

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 7th August, 2019

## MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairperson);  
Alderman Kingston; and  
Councillors S. Baker, Beattie, Brooks, Ferguson,  
Flynn, Graham, Hanvey, Heading, Howard,  
T. Kelly, Lyons, McLaughlin, O'Hara and Whyte.

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

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Spence and Councillors Garrett, Murphy and Nicholl.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 5th June 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 July.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Beattie declared an interest in relation to item 7(b) – Future Arrangements for Committee – Strategic Workshops, in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, which had sought approval to present the Belfast Harbour Strategy at a future meeting, and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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**Update on City of Music Programme**

The Director of Development informed the Members that the ten-year Cultural Strategy, which was being developed currently, set out a number of strategic projects, including, as had been approved by the Committee on 7th March, 2018, a commitment to bid for UNESCO City of Music status.

He reviewed the rationale behind the decision to apply for such status and confirmed that work would focus primarily upon delivering a more joined-up and visible music offer, whilst increasing opportunities for production and civic engagement in music across the City on a permanent basis. Significant music-related activity had taken place or was due to take place throughout 2019/20, including the provision of ongoing support for home-grown activity and of funding for one-off events, which had helped to strengthen the profile of Belfast as a culturally vibrant destination, in line with the objectives of the Belfast Agenda. Further music development activity would also be supported throughout the year, as part of the Tourism, Culture and Arts Action Plan for 2019/20 and the ongoing City Centre Revitalisation Programme.

The Director reported that, in addition to the funding of one-off events and to build upon the success of the Amplifier Programme of 2018/19, an open call had been undertaken to invite project proposals from organisations producing music-related events between October 2019 and March 2020, in order to complement the wider cultural activity taking place in the City. Twelve proposals had been received, all of which had met the eligibility criteria. Of those, four had met the quality threshold of 65% and, accordingly, he recommended that funding totalling £52,555 be allocated as follows:

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Event/Activity</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Moving On Music	Brilliant Corners Jazz Festival 2020	£8,105
Arts Ekta	Connections 2020	£15,000
Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts	Joining the Dots Creative Collective and 100 Club Events	£14,450
Oh Yeah Music Centre	NI Music Prize 2019	£15,000

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Presentations**

**Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan/Draft Open Spaces Strategy**

(Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning and Building Control, attended in connection with this item.)

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The Director of Planning and Building Control reminded the Committee that it had granted approval to formulate a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan for the City, alongside the development of a new Open Spaces Strategy.

He provided an overview of the draft Plan and confirmed that it would respond to national and regional policy approach and priorities and guide more detailed strategies and action plans over time. The Plan acknowledged the benefits and multi-functionality of green and blue infrastructure assets across the City, with green assets including parks, playing fields, amenity open space, trees, garden and countryside and blue assets comprising rivers, water bodies and sustainable drainage systems. The overall network of assets would, he pointed out, result in wide-ranging benefits in terms of, for example, health and wellbeing and biodiversity and environmental resilience and would meet many of the objectives set out within the Belfast Agenda.

He reminded the Committee further that it had granted approval to undertake a consultation exercise on the draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and on the draft Open Spaces Strategy. In view of the synergies between the documents, it had been agreed that the consultations should run concurrently. A twelve-week consultation had commenced on 17th June (available [here](#)) and a series of public engagement sessions were being held across the City in order to promote the draft documents and encourage the submission of responses prior to the closing date of 6th September. Responses would be incorporated into further draft documents and would be submitted to the Committee for approval in due course.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the Department for Infrastructure be invited to provide at the Special meeting on Infrastructure issues taking place on 28th August an update on the current status of the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland, in the context of the Belfast Cycle Network.

**Growing Businesses and the Economy**

**Update on Growing the Economy**

The Director of Economic Development 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 the Committee with an update on progress against a series of commitments set out under the Growing the Economy pillar of the Belfast Agenda and to secure approval to proceed with a number of initiatives within this work programme. The update is in line with the activity approved by the Committee on 6th March, 2019.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

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- i. note the Council's performance and contribution to delivering against Belfast Agenda ambitions to grow the Belfast economy, focusing on the current support for Business Start-up, Growth and Investment;**
- ii. approve the allocation of £55,000 from the existing 2019/2020 Economic Development budget to support the delivery of the Scale Up initiative, in partnership with Catalyst Inc and Invest NI, which will commence in October 2019. This funding was approved as part of the 'Growing the Economy' delivery plan that was agreed by this Committee at the meeting on 6 March 2019;**
- iii. approve the allocation of £50,000 from the existing 2019/2020 Economic Development budget to support the delivery of the social enterprise action plan. This funding was approved as part of the 'Growing the Economy' delivery plan that was agreed by this Committee at the meeting on 6 March 2019; and**
- iv. note the application submitted to join the NESTA Upstream Collaborative network, to develop new and innovative approaches to tackle educational attainment challenges.**

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council and its partners made a series of commitments as part of the Belfast Agenda to support inclusive economic growth in the city. This work focuses on creating jobs by encouraging more new businesses to start up, driving additional investment to support growth in indigenous companies and attracting more Foreign Direct Investment.**
- 3.2 The Council has a key role in ensuring that these ambitions are met. It has statutory responsibility for business start-up and also supports small local companies that have the ambition to grow. Through its assets and influence, the Council also encourages other developments to come forward which will support the creation of new jobs by enhancing skills, providing appropriate workspace and accommodation and encouraging new investment in digital infrastructure.**
- 3.3 At its meeting on 6th March 2019, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the delivery of the Growing the Economy work plan for the 2019/20 financial year. Since April, officers have been working on a range of activities to address the challenges around low levels of start-up,**

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innovation, business competitiveness and productivity. Whilst work is ongoing to deliver the 2019/20 work plan, the key achievements to date include;

- **Enterprise Awareness:** 72 females have been engaged through our female enterprise support, and we are currently in the process of working with the Department for Communities (DfC) to launch a new self-employment initiative in the Autumn, focusing on those who are unemployed or economically inactive;
- **Start a Business:** 180 individuals have been engaged in the 'Go for It' programme which has supported the development of 62 new jobs to date. We have also launched a new initiative to extend the range of support available to new starts by providing additional mentoring and access to financial and other incentives;
- **Social Enterprise and Cooperatives:** we have provided support for 10 social enterprises and cooperatives, supporting the creation of 20 jobs to date. This month we will launch a new more enhanced programme of support to grow and develop the social enterprise and cooperative sector in Belfast;
- **Innovation Factory:** we continue to deliver services through the Innovation Factory which has supported the creation of 115 jobs and houses 41 small businesses;
- **Business growth mentoring:** 50 existing businesses have accessed mentoring to support their strategic growth and development this year to date; and
- **Investment:** the Council's 'City Investment Service' was established as an 18 month pilot in mid-2018. Since then, the team has worked with 69 businesses and the cumulative investment from these businesses has been more than £90million.

- 3.4 **Recognising the importance of a partnership approach to achieve the growth ambitions in the field of enterprise support, officers have recently developed an enterprise framework that was agreed at the December 2018 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. This sets a vision for the city as a great place to start and grow a business. It outlines recommended steps to be taken for Belfast to be 'recognised for its diverse community of entrepreneurs, who benefit from a comprehensive, planned**

and coherent system of enterprise support, which fulfils their needs at all stages of the business growth life-cycle'. Aligned to these thematic priorities, officers have been working to further develop the range of support offered by the council to achieve the ambitions of the framework. Details of these activities are set out below.

#### **Support for new Start-Ups**

- 3.5 Currently, the main vehicle for providing support to new business starts in the Go for It programme. This programme is delivered on a regional basis and provides individuals with access to one to one mentoring advice to develop a business plan. While we recognise that the current programme has many benefits, there are issues with the nature of support provided and its ability to meet the needs of the new businesses that are engaging with the service – as well as the ambitions set out in the enterprise framework.
- 3.6 The Go for It programme will run until 2021 and all councils are currently considering the merits of moving forward with a similar programme or reviewing the current provision and taking a much more radical approach – that may or may involve a NI-wide programme. At a Belfast level, officers are undertaking research work to inform the approach that would most closely meet the needs of the businesses that we are engaging with – helping them to start up and providing them with the appropriate support to meet their growth ambitions. The outworking of this research will help inform our future investment approach. It is proposed that more detail on this work will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for information and endorsement. The work will also be used to inform our future estimates process.

#### **Support for Social Enterprises and Co-operatives**

- 3.7 Over a three-year period, our tailored support to encourage the development of the social enterprise and cooperative sector has supported 93 participants creating 44 new social enterprises and cooperatives, generating 82 new jobs and securing over £820,000 in funding.
- 3.8 As part of our ongoing engagement with the social enterprise sector, we have identified ongoing challenges around access to finance to overcome barriers to starting and growing the business. Officers have been considering a range of options to address this issue. An increasingly significant funding options is the concept of crowdfunding. Working with CrowdFunder.co.uk, we have developed a pilot Belfast-specific crowdfunding proposition for the social enterprise

and cooperative sector. This pilot will provide support for developing and running a crowdfunding campaign for up to 10 social enterprises or cooperatives in the city.

- 3.9** It is proposed that the Council supports this initiative by offering match funding of up to £5,000 for each of the organisations who deliver a successful campaign. This option encourages organisations to develop and test the market, secure public buy-in and successfully attract £2,500, which will then be uplifted with funding from Belfast City Council. To access this funding, social enterprises and cooperatives will be in the early stages of developing the enterprise and will be required to go through a competitive process to access the Council funding. This approach ultimately supports the long-term sustainability of the enterprise. The total cost of the pilot will be £50,000 all of which will directly support the growth and development of the sector.
- 3.10** Members should be aware that, at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 12th April 2019, approval was given for the delivery of two pilot projects in partnership with NOW Group and USEL (Ulster Supported Employment and Learning). These pilot projects are aimed at supporting people with disabilities or health related conditions into work as well as helping new businesses including social enterprises to start up and grow. At the initial stage of development, the focus was on the hospitality sector; however as we have worked with both organisations, it is clear that there is scope to re-shape these activities to look at other sectors – and also incorporating retail outlets. This change of focus will not have any negative effect on the outputs associated with this project. Across the two pilots, up to 60 Belfast residents and up to 40 new start-ups will be supported.

**Support to Scale and Grow**

- 3.11** One of the key challenges identified through the enterprise framework is the need to encourage more businesses to scale and grow to turnover of more than £3million. Following the success of the Way to Scale Initiative in partnership with Catalyst Inc and Invest NI, officers have been working to develop the offering for businesses with growth ambitions and potential. Through last year's programme, 10 businesses accessed support which included a series of workshops, access to the entrepreneurship development programme at MIT in Boston, and a one week residential in Boston to develop market strategies and build networks support to realise the growth ambitions of their businesses . Early feedback from the Way to Scale Initiative has

demonstrated transformational results for the participating businesses. To date, participating businesses have reported generating equity funding offers up to £2m while others have seen significant increases in revenue forecasts and sales pipelines. A full evaluation of the programme is currently underway and the feedback will be used to inform future investments from the Council in this area of work.

**3.12 Building on the learning from last year, the new programme of support has been enhanced to enable up to 60 businesses in the city to access support to encourage CEO transformation, business modelling and sales strategy. 10 of these businesses will then be further supported through a core programme of activity. The programme will encompass four core elements, namely:**

- **Belfast bootcamp for up to 60 businesses with Bill Aulet from Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Entrepreneurship Development Programme, designed to change CEO behaviour and develop high growth strategy;**
- **1 week Boston Residential at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Entrepreneurship Development Programme;**
- **Peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst Inc designed to maximise peer learning and address real-time business challenges; and**
- **Go to Market 1 week Boston residential which focuses on go to market strategies and tactics.**

**3.13 The programme will be delivered in partnership with Catalyst Inc. and Invest Northern Ireland. The overall cost of the programme will be £184,750. Given the alignment with the ambitions set out in the enterprise framework, it is recommended that this is supported with Council funding of £55,000 to maximise the take-up by Belfast-based businesses. This equates to 29% of the overall programme cost. Invest NI, Catalyst Inc and the participating companies will cover the remainder of the costs.**

**Involvement in good practice network on addressing educational underachievement**

**3.14 Members may be aware of the work of NESTA, an innovation foundation that focuses on supporting the creation of collaborative networks to promote innovation and share good practice. Officers have recently responded to a call for participation in NESTA's Upstream Collaborative network, the purpose of which will be to experiment with new models that work 'upstream' of social problems, to address the underlying**

**causes of need and create the conditions from which good outcomes can emerge.**

**3.15 The suggested area of focus for Belfast is educational underachievement, recognising that educational performance is one of the key determinants of young people's economic destiny and impacts hugely on their ability to secure positive employment outcomes. If successful, participation in this network will provide the Council with access to learning and resources as well as NESTA consultancy support. There may also be an opportunity to access up to £20k through to test new approaches.**

**3.16 Financial and Resource Implications**

**All new activity included in the report will be resourced from the 2019/20 Economic Development budget agreed by this Committee on 6th March 2019.**

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

**Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of each project."**

After discussion, the Committee adopted recommendations (i), (ii) and (iv), as set out within the report.

The Committee agreed to defer until its monthly meeting in September consideration of recommendation (iii), that is, the allocation of funding of £50,000 to support the delivery of the social enterprise action plan, to allow for information to be provided on:

- how the number of co-operatives in the City might be increased, taking into account the motion on Support for Small and Medium Enterprises which in 2016 had been passed by the Council and the success of the Preston Co-operative Initiative; and
- the mechanisms in place to ensure the integrity of the Crowdfunding process, together with the cost to the Council of using that platform.

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The Committee agreed also that:

- future reports should, given their distinct differences, differentiate between social enterprises and co-operatives; and
- the report to be submitted to the monthly meeting in September should provide details of the initial analysis which had been undertaken around last year's Scale-up programme.

**Belfast – Boston Sister City Visit –  
Invitation to Lord Mayor**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th June, it had granted approval for the Chairperson and the Director of Economic Development (or their nominees), together with one officer, to participate in a Sister City trade mission to Boston from 22nd till 26th September.

The Director of Economic Development reported that the Lord Mayor had, subsequently, received from his counterpart in Boston, Mayor Martin J. Walsh, an invitation to accompany the delegation. Mayor Walsh had stated that the Belfast – Boston Sister City agreement had been the first to be signed by him since assuming Office in 2014 and had pointed to the significant benefits derived by both cities in the intervening five years.

The Director pointed to the annual Friendship Four ice hockey tournament as being one example of the tangible benefits to Belfast of the City Sister agreement and stressed that the inclusion of the Lord Mayor would demonstrate the City's continued commitment to the agreement. He added that the Council's International Unit was co-ordinating the itinerary for the visit and that the additional cost incurred by the Lord Mayor's participation would be met from the International Relations Unit's current budget.

The Committee approved the Lord Mayor's participation in the Sister City trade mission to Boston.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**Update on Department for Communities' Regeneration  
Guidance for Greater Clarendon and Sailortown**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report until its monthly meeting in September to enable a briefing to be held on the draft Greater Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan and on the work of the York Street Interchange Strategic Advisory Group.

The Committee agreed also that the proposed Gamble Street rail halt alluded to within the Masterplan be raised with the Department for Infrastructure at the Special meeting on Infrastructure issues taking place on 28th August.

**City Centre Regeneration Task Force – Quarterly Update**

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

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To update Members in relation to work around the City Centre Regeneration Task Force.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to note the update on the City Centre Regeneration Task Force including:**

- progress around the co-commissioning of a study on city centre connectivity;**
- review of non-domestic rates;**
- proposed City Centre Reference Group;**
- City centre living; and**
- the proposal to invite representatives of Edinburgh City Council to present to the Committee lessons learnt from the ‘Edinburgh City Centre Transformation’ programme.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 7th November 2018, agreed to establish a City Centre Regeneration Task Force, jointly chaired by BCC's Chief Executive and the Head of the Civil Service. Members were also advised that Committee would receive, on a quarterly basis, an update on the work of the Task Force.**

**3.2 An update on the work of the Task Force was provided to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 13th February. The Task Force has met four times since November 2018 and have meetings scheduled up until December 2019. A broad objective of the Task Force is to maximise the collective potential of our regeneration efforts to transform the city centre aligned to respective and collective priorities and identify an action plan accordingly. It was recognised that there was an immediate need to drive, and resource targeted city centre recovery efforts in response to the Bank Buildings fire but also to consider the longer term revitalisation and regeneration of the city centre from an integrated and sustainable perspective.**

**3.3 In terms of a medium/long term plan for city centre regeneration, there was a consensus that the Belfast City**

Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) was a solid basis upon which to take forward a refreshed action plan and prioritisation in respect of the regeneration of the city centre. BCCRIS was developed and agreed by the Council and sets out the policies, projects and priorities to underpin the regeneration and growth of the city centre and surrounding areas. The Department for Communities (DfC) have also adopted BCCRIS as one of their policies. The delivery of the outcomes within BCCRIS is however dependent upon a range of stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors, anchor institutions and the residential and business communities.

3.4 A stocktake and gap analysis of the various policies, projects and priorities in BCCRIS was undertaken to coincide with the work of the Taskforce. This included a review of what was progressing, highlighted gaps and identified how the priorities aligned with the outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda, Programme for Government and other strategies. As previously reported this has formed the basis of the City Centre Regeneration Task Force action plan which is focused on the prioritisation of actions and projects or interventions in three thematic priority areas:

- City Resilience – medium to long-term city centre recovery plan; city centre leadership and management and catalyst development opportunities to stimulate wider regeneration;
- Re-imagining and Diversification of City Centre Land Uses – to include focused actions around increasing city centre living; use of public land to deliver on priorities and realisation of growth ambitions; enhanced open spaces and family/leisure based activities; improved tourist and cultural offering; and
- Infrastructure and Connectivity – public realm and connectivity into and around the city centre; transport strategy/car parking etc.

3.5 The Regeneration Task Force agreed various priority actions aligned to the public sector from the thematic areas. Cross-departmental work is progressing through a Joint Regeneration Group made up of BCC and central government officials. Recent priority areas that have been considered included:

**Co-commissioning of a study on reimagining City centre connectivity**

- 3.6** The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 5th June, noted that the Council, in collaboration with DfC and Dfl, would commission a study to examine how the city centre should develop in a way that is accessible and welcoming for all. The commission is to be overseen by a Steering Group made up of senior members of staff within BCC, Dfl and DfC and will report directly to the City Centre Regeneration Task Force and the appropriate governance arrangement of the member organisations, i.e. Departmental Permanent Secretaries and CG and R Committee.
- 3.7** The Steering Group has had a number of successful meetings to scope out and agree the extent of the study to create a vision for the future use of the city centre. The objective of this study is to develop a shared vision for the future of the city centre reflecting how people will use the city spaces and places within the changing city landscape. The Steering Group are working to finalise the Terms of Reference and Specification for the study to enable the procurement of consultancy team to carry out the study and to create the vision.
- 3.8** To establish best practice, and to help shape the scope of this work, officers have engaged with a number of authorities and bodies, including the Institute of Place Management and Edinburgh City Council. Edinburgh are currently out to consultation on their City Centre Transformation focusing on connecting the city and transforming places. It is proposed that Committee extend an invitation to Edinburgh City Council to present and discuss the opportunities, benefits and issues experienced during their ongoing 'Edinburgh City Centre Transformation' programme at a date to coincide with the drafting of the Vision document.

**Review of Rates**

- 3.9** Members may be aware that the Department of Finance (DoF) announced a review of non-domestic rates on 9th May 2019. City centre businesses continuously raise the issue of rates in terms of their longer- term sustainability. As part of this review DoF are working in conjunction with Dfl and DfC to consider issues currently affecting high street and town centres (including rates) and facilitated an Innovation Lab on 2nd and 3rd July. This was attended by a range of key stakeholders and considered the challenges affecting city and town centres, and sought to identify recommendations to address these challenges. The Director of City Regeneration

and Development and Head of Finance represented Belfast City Council at the Innovation Lab. As this work progresses a further update will be brought back to Committee.

#### City Centre Living

- 3.10 As part of the ongoing objective to increase the city population the Task Force has also considered issues affecting the delivery of housing in the city centre. This has included consideration of the definition of affordable housing and potential additional products within this definition; progression of the city centre waiting list; funding and procurement issues and consideration of how public sector and other lands can be brought forward in a strategic way to deliver on a range of housing tenures across the city. A consultation by DfC is currently underway in respect of the definition of affordable housing and the Council is preparing a response, welcoming the review which suggests a broader range of intermediate housing products be included within the definition. That response will be the subject of a report to Planning Committee on 13th August. Alongside this, NIHE are moving forward with developing the city centre waiting list and further details will be provided to members as this progresses. Members will also recall that a report was brought to Committee in June on the Strategic Sites Assessments of city centre lands in public ownership. This report identified key strategic sites in the Inner North West, Greater Clarendon and Linen Quarter with the potential to provide mixed use development including housing across a range of tenures. A workshop on the potential of these locations is to be held with Members on Wednesday 4th September at 5pm and further details will be circulated in advance.

#### Establishment of a City Centre Reference Group

- 3.11 The City Centre Regeneration Task Force Action Plan included an action on creating a City Centre Reference Group to inform the ongoing work of city centre revitalisation, the work of the Task Force and wider long-term regeneration and development activities in the city centre. At its meeting on 14th June 2019, the Task Force agreed to the establishment of a City Centre Reference Group. This will enable two existing groups, the City Recovery Lead Group, established to mitigate the effects of the Bank Buildings fire, and a recently formed City Strategic Forum (Belfast City Centre Management led), to be stood down in the near future. It is recognised that there remains a requirement to continue with the City Recovery Lead Group in the short term given the issues that remain as a result of the Bank Buildings fire. However, it is intended

these will evolve into a wider and more strategic reference group consisting of a range of stakeholders across all sectors that can contribute to the range of issues and work-streams emerging from the Task Force Action Plan and wider city development issues. It is proposed this Reference Group will be chaired by the Council's Strategic Director of Place and Economy, with Belfast City Centre Management acting in a secretariat role. The remit and work of the group will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure alignment with the work of the Task Force, and in line with the emerging governance boards emerging from the Belfast Agenda.

**Presentation from the Institute of Place Management**

- 3.12 *Belfast City Council has recently obtained partner membership with the Institute of Place Management (IPM). The IPM is an international professional body that supports people committed to developing, managing and making places better. IPM work with policy makers, practitioners and providers to identify the core aspects involved in the effective management, development and marketing of places. They have recently been appointed by Government to lead the High Streets Task Force in England and deliver support to local authorities and communities who want to transform their high streets. The Co-Chair of the IPM, Professor Cathy Parker visited Belfast in mid-June. Professor Parker is regarded as an expert in place management and is one of the co-authors of the recent UK Government-commissioned report 'High Street 2030: Achieving Change'. Professor Parker attended the City Centre Regeneration Task Force and shared research and findings on city centre and high street trends and the future focus for high streets in managing the retail offering. Specifically Professor Parker made reference to the criticality of city centres for the wider economy and surrounding areas; the need for investment for successful city centres, and the importance of city leadership.*
- 3.13 Referring to the High Street Report, Professor Parker highlighted key factors that had been identified in transforming places in other towns and cities. These included strong leadership; blending expert and local knowledge; communication; involvement of young people and co-ordination of efforts. She also referenced empirical research which identified the top 25 factors for successful town and city centres. These included vision/strategy, appearance, activity hours, liveability, experience, entertainment/leisure, recreational space, a balance of independent /chain retailers and the offer and diversity within city centres.

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**3.14 Officers are currently working with the IPM to review the emerging action plans for the city centre to ensure alignment with best practice and to maximise the potential of priority projects to deliver the ambitions of the city centre.**

**3.15 Financial and Resource Implications**

**None directly associated with this report.**

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

**None associated with this report. The Council's Equality and Diversity Officers will be consulted on any future changes to strategies or plans that are currently in place."**

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and:

- i. endorsed the proposal to invite representatives of Edinburgh City Council to a future meeting to outline the lessons learned from the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Programme;
- ii. agreed that the Terms of Reference for the proposed study on re-imagining City centre connectivity be circulated to the Members;
- iii. agreed that the stakeholders for the proposed City Centre Reference Group should include representatives of the culture and arts and the community sectors; and
- iv. agreed that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive be invited to brief the Committee on issues associated with City centre living, including the development of a City centre housing waiting list.

**Briefing – Infrastructure Presentation**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development 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 brief Members on key city infrastructure issues in advance of presentations from Northern Ireland Water (NI Water), Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads and Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) at the special City Growth and Regeneration Committee being held on 28th August.

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**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to note this report and identify any strategic city infrastructure questions in advance of the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28th August 2019.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 5th June, agreed to receive presentations from NI Water and NITHC. Representatives of DfI Roads will also attend to present the 2019/2020 Annual Report.
- 3.2 The Belfast Agenda recognises that infrastructure is key to the delivery of sustainable development and identifies that infrastructure planning for Belfast needs to be taken forward in a strategic and integrated way. A core goal of the Agenda is to work in partnership to plan for sustainable urban infrastructure.

**Belfast Infrastructure Study**

- 3.3 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 13th September 2017, agreed to commission the Belfast Infrastructure Study. The study is intended to present a realistic phased approach to infrastructure delivery to support the growth outlined in the Belfast Agenda. Arup were appointed to develop the Infrastructure Study in July 2018 and are currently working to finalise a draft report by end of summer 2019. City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 13th February 2019, agreed to hold a Members Briefing at which the initial out-workings of the Infrastructure Study will be presented. This will be scheduled during autumn 2019.

**Infrastructure Initiatives**

- 3.4 Below is a brief overview of strategic infrastructure initiatives relevant to NI Water, NITHC and DfI Roads and a summary of each organisation's responsibilities. The brief descriptions below are intended to assist Members when considering strategic city infrastructure questions in advance of the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28th August.

**NI Water**

- 3.5 NI Water is a Government Owned Company and non-departmental public body within DfI. NI Water was set up in April 2007 as the sole provider of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland.  
**Living with Water Programme (LWWP)**

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- 3.6 The LWWP is led by DfI's Water and Drainage Policy Division. LWWP is developing a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast (Belfast SDIP) to manage the flooding risk in Belfast, address the risk of infraction proceedings under the Water Framework and Urban Waste Water Treatment Directives in respect of Belfast Lough, and support economic growth.
- 3.7 The sewerage networks and wastewater treatment works serving Belfast require significant upgrades to facilitate future growth and development. One of the key aims of LWWP is to support economic growth. In addition, the Executive's North Eastern Flood Risk Management Plan identifies the LWWP as the primary measure for managing future flood risk in Belfast. There have been a number of flooding events across Belfast on several occasions in recent years and Belfast is the largest of the 20 significant flood risk areas (SFRAs) identified by the EU Floods Directive Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments. This is a very significant issue for Belfast in that the finances have not yet been secured to deliver the upgrade requirements. If these finances are not secured development in the city may be restricted.
- 3.8 At the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28th August, NIW will present an overview of the LWWP, outline the work undertaken to date, and set out the proposed next steps and associated costs and timeframes.

**Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme**

- 3.9 The Belfast Tidal project is an £18 million scheme of works led by DfI Rivers to provide a long-term approach to flooding from the sea in Belfast. The proposed scheme extends from Belfast Harbour to Stranmillis Weir and will comprise a number of different forms of both permanent and temporary flood defences. It is anticipated construction will commence in winter 2019/20 with completion the following winter 2020/21.

**NITHC**

- 3.10 NITHC is the public corporation providing public transport services in Belfast via subsidiary companies, operating under the brand name Translink. They include Metro (serves Belfast area), Ulsterbus (serves regional network), Glider and Northern Ireland Railways (NIR). Last year there were 84.5 million passenger journeys across Translink's network; the highest in over 20 years and the third year successive year of growth.

Belfast Transport Hub

- 3.11 DfI granted planning permission for the new integrated Transport Hub in March 2019. The hub forms part of the wider proposed 20 acre Weavers Cross regeneration project and is a flagship project prioritised by the NI Executive. The scheme supports the Belfast Agenda growth aspirations and is identified in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) as one of the key transformative interventions for the city centre within the Linen Quarter Special Action Area.
- 3.12 Translink is liaising with Council on Buy Social clauses and a draft Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared and will be implemented upon appointment of the contractor. This Memorandum of Understanding agrees partnership working arrangements for Council and Translink to deliver employability and skills interventions. This will optimise the ability of those long-term unemployed and economically inactive within Belfast to access employment opportunities arising from the Buy Social requirements within the Belfast Transport Hub. This will initially focus on embedding the Construction Employment Academy model within the enabling works and construction phases of this redevelopment as a demonstrator project for the wider partnership to optimise the employment opportunities resulting from the wider redevelopment of the surrounding area.

Weavers Cross

- 3.13 Weavers Cross is the wider 20 acre proposed mixed use regeneration project that the Transport Hub will be situated within. NITHC will be engaging with a range of stakeholders including Members in the near future regarding this project.

Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) / Glider Phase One

- 3.14 BRT Phase 1 went live in September 2018 with Glider services G1 (East-West) and G2 (Titanic Quarter). The Colin Connect Transport Hub opened March 2019. Translink reported in May 2019 that the Glider has led to over 45,000 additional passenger journeys every week.

Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) / Glider Phase Two

- 3.15 BRT Phase 2 (North-South) has been included as a key project within the proposed Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD). An outline business case for BRT 2 is being prepared for the BRCD process and further details on BRT 2 will be presented to a future meeting of City Growth and Regeneration committee.

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**DfI Roads**

- 3.16 DfI Roads is the sole Roads Authority in Northern Ireland responsible for transport policies and initiatives. DfI Roads previously presented their annual report to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in November 2018.

**Park and Ride Facilities**

- 3.17 Proposals for Park and Ride sites are developed under the Park and Ride Programme Board which includes representatives from DfI and Translink. An expanded Park and Ride at Blacks Road opened in November 2018 and DfI are currently developing proposals to expand Park and Ride capacity at Ballymartin, Cairnshill, Moira, Mossley, Newtownards and Sprucefield and create new facilities at Comber, Tillysburn and Trooperslane. To support the Park and Ride facilities new hard shoulder bus lanes on the M1 and M2 motorways began operation in March 2019.

**York Street Interchange (YSI)**

- 3.18 The YSI scheme is intended to address a major bottleneck on the strategic road network, replacing the existing signalised junctions at York Street with direct links between Westlink, M2 and M3, the three busiest roads in Northern Ireland. It will also separate strategic traffic from local traffic movements via underpasses below the existing road and rail bridges and underneath a new bridge at York Street.
- 3.19 Recognising the need for careful design to reduce the visual impact of the interchange and enhance connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, DfI Roads established a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) in January 2015. The SAG comprises statutory and community representatives. Significant engagement has been undertaken to inform design changes that will reduce the impact of the YSI on local communities and enhance connectivity.
- 3.20 The tender process to appoint a contractor to bring the scheme to a construction ready stage was undertaken in 2016. However, the tender was not awarded due to a legal challenge. The hearing to consider the legal challenge took place in the High Court between February and March 2018. The court ruled that the contract award should be set aside and the matter will have to be reconsidered by DfI. The decision was appealed by DfI in November, 2018. DfI will provide an update at the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28th August, 2019.

Belfast Bicycle Network

3.21 A key Government priority for growing a sustainable economy involves promoting a modal shift from private car usage to cycling and walking. DfI have responsibility for coordinating relevant cycling and walking policy. DfI established a Cycling Unit in 2013, published a Bicycle Strategy for NI in August, 2015 and published the draft Belfast Bicycle Network Plan for public consultation in January 2017. The consultation report was published in February 2018 however the final Network Plan has yet to be published. Members may recall that a representative from DfI's Safe and Sustainable Travel Division attended a special City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to present and update on the Belfast Bicycle Network Plan.

Residents' Parking Zones

3.22 DfI Roads has completed one Residents' Parking Zone in the Rugby Road area, which began operation in April 2018. DfI intend to carry out a project evaluation in due course taking into account the lessons learnt and subsequently a review of the Resident's Parking Zone Policy will be completed to address how schemes are delivered going forward. DfI are also designing options to progress a Residents' Parking Zone in the Iveagh Drive area that will be subject to consultation in due course. DfI will provide an update on Residents Parking Zones at the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Members may also recall that there was a DfI / Members meeting in May 2018 to discuss problem parking. As a follow up to this and in light of various concerns that Members have raised on the issue of problem parking, including a Notice of Motion from February 2018, DfI has advised that it will facilitate a further meeting on this issue and Members will be notified when DfI confirms a date.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.23 There are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment

3.24 There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications at this stage."

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that the following issues be raised also at the meeting:

- the proposed Gamble Street rail halt alluded to within the draft Greater Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan;

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- the current status of the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland, in the context of the Belfast Cycle Network;
- overgrown entries and laneways;
- electric vehicle infrastructure; and
- the upgrading of existing drainage and water infrastructure.

**Update on City Centre Revitalisation Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the ongoing delivery of the City Centre Revitalisation Programme.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- i. note the update on the building cordon and the anticipated timescale for the Council to receive a planning application for the next phase of rebuild;**
- ii. note the work underway to develop concept proposals for additional pop-up parks at locations in the city centre;**
- iii. note the work underway with DfI and DfC to commission a study to explore options and create a vision for the future development of the city centre enabling both pedestrian enjoyment and public transport access;**
- iv. note the emerging concept designs for lighting pilots to be brought forward for Castle Street and Castle Arcade;**
- v. approve funding up to £45,000 towards an enhanced ‘Cultural Night/Day Programme’;**
- vi. approve funding up to £5,000 to support enhanced Taste the Island activity as part of a programme of activity by the Linen Quarter BID;**

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- vii. approve funding up to £4,500 to support a second Belfast Restaurant Week and weekend food market;
- viii. approve funding up to £3,000 to support the inaugural Belfast Oyster Festival to take place in the city in October 2019; and
- ix. grant a Market Licence for the Tesco 'Taste of Northern Ireland' event scheduled for 20th – 22nd September in Custom House Square.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1 Since the detailed update provided to the Committee on 5th June, officers continue to engage with key stakeholders to further develop the specific proposals being brought forward as part of the City Revitalisation Programme to enhance the vitality and sustainability of the city centre, in the context of the budget envelopes previously agreed by the SP and R Committee on 22nd February 2019. The work being progressed as part of the City Revitalisation Programme is closely aligned with the existing strategies to enhance and develop the city centre including the Belfast Agenda and Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

**Update on the Cordon**

- 3.2 As Members will be aware, the building façade retention schemes on Bank Buildings are now in place and the cordon has been reduced which has increased access, albeit that the road width is still significantly reduced at this location. Traders continue to raise concerns about the impact this cordon is having on their businesses, particularly those on Royal Avenue. DfI has recently introduced additional railings at Castle Junction and Royal Avenue to improve pedestrian flow and safety. A number of retailers in Royal Avenue have expressed concern over the size of the cordon, the duration of the cordon and its effect on vehicular and pedestrian access to Royal Avenue. Belfast City Council officers continue to echo these concerns from retailers to the DfI, Translink and Primark's contractor. City Council officers have received assurances from Primark that the cordon in place is as small as it can be given the nature of the work taking place, and that the current cordon is necessary to ensure the safety of those working on the site. Work is continuing to remove debris from site and it is anticipated that the planning application for the next phase of rebuild will be submitted to Council in late August / early September 2019.

**Footfall figures**

- 3.3 There continues to be ongoing challenges around footfall in the City centre. In June, footfall continued to decline in the city centre as a whole, down by 11.6% on the previous year to date. Royal Avenue continues to be impacted greatest by reduced footfall compared to the same month in the previous year (-31.0% on June 2018), with Corn Market (-11.3% on June 2019), Donegall Place (-7.3% on June 2018), Fountain Street (-3.4% on June 2019) and Anne Street (-1.8% on June 2019). Across NI, footfall is down by 1.8% on the year to date, and down across the UK as a whole by 1.4%. The wayleave permission is now in place with Gordons Chemist (55 Castle Street) to place the footfall counter on 3<sup>rd</sup> party premises for the new Castle Street footfall counter. The counter is expected to be in position in the coming weeks.
- 3.4 An update on the activity within the strands of work for the City Revitalisation Programme as previously agreed by Members is set out below.

**Physical and Environmental Improvements**

i. **Pop- Up Park and Pedestrianisation**

- 3.5 Following the removal of the temporary 'Pop-Up' Park from Castle Place on 10th May, work has been ongoing to explore a number of options for the possible provision of further temporary pop-up parks. Members should note that Buoys Park has been identified as one potential location and proposals are currently being drafted up and will be brought back to Committee in the near future for consideration. A National Day of Play event will be held at Buoys Park on 7th August to introduce the concepts of the Pop Up Park and to engage with the public to establish the preferred uses for the space on a temporary basis. Work is also underway to address the operational and safety issues associated with the space and how a temporary intervention could mitigate against these issues. A second potential location in the vicinity of the Lagan Lookout are also being investigated and further information will be provided as the concept develops. The funding to create a 'Pop-Up' Park in a new location is contained within the existing City Revitalisation Programme budget.
- 3.6 As discussed with Members at 5th June Committee meeting, following the removal of the Pop-Up Park on Castle Place and the reopening of Castle Junction enabling traffic flow, there was a significant public lobby and petition calling for greater

pedestrianisation of the city centre. As agreed by Committee on 5th June, Council officers are working with DfI and DfC to examine the models of pedestrianisation and other initiatives which facilitates the development of the city centre enabling both pedestrian enjoyment and public transport access. This recommendation was ratified at full council on 1st July, with an amendment proposed by Cllr Lyons and ratified by council to also '*consider fully pedestrianised streets, where access is not shared between vehicles and pedestrians on a 24-hour basis but where vehicular access to businesses for deliveries etc. was allowed for short designated periods*'. Additional details on the recommendations are included within the committee report 'City Centre Regeneration Taskforce Update' for this committee meeting.

ii. Belfast in Bloom

- 3.7 The enhanced Belfast in Bloom project is currently being rolled-out with additional greenery and colour being introduced across the city centre including the installation of enhanced planters, hanging baskets and flower towers across the city centre. A procurement competition was undertaken and a supplier selected to create a new and creative display garden feature in City Hall. Unfortunately, the supplier did not fulfil the requirements of the contract and officers are currently working towards re-commissioning the work with a feature to be brought forward in early Autumn.

iii. Deep Clean and Graffiti Removal

- 3.8 Whilst initial work commenced on underfoot deep clean (pavements/ granite/ gable walls) and the removal of graffiti from hard services in priority city centre areas affected by the fire, progress has been stalled as a result of technical staffing and HR issues. A new dedicated cleansing squad have now been recruited and are currently undergoing training with an expected commencement date of the 4th of August. Officers are continuing to explore options to address the graffiti on shutters, although there are some issues around liability which need to be considered prior to commencement. Options being explored include the potential for anti-graffiti artistic shutter wrapping in specific streets/ areas as a trial (subject to agreement with property owners).

iv. Bank Square Canopy

- 3.9 Members may be aware that a key project for the City Revitalisation Programme was the exploring of the creation of an outdoor covered space for retailer-led themed events and other animation activity in Bank Square. In order to test the

viability of a permanent covered space, two one-month long pilots are being implemented over the Summer (July/August 19) and Autumn (September/October 19) using a temporary canopy to encourage visitors and shoppers to spend time in the area.

- 3.10 Officers are working with local retailers to develop a comprehensive programme of events during the pilot periods with an initial concentration of activity in July/August showcasing a mixture of musical events and family activities. Further details on the programme of events scheduled for Bank Square during this period have been circulated, with engagement ongoing with local traders and artists to further develop and enhance the programme. BCC cleansing team and Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs) as well as the PSNI are present in the area and aware of installation to address any potential issues that may arise.
- 3.11 A market research company (CARD) has been appointed to carry out a comprehensive consultation and evaluation of the two pilots, engaging the general public and local traders on experience and recommendations for the longer-term potential of a covered canopy in Bank Square. If the temporary pilot programme is successful, it is intended to bring formalised proposals for a longer term more permanent solution that involves the Council, DfC and traders.

**v. City Dressing and Lighting Strategy**

- 3.12 Members will be aware that work is underway to develop a City Dressing and Lighting Strategy which will inform how new city dressing and lighting schemes may be brought forward in a coherent way. It is envisaged that the draft Strategy will be complete in early Autumn and will be brought into Committee in September for consideration of Members.
- 3.13 As previously discussed with Members, a number of initial pilot lighting projects are being developed for Castle Street and Castle Arcade. The Castle Street proposals involve a series of streamlined projectors being positioned in specific locations enabling lighting schemes to be transferred onto buildings and shutters addressing anti-graffiti and safety issues. Initial engagement with local traders has been positive and it is proposed that a pilot display will be erected on 83-87 Castle Street with a further role out of additional displays pending wayleave agreement with landowners. The lighting schemes will be commissioned and themed by council in conjunction with local traders and arts organistaions, and will also have the capacity to be programmed to promote local events and activities. The

Castle Arcade proposal will involve the positioning of a large lighting rig which will facilitate the rigging of lighting equipment for programmable lighting displays, and enable the area to be themed and dressed to promote local events and activities. Due to the permanent nature of the structure in Castle Arcade this piece will be designed and installed as a part of the Entries project which also forms an element of this programme.

- 3.14 Discussions are also underway with city partners in relation to potential enhanced Christmas lighting including proposals for the Council to fund creative lighting feature(s) at specific locations as part of the City Revitalisation Programme. Bid One have committed additional funding to address cross street lighting features within their boundary, and Council currently have a procurement competition ongoing to engage a large feature lighting display within the Royal Avenue/Castle Place area of the city. A further report will be brought back to Committee in September for consideration of Members on completion of the procurement competition.

vi. Entries and Lanes Strategy

- 3.15 One of the key issues identified in the pre-Christmas Recovery Programme was the connectivity and permeability of the city centre and its impact on wayfinding around the city centre following the fire. To address this, and following research in other cities, there is an opportunity to support and enhance permeability via an Entries and Lanes Strategy to improve the connectivity, resilience, tourism, city character, marketing and alternative uses for the existing entries.
- 3.16 Stage one procurement competition (PQQ) for design consultants has been completed and the second stage (ITT) is underway. It is anticipated that a consultant will be appointed during August 2019 to carry out design works on Phase 1 of the Entries Project which will include Castle Arcade, Crown Entry, Joys Entry, Pottinger's Entry, Coles Alley, Wellington St and Winecellar Street. Following a period of engagement, it is intended that some capital work could commence before Christmas 2019 with completion of all Phase 1 works by March 2020. Preparatory work for Phase 2 will be progressed during Autumn 2019 and capital works will be subject to funding becoming available. Phase 2 of the Entries Project also incorporates design works at Church Lane and Callendar Street which will be carried out in conjunction with DfC. Capital works will be subject to available budget and additional information will be brought to committee in subsequent reports.

**Animation/ Events and Programming**

- 3.17** Members will be aware that as part of the Recovery Programme, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on the 22 February, agreed a budget of £200,000 to support animation activity as part of the City Revitalisation Programme.
- 3.18** A key principle for Council investment was to augment and amplify planned activity, as opposed to developing new activities. As a result, officers have been working with event organisers to consider how these can deliver on the objectives above, with a focus on the areas of the city most negatively impacted by the fire.
- 3.19** Examples of activities supported to date include:
- **Festival of Fools:** this event takes place on the first May Bank Holiday weekend each year. This year, the organisers programmed a range of activities in Castle Place, focusing on the pop-up park (before it was moved). This attracted a large family audience to this part of the city;
  - **City of Music programme:** this programme will run from July to September. It will deliver a series of musical performances and activities across the city centre, with a focus on the stage at Bank Square which is to be installed for two periods over the summer break;
  - **Big Belfast Tee Off:** this programme of family-friendly activities was focused on the City Hall grounds and involved a NI-themed pitch and putt, a golf simulator and other golf-related activities to appeal to young audiences. The event marked the 148th Open at Royal Portrush, in recognition of the large number of visitors and golf spectators who based themselves in Belfast over the period of the tournament; and
  - **Belfast Music Summer Season:** Over 50 Music events running across 20 different venues and locations in the city centre from 18 July to 28 September. Highlights for the Bank Square activity include the Golf Open Weekend in partnership with Belfast One showcasing some of Belfast's best bands, family friendly global music workshops including Dhol drumming, a showcase of the winners of The Great Belfast Busk Off and a 20-piece brass band covering contemporary pop music over Pride weekend.

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**3.20 A number of additional events are planned over the coming months including:**

**i. Enhanced Culture Night/Day programme**

**3.21 For the first time this year, the traditional Friday-night Culture Night will also feature a Culture Day on Saturday. The dates for this year's event are 20th-21st September. In order to maximise the value and impact of the Culture Day programme, and draw footfall and spend into the city centre area, officers have been working with the Cathedral Quarter Trust to put together a programme to facilitate ease of attendance, benefit retailers and encourage movement across the city centre from City Hall to the Cathedral Quarter.**

**3.22 Culture Day will include a wide range of family-friendly activity across the city including a global music and dance programme at Writer's Square, a family 'playground' at Buoys Park and a Bazaar and Street Food Market at St Anne's Cathedral. Key elements of the programme, for which additional support is being sought from the Council, include:**

- City Hall: a music stage will be located there. Performances and activities will include 'Baby Rave' events; world music stage; dance and street theatre workshops; and**
- At other locations (principally Castle Place, Bank Square, Lombard Street and Rosemary Street) additional activities will include Belfast Busk Off event; pop-up musical performances and family cinema activities.**

**3.23 The Cathedral Quarter Trust estimates that the impact of these Culture Day activities will include:**

- Audiences/ Footfall: 40,000+**
- Estimated economic impact: £500,000+**
- Estimated additional bednights: 4,000 (as programming on Friday evening & Saturday)**
- Estimated print and broadcast AVE value of £1,000,000**

**3.24 The Trust has been successful in leveraging financial support from the Department for Communities (DfC), Destination CQ BID and BID One. The financial request from the Council will be £45,000 towards this additional programme of activity on Saturday 21 September.**

**ii. Taste the Island Activity**

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- 3.25** Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) is leading a new initiative called 'Taste the Island'. The initiative is an eight-week showcase of the fabulous food and drink offer all across the island of Ireland. It will run from mid-September to mid-November 2019.
- 3.26** 2019 will be the first of a three-year commitment, delivered in conjunction with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. The timing of the 8 week programme will build on the success of the 2016 Year of Food and Drink and coincides with the celebration of Northern Ireland as the 'Best Food Destination' at the International Travel and Tourism Awards 2018/19.
- 3.27** Tourism Northern Ireland has put in place a small budget to support and profile local events and a number of local organisations have made applications for support from the fund. Other organisations are leveraging financial support from alternative sources and are linking in with Tourism NI in order to profile and showcase their event as part of a marketing initiative associated with the programme.
- 3.28** There are a number of events taking place in Belfast over that period and the Council has been working with partners to consider how these can be developed to support some of the ambitions and objectives of the Revitalisation Programme. Council officers have also encouraged these partners to programme their events over a number of weekends in September and October in order to encourage economies of scale and improve the experience for visitors to the city.
- 3.29** Key activities which the Council has been asked to support include:
- To coincide with Culture Night and Culture Day, partners are planning a series of food-related activities. These include the 'Linen Table'. This event is being delivered by the Linen Quarter BID. It will involve organising an evening dining event delivered by a range of hospitality providers in the Linen Quarter area. The event will take place in the City Hall/Bedford Street area. The Linen Table will be a paid-for event, focusing on food excellence and local produce. In advance of the evening event, the marquee that is to be used for the event will be used by the Culture Day organisers for some of the activities outlined above. In order to support the engagement activities, it is proposed that the Council makes a financial contribution towards this event of £5,000. The remainder of the costs will be met

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from ticket income as well as a financial contribution from the Linen Quarter BID;

- **Following on from the weekend activities, BID One and Destination CQ are proposing to organise the second Belfast Restaurant Week as well as a weekend food market. The restaurant week event will run from Monday to Thursday (23-26 September) and will involve £10 lunch and £15 evening meal offers by a range of hospitality venues. The weekend event (27-28 September) will include food demos and a producers' market as well as a Big Belfast Brunch event on the Sunday (28 September). The event organisers are seeking funding from Tourism NI and DfC and both BIDs will also be making a financial contribution. It is proposed that the Council makes a financial contribution of £4,500 towards the costs associated with hosting the event;**
  
- **Also taking place on the same weekend as Culture Night/Day, Tesco will be organising their seventh annual Taste of Northern Ireland event in Custom House Square. Members will be aware that anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to Belfast City Council for permission to do so – and applications for markets with more than 20 stalls need to be approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Tesco are seeking a licence to operate this event on 20-22 September 2019. This event is designed to showcase the range of food and drinks available from Tesco produced in Northern Ireland. Some stallholders do have products for sale on the day; however, most will offer free samples and use the event as an opportunity to demonstrate their product range. Numbers are currently being finalised but it is expected that there will be up to 65 stalls at the event. There will be no financial contribution required from the Council for this event – Tesco cover all of the costs. As with all markets, the Council will receive a fee for the licence application (£50) as well as a stallage fee of £5 for each stall at the event. It is proposed that the Committee agrees to grant the markets licence for the organisation of this event, given that it will complement the wider programme of activity;**
  
- **Belfast's inaugural Oyster Festival will take place in Bank Square on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th October. The event will feature a series of cookery demonstrations and a food market with a variety of**

seafood stalls alongside family friendly daytime entertainment with workshops and aquarium touch tanks for children. In the evenings, there will be a music showcase featuring local bands and musicians. The organisers will be working closely with the Council to ensure that the animation supports the wider City Revitalisation objectives. It is proposed that the Council provides a financial allocation up to £3,000 towards the costs associated with event logistics.

### **Marketing and Communications**

**3.30** Members may be aware that the ‘Make it Belfast’ advertising and marketing campaign went live on Monday 13 May and will run through until the end of August 2019 to support the City Revitalisation Programme. It targets the local day trip market and seeks to uplift the image and attractiveness of Belfast city centre as a premier retail and day trip destination, promoting its unique experiences, great value and access.

**3.31** Visit Belfast are commissioned to oversee implementation of campaign in liaison with city stakeholders and Council; with a range of mediums being used including radio advertising, digital, video, social media, national and local press as well as highly visible outdoor promotion on bus T-sides, adshels and 48 sheets. In addition, a ‘Make it Belfast’ campaign toolkit has been developed and shared with city stakeholders and businesses to further strengthen and add value to the campaign. The Council is also supporting the uplift of the campaign, as appropriate, via existing external communications channels. Visit Belfast have provided initial feedback on implementation and successes of the campaign to date as set out below:

- **Press and PR coverage** – reach 210,000 people and 629,000 opportunity to see (OTS)
- **180,000 leaflets distributed** to targeted households, key transport hubs and bus stations
- **Digital channels** – over 1.5m impacts (social media, email marketing, search and campaign website views)
- **Radio Advertising** – over 5.5m impacts (relates to number of opportunities to hear ad by any one person)
- **Outdoor advertising** – 7,970K impacts

### **3.32 Financial and Resource Implications**

At the SP and R Committee meeting in October 2018, members were updated on the £5.637m allocated, from a number of sources, to the recovery programme, and the £4.887m

allocated directly to council for the City Centre Revitalisation Programme.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22 February 2019, followed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 6 March 2019, were updated on the £1.882m spent on Phase 1 of the Revitalisation Programme, and the £500k of funding allocated by council for direct trader support. The respective committees approved a report setting out an overview of the broad proposals for Phase 2 of the City Revitalisation Programme and associated budget allocations across the identified strands of activity totalling £2.505m. The key strands detailed, and for which updates are provided and approvals requested, in this report are funded from within this Phase 2 budget.

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

None associated with this report.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Positioning Belfast to Compete**

**Conference Tourism: Economic Impact and Future Development**

The Director of Economic Development 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 update Members on the growth of conference tourism over recent years and the potential for future growth as a key element of tourism development in the City. It also includes a request to extend the eligibility period for the current Conference Subvention Scheme to 2030.**
- 1.2 Belfast City Council and Tourism NI both provide financial support towards a Conference Subvention Scheme which is administered by Visit Belfast. This provides financial incentives to encourage Conference organisers to choose Belfast as a destination for their event.**
- 1.3 The Scheme has been a critical element of Belfast’s ability to attract conferences and boost the City’s growing reputation as a premier conference location. Last year, Visit Belfast reported that Belfast welcomed over 55,000 national and international delegates to the city. This was a 77% increase on the previous year and is estimated to have generated**

**£52million for the local economy. In 2018, Belfast was also named as the Best Events Destination by Conference and Incentive Travel (C&IT) while the International Conference Centre (ICC) won the accolade of Best Events Venue.**

- 1.4 One feature of business and conference tourism is the long lead-in times for attracting new business. As part of the operation of the Conference Subvention Scheme, Visit Belfast have requested that the Council and Tourism NI agrees to a longer timeframe for the scheme. This will allow them to make recommendations for support for events that are planning to come to the city in coming years. It does not involve a request for additional financial support beyond the current commitments.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- i. agree to extend the Conference Subvention Scheme end date to 2030, subject to resource availability;**
- ii. note the importance and economic value of conference tourism to the city and the projected growth of this sector; and**
- iii. note the importance of support mechanisms such as the Conference Subvention Scheme in attracting events.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Key Issues**

**The Conference Support Scheme is administered by Visit Belfast and provides financial support to encourage conference organisers to choose Belfast as a destination for their event. The key objectives of the Conference Support Scheme are:**

- to raise the profile of Belfast and Northern Ireland as a leading business and conference destination**
- to consolidate existing investment in Belfast and Northern Ireland hotel and conference infrastructure**
- to increase the contribution of business and conference tourism to Belfast and Northern Ireland economy**
- to change the international perception of Belfast and Northern Ireland**

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- to encourage investment to Belfast and Northern Ireland
- to grow the number of leisure visitors by encouraging conferences to run partner and extender programmes and
- to increase the value of business tourism and visitor spend through encouraging partner, social and extended programmes.

**3.2** The Scheme has been a crucial element of Belfast's ability to attract conferences to the city, particularly given some of the challenges that the city faces around issues such as transport accessibility. It has helped to enhance Belfast's reputation as a city for conferences and is leading to repeat conferences in the city as well as highlighting the city's leisure tourism offer.

**3.3** The 2015 Integrated Tourism Strategy identified business tourism as a key area of focus and the mid-term review of the strategy undertaken in 2018 emphasised that business tourism in Belfast is growing at an international level which demonstrates the importance of having an effective support scheme in place. Conference and business tourism is a global business so Belfast is competing with cities all across the world and we need to have all the relevant tools at our disposal to make a compelling bid to host relevant events. As part of a 2016 review of the scheme, an assessment of conference support schemes in other cities was undertaken in order to benchmark the Belfast offer and understand what was being presented by competitor cities. This identified that the Belfast budget is still very modest in comparison to other cities. In addition, other locations provide additional incentives on top of the financial offer e.g. access to free public transport for all conference delegates, interest free loans for conference organisers.

**3.4** Since its inception in 2011, the Scheme has helped to secure 88 conferences which have been awarded support funding worth £1.55m, generating £97.2m of economic impact. In 2018-19, conference wins were worth approximately £52.1m to the local economy. Furthermore, Visit Belfast presently has a strong pipeline of over £50 million of active leads.

In recent years, Belfast has also been able to benefit from the development of the ICC and can now attract large international conferences to the city. Visit Belfast has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICC to encourage new business to the city and they have been working to increase awareness of the enhanced facilities as well as the wider positioning of Belfast as a cost-competitive, business-friendly conference location. However, the ICC is not the only venue available, and

other locations such as local hotels and the universities have also been successful in attracting conference and business events.

**3.5 Conferences taking place later this year that have been secured as part of the Support Scheme include:**

- **CHRO 2019 (Campylobacter, Helicobacter and Related Microorganisms) in September with 2500 bed nights and £965,150 economic impact**
- **European Conference on Mental Health in October with 1590 bed nights and £613,835 economic impact**
- **The Association of Simulated Practice in Healthcare (ASPIH) in November with 1275 bed nights and £623,398 economic impact.**

**3.6 The end date for financial commitments as part of the Support Scheme is currently 2025. However Visit Belfast has recently been approached about hosting a major event in the city in 2027. This event is projected to deliver 5200 bed nights and generate £2,542,488 of economic impact. Visit Belfast considers that their engagement with conference organisers is increasingly likely to relate to events beyond the 2025 time period. As a result, they have asked approval from the key funders (Belfast City Council and Tourism NI) to extend the end date for the scheme to 2030. This does not mean that the Council will be making a commitment to maintaining specific levels of resources until this timeframe but that Visit Belfast can bid for new business development opportunities within a wider timeframe, subject to financial resources being in place at that time. Officers have engaged with Tourism NI who have agreed to the revised timescale.**

**3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

**At present, Belfast City Council's annual financial contribution to the Conference Support Scheme is £200,000. This funding was approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 3rd April 2019, as part of the Tourism Development Action Plan for the 2019/20 period. This is match-funded by resources from Tourism NI.**

**3.8 The Council contribution to the scheme will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, in conjunction with Tourism NI and in line with available resources.**

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**3.9 Equality and Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Impact Assessment**

**No specific equality or good relations implications. No rural impact assessment.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Strategic and Operational Issues**

**NILGA Event – Changing Places: Planning,  
Place-Shaping and Place-Making in Northern Ireland**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy drew the Committee’s attention to a forthcoming conference entitled “Changing Places: Planning, Place-Shaping and Place-Making in Northern Ireland, which had been organised by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. The event, which would be taking place in Enniskillen on 8th October, would cover a range of topics of particular interest to Committee, such as housing, infrastructure, local job creation, smart cities and sustainable tourism. He pointed out that there would be no conference fee and sought the Committee’s approval for the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees), together with two Council officers, to attend.

The Committee granted the approval sought.

**Future Arrangements for Committee – Strategic Workshops**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on 21st June, agreed to hold a workshop at 5.00 p.m. on 8th August to focus on the priorities for the Council. Following this, there will be a specific workshop for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to further consider its priorities and the direction of travel for 2019-20 within the corporate context and ongoing commitments, as agreed on 5th June 2019.**

**1.2 In addition, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee also discussed the need for a series of strategic discussions / workshops to allow for more detailed engagement and to support their role in taking informed decisions on issues of strategic importance for the growth and regeneration of the city.**

**1.3 This report identifies the initial topics for focused strategic workshops for the Committee. These will be programmed over the next 6 months, to support the decision making process.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

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- 2.1 The Committee is requested to:
- i. approve the list of topics that require a focused strategic workshop;
  - ii. note that the strategic workshop on City Regeneration and Development, which will include Strategic Site Assessments, will be held on 4th September at 5.00 pm;
  - iii. agree, where possible, to use the scheduled dates for the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee meetings for these workshops; and
  - iv. agree to receive a presentation on Belfast Harbour's Strategy at the Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 25th September. The workshop to consider the Committee's priorities will follow immediately after this item on 25th September.

3.0 **Main Report**

3.1 **Key Issues**

The Committee considered a number of detailed reports on key issues for the city at its initial meeting in June 2019, such as City Centre revitalisation and Strategic Site Assessments. Whilst these reports provided an update on ongoing programmes of work, it is important that the new Committee has ownership of these issues and is in a position to make informed decisions about the future direction of travel. As these issues tend to be complex and have long-term impacts for the city and its communities, it was suggested that specific strategic workshops should be held, which would allow the scheduled Committee meetings to continue to deliver its responsibilities while also managing the need for informed discussion.

3.2 A number of issues were highlighted during the course of the meeting that would benefit from more focused strategic workshops to inform the future direction of work. The issues identified include:

- City Development and Regeneration, including Strategic Site Assessments – consider the emerging proposals and proposed next steps
- Economic research insights - an overview of the opportunities, strengths and challenges for the city, with a focus on topical issues
- Inclusive growth
- Employability and skills
- City centre recovery/revitalisation

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- Transport and car parking
- Engagement with the city centre communities.

3.3 The Committee will note that additional issues may be identified as the work of the Committee progresses; this will be kept under review and updated as required. As Members have a significant number of commitments, the dates scheduled for the Special Committee meetings will, where possible, be used for the strategic workshops.

**Requests to present to Committee**

3.4 In November 2017, the Committee agreed that, in order to deal with the volume of requests from external groups and organisations to present to the Committee, that a maximum of one presentation would be heard at the main monthly meeting and that the Special Committee meeting would be used where two or more presentations were scheduled for any month. Presentations are scheduled for the main monthly Committee meeting when it relates to an item on the agenda or if the nature of the presentation is time critical.

3.5 There are a number of presentations that have been agreed in the previous Council term that remain to be scheduled:

- Nevin Economic Research Institute, Institute of Public Policy Research and Ulster University Economic Policy Centre – to receive economic briefings
- Tourism NI – to consider collaborative opportunities
- Queen’s University of Belfast – to outline the role and issues impacting on Higher Education in the city and region
- Retail NI - to present their policy agenda ‘Regeneration NI, Creating 21st Century Town and City Centres’
- NOW Group - to review the work of the social enterprise.

3.6 In addition, the Council received a request on 24th July from Belfast Harbour to present their strategy to this Committee. The Committee will recall that the Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, as agreed at the Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21st June 2019. This outlines how the Council and Belfast Harbour will work together, through a strategic partnership arrangement, to realise their shared ambitions for the strong growth, regeneration and prosperity of the City.

3.7 In order to manage the requests for presentations, the Committee is asked to note that officers will provide a recommendation based on the following options to inform the Committee’s decision on the request to present:

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- to receive the presentation at a main Committee meeting
- to receive the presentation at a Special Committee meeting
- to receive the presentation as part of a strategic workshop
- that the requestor meets with a named Council Officer for further information and a report is brought back to Committee

3.8 It is proposed that the economic briefings are included in one strategic workshop session 'Economic/Research Insights' referenced at paragraph 3.2.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

3.9 There are no direct financial or resource implications attached to this report.

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

3.10 There are no direct implications attached to this report. Equality, good relations and rural needs issues will be considered as part of development and delivery of plans, programmes and policies.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that productivity be added to the list of topics listed within paragraph 3.2 of the report to be considered within the context of focused strategic workshops.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Financial Reporting – Quarter 4 2018/19**

The Committee considered a report which set out the financial position of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for the fourth quarter of 2018/2019. The report confirmed that the year-end position for the Committee was an underspend of £11,000 (0.1%), in an annual budget of £17.4m, which was well within the acceptable tolerance of 3%. The underspend could be attributed primarily to reduced expenditure on programme costs and premises costs, which were offset by increased staffing costs, subscriptions and grants and reduced income.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson