



Your reference

Our reference JW/as

Date 20 November 2023

Ms Rosemary Thomas
Chair of the Interim Regional Planning Commission
c/o Julie Sullivan: julie.sullivan@rtpi.org.uk

Dear Rosemary

Regional Planning Improvement Programme and the Interim Regional Commission

I am writing to you in your capacity as the Chair of the Interim Regional Commission as I am aware that there is a workshop being planned for the Commission members in November and I thought it would be an opportune time to express both our commitment to and concerns around the approach taken to date.

Belfast City Council has made extensive representations to the Department for Infrastructure's call for evidence on the implementation of the Planning Act, as well as to the Northern Ireland Audit Office in producing their report. We were also able to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee in their consideration of Planning in Northern Ireland. Our interest and commitment to identify issues and improve the regional planning system is absolute.

For Belfast as the capital and economic regional driver of Northern Ireland, it is essential that the Council shares its observations and concerns regarding the operation of the planning system in Northern Ireland. Planning has a vital role to play in the economic prosperity of the city, social cohesion and promoting the environment. It is also key to delivery of the *Belfast Agenda*, the City's Community Plan.

The Regional Planning Improvement Programme that has been progressed over the last 18 months has identified a number of issues that are in the process of being addressed but we are very concerned that the actions identified, the culture in which the actions are being pursued and the governance around the programme will not result in the fundamental change identified and required by the Public Accounts Committee and ourselves.

As the Interim Planning Commission will meet to consider its role, remit and work programme in November, I would like to extend the offer of meeting with yourself or the wider Commission. This would enable constructive discussion on Belfast City Council's long standing and well documented concerns around the regional planning improvement programme in the hope of achieving better outcomes for the regional improvement work to much better serve the needs of our citizens, businesses and environment.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



John Walsh LLB LLM
Chief Executive

Belfast City Council, Office of the Chief Executive
City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
Tel: 028 9027 0202, Textphone: 028 9027 0405
Email: walshjohn@belfastcity.gov.uk