impact, secure funding of up to £30,000. Council-owned arts and cultural venues would be eligible to apply, as well as independently operated arts and cultural venues or organisations. Whilst there was no match funding requirement on behalf of councils, they had been requested by the Department for Communities to raise awareness of the programme amongst cultural organisations in their area, to assist them in the application process, where appropriate, and to work with successful applicants to ensure that funding was accounted for and that expenditure was in keeping with their application. He added that the closing date for applications was 18th January, following which eligible projects would be ranked in accordance with pre-agreed criteria.

The Committee endorsed the Council’s role in the Department for Communities’ Access and Inclusion Capital Programme, as outlined.

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Site Visit – ‘Building Blocks’ Development

The Committee was informed that an invitation had been received from Bywater Properties to visit its proposed Building Blocks development in the Smithfield area of the City.

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reported that the proposed development was located within the Inner Northwest Masterplan area and that the Belfast Planning Service was assessing currently an outline planning application for mixed-use buildings in Gresham Street, North Street and Winetavern Street and a full planning application for the first phase of the development. In that context, he pointed out that, should the site visit be approved, those Members who were also on the Planning Committee could attend but could not comment on any aspect of the development.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to undertake the site visit.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

**Progression of the Cultural Programme –
Festivals and Events Update**

(Ms. E. Henry, Cultural Regeneration Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the implementation of recommendations for the development of Events and Festivals in Belfast and to agree an interim position for 2019/20.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- **note the contents of this report and agree to allocate funding as outlined in 3.16; and**
- **agree that Council officers develop and deliver a programme to support growth festivals in 2019/20, subject to Committee approving the breakdown of funding allocations.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 At the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 5th December, it was agreed that further

consideration should be given to an interim position for events and festivals in advance of the implementation of a new cultural strategy from April 2020 onwards. It was agreed that a report would be taken to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider allocating additional funding to support Signature and Growth Events and Festivals in 2019/20. Subsequently, at the December meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, Members agreed to allocate a budget of £320,000 for this purpose. This was allocated from the specified reserve for the development of a long term cultural programme.

- 3.2** The background to the proposed approach is a series of key recommendations from the Events and Festivals strategy commissioned by Council from consultants Festival and Events International (FEI).

The brief for this work included:

- a review of current portfolio;
- consultation with stakeholders including funders and existing events/festivals;
- benchmarking how events and festivals are funded and delivered in other cities;
- consideration of pre and post event impact modelling
- consideration of future structures for delivery; and
- making recommendations for the identification, securing, funding and delivery of events and festivals in Belfast.

- 3.3** The recommendations cover 4 main areas, namely:

- funding: Need to adopt the standard classification of Events and Festivals as Major, Signature, Growth, Local and Neighbourhood;
- capacity building: Portfolio approach; programme of support; multi-annual investment where appropriate;
- evaluation and measurement: Adopt the proposed investment/evaluation criteria and simplify evaluation based on demonstrating value against the Belfast Agenda, ensuring that the level of evaluation is commensurate with the scale of the event; and
- governance and delivery: Need to improve internal co-ordination; greater partnership with other funders; consider a commissioning model for certain types of events.

- 3.4** These recommendations present a strong operational model for the future delivery of events and festivals in the city and

the FEI report forms a strong foundation to build on. In particular, the report highlighted the need for:

- better co-operation with other city stakeholders e.g. Tourism NI;
- effective internal structures e.g. relationship between units within Place and Economy and across the Council; and
- clear categorisation of the city's events and festivals offer

Gap Analysis

3.5 However, the scope of the work was such that the focus was on existing infrastructure and products including some assessment of capacity and support for growth. Further consideration needs to be given to the wider strategic context and in particular the role of events and festivals as part of long-term cultural and tourism development in the city. Therefore, rather than taking forward a standalone festivals and events plan and to ensure greater strategic value, it has been agreed that this work will be embedded into the proposed ten year cultural strategy. This will be subject to wider stakeholder engagement and public consultation.

3.6 In this context further consideration will be given to:

- the thematic areas of strength that could be built upon to develop signature events and form part of a more coherent tourism narrative for the city;
- the longevity, impact and sustainability of the current predominantly festivals based model;
- how the product in Belfast can become sufficiently distinctive from that on offer in the rest of UK and Ireland; and
- a review of other challenges that impact on the growth of festivals and events in the city.

Key Issues

Interim year

3.7 The timeline presented to Committee for the implementation of a new ten-year strategy integrating events and festivals with cultural and tourism development is April 2020. This will ensure the effective alignment of funding through a new comprehensive competitive investment programme where funding will be clearly linked to strategic priorities.

- 3.8 However, there is therefore a need to agree an approach to 2019/20. If possible, this should maintain existing levels of support for Festivals and Events until April 2020 when the recommendations set out in the FEI report will be integrated into the long-term approach. A table outlining the allocation of the events budget has been circulated to Members (largely based on standard events).
- 3.9 There is also an opportunity to use 2019/2020 to test the categorisation and evaluation measures set out in the FEI report as well as the proposed levels of funding. Of the four categories identified by FEI: Major, Signature, Growth and Neighbourhood, the additional funding in 2019/20 will focus on two key categories:
- Signature
 - Growth

Signature

- 3.10 The FEI report identified the potential of existing events in the city to develop into key Belfast Signature Events representing a significant economic and social return on investment. This included events currently delivered directly by the Council such as the Maritime Festival as well as longstanding city festivals such as Féile an Phobail. The report also recognised the need for a transition period. It is therefore proposed that in 19/20 in order to sustain adequate levels of funding that the additional budget as agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is allocated as follows:
- 3.11
- Maritime Festival - £240,000. This is an additional £22,000 from the amount invested in 18/19 (This will be funded in its entirety from the annual departmental budget). This will enhance the programme to test Signature status, as set out in FEI report;
 - Féile an Phobail - £239,000. This would be made up £39,000 from Core Multi-annual Funding (in annual budget) and £200,000 from the specified reserve.
 - Belfast International Arts Festival - £64,000. This would be made up of £39,000 from Core Multi-Annual Funding (in annual budget) and £25,000 from the specified reserve. This should be used to develop an international enhancement plan.
- 3.12 Funding contracts will include evaluation measures set out by FEI and a requirement to carry out market research in line with the emerging themes and narrative of the long-term strategy.

- 3.13 From April 2020, the required levels of funding to deliver a strategic programme of festivals and events will be considered as a part of a new competitive cultural investment programme aligned to a new cultural strategy.

Growth

- 3.14 It is proposed that the remaining budget of £95,000 is allocated to support growth festivals and events in the city. Given the number of festivals and events that could be categorised as growth, an interim programme of support in 19/20 will be developed in line with FEI recommendations in order to pilot key recommendations. Funding allocations will then be subject to Committee approval.
- 3.15 For major events, development work is ongoing to identify a longer-term pipeline and strategic approach. This will be reported on as part of the long term cultural strategy programme of work. In 2019/20 neighbourhood festivals and events will continue to be supported through Council's existing funding and support programmes such as the Community Festivals Fund. However, as part of the new cultural strategy and in line with FEI's recommendations, specific consideration will be given to capacity building and development.

3.16 **Financial and Resource Implications**

A budget of £225,000 will be allocated as outlined in 3.11 with £200,000 awarded to Féile an Phobail and £25,000 to the Belfast International Arts Festival. Specific allocation of the remaining £95,000 from a total of £320,000 approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will be subject to further Committee approval.

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

Specific good relations and equality clauses will be included in terms and conditions of funding contracts and reported against as part of the evaluation process.

- 3.18 The long-term cultural strategy and recommended funding schemes will be equality screened."

During discussion, several Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the funding allocation being proposed for the interim year, as set out within paragraph 3.16

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of the report, on the basis that two organisations accounted for the majority of funding and that it that was not being spread equitably across the City.

In response, the Cultural Regeneration Manager pointed out that the Belfast International Arts Festival, Féile an Phobail and the Maritime Festival had been selected on the grounds that they were deemed by FEI to be of such a scale currently as to qualify as a Signature project for the interim year. She added that the funding which was being recommended was commensurate with that which they were receiving in the current year.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Clarke,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor O'Neill,
Seconded by Councillor Kyle,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report for one month to allow the Political Parties to be briefed on the rationale behind the proposed funding allocation and the process governing the funding of festivals generally.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for the amendment and seven against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the Committee as the substantive motion and passed.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Private Car Parks

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McReynolds proposed:

“This Council is concerned at the growing number of private car parks appearing across the City and Northern Ireland, is concerned at the lack of an effective and independent appeal mechanism open to individuals and agrees to write to the Department for Justice to introduce legislation to create an independent Parking Ombudsman similar to England, Scotland and Wales, at the earliest opportunity.”

Councillor McReynolds was invited to address the Committee, during which he sought and was granted approval to amend his proposal to read as follows:

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“This Council is concerned at the practice of private car park operators and their agents in Northern Ireland, is concerned at the lack of an effective and independent appeal mechanism to allow individuals to challenge penalty notices issued by or on behalf of such operators and agrees to write to the Department of Justice, calling for an independent Parking Ombudsman, similar to England and Wales, to be created at the earliest opportunity.”

After discussion, the Committee endorsed Councillor McReynolds’ proposal, as amended.

Chairperson