

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 28th August, 2019

SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairperson);
Aldermen Kingston and Spence; and
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Brooks, Ferguson,
Garrett, Graham, Heading, T. Kelly, McLaughlin,
Murphy and O'Hara.

Also attended: Alderman Rodgers.

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, Director of City Regeneration and
Development; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Flynn, Lyons and Whyte. An apology for Alderman Copeland was also reported.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Cultural Strategy

(Mrs. E. Henry, Cultural Regeneration Manager, attended the meeting in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the proposed ten year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, including:

- The findings from the public consultation
- The emerging investment model including plans for a new multi-annual grant
- Draft implementation plans

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the findings of the public consultation and approve the updated strategy document as the final version for publication.
- Approve the final Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment.
- Approve the opening of a new cultural multi-annual grant scheme in October 2019 to enable that funding awards are in place for April 2020. Officer recommendations will be brought back to Committee in February 2020 for ratification by Council in March 2020.
- Note the contents of the draft implementation plans and the full investment model and agree to receive a further report in October 2019 with the final plan and budget approved in advance of April 2020.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

In December 2018 Members of City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed for officers to develop a 10 year cultural strategy for Belfast to drive transformation in the city. For the first time the scope of this strategy would bring together under one compelling vision a number of areas including:

- Support Belfast to become a recognised cultural destination through a coherent approach to events and festivals. This would include a range of approaches from bidding for major events to supporting local festivals and importantly creating a portfolio of Signature homegrown Belfast Events.
- Support sustainability and growth of the cultural sector across the city.
- Build on the work undertaken during European Capital of Culture to make the approach to cultural development more people centred and support cultural expression, identity and diversity.
- Support significant strategic projects that celebrate Belfast's unique culture and positions the city internationally.
- Build local capacity and skill development through specific initiatives such as neighbourhood tourism.

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- 3.2** Members will be aware that in March 2019 the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved that the draft ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, be subject to a 12-week public consultation exercise.
- 3.3** The draft strategy was the culmination of an extensive research, engagement and development programme including a co-design process with citizens and city partners that amounted to:
- Holding 62 civic conversations
 - Engaging with 5361 citizens
 - Supporting 625 creators
 - Working with 106 artists
 - Across 85 places
 - Through 137 events
- 3.4** The strategy was also informed by a review of existing programmes and frameworks including:
- Review of Tourism Strategy 2015-2020
 - Review of Cultural Framework for Belfast 2016-2020
 - Events and Festivals Review 2017/18
 - Review of core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage organisations 2016-2020
 - Review of project funding for arts and heritage organisations
 - Review of Community Festivals Funding
- 3.5** The draft strategy was shaped by two external bodies of work. The first is Agenda 21 for Culture – an international methodology that supports cultural development in cities and regions. The focus of Culture 21 is to embed culture as the fourth dimension of sustainable cities alongside existing economic, social and ecological pillars. Belfast’s participation in the Culture 21 pilot cities programme has already been approved and this programme will support the implementation of the strategy.
- 3.6** The second set of recommendations that have helped inform this strategy is the recently published Cultural Enquiry by the Core Cities network of which Belfast is a partner member. This enquiry presents a number of practical recommendations on investment and governance of culture in cities. This presents an opportunity for a collaborative model to be taken forward that complements the community planning process and sets shared priorities for culture along with a more effective approach to investment to maximise the overall return. This

involves working closely to leverage new sources of finance including public-private models.

3.7 The draft strategy

The draft strategy, *A City Imagining*, opens with a cultural statement for the city shaped by the thousands of conversations that have taken place since 2017 as part of the ongoing public engagement programme. This is then taken forward through an overall cross-cutting thematic approach to the strategy with each theme having a particular area of focus as follows.

3.8 Theme 1: A City Belonging – focuses on supporting active citizenship and participation in cultural life.

Theme 2: A City Challenging – focuses on diversity through use of public and cultural spaces.

Theme 3: A City Creating – focuses on supporting innovation and creativity across the cultural sectors.

Theme 4: A City Exploring – focuses on Belfast’s relationship to the rest of the world both inward and outward including support for cultural tourism.

3.9 Four strategic priorities are set out for each theme. The result is a strategic framework consisting of 16 key priorities to be delivered by 2030. Each of these priorities have been further developed in the detailed draft implementation plans.

3.10 The document also sets out a number of key strategic milestones throughout the ten-year period. These include:

- Launching a new approach to events and festivals in the city
- Producing an international year of culture *At Home in 2023*
- Bidding for UNESCO *City of Music* in 2021
- Delivering a new visitor attraction in the city centre
- Developing a long-term local neighbourhood tourism programme

3.11 These specific initiatives are considered to be central to delivering on the city’s overall targets for the period and to attract new forms of investment into the city with significant cultural, social and economic impacts. Critically the strategy considers the governance and investment model required to

deliver this type of long-term transformation clearly positioning Belfast as a regional driver.

3.12 The purpose of the strategy document is to present the overall approach and commitments with the intention of developing detailed implementation and actions plans to support the delivery of the strategy over the ten-year period.

3.13 The public consultation

The draft cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, was open for public consultation between 17 April and 10 July 2019. In keeping with this ethos of citizen-led design and engagement, Council committed to an in-depth consultation process for this new strategy. This involved various engagement strands from the traditional online platform, *Citizen Space*, to opening a consultation hub in the city centre.

3.14 Other methods included citywide exhibitions and one to one meetings led by officers. The results of the overall process have been extensive reaching over 3000 residents and visitors, in one to one engagement through 80 events taking place in Belfast. A further 134 responses were received online or in writing. Additional awareness raising was achieved through the distribution of the full strategy document, a citizen summary and a short film.

3.15 There has been overwhelming support for the vision set out in *A City Imagining* from citizens and the cultural, creative and tourism sectors. However with this support has come a recognition that for this strategy to be successful it will need resources, investment and new levels of partnership working both within Belfast City Council and externally.

3.16 The public consultation aimed to:

- Test whether the strategy effectively represented the long-term engagement process that had taken place
- Identify clear areas for reconsideration or revision
- Inform the development of the implementation plans including the investment model.

3.17 In order to ensure the aims of the consultation were realised all feedback was assigned an action as follows:

Supports Strategy: the comment specifically supports/agrees with an aspect of the strategy

Do nothing/ Commentary: the comment doesn't need action and is general commentary

Consider Revising: consider taking on board the feedback and revising the strategy accordingly

Implementation Plans: the issue raised will be dealt with in the Implementation Plans

Equality Impact: a specific equality issue has been highlighted and will be addressed.

3.18 Through this process the following changes have been made:

- Revisions in language to the Cultural Statement and Tourism Narrative to ensure that the vision for inclusivity and diversity is explicitly articulated.
- The 16 priorities are valid and however, some revisions have been made to a number of them in order to increase clarity or extend focus. Such examples include:
 - Ensure that cultural rights includes the principle of respect for other people's rights.
 - Increase references to heritage.

3.19 A number of recommendations in relation to the strategic projects have helped to shape the proposed approach and actions to be taken forward in the implementation plans.

- Further detail on the proposed governance model has been included with emphasis on the need for cross-sector partnerships in line with feedback received.
- Feedback on the investment model has been considered as part of the design of new funding programmes. Specific feedback taken on board is that the open definition of culture within the strategy while positive must then be supported by robust investment criteria. Each funding stream will have very clearly defined eligibility criteria and quality assessment.

3.20 Full details of the public consultation are included at Appendix 1 with the revised strategy included at Appendix 2.

3.21 **Draft implementation plans**

A significant amount of feedback received during the engagement and public consultation process has helped to inform the draft implementation plans. From the outset, whilst

there was a recognised need for a long-term commitment through a ten-year strategy, this approach required shorter implementation phases that could both support the overall vision and be responsive to constantly changing local and global environments. The first implementation phase will be 2020 -2023. Appendix 3 sets out full details, however it is important to note that this is a draft document and Committee are asked only to note the work to date and agree to receive future updates in advance of agreeing the final plan. Between September 2019 and March 2020 further consideration will be given to these plans including internal and external engagement and the setting of baselines and key performance indicators. Annual service plans will also be developed.

3.22 The following areas are covered in the draft Implementation plans:

- Actions to support the 16 strategic priorities set out in *A City Imagining*
- Actions to support specific strategic projects or areas of focus such as UNESCO City of Music and At Home in 2023
- Priority areas and actions for tourism development
- Overview of the proposed investment model
- Details of the proposed governance model
- Proposed approach to Communications and Evaluation

3.23 Subsequent reports will be taken to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee with final approval due following rate setting in early 2020. Final plans will become operational from April 2020.

3.24 The investment model

To support the delivery of the cultural strategy consideration has been given to a fit for purpose investment model. Full details of this draft model is included at Appendix 4 however this is subject to further consideration and budget allocation. The recommendation is that this model is introduced in phases with the first phase being approval for a new multi-annual grant to replace the existing core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage (due to end in March 2020) and previous one-off funding agreements to events and festivals awarded via Committee on either a year to year or adhoc basis. Members are asked to approve the opening of the multi-annual scheme in October 2019 in line with the criteria outlined below and on pages 7-11 of Appendix 4: DRAFT Approach to investing in culture.

3.25 Core multi-annual grants

In April 2013, Council introduced core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage organisations. In April 2016 this scheme was repeated with 56 organisations receiving funding.

3.26 The purpose of the core multi-annual funding was to support core costs and associated programme costs, offering longer term sustainability for Belfast based arts or heritage organisations that have full time staff and ongoing annual costs, and that produce work which substantially benefits the city.

3.27 Assessments were made only on the basis of information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This included the application form, programme of activities and supporting documentation such as business plans and strategies. Assessors considered the strategic fit of the proposed programme against the agreed Cultural Framework. Contracts associated with this programme are due to come to an end in March 2020.

3.28 The extensive monitoring and evaluation of core multi annual funding indicates the success of a multi-annual approach, however, revisions were necessary such as the introduction of a tiered approach including a 4 year and 2 year option as this would offer greater equality of opportunity especially for developing or newer organisation. It is therefore recommended that a new multi-annual funding programme is opened in October 2019 to support organisations from April 2020 onwards in line with the priorities set out in the new cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*.

3.29 Events and Festivals

In 2017/18 an independent review of events and festivals was carried out by Festivals and Events International (FEI). This review recommended that in line with the established approach for arts and heritage that a multi-annual funding programme with published criteria was also introduced for festivals and events in the city. This was considered critical to ensuring greater accountability and transparency of funding and to increase the impact and return on investment.

3.30 The proposed approach

The recommendation is that a new cultural multi-annual grant (MAG) is introduced with two strands of multi-annual grants (MAGs) available, that is grants for:

1. Festivals and events with an audience of more than 10,000
2. Arts and heritage organisations with a year-round programme of activity

There are also two tiers of investment available: two- and four-year.

3.31 Arts and heritage MAGs

Arts and heritage MAGs are designed to help sustain our existing cultural offer. They are open to organisations that have a recurrent, year-round programme of work and ongoing costs. It is expected that organisations sustain their programme over the period making a significant contribution to the cultural life of the city. It is not intended for short- or fixed-term projects or single or one-off events.

3.32 Festivals and events MAGs

A festival or event is an activity or a series of activities with a common theme that occurs on one day or over a period of several successive days.

3.33 Festivals and events MAGs are designed to develop large events and festivals that will help Belfast become an events destination. Applicants will have to demonstrate how they will grow their audience by the end of the contract period. This means that new festivals and events, and festivals with audiences less than 10,000 people, can still apply.

3.34 Eligibility and Criteria

The eligibility criteria has been drawn up in relation to the potential scale and impact of the organisation and programme and takes into consideration areas such as turnover, audience and staffing. An online eligibility quiz will guide organisations through this stage of the process.

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3.35 Quality criteria

The quality criteria for all strands and tiers are directly related to the priorities of the new cultural strategy. If an application is deemed eligible, it will be scored against the following criteria.

Criteria	Weighting %
<p><i>Quality of programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Quality of content • Quality of audience experience • Marketing 	30
<p><i>Impact of activity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets • Contribution to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>A City Belonging</i> (impact on people) ○ <i>A City Challenging</i> (impact on place) ○ <i>A City Creating</i> (impact on sector) ○ <i>A City Exploring</i> (impact on worldview/our place in the world) • Monitoring and evaluating impact 	40 Note: applicants must score 75 per cent or over (that is, 30 marks or more) in this section to be eligible for a MAG
<p><i>Readiness for investment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Financial management • Governance • Skills • Environmental impact 	30

3.36 Applications must score at least 65 per cent overall to be considered for investment. Even if an application scores 65 or over, this is not a guarantee of funding as this scheme is expected to be very competitive, and the funding threshold will depend on demand, quality of applications and resources available.

3.37 Principles of the Assessment Process

Applications received will be eligibility checked by the Central Grants Unit before being passed to Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts or City Events officers for scoring.

3.38 A five day rule is implemented by the Central Grants Unit at the eligibility check stage for missing information such as accounts. This only applies to information that is not scored. Thereafter, officers do not return to applicants to request any additional details in relation to their applications.

3.39 Officers undertake a thorough assessment of all eligible applications. Assessments and applications are discussed and agreed at an internal moderation panel.

3.40 An independent assessment panel co-ordinated by Central Grants Unit and made up of Head of Service and Unit managers is also convened. The role of this assessment panel is 'to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification or validation of sampled applications and the overall process'.

3.41 It is recommended that for applications to 4 year funding for large festivals (Imagine) that the assessment and moderation stages include input from an external independent expert to be appointed via quotation.

3.42 Officer recommendations will be brought back to Committee in February 2020 for consideration and approval. Letters of offer will be issued following Council ratification in March 2020. In order to mitigate against any impact of the new multi-annual scheme project funding for arts, heritage, festivals and events will remain unchanged in 2020/21.

3.43 Promotion of grants

In recognition that this core funding programme is an open and competitive process the necessary measures will be taken to ensure that all eligible organisations have an equal opportunity to apply. This will include:

- Public advertisements via newspapers and websites
- Email notifications
- General Information Sessions in locations across the city

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- An offer of one to one advice session to any potential applicant with a Tourism, Culture, Arts & Heritage officer or a City Events officer

3.44 Full details of the multi-annual grant are available in the relevant section of the Investment Model included at Appendix 4.

3.45 Other considerations for City Events

It is important to note that the proposed multi-annual grant for events and festivals will not be the only investment available. Project funding including support for neighbourhood festivals will continue through the Community Festivals Fund.

3.46 Council will also continue to directly deliver a number of city events including the Maritime Festival and St Patrick's. However these events will be reviewed with an increased focus on partnership working and delivery.

3.47 Finally, Council will continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders to bid for and secure major events for the city. A report will be taken back to Committee in October with an update on proposals for the period 2020-2025.

3.48 Financial & Resource Implications

There are no direct financial resource implications at this time. The recommendations for funding will be presented to Committee for approval in February 2020 and will be subject to agreed budgets for subsequent years.

3.49 The full delivery of the strategy will be considered as part of the rate setting and final implementation plans will be agreed pending the outcome of this process. A further detailed report setting out operational and financial implications will be taken to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in October 2019.

3.50 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The cultural strategy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EAIQ) included at Appendix 5 and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNS) at Appendix 6. Where any issues were raised during the public consultation these have been addressed in the strategy, implementation plans and investment model and the EQIA and RNIA have been updated accordingly. The multi-annual grant has also been equality screened and rural needs assessed. All subsequent strands

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of the investment model will be equality screened and rural needs assessed.”

The Cultural Regeneration Manager provided a detailed overview of the Cultural Strategy. She presented the consultation process, influences on the strategy, and the implementation strategic priorities. She outlined the Investment Model and explained further the multi-annual grants that would be available and the criteria which would be used to assess them. She reiterated that the multi-annual grants would open in October, 2019 and be fully operational by April, 2020, once the implementation plans, funding recommendations and approvals had been completed.

During discussion, Members welcomed the Cultural Strategy and praised the Cultural Regeneration Team for their comprehensive process and outcomes. The Members raised a number of points in relation to ensuring that the grants were not out of reach for community groups and the need to develop emerging talent and advance the city in a fair way.

The Cultural Regeneration Manager highlighted that there would be a wraparound service for those organisations who might not qualify for the new grant system, to help them apply for other grants.

The Chief Executive confirmed that any impact of the new Investment Model might have on the Rates would be considered by Members as part of the Rate Setting Process in October.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to:

- Note the findings of the public consultation and approve the updated strategy document as the final version for publication;
- Approve the final Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment;
- Approve the opening of a new cultural multi-annual grant scheme in October, 2019 to enable the funding awards to be in place for April, 2020 and note that officer recommendations would be brought back to the Committee in February, 2020 for ratification by the Council in March, 2020; and
- Note the contents of the draft implementation plans and the full investment model and to receive a further report in October, 2019, with the final plan and budget approved in advance of April, 2020.

Presentations

Northern Ireland Water (NIW)

(Mrs. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience, attended the meeting in connection with this item.)

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mrs. S. Venning, Chief Executive, Dr. S. Blockwell, Head of Investment Management, and Mr. P. Brow, Head of Living with Water Programme, representing Northern Ireland Water.

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Mrs. Venning provided an overview of the work which had been undertaken by NI Water in relation to Water Supply and Wastewater services. She advised that protecting safe, clean, drinking water supplied to houses and business would always be the organisation's top priority. She informed the Committee that there were Wastewater capacity constraints in the infrastructure and, of the 260 larger WWTW, 50 per cent were now either at full capacity or fast approaching full capacity and that they expected the number of these areas to increase further before 2021. She confirmed that Water and Wastewater were fundamental to enabling Belfast's goals and ambitions.

She emphasised that NI Water could only spend within its Annual Public Expenditure budget and, as there was a shortfall in their funding, there was an impact on investment, economic growth, protecting the environment, and public health. She highlighted that there was the potential, in the future, that Wastewater new connection applications could be refused because of the capacity constraints.

Mr. Brow provided an overview of the Living with Water Programme which had been established in 2015 following Northern Ireland Executive Approval. He reported that the programme aimed to develop a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast to protect against flood risk, enhance the environment and support economic growth. He presented an illustration of potential flooding risks in Belfast of the sewers, surfaces, rivers, sea and asset failures. He reiterated that more investment was required to fix the current drainage infrastructure but also to expand the capacity of Waste Water Treatment Works.

During discussion, the representatives answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to protecting the environment, the relocation of Sydenham Wastewater Treatment Works and flood risks. The Members also praised the NIW Elected Member Helpline.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for attending and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC)

It was reported that Mr. D. Bannon, Belfast Area Manager, representing NITHC was in attendance and he was admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Bannon explained the need for significant investment in Northern Ireland's public transport system and the key role that Belfast played as the key economic driver for the region.

He outlined the principal aspects of the Metro Network Development 3 phased plan, from 2019 – 2025/6, to deliver a 25 per cent increase in customers. He advised that Phase 1 would be introduced on 2nd September and would include assisting regeneration efforts of the city, in particular North Belfast, accompanied by route enhancements in East Belfast and the renumbering and the refresh of the network presentation. He highlighted

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that, in the short-term, they would also encourage a reduction of the Bank Buildings cordon as soon as possible to lessen the impact on North Belfast.

He reported that Phase 2, from 2020 – 2023, would include improvements to South and East (Lisburn Road, Malone Road and Tillysburn Park and Ride as well as enhanced connections between North and South Belfast); and Phase 3, from 2023 – 2025/6 approximately, would include BRT Phase 2 (North-South via city centre).

He advised that 600k journeys were made on the Metro and Glider every week, helping to:

- Boost employment;
- Encourage active travel;
- Build local communities and promote social mobility – 30% of Belfast households which had no access to a car;
- Enable access to healthcare, education and employment;
- Support a vibrant city centre – servicing the heart of the city, helping to drive Belfast’s retail and leisure economy;
- Create a positive economic impact; and
- Pledge to invest in new eco-technologies and ultra-low emission vehicles, thus helping the environment.

He described how the City Centre Cordon, after the Primark Fire, had impacted on the service with loss of patronage, increased costs, connectivity of network, reliability and timeliness of service and restricted access to north Belfast.

He confirmed that the ‘Phased Improvement’ approach would deal with frequency and capacity enhancements, high specification fleet and better air quality. He presented the new Investment in Metro branding and numbering which included 23 new high specification fleet; eco hybrid, USB chargers, leather seats, together with service enhancements. He highlighted that they were also working towards a low/zero emission fleet.

He advised that following the success of Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) Phase 1, they had been working with Department for Infrastructure to prioritise Phase 2 (North/South).

In answer to Members’ Questions, Mr. Bannon advised further on the reallocation and updating of bus shelters, the renumbering of bus routes, timescales for the BRT2, electrification of fleet, potential for new park and ride services, the removal of bus stops, air pollution, and the business impact of BRT on the Falls Road,

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. K. Monaghan, Eastern Divisional Manager, Ms. L. Loughran, Director of Safe and Sustainable Division, Mr. A. O’Callaghan, Belfast Section Engineer, Mr. P. McParland, Belfast South Section Engineer,

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Mr. T. McLay, Belfast North Section Engineer, representing the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Monaghan provided an overview of the Spring Report which included updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the City and highlighted key statistics within the Council area of the Eastern Division, together with updates on bus lanes, street lighting, cycle measures and parking.

He outlined to the Members that pressures remained on both capital and resource funding in 2019/2020 but that his staff would continue to develop resurfacing and traffic management schemes to enhance safety, improve traffic flow and provide measures for pedestrians and cyclists. He advised the Committee that additional schemes would be implemented as capital funding became available through the year and £10m had been set aside for a roads recovery fund which would be used to address areas of immediate need across the road network.

The Members raised a number of other matters, a number of which are set out hereunder:

- The maintenance and conditions of alleyways;
- The expansion and improvements to the Safe Cycle Network;
- The potential for further residential parking schemes across the city;
- Proposed coach parking near the Ulster Museum, Stramillis;
- Mount Eagles – Adoption of land;
- Developer Reinstatements;
- Translink – impact on level of service;
- The low level of grass cutting on verges and roundabouts together with the potential of Wild Flowering; and
- Park and Ride Services.

In response to Members' queries in relation to overgrown alleyways, Mr. Monaghan advised that they would work with the Council to gain access to remove weeds in any alleyways within the Alleygating Scheme. He confirmed that he would update the Committee in regards to the location of the proposed coach parking at Stramillis Road and that the Department's Public Transport Division would respond in relation to any proposed service changes to the public service provision.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives from DfI for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Chairperson