

# Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section  
Legal and Civic Services Department  
Belfast City Council  
City Hall  
Belfast  
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast  
City Council**

2nd May, 2025

## **MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the report for the following item to be considered at the meeting to be held at 5.15 pm on Wednesday, 7th May, 2025.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

#### **5. Strategic and Operational Issues**

- (a) Committee Plan 2025/26 and End of Year Report 2024/25 (Pages 1 - 36)

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<b>Subject:</b>	City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan 2025/26 and End of Year Report 2024/25
<b>Date:</b>	07 May 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Damien Martin, Strategic Director, Place and Economy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

## Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

## Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To provide an end of year report on the key actions contained in the 2024-25 City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee Plan, as agreed by this Committee in May 2024.
1.2	To present to Committee the draft City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan for 2025-26 and associated Tourism & Culture workplan. A further draft of the Committee plan incorporating key performance information will be brought to the committee in June. Should any amendments be required following agreement of the Corporate Delivery Plan, these will also be reported in June.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the contents of the end of year report as set out in Appendix 1;</li> <li>• Approve the draft City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2025-26 attached at Appendix 2, subject to additional performance information being brought to the next committee meeting.</li> <li>• Approve the priority work areas and budget allocations presented in the Tourism &amp; Culture workplan for 2025-26 as set out in Appendix 3; and</li> <li>• Approve the contribution to support the ongoing development of the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (work to be coordinated through Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) up to a maximum of £35,000.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><u>CG&amp;R Committee Plan 2024-25 End of Year Report</u></p> <p>While the Committee receives regular updates on progress for specific programmes and initiatives, Appendix 1 sets out an overview of progress against the strategic priorities and deliverables that were contained within last year's Committee Plan (2024-25) as of the 31st March 2025. This builds on the report that members received at the November 2024 committee meeting which provided a six-monthly update.</p>
3.2	<p><u>CG&amp;R Committee Plan 2025-26</u></p> <p>Each year the Committee is tasked with agreeing a Committee Plan for the year ahead. This year's Committee Plan (attached at Appendix 2) has been developed to align to the council's Corporate Plan 2025-28, member feedback and engagement, in addition to decisions relevant to the Committee agreed through the rates setting process. The Plan is structured to articulate the council's contribution to the recently refreshed Belfast Agenda. In particular, the strategic priorities and deliverables within the draft Committee Plan contribute to the "Our Economy" and "Our Place" themes of the community plan.</p>

3.3	During the last 12 months, members have asked that consideration be given to measuring progress and reporting performance with the addition of annual targets for agreed Key Performance Indicators. (KPIs). The development of a refreshed planning and performance management framework has been an internal priority for council with last year's Corporate Delivery Plan committing to "develop a refreshed set of corporate performance indicators to support performance management and regular internal monitoring and reporting".				
3.4	This work is ongoing across council and significant progress has been made within the business areas that report to this committee, including the introduction of new monitoring processes and installation of new monitoring systems. Further discussion however is required to ensure that accompanying targets for KPIs are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound.				
3.5	The Performance Monitoring section of the draft Committee Plan is not yet complete and will be presented to members at the June meeting. It is proposed that KPIs and progress towards their targets will be reported on a six-monthly basis together with an accompanying progress report against all deliverables.				
3.6	The council's Corporate Delivery Plan will be presented to the May meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee. Should any changes be required, an update of the committee plan will also be brought to the attention of members at its June meeting.				
3.7	<p><u>Culture and Tourism Workplan/ Programme Budgets</u></p> <p>Many of the activities outlined within the draft Committee Plan will be resourced through the respective departmental budgets for 2025-26 in line with the Scheme of Delegation and in accordance with section G of the Financial Regulations. Members are asked to approve the priority Culture &amp; Tourism work areas for the 2025-26 financial year and their allocation from their respective budgets presented in Appendix 3.</p>				
3.8	<p>In addition to the Fleadh Cheoil, there are a number of other regional and overseas events held throughout the Fleadh year and it is important that appropriate council representatives attend these gatherings to experience in-person and learn directly the range of organisational and operational considerations in delivering an event of this nature. There is an expectation from Comhaltas HQ that the newly appointed host city attend these events. Attendance will demonstrate Council's full and ongoing commitment to delivering a first class Fleadh in Belfast. Permission is therefore sought for the Lord Mayor and appropriate officers to attend the following events:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Event, Date</th><th>Proposed Attendee(s)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="2">Page 3</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Event, Date	Proposed Attendee(s)	Page 3	
Event, Date	Proposed Attendee(s)				
Page 3					

	All Ireland Fleadh Wexford, Aug 2025	Lord Mayor, elected members, relevant Chief Officers / Directors and Senior Managers. Attendance at relevant components by external strategic and operational stakeholders will also be required .
	Comhaltas HQ Christmas Dinner Dublin, Dec 2025	Lord Mayor, Director
	GB Convention England, Feb / Mar 2026	Chief Executive, Director
	US Comhaltas US city tbc, Apr 2026	Lord Mayor, Chief Executive, Director, Senior Manager
3.9	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> The draft Committee Plan 2025-26 and the subsequent work plans are aligned with the budget agreed by the Special Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2025, namely a cash limit for the CG&R Committee of £22.9 million as set out in Appendix 2.	
3.10	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> Strategies, programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Officers and subject to appropriate equality, good relations and rural needs assessment.	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>	
	Appendix 1 - CG&R Committee Plan 2024-25 End of Year Report Appendix 2 – CG&R Committee Plan 2025-26 Appendix 3 – Tourism & Culture Work Plan 2025-26	





# City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan 2024-25 End of Year Report



# Summary of Key Progress

## Commercial Assets

129,520 journeys on Belfast Bikes during 2024-25 – up 15% from the previous year.

Appointed a new operator for the Belfast Bikes.

Welcomed 213k visitors to Belfast Zoo and appointed a new catering contract.

Visits to St. George's Market increased 14.9% compared to the previous year.

## Culture and tourism

St Patrick's Day parade attracted up to 30k people to the city centre.

12k people attended Lord Mayor's Day event

The Christmas lights switch-on event attracted over 10k people.

Belfast 2024 included over 1,000 new cultural and creative events and provided over 1,400 contracts for the sector.

The Belfast 2024 attracted over 130k attendees.

The culture team facilitated £2.45 million CMAG funding to 59 cultural organisations; supporting 20 community festivals and 19 larger festivals.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann secured for 2026.

## City Regeneration

Appointed a Private Sector Partner to deliver £630million housing-led regeneration opportunities.

Published a 10-year stocktake of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy.

46 vacant city centre premises brought back into use through the Vacant to Vibrant grant scheme.

This investment of £839k provided a Return on Investment of over 4:1.

Launch of a city wide Vacant to Vibrant regeneration scheme.

## City Economy

525 people participated in our Employment Academies.

317 people are participating within our Upskilling Academies.

Of the 246 participants to have completed an academy in-year, 82% (202 people) have progressed onto a job or a better job via an Employment or Upskilling Academy.

Delivered NI Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) on behalf of all 11 councils.

Secured £9.2million of funding from UK Government to continue the NIESS service during 2025-26.

An estimated 208 jobs have been supported through Go Succeed business start activity. 1,036 entrepreneurs received 1 to 1 business start mentoring.

756 business were supported with 1:1 mentoring for business growth activity.

A total of 110 social enterprises and co-operatives have been supported.

16 Multiply projects supported 1,070 people to gain numeracy skills.

57 organisations signed up to the Belfast Business Promise.





# 2024-25 Key Programmes of Work – End of Year Report

## 1. Our Economy

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
<b>Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Academies: 526 participants with 199 successfully completed and 155 into work (78%). 309 still participating and low attrition (7 people). The focus of Employment Academies is on sectors of high job demand such as Tech, Business Services, Working with Children, Health &amp; Social Care, Logistics etc.</li> <li>Upskilling Academies: 317 participants (306 of whom undertaking Level 3-5 qualification). Of the 47 successfully completing, 100% have gained a better job. 266 still participating and low attrition (2 people). Upskilling Academies are delivered in low-paid (female dominated) sectors where Level 3-Level 5 can assure a better job, such as Childcare, Classroom Assistants, Health &amp; Social Care. So far this year, we are supporting 306 Level 3-Level 5 qualifications.</li> <li>Of the 246 who have completed an Employment or Upskilling Academy, so far 82% have secured a job/better job.</li> <li>BCC as an employer has undertaken a pilot phase of digitally badging skills development programmes within the People Strategy.</li> <li>Gateway to Choices supported 1,169 people to access the appropriate provision to meet their employability needs.</li> <li>The 16 Multiply projects supported 1,070 to gain numeracy skills and gain a digital badge to recognise the skills developed.</li> <li>A further Bridges to Progression programme being scoped to target vulnerable young people such as those leaving the criminal justice system, refugees/asylum seekers and care experienced.</li> <li>Health &amp; Work Steering Group established with strategic partners to design a more cohesive ecosystem of support that encompasses both 'health' and 'employability' provision to better support those experiencing economic inactivity. Partners include DfE, DfC BHSCT, PHA, NICVA, DoF, Belfast Met, Belfast Works with extensive engagement planned in April/May across providers, employers, JBOs, health professionals and those with lived experience. This also includes benchmarking visit to London including DWP officials, local authorities, Health &amp; Work provision, Working Well/Integrated Care Boards etc.</li> <li>The Enterprise &amp; Business Group (EBG) team have been working to engage on various BRCD projects and have recently launched a pilot programme with Studio Ulster with the aim of engaging local SMEs in the facility and allowing them to avail of the state-of-the-art facilities. The EBG team alongside E&amp;S are also working closely with the newly appointed BRCD E&amp;S manager to look at opportunities for us to engage on the various projects and maximise benefits realisation for the local economy.</li> </ul>
<b>Support business start-up and growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since the launch of the NI Enterprise Support Service in November 2023, the council's Programme Management Office has overseen the following regional performance (for all NI councils): 18,793 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities; 6,202 individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks); 4,168 businesses</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
<div>Page 8</div>	<p>supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks); and 1,595 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Belfast City Council, as lead for the service, has now secured additional funding via an application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) of £9.2 million for the 2025/2026 financial year, ensuring continuity of the service. The focus over the next year, alongside delivery of the service, will be working to secure a more permanent funding source. The coming year is considered a “transition” year for Shared Prosperity Fund and work is underway within the NI government departments to consider how they will take a more direct management role in a future Fund from April 2026 onwards.</li> <li>▪ Through the delivery of the Go Succeed Programme, we have supported an estimated 208 jobs based on business start activity (Note this is a provisional figure based on year-to-date) performance, as some Q4 data is still outstanding. It is expected there will be 346 business plans created during the 2024-25 year. Applying the recommended 60% multiplier to convert to “jobs promoted”, arrives at the estimated 208 jobs promoted (compared with the statutory target of 325).</li> <li>▪ A total of 2,046 individuals were ‘reached’ through a range of community outreach activities; 1,036 individuals/ entrepreneurs received 1:1 mentoring for business start but many chose not to receive a business plan and instead focused on more relevant support for their business, for example market testing or a marketing plan.</li> <li>▪ A total of 756 Belfast businesses were supported with 1:1 mentoring through business growth activity.</li> <li>▪ A total of 315 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed grants since their launch in February 2024, drawing down over £1 million.</li> <li>▪ For the 2024/25 year we supported a total of 110 social enterprises and co-operatives – of this total, 57 organisations were supported to start a social enterprise or cooperative via our dedicated Go Social support. Via Go Succeed we supported an additional 53 Social economy businesses to grow their existing organisation.</li> <li>▪ We are continuing to work with Community Finance Ireland (CFI) in supporting our Social Economy Incentive Fund. The fund provides grants of up to £10,000 to new or developing social economy businesses in early growth stages, or in need of support to begin trading in the next six months. CFI's involvement in the fund ensures we are supporting ventures that can self-sustain post-grant intervention. In the 2024/25 year we supported 14 organisations via a total grant pot of £91,082.83.</li> <li>▪ We have continued to support the delivery of Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF), with 28 successful companies receiving their DTFF grant in the 2024/25 year. Belfast City Council EBG team have provided enhanced support to guide businesses on the fund, providing support via Go Succeed peer support networks, events, masterclasses and dedicated mentoring support.</li> <li>▪ At the end of Q4 occupancy at the Innovation Factory had dipped to 50% which will bring the average occupancy for the 2024/25 year to 70%. Via our governance structures, SRO and external advisors (KPMG) we are working closely with the operator to implement a recovery plan to achieve the annual service plan obligations.</li> </ul>
<b>Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Following the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Summit on 27 February 2025, we are working within the governance structures of the partnership to review the strategic direction and priorities of the partnership. A new partnership manager has been recently appointed and we will work closely with them to support this ongoing piece of work.</li> </ul>
<b>Support City Markets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The annual business plan for St. George's Market is on track including a review of stall fees and venue hire fees, trader compliance, a review of the storage policy is underway. Visitor experience has been improved with the use of footfall counters and customer research, a new CRM system has been established for the unit to manage market operations more effectively and trader engagement continues. Opportunities to maximise usage on the market mid-week are being explored with some external operators. Investment has been made</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<p>for new stalls for the market. A new brand has been developed and Marketing and comms is ongoing. Footfall counters are now installed and providing valuable insight into customer data to St Georges. Using Visitor Insights (the council's city footfall monitoring system), visits to the St. George's Market during vicinity 2024-25 (April - March) increased by 14.9% compared to the previous year 2023-24.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Christmas Continental Market delivered for 2025. Visitor numbers were 1.6 million and market was a huge success.</li> <li>▪ Markets Rights policy is currently under review and a report should be brought to committee in June with an update.</li> <li>▪ Management of Smithfield Market is ongoing - however some areas of the building need improvement/investment.</li> <li>▪ The Twilight Market took place on the 26 and 27 November and was big success with over 20,000 customers attending over the two nights. There were just over 150 local traders selling hot food, cold foods, arts, crafts and jewellery. There was live music on both evenings and officers worked in collaboration with officers from Belfast Stories to run events to raise the profile of their public consultation work.</li> </ul>
<b>Belfast Business Promise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We exceeded the initial target for 50 organisations signing up to the Belfast Business Promise (BBP). There are now 57 organisations signed up to the promise. BBP pledges are now digitally badged, which increases the currency and recognition of digital badging with employers.</li> <li>▪ Of the 57 Supporter Organisations signed up to the BBP, 19 organisations are accredited as Members and 3 organisations (Belfast Harbour, Department for the Economy and Linen Quarter BID) are accredited as Ambassadors.</li> <li>▪ Proposition being designed to offer BBP employers an accelerated offer for digitally badged Business Services Employment Academy, which will continue once in employment through CPD and in-work Learning &amp; Development.</li> </ul>

## 2. Our Place

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
<b>Housing-Led Regeneration - Support and work with partners to address housing challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the conclusion of the Competitive Dialogue process, an evaluation of Final Tenders was completed in September 2024. Following approval at November's SP&amp;R Committee (and Council ratification) work is advancing to finalise legal agreements including a Partnership Agreement between Council and the Private Sector Partner. It is anticipated that the Partnership Agreement will be formally executed in Q1 25/26. Work will then commence on developing the overarching business plan.</li> <li>The SP&amp;R Committee in February 2025 approved advancing the initial tranche of 11 sites via the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) Phase 2 for housing-led regeneration, with updates to be brought back to Committee as this work progresses. The delivery route for individual sites will be subject to further consideration and Committee approvals.</li> <li>Ongoing work through the Housing-Led Regeneration Group on the collation of public sector land data and analysis of housing-led opportunities, as well as working to develop placemaking pilots as set out in the Belfast Agenda.</li> <li>The evaluation process has been completed for the Development Brief for lands in the Inner North West (Little Donegal Street, Kent Street and Library Street). The SP&amp;R Committee agreed the award of the Development Brief to the Housing Association with the highest score in February 2025. The award to Clanmill Housing Association was made publicly on 10 March 2025. This is subject to terms to be agreed with the Director of City Regeneration &amp; Development and the City Solicitor and subject also to the approval of DfC (as joint landowner) through their own governance processes.</li> <li>The review of the City Centre Investment Fund has been undertaken, noting alignment in underpinning the need to bring forward interventions to support delivery and unlock housing-led regeneration. Further refinement of the Place Based Growth Proposition has progressed in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) 10-year stocktake, this includes proposals for dedicated funding to unlock housing-led regeneration and addressing viability which exists around city centre living.</li> </ul>
<b>Connectivity and City Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing work with DfI and DfC in respect of reviewing the A Bolder Vision (ABV) strategy in line with the emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) City Centre Chapter, which DfI are currently advancing. The recent BCCRIS 10-Year Stocktake identified the delivery of ABV as a key area of focus for the next 5-10 years, to realise catalytic change.</li> <li>The BCCRIS Stocktake also evidenced that progress in policy areas is reflected in the blueprint envisaged through ABV, and that opportunities exist to see greater implementation.</li> <li>Ongoing public realm works at Grand Central Station. Design and Planning is ongoing with Little York St/ Little Patrick St, Blackstaff Square and the <a href="#">5C's</a>.</li> <li>Ongoing work under "Embracing the River" and with partners of the Waterfront Taskforce including building funding cases to advance 'Under the Bridges' and 'Sailortown Bridge' proposals. The recent BCCRIS Stocktake notes the development progress across the waterfront and the opportunity for further transformation.</li> <li>Our work to champion the council's preferred position is ongoing and has been strengthened within the emerging integrated prioritisation team, with DfI, on the ETP city centre chapter, and the publishing of the BCCRIS stocktake. We have continued to feed council's position into the various major infrastructure boards including York Street Interchange, BRT Phase 2, Living With Water, Belfast Streets Ahead and Weaver's Cross.</li> </ul>



Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
<b>Strategic regeneration and investment schemes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submissions have been received on proposals for the long-term use of 2 Royal Avenue, based on evaluation categories previously agreed by Committee. These included: Proposed operational terms / user proposals; Proposed community / social value; Proposed placemaking potential (including alignment to Inner North West Masterplan and BCCRIS); Proposed compatibility with first floor occupation (aligned to Peace Plus application); and proposed commercial terms. The evaluation of submissions is currently underway.</li> <li>Work has advanced with private sector landowners in the area on the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme. An MOU has been agreed and an inception meeting took place at the end of 2024 on the masterplan development.</li> <li>Work has progressed in delivering Arterial Routes Regeneration with £500k funding secured to deliver a City Wide Vacant to Vibrant grant scheme (£200,000 has been awarded from the UKSPF, with a further £300,000 from DfC). The city wide regeneration scheme was launched in November 2024. The launch included promotion of information surgeries held in local centres across the city at the end of November providing one-to-one briefing sessions for interested businesses on the parameters of the scheme and to prepare the businesses for submitting application forms. Six applications have been approved representing a capital grant investment of £140,000 to date, resulting in 24 direct employment opportunities and an estimated rates value of £237,773.31 (subject to LPS assessment) over the course of the lease periods. This means for every £1 invested in the grant, at least £1.70 is estimated to be returned in rates income over the terms of the leases due to the activation of vacant properties.</li> <li>Ongoing implementation and application of the regeneration framework. Recommendations from the Place-Based Growth Proposition have been recognised as levers to enable catalytic change in the recent BCCRIS 10-year stocktake. Work is ongoing in respect to giving consideration to the implementation of key recommendations focused on decision making powers and new models of funding, with reporting to SP&amp;R expected in Q1 25/26.</li> <li>Following an extensive engagement and research programme the BCCRIS 10-year stocktake, "Looking Back to Look Forward" report and key messaging was launched on 25 November 2024. This included a launch event at City Hall, with attendees across a broad range of sectors, panel discussions and speeches from the Lord Mayor, Chairs of SP&amp;R and CG&amp;R Committees, the Chief Executive and the NI Executive Minister of Finance. The stock take provides a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evidence base of progress in the city over the last 10 years. Importantly it also includes the need to understand the city's opportunities, challenges and key areas of focus to drive catalytic change to move forward. Key areas of focus include the need to increase city centre living, deliver on ABV, unlock major regeneration schemes and a multi-agency approach to place keeping and city centre management. To move forward the recommendations from the Belfast Place-Based Growth Proposition are evidenced as key levers to enable catalytic change namely addressing the transfer of decision-making powers and new models of funding. Reporting in respect of the Place Based Growth Proposition and advancing the compelling asks for Belfast are scheduled to be reported to SP&amp;R Committee in Q1 25/26.</li> <li>Ongoing developer contributions work includes placemaking scheme at Little York Street / Little Patrick Street and working with DfC on 5Cs and Blackstaff Square (surrounding environs).</li> <li>46 Vacant to Vibrant applications approved. representing a capital grant investment of £839,203.55. This results in approximately 133 direct employment opportunities with approximately a further 32 indirect jobs across the supply chain, and an estimated Rates Value of £3,551,377.30 (subject to LPS assessment) over the course of the lease periods. This means that for every £1 invested in the grant, at least £4.23 will be returned in rates income over the term of the leases. The total output of businesses/organisations through the scheme (based on sales for Year1 and Year 2) is £21m.</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing management of regeneration assets including 2 Royal Avenue, Commission House, Site 10, Corporation Street, noting the additional target acquisitions of 106 -114 Joy Street (pending completion) and 35-39 Royal Avenue (completed August 2024).</li> </ul>
<b>Promote and Position the City for Inclusive Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuing to support the Belfast City Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) programme and play a role in the joint public / private sector approach to attracting inclusive investment. This includes working across the key pillars of Research; Events; Advocacy and Engagement; and Communications aligned to securing investment and regeneration for Belfast and the wider city region. During Q4, the council were part of the Belfast presence at MIPIM 2025, with 134 leads, of which 25 were developer /investors; preparations for UKReiiF are advancing with the event scheduled to take place in May 2025; and advancing comprehensive and strategic advocacy engagement aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, including meetings scheduled in Q1 25/26 with NI Ministers.</li> <li>▪ Ongoing maintenance of the Invest in Belfast website and associated promotion platforms including updated investment guide.</li> </ul>
<b>Future City Centre Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing monitoring and reporting of City Centre strategic and operational indicators via the City Centre All Party Working Group, including detailed overview on Council led activity and comms digest.</li> </ul>
<b>Deliver year 3 of the Tourism Strategy 'Make Yourself at Home'</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighbourhood Tourism options continue to be scoped beyond the Investment Programme awards of 12 grants to include Visitor Experience Development Plans and uplifting Council's own work in assets, learning journeys etc.</li> <li>▪ Full Accessible Tourism programme delivered for the year including annual conference and accessible tourism awards.</li> <li>▪ Full Food and Drink programme delivered for the year including positioning, seminars, annual conference and appointment of a facilitator.</li> <li>▪ The Business Tourism - Conference Subvention programme was delivered in partnership with Visit Belfast and attracted match funding from Tourism NI.</li> <li>▪ Visit Belfast business plan – delivered their first business plan (2024-25) of their new three-year strategy New Horizons (2024-2027). Highlights included exceeded their target to deliver an economic impact of £172million. 625k leisure bed nights, 8 leisure marketing campaigns, 114 business event wins, 31k business delegates, 89k business bed nights, 2 global awards (including Best events destination 2024).</li> <li>▪ All Marketing campaigns to position Belfast in national and international markets were successfully delivered in year including Christmas, St Patrick's Day etc.</li> </ul>
<b>City Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lord Mayors Day and Christmas Lights Switch-On events were successfully delivered with large attendance numbers and integration with Belfast 2024 programming.</li> <li>▪ Attendance figures at city events included 12,000 at Lord Mayors Day and 10,500 at the Christmas Lights Switch On.</li> <li>▪ St Patrick's Day was successfully delivered late in Q4 with an evaluation report pending. Early indication shows attendance levels of circa. 25,000-30,000 for the parade on 17 March in Belfast City Centre. Over 16,000 people attended events across 13 venues as part of the St Patrick's Music Festival, with an estimated 12,000 visitors engaging with programming at Cathedral Gardens alone over the course of the weekend. The festival featured 410 participants and over 60 hours of content. The TradTrail, delivered by Féile an Phobail, extended across 60 venues citywide, featuring 87 artists. Spraoi Cois Lao which took place at Custom House Square on Saturday 8th March, was the biggest fun day of its kind, attracting almost 6,000 attendees. At 2 Royal Avenue, over 3,550 visitors engaged with a tailored programme of family-friendly activity, including arts, dance, traditional music, and a sensory zone. Approximately 50,000 attendees in total across combined activity</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning is underway for Lord Mayor's Day 2025 and Maritime Festival 2025.</li> <li>Officers conducted a full technical site visit with the Oireachtas team on the 3rd of December – the site visit covered the ICC Belfast, Ulster Hall, City Hall and the Europa. The Oireachtas team are overlaying their event schedule, evening social and media awards with associated technical requirements. This will inform any additional financial support on technical and production fees. A partners' working group has also been stood up to identify and deliver additional work packages on marcomms, visitor servicing, volunteering, fringe activity and legacy.</li> <li>Option scoping continues for Belfast / NI to maximise the potential for the Euro 2028 tournament in the absence of a stadia and games.</li> <li>Secured the 2026 Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann for Belfast. Development of plans is underway aligned to the Fleadh.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Strategy 'A City Imagining'</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A total of £2.8 million has been distributed to Culture organisations in Belfast, including £2.45million to 59 organisations delivered through the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants (CMAG) funding programme.</li> <li>Supported 20 community festivals through the Community Festivals Fund; and 19 larger festivals with CMAG Festivals funding.</li> <li>Supported 19 projects through the Arts and Heritage Small Grants.</li> <li>Delivered a programme of sectoral development and strategic partnerships with Arts and Business NI, Craft NI, Theatre and Dance NI, Thrive, University of Atypical, Music Venue Trust and Eden Project.</li> <li>Delivery of heritage workshops and dissemination of research as part of the heritage audit and roadmap for development.</li> <li>Completed cultural animation activities including Belfast Canvass and City as a Gallery.</li> <li>Design and deliver wraparound support programmes including leading sector forums for festivals, visual arts and sustainability. Delivered four visual arts forum events, 8 festival forums and 6 green arts forums; Belfast Art Map developed and distributed; supported four pilot sustainability projects; and delivered marketing support for 18 festivals and Late-Night Art.</li> <li>Gig buddies project completed. Developed and completed new programme entitled Sounds Atypical, a programme to support deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists.</li> <li>Supported creative workspaces in the city including the delivery of Artist Studio Support scheme with 12 artist studios receiving a combined £100k in support, a new skills programme for creative workspaces and completed a strategic review with findings forming the development of an action plan with key stakeholders over Q3 and Q4.</li> <li>Delivered actions aligned to the Music Strategy's 4 strands and delivery of £400k of targeted support within workplan presented to CG&amp;R Committee in Aug 2024. Includes bursaries to 21 musicians, over 70 young people in deprived areas supported with access to instruments and tuition, 30 individuals provided production skill training, 4 individuals provided social media strategy mentorship, 4 international exchanges with UNESCO Cities, 6 City of Music Industry sessions, the Music Connections website, social channels, a conference for Grassroots Music Venues, the NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast programme and delivery of Output, Irelands largest music conference and showcase.</li> </ul>
<b>Belfast 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belfast 2024 was delivering throughout 2024-25, achieving significant successes across the programme, with very positive feedback including: 99% of attendees agreeing they had a good time; 97% agreeing the activity was absorbing and held their attention; and 98% agreeing they would come to something like this again.</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
<div>Page 14</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The programme commenced with a weekend of events to welcome Little Amal to Belfast and our welcome performance, with over 200 community and professional performers. This was the biggest and most ambitious welcome Amal has seen across 160 cities she's visited previously. Following this activity several Belfast artists have been invited to work with the Amal team on future projects.</li> <li>▪ Other events which took place throughout the summer included Lyric's Midsummer - sell out audiences in a new outdoor theatre space.</li> <li>▪ Waterworks – the culmination of more than 90 workshops held with residents, community groups, schools and residential homes since February during which participants created their own boats.</li> <li>▪ Drift – a floating river pavilion, opened at Stranmillis and was at full capacity for their special events. It moved to a second location at the ICC allowing for activity in the city centre.</li> <li>▪ Green House has continued to grow their offering with a series of skills workshops to challenge fast fashion.</li> <li>▪ Bank of Ideas – Participatory Budgeting as part of Belfast 2024 'Creative Me' Programme. This scheme awarded £50,000 to 28 projects, divided evenly between ideas for North, South, East, West, Belfast, and City Centre.</li> <li>▪ Safari in the City have completed their first mural at Cliftonville Football grounds – incorporating nest boxes for local wildlife which received extensive coverage from the BBC.</li> <li>▪ 9ft in Common have mapped over 202km of alleyways in our city and led a series of events, from foraging to music gigs and art workshops, across the city.</li> <li>▪ Nobodaddy - Michael Keegan Dolan's world premiere opened in Belfast in September – a first for one of Ireland's most prolific choreographers.</li> <li>▪ Soundlinks – Townsend Street closed to traffic and welcomed 1,000s to their Block Party on International Peace Day, with food music and fun throughout the day for all ages and communities.</li> <li>▪ BBC Concert – A Century of Stories took place in Waterfront Hall and will be aired on TV at the end of October.</li> <li>▪ Eurocities Culture Conference - We hosted a 3- day Eurocities Culture Forum 25-27 Sept, with 136 participants from 64 cities &amp; 23 countries.</li> <li>▪ We were able to showcase 14 Belfast 2024 projects, 22 venues and spaces, and 33 local artists and culture sector representatives.</li> <li>▪ An Irish Goodbye mural was launched on 30th Sept celebrating the success of this home-grown Oscar and Bafta winning film.</li> <li>▪ Shadowdock brought to life the Thompson Dry dock where the Titanic was built. Despite cancellation of one show due to adverse weather – this was followed by a sellout run over the last weekend in September.</li> <li>▪ Work has commenced on the programme evaluation. Initial findings have presented the following highlights: 1,000+ new cultural and creative events across the city, 1,400+ contracts for cultural sector, 20+ large scale commissions, 28 participatory budgeting projects, 16 creative bursaries, 6 international artist residencies, 130,000+ attendees (audience and participants) and £400k raised in partnership investment. A final evaluation report will be published in June 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>Belfast Stories</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ralph Applebaum and Barker Langham were appointed in the role of Interpretive Planner and Concept Design Team.</li> <li>▪ RIBA Stage 1 report completed.</li> <li>▪ RIBA Stage 2 draft designs for experience and buildings completed and presented to Project Board, SP&amp;R Committee and completed Public Consultation exercise.</li> </ul>



Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Programme revised to accommodate additional design development work. Due for completion May 2025.</li> <li>▪ Revised programme for completion of RIBA Stage 2 and commencement of RIBA Stage 3 in place for Q1 2025/26.</li> <li>▪ Members Working Group study visit to Liverpool undertaken in August 2024 and evaluation report completed.</li> <li>▪ Stories Network meetings have taken place throughout 2024/25 including as part of the Public Consultation. An Ethical Framework has been completed and includes Terms of Reference for a Stories Panel to be implemented in next stage, RIBA Stage 3.</li> <li>▪ The Public Consultation on the current design thinking and plans was extended to 9 March due to level of interest. Feedback has been analysed and a report completed. It will be brought through Belfast Stories governance structures and presented to SP&amp;R Committee in Q1 2025/26.</li> <li>▪ A full draft of the OBC has been completed and presented to Belfast Stories Project Board and the internal Financial Oversight Group. It will be presented to SPR in April 2025 with recommendation to submit to Department for Economy in May 2025, if approved and ratified by Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development and delivery of Belfast Bikes has continued with the current operator.</li> <li>▪ A new operator of Belfast Bikes has been appointed. Officers have worked with both the current and new operators to develop a transition plan to allow for a seamless transfer, with the aim of launching the new operation in late summer 2025. This will be supported by a user-focused marketing campaign to encourage use of the new scheme.</li> <li>▪ There were 129,520 bike journeys during 2024-25; representing an increase of 17,198 rentals compared to the previous year.</li> <li>▪ Commercial Assets continue to be operationally managed. Income for each asset is relatively healthy, however the increasing cost of supplies and additional operational expenditure requirements continues to significantly increase costs which is having a detrimental impact on the 'bottom line'. Catering contracts for Belfast Castle and Malone House continue to perform well. A new catering contract for the zoo was appointed at end of Q4.</li> <li>▪ Whilst the annual footfall for the Zoo represents an increase of 7,349 (to 213k) compared to previous year, it falls below the average annual footfall of 227k. The zoo continues to offer a range of promotions, offers and events to appeal to visitors however it continues to face increased competition from other visitor attractions and leisure facilities, and is impacted by the weather.</li> </ul>

### 3. Our Planet

Strategic Priority	Progress Delivered During 2024-25
<b>Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework: UP2030 Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ongoing work with partners in respect of the UP2030 Net Zero pilot, including extensive engagement and workshops through existing forums.</li><li>▪ Progressing the final draft of the Net Zero Framework (which will include an elected members' workshop in early Summer 2025) on the emerging draft prior to taking the final framework for Committee approval in Autumn 2025.</li><li>▪ The 3 main themes of the Framework are around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing-led regeneration programme and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.</li></ul>



FRONT COVER

Image from Alex In Comras (taken from City Matters)

# City Growth & Regeneration

## Committee Plan 2025/26

**Belfast**



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## Introduction

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

Its specific functions, as outlined within the Belfast City Council Constitution Appendix 3 – Standing Orders, include:

- Influencing and contributing to regional regeneration and growth strategies and activities
- Developing and implementing city-wide economic strategies and policies
- Managing and maximising the impact of major physical developments in the city
- Coordinating and promoting major city-wide events
- Sourcing and providing support to attract and utilise European and other grants which contribute to the growth of the city
- Providing support for economic development initiatives
- Supporting the development of culture, heritage and the arts
- Working with other agencies to promote Belfast as a key investment and tourism opportunity
- Developing programmes and actions to support local businesses and attract inward investment
- Managing the Council's markets and maximising their benefit to the city
- Influencing and contributing to strategies and policies affecting skills, employability, transportation and energy in the City
- Overseeing the delivery of the following services:
  - Economic Development;
  - Tourism;
  - Culture and Arts;
  - European and International Relations;
  - City Markets;
  - City Events;
  - Belfast Castle;
  - Malone House;
  - Belfast Zoo;
  - City Centre Development; and
  - The transferring car parks.

## Committee Membership

 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Sam Nelson</u></a> (Chair) Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Castle</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Ian McLaughlin</u></a> (Deputy Chair) Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Court</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>The Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Andrew McCormick</u></a> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>
 <p><a href="#"><u>The High Sheriff, Cllr Fiona McAteer</u></a> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Ald James Lawlor</u></a> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Christina Black</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Court</p>
 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Séamas de Faoite</u></a> Party: Social Democratic and Labour Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Davy Douglas</u></a> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Joe Duffy</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Collin</p>
 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Eric Hanvey</u></a> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Tracy Kelly</u></a> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Donal Lyons</u></a> Party: Social Democratic and Labour Party District Electoral Area: Balmoral</p>
 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Conor Maskey</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Castle</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Áine McCabe</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Black Mountain</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Emmet McDonough-Brown</u></a> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>
 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Ron McDowell</u></a> Party: Traditional Unionist Voice District Electoral Area: Court</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Conor McKay</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Ronan McLaughlin</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Black Mountain</p>
 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Tomás Ó Néill</u></a> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Oldpark</p>	 <p><a href="#"><u>Cllr Brian Smyth</u></a> Party: Green Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	

## Belfast City Council Priorities

Since its launch in 2017, the [Belfast Agenda](#) has been a key city framework, coalescing partners beyond the core legislative requirements of community planning with a shared focus on addressing key city challenges. The approach adopted has enhanced the relationship between the public/statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to drive forward real change, address inequalities and improve quality of life within and across the city

The refreshed Belfast Agenda 2024-28 maintains the same level of ambition and collective leadership commitment to deliver the long-term vision and outcomes previously agreed. It is delivery and outcome focused and is positioned as an overarching city strategy which identifies the major transformational programmes and investment opportunities for the city. The strategy also sets out a number of specific 'calls to action' for local, regional and national partners to work together to bring forward important strategies, programmes and investment which will help deliver the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

The council's corporate plan is a reflection of what people in Belfast have told us they want and the type of leadership they feel the city needs. It takes the priorities of the Belfast Agenda and sets out the ways in which the council will support and deliver these to grow a sustainable, inclusive economy and equitable society and sets out the work we will do as an organisation to continually improve and develop to continue to deliver excellent services. The council's 5 strategic themes are cascaded down from the Belfast Agenda and include:



1. **Theme 1: Our people and communities** - Making life better for all our residents



2. **Theme 2: Our economy** - Creating inclusive, innovative and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity
3. **Theme 3: Our place** - Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city
4. **Theme 4: Our planet** - Creating a sustainable, nature-positive city
5. **Theme 5: Compassionate city** - Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, fair and inclusive city – leaving no one behind.

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan is aligned to both the recently refreshed Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and newly developed Corporate Plan 2025-2028. It identifies the priorities that this committee will be focussed on over the year ahead and primarily relate to the 'Our economy' and 'Our place' themes. The key areas of work have been identified and specific in-year deliverables are set out in section that follows.





## Our Economy Priorities

To support our economy in 2025/26 we will:

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Manage and oversee the delivery of the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NISS) on behalf of all 11 councils and deliver targeted support in Belfast to meet funder and statutory targets.	Undertake the 'Lead Council' role on NISS, managing the delivery of £9.2 million to foster enterprise across the region, in line with funder obligations and work to secure a more permanent funding source.
	Deliver a flexible menu of support through the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) for Belfast entrepreneurs wishing to start a business; tailored support for existing businesses wishing to grow or scale including grant assistance to support their growth.
	Support 30 SMEs to access finance to support investment and growth through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF).
Support the development of the social enterprise sector	Develop the social economy sector, encouraging more social enterprise/ cooperative start-ups. through (Go Social) the provision of mentoring, workshops and upskilling; facilitate three best practice knowledge sharing events and deliver six outreach sessions.
	Deliver the Social Economy Incentive Fund, with a renewed focus on establishing new social enterprises addressing barriers in areas of deprivation across Belfast.
Maximise the benefits emerging from Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD and Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)	Support delivery of the benefits of first phase of BRC) delivery by integration and alignment with economic development and skills programmes.
	Develop an updated economic proposition demonstrating the critical role of Belfast and the Belfast Region in creating good jobs, supporting innovation and driving productivity.
	Contribute to the development of a new strategic approach as part of the DBEC, focusing on promoting economic linkages along the corridor.
Establish Local Economic Partnership to support delivery of sub-regional economic development fund priority actions.	Establish the Local Economic Partnership (LEP), building on the Labour Market Partnership in the first instance.
	Agree priority projects for financial support and draw down year one funding to mobilise activity
Develop and maximise international linkages to support inclusive economic growth	Engage and collaborate with city partners on outward business missions explore the potential for developing business-to-business opportunities, investment in capital and innovation programmes, and facilitating cultural/ tourism and educational linkages with partner organisations in host cities.
	Complete a review of the council's international engagement activity and develop a new approach to international engagement activity to ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the world stage and that collaborative opportunities for promoting economic development are maximised.
Support the development and delivery of the Belfast Business Promise scheme	Undertake a review of the pilot phase of the Belfast Business Promise (BBP) programme to inform the future approach of the scheme.
	Deliver six Belfast Business Promise Learning Days for existing member organisations.
Oversee the management of the Innovation Factory to maximise occupancy levels and optimise inclusive growth opportunities for existing tenants.	Support the operation of the Innovation Factory, in line with the agreed Annual Service Plan obligations.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Deliver employment and upskilling academies to support business growth by promoting inclusive labour market opportunities.	Delivery of Employment Academies (into work) within sectors with high job demand such as caring professions, customer service sectors and professional services, in line with business demand.
	Work with partners to deliver Upskilling Academies targeting those working in low paid sectors to achieve higher level qualifications and gain a better job, in line with business demand.
Support the management and development of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership.	Convene and chair up to six Labour Market Partnership meetings, to identify key labour market challenges and co-design solutions and co-ordinate delivery of agreed programmes of work.
	Deliver the Gateway to Choices service, providing independent advice and guidance and encouraging informed decision making to find the right provision for people.
	Deliver the Bridges to Progression service and work in partnership to scope the need for additional supports for young people under 24 years old to manage positive transitions.
	Host localised jobs fairs in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices and explore other jobs and skills events.
	Expand the Labour Market Partnership to encompass the work of the Local Economic Partnership, developing priority projects aligned to funder criteria and overseeing delivery
Deliver social value while supporting the wider employability and skills ecosystem	Expand and consolidate the Employability and Skills Provider Network including organisations representing target groups for people with a disability, women, young people, justice leavers, ethnic minorities and care leavers.
	Ensure Employability and Skills considerations are included within Developer Contributions by providing statistical data and analysis on labour market shortages. Review and recommend interventions regarding Skills Plans where applicable.
	Support contractors to meet their Social Value job requirements and support inclusive recruitment practices on current labour market issues such as visa requirements, employing people with disabilities.
Improve the visitor experience at St George's Market to drive footfall and enhance customer satisfaction and provide support for city markets.	Develop a programme of customer insights based on new footfall tracking technology, regular customer surveys and introduction of additional customer feedback loops.
	Benchmark St George's Market with other comparable visitor attractions in terms of customer experience and visitor feedback.
	Manage and promote the delivery of the annual Christmas Continental Market and additional market events such as Twilight Markets.
	Review the markets rights policy in order to ensure that it supports the operation of independent markets across the city, to enhance animation and vibrancy.
	Review existing storage policy at the market to increase opportunities for additional rental/ income generation on non-market days.

## Our Place Priorities

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Housing-led regeneration	Establish and oversee governance arrangements across the Private Sector Partner indicative work streams ensuring alignment and linkages to the established council governance structures.
	Work in partnership with the Private Sector Partner to take forward development of the initial four strategic sites (Corporation Street / Exchange Street, Gloucester Street, INW Smithfield, Ormeau Avenue) in line with the contractual timelines and development programmes (to be agreed by Council).
	Agree and progress the delivery route for delivery of housing led regeneration in respect of Tranche 1 sites from the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2 (as agreed via CGR/SPR)
	Progress Tranche 2 sites (from the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2) through feasibility and development options for subsequent consideration by CGR/SP&R.
	Working in partnership with the Department for Communities, and Clanmil Housing Association, oversee delivery of a housing led regeneration scheme on the Inner North West lands (following award of the Inner North West Development Brief).
	Develop Placemaking Action Plan for lands at Joy Street/ Cromac Street/ Stewart Street.
	Work with partners in relation to developing Placemaking Action Plans for Cregagh Green, Shankill / Glencairn and Tullycarnet.
City Development and Investment	Progress options for vesting and/or acquisition by agreement of the Tribeca site in whole or in part, including the Assembly Rooms, including potential development / funding options, and development of Strategic Regeneration Framework to underpin future development.
	Develop future use /development proposals for Regeneration Assets including 2 Royal Avenue and 35-39 Royal Avenue.
	Deliver the Vacant to Vibrant City Wide capital grant scheme to support the reduction of vacancy and promote the revitalisation of the city.
	Progress outputs from the Homes On Upper Spaces for Everyone (H.O.U.S.E) Expression of Interest process and scope funding opportunities aimed at bringing vacant upper floors into residential use.
	Undertake a scoping study on vacant offices, to include financial, economic and regeneration implications and future use and funding options.
	Deliver the Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme, administering Department for Communities funding in the Sandy Row area to support eligible businesses and the wider revitalisation of the area.
	Progress the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme (including BCC lands and private sector assets) and bring forward an action plan and route map to deliver a comprehensive regeneration scheme for the combined lands assets.
	Ensure City Regeneration and Development considerations are included within Developer Contributions to maximise the regeneration benefits.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel & Net-Zero	Refresh A Bolder Vision strategy in line with the Eastern Transport Plan. Undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment and publish final documents with a Delivery Prospectus.
	Progress the Under the Bridges project to design development RIBA Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination).
	Progress the Sailortown/Titanic Quarter (TQ) bridge project to design development RIBA Stage 2 (Concept Design).
	Progress public realm improvements through design development and statutory approval at Little York Street Little Patrick, 5Cs and Blackstaff Square & Environs.
	Deliver the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework (NZNF).
	Support the delivery of relevant priorities in the Climate Action Plan for 25/26
Positioning the City to Compete	Support the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership, taking a joint public-private approach to promote and position the city and city region as a priority location for investment, underpinning the regeneration, development and infrastructure required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions.
	Undertake a strategic engagement programme aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, working with city, regional and national government partners to seek to secure place based and regeneration investment funding. .
	Facilitate investment and development related follow ups aimed at positioning the city to compete and promote inclusive development for the city.
	Manage and maintain the Invest in Belfast website and complimentary digital platforms and collateral.
Future City Centre Programme	Working with internal and external partners, deliver agreed priorities in the Future City Centre Programme to reimagine the city centre by addressing the five priority pillars (Regeneration and connectivity; business and investment proposition; animation and distinctive offering; creating a clean, green, inclusive & safe place; and supporting those who are vulnerable).
Deliver Year 5 of A City Imagining, Belfast's 10-year cultural strategy.	Deliver Core Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG) funding to sustain accessible cultural activity (Festivals and events grants) and infrastructure (arts and heritage grants) within Belfast.
	Provision of Community Festivals Fund small grants (in partnership with the Department for Communities) to assist 15 Community and Voluntary organisations to celebrate their identity, enhance community relations by delivering community festivals.
	Provision of arts and heritage small grants to a minimum of 15 cultural projects to support the outcomes identified within City Imagining.
	Support Belfast based artist studios and creative spaces through targeted investment and work in partnership with Arts and Business NI to deliver a capacity building programme.
	Strategic Partnerships to enhance skills and development across specific art forms, support audience development and enhance accessibility provision including delivery of the Gig Buddies programme.
	Deliver 'Bank of Ideas', a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<p>Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified.</p> <p>Sectoral development initiatives, including research, support for sectoral forums and establishment of a cultural compact.</p> <p>Deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme, a city wide, venue based open call event including supporting marketing activity.</p> <p>Deliver phase two of the Heritage Audit and Roadmap, including the development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes. Work in partnership with Belfast Stories, the Climate Team and Brink to deliver a pilot programme entitled “Growing a Museum” which will deliver heritage skills-sharing, training and participative public activities across Belfast.</p>
Deliver Year 2 of the music strategy, Music Matters – a roadmap for Belfast	<p>Delivery of UNESCO City of Music activity including programmes to support artists, the music sector and venues, including working internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.</p> <p>Deliver the NI Music Prize &amp; Sound of Belfast, an event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music.</p> <p>Output Belfast – Work in partnership with Score Draw Music to deliver Output Belfast, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase.</p>
Deliver Year 4 of Make Yourself at Home, the 10-year tourism plan for Belfast.	<p>Position and promote Belfast in national and international markets through investment in Visit Belfast, the city's destination marketing and visitor servicing organisation to increase the value of tourism to the local economy.</p> <p>Deliver the Belfast and Northern Ireland Conference Support Scheme in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast, to enable Belfast to compete and win national and international conferences.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme including management of awards to support new or enhanced neighbourhood tourism visitor experiences.</p> <p>Deliver the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme</p> <p>Deliver the Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme</p> <p>Visitor Signage, Wayfinding and Street Dressing and Signage Upkeep</p> <p>Enhance the visitor experience within Belfast, including enhancement of visitor experiences at Council owned assets.</p> <p>Develop an electronic dashboard for Belfast based tourism data to measure the impact of tourism in Belfast and its contribution to the Northern Irish economy.</p> <p>Deliver the Environmental Impact Audit, in partnership with Visit Belfast and the Climate team to improve Belfast’s performance in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index and maintain its place as a sustainable tourism destination within the GDS Index of 100 cities.</p>
Delivery of the annual City Events programme of large-scale public city events and activities attracting local audiences and out-of-state visitors	<p>Lord Mayors Day - Delivery of a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at three other venues – 2 Royal Ave, the Oh Yeah Music centre and the Green House.</p> <p>St Patrick's Day 2026 - build on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations.</p> <p>Christmas - delivery of the Christmas event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall and supplemented by city centre animation.</p> <p>Deliver the Festive Lighting programme.</p>



Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Deliver the 2025 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.
International and Domestic Events	Host Oireachtas na Samhna, Ireland's oldest Irish language and arts festival, from October 29 to November 2, 2025
	Work with city partners to plan for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy.
	Develop an Events Action Plan for the city, incorporating an ongoing approach to bid for events.
	Develop options for enhanced city animation during the summer.
	Engage with NI partners on maximising Belfast's position in Euro 2028.
Fleadh Cheoil	Planning and preparation to host the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann 2026 in Belfast, including establishment of Fleadh team, development of agreements with partners, commencement of volunteer recruitment and delivery of engagement programme.
	Development of Outline Business Case and implementation of governance structures and arrangements including establishment of a Fleadh Executive Committee.
	Develop and deliver the event Programme Plan and Operational Project Plan and initiate event procurement exercise.
Commercial Assets (Belfast Castle, Malone House, Belfast Zoo and Belfast Bikes)	Efficient and effective management and operation of Belfast Castle and Malone House providing a safe, welcoming and attractive venue for all visitors; and promoting both venues as premier conference, event and wedding venues.
	Efficient and effective management and operation of Belfast Zoo with a focus on enhancing the visitor experience, safety, conservation, education and animal welfare.
	Oversee the implementation and mobilisation plan for changing to the new Belfast Bikes operator/ operating model in September 2025.
	Oversee the delivery of the Belfast Bikes public bike hire scheme, maximising revenue and reducing vandalism costs.

Performance Monitoring *[Detail to be inserted in final plan in June following agreement of Corporate Delivery Plan]*

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets are used to monitor performance and will be reported to committee on a six-monthly basis as well as the year-end.

Theme	Key Performance Indicator	Target
Economy		
Place		

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## Committee Finances

The expenditure for the 2025/26 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan is based on a total planned investment of £22.9 million, as agreed at the Strategic Policy & Resources committee meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, as follows:

Service	Budget 2025/26
Off-Street Car Parking	-963,673
City Regeneration	2,521,194
Economic Development	18,820,722
Place and Economy Directorate	2,519,119
<b>Committee Total</b>	<b>22,897,361</b>





## Culture Development Workplan 2025 / 2026

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
<b>Core multi-annual funding</b>	Management of year 4 of cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG). Two-year funding 2024-2026: £473,425 to 15 Festivals and Events organisations and £ 587,462 to 30 Arts and Heritage organisations Four-year funding 2024-2028: £600,240 to four Festivals and Events organisations and £791,783 to ten Arts and Heritage organisations	April 2025 to March 2026	£2,452,910
<b>Small Grants - Arts and Heritage</b>	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes.	April 2025 to March 2026	£178,788
<b>Small Grants - Community Festivals Funding</b>	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes.	April 2025 to March 2026	£69,000 + DfC match funding £10,000 Grants admin linked to CFF
<b>Artist Studios and Creative Workspaces</b>	A continuation of scheme to support Belfast based artist studios and maker spaces to ensure a stable infrastructure for 2025/26.	April 2025 to March 2026 Launched June 2025	£150,000
<b>Artist Studios and Creative Workspaces</b>	Continuation of phase two of targeted capacity building programme with Artist Studio and Creative workspace sector in partnership with Arts and Business NI. Continued development of a 5-Year action plan for Creative Workspaces.	April 2025 to March 2026	£30,000
<b>Sector Support Programme</b>	Design and deliver wraparound support programme aligned to investment model. Includes support for Festivals Forum, Belfast Visual Arts Forum and Green Arts Forum.  Implementation of recommendation from Cultural Enquiry by Core Cities network. This will establish a governance and investment model for culture in the city.	April 2025 to March 2026	£80,000
<b>Research and development</b>	Commission further research and engagement, collect and analyse data to ensure strategic approach to investment and delivery.	April 2025 to March 2026	£50,000
<b>Heritage development</b>	Development of phase two of Heritage Audit and Roadmap for development, including development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes and designing action plans and events through a co-design process. Includes strategic partnership with Belfast Stories, BCC Climate Team and Brink for pilot programme entitled "Growing a Museum".	April 2025 to March 2026	£70,000  Up to £60,000 (total BCC budget to be met across depart budgets) with £20,000 from Culture

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
<b>Cultural animation and Art in Public Realm</b>	Further develop a 'City as a Gallery' or 'Art in the Public Realm' initiatives including Belfast Canvas and Art Unwrapped with Ulster University and National Museums NI Development of phase two of "legal walls" pilot programme and mentoring programme for Street Art Community.	April 2025 to March 2026	£25,000 £30,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Delivery of Blueprint Programme (yr 4) in partnership with Arts and Business NI	April 2025 to March 2026	£30,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Continue partnership with University of Atypical to promote accessibility in cultural spaces and support training for disability champions within the cultural sector.	April 2025 to March 2026	£25,000
<b>Capacity Building</b>	Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified. Support established organisations to adapt to change and to support new organisations and practitioners to take longer term risks in programming or creative development. Development and delivery of catalyst projects and programmes with community partners. Scoping and development of Culture Belfast social channels to highlight impact of investment and cultural activity in the city	April 2025 to March 2026	£80,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Work in partnership with Theatre & Dance NI to deliver a professional 3 year development and capacity building programme 'Transform' (2025-28) for artists in theatre & dance sector at differing career stages, focusing on networking, mentoring and creation.	April 2025 to March 2026	£45,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Work in partnership with Craft NI to deliver inclusive programme of showcase and professional development events for makers in Belfast including growth of August craft month. Includes development of a new mentorship and capacity building programme for craft makers.	April 2025 to March 2026	£35,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Partnership with Visual Arts Ireland to deliver a Peer Support Programme. Connecting Visual Artists who fall outside of the studio framework, to include those in rural areas, connecting them to the Belfast Art infrastructure. Providing professional development skills and engagement.	April 2025 to March 2026	£10,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Partnership with Thrive audience development agency to support audience development across the sector.	April 2025 to March 2026	£20,000
<b>Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships</b>	Work in partnership with Creative Ireland, Theatre and Dance NI and the Belfast International Arts Festival to deliver the Culture Ireland Showcase of local theatre and dance for the international market	April 2025 to March 2026	£30,000
<b>Sectoral Development and</b>	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people including Gig Buddies programme 2025 – 2028 in partnership with the Black Box.	April 2025 to March 2026	£45,000



Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
<b>Strategic Partnerships</b>			
<b>Engagement</b>	<p>Develop phased process to shared placemaking through cultural interventions. Deliver first phase by commissioning artists to create shared resources for community events. Support capacity building programme for socially engaged artists and up to 3 pilots of City Artist residencies. Deliver Arts &amp; Wellbeing activity through partnership with CHOICE research project on health and social inequalities of people with long term mental illness and Women's Aid Refuge. Programme shared learning series of best practice in participation for cultural sector.</p> <p>Bank of Ideas, a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.</p>	April 2025 to March 2026	<p>£115,000</p> <p>£75,000</p>
<b>Culture Night</b>	Public procurement exercise and appointment of a contractor to deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme including supporting marketing activity	May 2025 to September 2025	£150,000
<b>UNESCO City of Music Activity</b>	<p>Implementation of “Music Matters” Music Strategy. Deliver actions within the Music Strategy 4 strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Theme 1: Place artists at the heart</li> <li>o Theme 2: Nurture the Sector</li> <li>o Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience</li> <li>o Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO</li> </ul>	May 2025 to March 2026	£400,000
<b>Networking</b>	Support active participation in relevant local, regional and international cultural networks including but not limited to IETM, Eurocities, and other relevant international networks	April 2025 to March 2026	£10,000

## Tourism and Events Workplan 2025 / 2026: Make Yourself At Home: Year 4 Action Plan

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
<b>Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme</b>	Now in its 4 <sup>th</sup> year, the <b>Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme</b> has significantly influenced Belfast's tourism industry and works towards positioning Belfast as a welcoming and inclusive for all visitors. The programme operates with strategic input from Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, BCC, and the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. The Tourism Team secured funding in 2024 / 2025 from external sources to deliver the strategic priorities of Council and has influenced stakeholder investment into Accessible and Inclusive Tourism.	April 2025 - March 2026	£45,000
<b>Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme</b>	Food and Drink play a pivotal role in shaping travel experiences, accounting for a third of total overnight visitor spending. The <b>Food and Drink Tourism Network</b> established in 2022 has been instrumental in driving industry growth.	April 2025 - March 2026	£60,000
<b>Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing</b>	During the past 20 years there has been an investment of over £3m in visitor interpretative signage and wayfinding in Belfast. A study of visitor signage is underway to examine a range of solutions, including digital options, that will ensure that the visitor signage is fit for purpose to provide wayfinding, interpretation and enhance the visitor experience in Belfast which also reflects the changing landscape of the city including 2 Royal Avenue, Cathedral Gardens and as Belfast Stories is established and other relevant visitor attractions.	April 2025 - March 2026	£26,000
<b>Signage Upkeep</b>	Upkeep, cleaning and maintenance of tourism signage network	April 2025 - March 2026	£50,000
<b>Enhancing the Visitor Experience Priority Actions</b>	A Visitor Experience Action Plan has been developed mapping out actions and priorities for enhancing the visitor experience across the city for the next 4 years.	April 2025 - March 2026	£36,000
<b>Tourism General Management</b>	Establishment of a Tourism Panel with city-wide commitment, as identified in <i>Make Yourself At Home</i> . The purpose of this Panel is to be outward-looking, horizon scanning, future proofing and to ensure benchmarking to inform future strategic tourism planning across city stakeholders, underpinning Council's position as a strategic leader in its gateway functionality.	April 2025- March 2026	£15,800
<b>Business Tourism - Conference Subvention</b>	Members will be aware that in January 2021 CGR agreed ongoing support for Conference Support in line with an updated criteria and support to ensure that Belfast can compete nationally and internationally to win conferences for Belfast in an everchanging marketplace. This fund is administered by Visit Belfast and match funded by our partner Tourism NI. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that Belfast, including ICC remains competitive as a business tourism destination.	April 2025- March 2026	£200,000
<b>Neighbourhood Tourism Investment programme</b>	The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to develop authentic and financially sustainable new tourism products, or enhancements to existing offers, which will bring vitality to neighbourhoods.</li> <li>• Promote enhanced visitor dwell time in the city and extend the economic benefits beyond the city centre.</li> </ul>	April 2025 - March 2026	£310,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
<b>Tourism baselines and measurement of tourism in Belfast and contribution to the NI Economy</b>	The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local Council level continues to be impacted by the reduction in number of surveys and depth of detailed statistics by our national statistics agency NISRA, therefore it is important that Belfast can establish its own baselines and measure the social and economic impact of tourism to ensure that the contribution of Belfast to the NI economy is recognised and that ongoing investment in Belfast is secured. An audit of data available for Belfast and plans for future data collection has been undertaken by Council through engagement with key agencies including NISRA, NITA, Tourism NI and Visit Belfast. This has identified that gaps exist in data required to measure tourism in Belfast, therefore dedicated financial resource is essential to enable Belfast to measure all aspects of tourism impact (social/economic/ environmental) as we implement regenerative and sustainable tourism plans and strategies.	April 2025 - March 2026	£70,000
<b>Sustainable Tourism: Global Destination Sustainability Index &amp; Actions for Sustainable Tourism work including Green Tourism Certification</b>	Belfast completed its first index benchmarking and application in 2022, following which an application was made for 2024 which placed <b>Belfast 9<sup>th</sup> out of 100 cities</b> as a sustainable tourism destination under the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index). The GDS index is a third-party evaluation of the destination's environmental, social, supplier and destination management performance across 77 indicators assessing policies and infrastructure, destination management and sustainability performance amongst the tourism supply-chain.	April 2024- March 2026	£25,500
<b>Visit Belfast</b>	Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities and targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It is a membership organisation with more than 460 partner businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works on behalf of its funders and partners and with a range of public and private partners including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Belfast Chamber to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.	April 2025- March 2026	£2,076,356
<b>City Events</b>	On an annual/biannual basis, the Council's City Events Unit delivers a series of large - scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. The Tourism, Culture & Events also support a number of annual programmes and activities. Our cultural and tourism strategic priorities sets out long term recommendations for events in the city including better alignment across the Council in the design, delivery and funding of events.	April 2025 – March 2026	As detailed below.
<b>Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival</b>	Following a strategic review the Maritime Festival is now delivered on a biennial basis in order to grow ambition, budget and impact of the festival. Last delivered in 2023, the next edition is now due to take place in 2025. The festival will be delivered in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.	April 2025 – November 2025	£217,000  (2024-25 budget also carried over into the 2025-26 year of event delivery)
<b>Christmas</b>	This will be a continuation of the agreed 'traditional' switch on format of the 2023 & 2024 Christmas event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall.	July 2025 - December 2025	£152,864  £300,000



Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
	This programme will be supplemented by further city animation and lighting.		
<b>St Patricks Day</b>	The new model of commissioning the creative sector to deliver projects over this period will continue in 2025/206.	August 2025 -April 2026	£300,000
<b>Lord Mayor's Day</b>	This event will celebrate Belfast music offering on the same day as the Eurovision final event. This event is a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at three other venues – 2 Royal Ave, the Oh Yeah Music centre and the Green House.	April 2025- June 2025	£45,500
<b>International Events</b>	Working with city partners to plan ahead for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy.	April 2025- March 2026	£40,000
<b>City Animation and Events</b>	Develop options for enhanced city animation and development of an Events Action Plan;	April 2025- March 2026	£200,000
<b>Oireachtas</b>	Belfast is set to host Oireachtas na Samhna, Ireland's oldest Irish language and arts festival, from October 29 to November 2, 2025. This event celebrates Irish language, arts, and traditions through a packed schedule of competitions, debates, film screenings, workshops, and awards, all conducted in Irish.	April 2025 – November 2025	£50,000
<b>Fleadh Cheoil</b>	Belfast has been successful in being awarded Fleadh Cheoil na Eireann in 2026 and will establish all necessary governance and delivery arrangements. Belfast also continues to participate in the Bid process to host it in 2027.	April 2025 - March 2026	Budgets to be finalised in line with OBC development
<b>Small Grants Project Funding</b>	Support for Sport grants to ensure development and delivery of community-based sporting events.	April 2025 - March 2026	£80,000