

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

8th June, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the reports for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held on Wednesday, 10th June, 2026 at 5.15 pm.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

7. Positioning Belfast to Compete

(d) UNESCO City of Music Programme Update (Pages 1 - 10)

8. Strategic and Operational Issues

(a) Committee Plan 2025/26 End of Year Report and 2026/27 Performance Information (Pages 11 - 54)

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Subject:	UNESCO City of Music Programme Update
Date:	10 th June 2026
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forester
Contact Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell Senior Manager Culture, Tourism & Events Rachael Campbell-Palmer Culture Development Manager

Restricted Reports					
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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?					
<p>After Committee Decision</p> <p>After Council Decision</p> <p>Sometime in the future</p> <p>Never</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px;"> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> </table>				

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>This report provides Members with an update on the delivery of UNESCO City of Music activities against the 2025/26 Workplan.</p> <p>In addition, the report seeks approval for activities within the 2026/27 Cultural Development Workplan approved by the Committee in April described as “Additional UNESCO City of Music Activity”, but in relation to which additional detail is now provided.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the contents of this update report and approve the additional aspects of the City of Music 2026/27 Workplan delivery outlined in Appendix 1.
3.0	Update Report
3.1	<p>Belfast City Council continues to support the growth, sustainability and international profile of the city's music sector through the delivery of its music development and UNESCO City of Music programmes. This report provides an update on key activities undertaken during the reporting period, highlighting progress across accessibility initiatives, community engagement, international partnerships and sector support.</p> <p>The Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme has continued in partnership with Duncairn Arts Centre. Each year three young artists receive a bursary towards their artistic and professional development, alongside mentoring, performance opportunities and ongoing support through The Duncairn and its wider cultural network. Many past recipients have gone on to perform nationally and internationally, contributing to a vibrant and evolving traditional music scene rooted in both heritage and innovation. This year’s awardees are guitarist Jack McGoldrick, fiddle player Eimear Magee and multi-instrumentalist Peadar Connor.</p> <p>Micro bursaries available to individual musicians is delivered in Collaboration with Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF). Each year 20 artists/bands from all genres and backgrounds receive a £1,000 bursary towards development or music creation that supports their career pathway. Artists and groups supported in this recent round range from singer-songwriters to Irish drone artists, to electronic musicians and more. Those awarded are:</p>

Conchur White | Keith McAlister | Morgana | Robyn Maddox | Erin K Hill | Luke Bell | May Rosa | Alfie Norma | J Shields | SILK | Neil Foster | Reflect | Sarah McCreedy | TUIRSE | Fuzzy Pines | Maeve O'Donnell | Moon Landing | O.S.G. | Heliopause | Tanazaki

The Crescendo Post-Primary Pathway in partnership with Ulster Orchestra seeks continued investment to sustain and expand high-quality music education opportunities for young people in North and West Belfast. This initiative provides a vital progression route into post-primary instrumental tuition, ensemble participation, and long-term musical engagement for students who would otherwise face significant financial and social barriers to access.

Through access to instruments, specialist tuition, orchestral participation, and performance opportunities, the programme nurtures musical talent while also supporting attendance, confidence, wellbeing, and educational attainment. Numerous successes have been noted since the beginning of this partnership, with students going on to pass ABRSM Music Medal assessments, others choosing GCSE Music as a response to this support, and teachers reporting measurable improvements in attendance, confidence, aspiration, and engagement with school life.

Teenage Kicks was launched to provide an expansion of opportunities in Belfast for under 18s audiences to experience high quality live music. Twelve awards made of £2,000 per event in the pilot round, supporting events across an array of music venues and cultural spaces. This year's awardees included venues, promoters, festivals and individuals covering events such a showcase of local artists at the Crescent, a matinee performance of orchestral video game music, a collaborative event with Alternatives Restorative Justice featuring Young Spencer. The awarded groups in this pilot round are:

Accidental Theatre | Irish Video Game Orchestra | EastSide Arts | the Black Box | The Duncairn | Sugru; Claire Kieran | Factory 61 | Niamh McDermott | Chordblossom | Scott's Jazz Club | Girls Rock School | Score Draw Music

NI Music Prize & Sound of Belfast a continued partnership with the Oh Yeah Music Centre with a commitment to a three-year uplift of support following research undertaken and reviewed by Committee. The NI Music Prize is an event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music. Sound of Belfast and the Northern Ireland Music Prize took place in November 2025 and will return this year, year two of the tree-year partnership. In 2025 the festival held 66 events across the city, with 166 local artists gaining paid performance opportunities. Total festival attendance was 8694, a significant increase on

previous years. Increased support for the festival allowed for a higher number of artists to be paid as well as enhanced quality of shows and greater marketing to reach a wider audience.

Direct partnership with Score Draw Music. Output is Ireland's biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. The conference and subsequent artist showcases took place in September 2025 and will return this year. In 2025, Output welcomed over 110 conference speakers across 34 panels, which was attended by 750 delegates. At the evening showcases, 36 music artists performed in the Cathedral Quarter across 9 venues, to a total audience of 5000 people.

Working with colleagues in Enterprise and Business Growth we are developing a Music Business Accelerator Programme tailored to a spectrum of needs within the music industry. A scoping and consultation exercise has now been undertaken and the first stage of the programme will be delivered this year.

Partnerships with organisations including Soultrane, Beat Carnival and Imagine Festival provided opportunities for people of all ages to develop skills and music knowledge as part of City of Music Industry Sessions, such as the 'Beyond the Blue' event during which participants learned about jazz history and its impact on music today, ending in an open jam session, as well as a two-day instrument building and percussion workshop with Korean band HOOLA where attendees learned about how to use recycled materials to create their own music.

Numerous projects have taken place to support the development and promotion of under-represented genres, such as an inaugural full-day Rap Festival featuring a networking event followed by performances from artists such as Leo Miyagee, Quinncidental and Don Chi. Additionally this strand of support provided the opportunity for a UNESCO City of Music legacy piece, with previous UNESCO Day rap artists Kadesh Flow and Kemet Coleman, from Kansas City US, returning to Belfast to record music with producer Eulogy and several local artists.

The City of Music programme delivers a partnership with University of Atypical continuing a fund for the d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse community within music to run accessible music events. This year, six grants in total ranging between £1,000 and £5,000 have been

awarded to Northern Irish music creators across genres, industry experience, and disabilities for events to take place in Belfast in 2026. Recipients include: Martin della Vecchia, Joe Kenny, Andy Skinner, William McLean, Lauren Martin and Susie Blue.

Continuation of a Strategic Partnership with the Music Venue Trust to support the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed. Following a successful first NI Venues Day a period of support for NI venues took place to engage in a period of data collection that led to the first ever NI representation within the 2025 Music Venues Trust Annual Report, noted as the most comprehensive picture to date of Northern Ireland's grassroots music infrastructure and the venues that sustain it.

This report was presented at Stormont on April 14th alongside political representatives and local artists, such as Neil Hannon from the Divine Comedy. At this presentation the Music Venue Trust revealed that they will be opening their "Raise the Standard" initiative to venues in Northern Ireland - a new scheme designed to support participating venues with full financial relief for high-quality PA systems, lighting, backline, microphones, stands and leads, along with any maintenance or repairs needed thereafter.

Through a partnership with Native Events a Sustainability Toolkit has been developed. This was preceded by a period of research and consultation with a group of industry stakeholders. The toolkit will be launched alongside an event focused on environmentalism in music and made public in 2026.

Belfast City Council supported Scott's Jazz Club to create high quality films of their weekly performances by renowned local and international jazz musicians. These films are provided to the artists, to use as essential promotional tools. The films will ultimately contribute to an archive of the contemporary jazz scene in Northern Ireland and was delivered under priorities to support organisations to embrace assistive technologies to increase accessibility of music for all and enhancing the visibility of Belfast globally as a key music destination.

Work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities. Artist exchanges and learning opportunities have taken place across UNESCO Cities of Music such as Metz, France; Daegu, Korea; London, Ontario, Canada; and Hannover, Germany, as well as Dublin UNESCO City of Literature. This has included the first part of a Samba exchange with Beat Carnival's BeatNDrum in Germany, a City of Music performance for Belfast queer punk band Problem Patterns in Canada, the formation

	of a Brno-Hannover-Belfast jazz ensemble with local artists Scott Flannigan and Andrew McCoubrey and more.
4.0	Financial and Resource Implications
	There are currently no additional financial implications attached to this report.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
	The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.
6.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 Remaining City of Music workplan 2026/27 for approval

Culture Development Workplan 2026 / 2027 – UNESCO City of Music “Additional Activity” for Approvals

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
UNESCO City of Music Workplan 2026/27 remaining activity for approval			
Theme 1: Placing Artists at the Heart			
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF) Micro bursaries programme	Continue to partner with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival to provide grants for local music creators. 20 musicians / groups supported each year across all genres and backgrounds with a grant of £1000 towards the career enhancement or support of their choice, such as recording, mentoring, PR and more.	October 2026 to March 2027	£25,000
Co-designed wellbeing events and initiatives to ensure the physical and mental health of music creators is safeguarded and protected throughout the year.	Partner with key stakeholders and organisations in the sector hosting initiatives to support the physical and mental wellbeing of music creators. Launch an initiative to bring music into libraries during winter months to benefit local communities. Bring music wellbeing events to groups where access may otherwise be limited, such as newcomer communities through a partnership with Happy Women’s Group.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Co-design with sectoral stakeholders a series of projects that will allow for the Priorities within Theme 1: Placing Artists at the Heart.	Partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that address priorities across Theme 1, such as ensuring there is enhanced inclusivity in music, seeking investment and export opportunities for artists and industry representatives at varying stages of their career and continuing to engage with young people to expand their understanding of the world of music.	June 2026 to March 2027	£12,000
Theme 2 : Nurture the Sector			
NI Music Prize & Sound of Belfast	Annual programmes that celebrate the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music. Recognising outstanding talent while providing opportunities for live performance, industry engagement and audience development. Second year or a three-year partnership.	June 2026 to March 2027	£55,000
Music Connections Website – a one-stop-shop online Music Directory to promote and connect all facets of the music business and those working in it.	Final year of delivery for Music Connections website and online directory and support service for musicians.	June 2026 to August 2026	£30,000
Music Business Accelerator Programme	Following the launch of the Music Business Accelerator- programme scoping exercise with the local sector, Stage One will launch in 2026 to provide local businesses with	June 2026 to March 2027	£10,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
	tailored support and connections to specific industry events, in collaboration with colleagues in Economic Development.		
City of Music Industry Sessions	Continued programming of free and accessible educational events around an array of topics within the music industry and partnering with groups that provide skill development opportunities. A space to allow local music creators and entrepreneurs to network together. Partners include EmuBands, Imagine Festival, The Night Institute, Belfast TradFest and Native Events.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Allocate programming funding to support organisations who seek to develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres	Continue to support projects and partnerships that develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres where gaps are identified, working with groups such as Sonic Arts Research Centre and Soultrane.	June 2026 to March 2027	£14,000
Co-design with sectoral stakeholders a series of projects that will allow for the priorities within Theme 2.	Partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that address priorities across Theme 2, such as providing pathways for artist and industry representative attendance at international conferences to develop new networks, including The Great Escape, as well as sourcing alternative education opportunities for continuous upskilling of the local music sector and creating pathways for local music businesses to be nurtured.	June 2026 to March 2027	£15,000
Belfast Music Forum	Host the inaugural Belfast Music Forum to bring different music communities together, mirroring the Visual Arts Forum and the Festivals Forum, and provide sector support identified through direct engagement, data and research opportunities. Utilise this engagement to inform future planning and respond to immediate sectoral needs.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Theme 3: Igniting the Live Experience			
Purple Flag Alignment	Alignment with the city of Belfast's Purple Flag, partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that enhance Belfast's night-time economy, culture and governance to ensure the city is fulfilling its economic and cultural potential after dark, as well as ensuring our venues are safe and accessible for audiences and artists.	June 2026 to March 2027	£8,000
Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO			
Music as a key asset for the outward promotion of NI	Collate Belfast music-focused imagery and videos that can be utilised when promoting Belfast on a global platform, such as during UNESCO City of Music forums, as well as capturing significant moments in projects supported through the Music Matters	June 2025 to March 2027	£5,000

Appendix 1

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
	delivery and new opportunities, such as the launch event for an all-Ireland UNESCO network in September.		
Co-design with sectoral stakeholders a series of projects that will allow for the Priorities within Theme 4.	Partner with key stakeholders and groups to launch initiatives that address priorities across Theme 4, such as supporting the sector to develop assistive and interactive technologies to increase the accessibility of music for all, enhancing the visibility of Belfast globally as a key music destination and working with the film and design sector to weave music throughout the city across different outputs and artforms.	June 2026 to March 2027	£12,000

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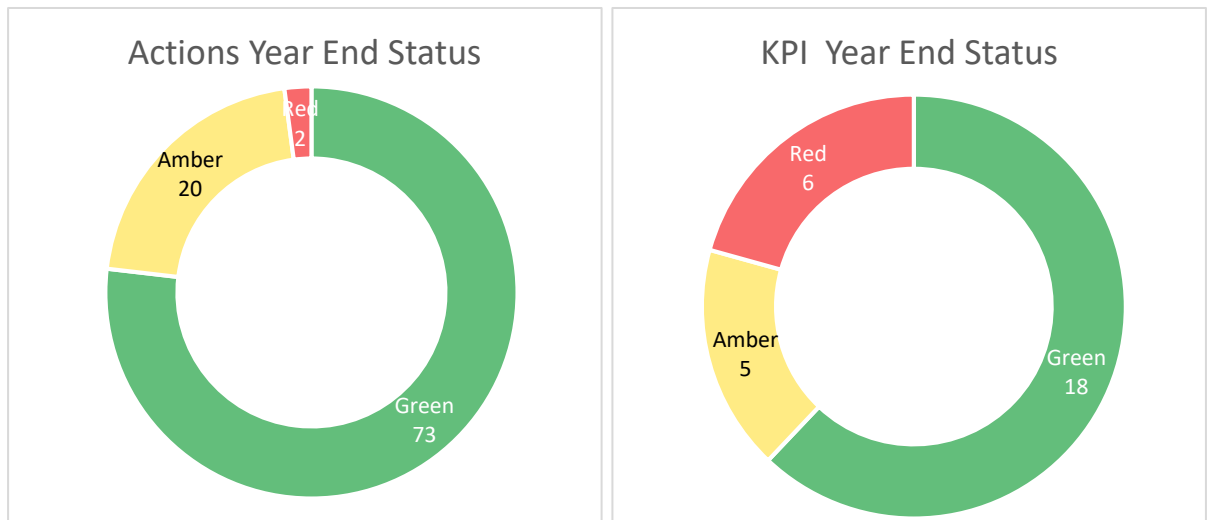
Subject:	City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan 2025/26 End of Year Report and final 2026-27 Committee Plan with Performance Information
Date:	10 June 2026
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director, Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

Restricted Reports					
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues						
1.1	To provide an end of year report on the key actions contained in the 2025-26 City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee Plan, as agreed by this Committee in May 2025.						
1.2	To present to Committee the final City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan for 2026-27 which incorporates a completed performance information section.						
2.0	Recommendation						
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of the end of year report as set out in Appendix 1; • Approve the performance section included within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2026-27 attached at Appendix 2. 						
3.0	Main Report						
3.1	<u>CG&R Committee Plan 2025-26 End of Year Report</u> While the Committee receives regular updates on progress for specific programmes and initiatives, Appendix 1 sets out an End of Year performance report detailing progress against the strategic priorities and deliverables that were contained within last year’s Committee Plan (2025-26) as agreed by members at its meeting on 4 th June 2025.						
3.2	A range of monitoring mechanisms is in place to track the wide variety of actions and KPIs set out in the Plan. For organisations in receipt of funding, grant recipients are usually required to submit their own end-of-year monitoring reports. This process creates a time lag, as it involves issuing individual requests, receiving responses, and then collating and analysing the information before it can be reported to Members. As a result, the data was not available in time for the April committee meeting when the 2026/27 report was presented. Officers are continuing to develop and improve monitoring processes and arrangements to enable more timely and responsive performance reporting.						
3.3	Year-end performance has been analysed using a Red-Amber-Green, using the following definitions: <table border="1" data-bbox="272 1655 1484 1814"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #f08080;">Red</td> <td>Action was not delivered as planned. KPI target not achieved (>5% tolerance).</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffd700;">Amber</td> <td>Action partially delivered. KPI target almost achieved (within 5% tolerance)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #90ee90;">Green</td> <td>Action delivered as planned. KPI target achieved.</td> </tr> </table> <p>In summary, 91 out of 124 measures (73%) were rated Green, with 25 Amber and 8 Red. This represents a significant improvement from the mid-year position (reported to Committee in November), where there were 76 Green, 43 Amber and 5 Red measures. The increase in Green ratings (+15) and reduction in Amber ratings (-18) demonstrates clear progress and effective corrective action during the second half of the year. The year has ended with a clear</p>	Red	Action was not delivered as planned. KPI target not achieved (>5% tolerance).	Amber	Action partially delivered. KPI target almost achieved (within 5% tolerance)	Green	Action delivered as planned. KPI target achieved.
Red	Action was not delivered as planned. KPI target not achieved (>5% tolerance).						
Amber	Action partially delivered. KPI target almost achieved (within 5% tolerance)						
Green	Action delivered as planned. KPI target achieved.						

upward trajectory. The substantial reduction in Amber measures shows that issues identified at mid-year have been actively managed and, in many cases, successfully resolved. Overall, the committee has delivered a strong year-end performance across both Our Economy and Our Place themes.



3.4 CG&R Committee Plan 2026-27

At its April meeting, the Committee approved the draft City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2026/27, subject to additional performance information being brought back to its next meeting. The Performance Monitoring section of the draft Committee Plan has now been completed and includes SMART targets for the year ahead. It should be noted that many targets cannot be compared with the actual figures from the previous year as the budget allocations are often different. Work continues to develop a suite of indicators that aren't just outputs but rather reflect the impact of the investment. Going forward, 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.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

The draft Committee Plan 2026/27 is aligned with the budget agreed by the Special Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 13th February 2026, namely a cash limit for the CG&R Committee of £23,958,554 as set out in Appendix 2.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

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.

4.0 **Appendices - Documents Attached**

- Appendix 1 - CG&R Committee Plan 2025-26 End of Year Report
- Appendix 2 – Final CG&R Committee Plan 2026-27

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FRONT COVER

Image from Alexi Comin (taken from City Matters)

City Growth & Regeneration

2025/26 End-of-Year Performance Report



Looking Back – A selection of highlights from the past year

434 Belfast businesses supported to grow through Go Succeed

873 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through Go Succeed start-up activity

24 Vacant Properties brought back into use by the Vacant to Vibrant programme

Culture Night delivered on 19th September attended by 50,000 people

Strategic Partnership agreement signed with Private Sector Partner

Strategic acquisition of the Assembly Rooms and adjoining assets

928 participants recruited to Employment and Upskilling academies

225K funding awards made through the £250k Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme

Belfast secured Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann for a second consecutive year in 2027

Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival delivered with an audience of 57,000

International Relations Framework adopted and being implemented

724,514 visitor servicing enquiries managed by Visit Belfast

1,048,237 visitors to St George's Market

459 conferences, weddings or events at Belfast Castle and Malone House

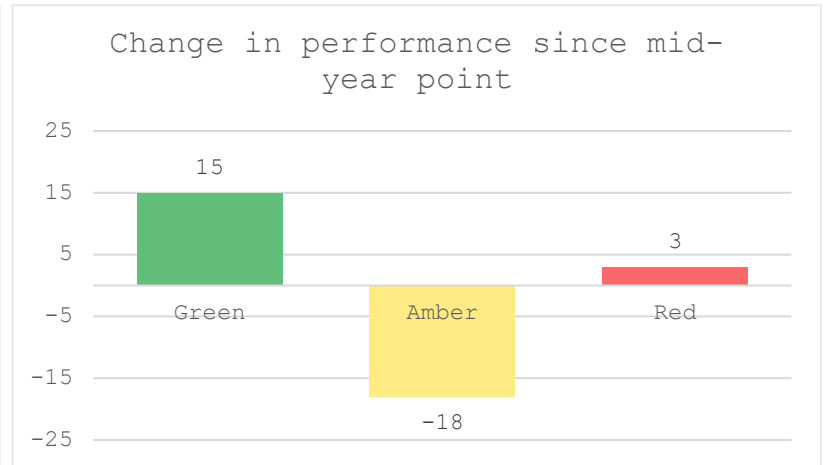
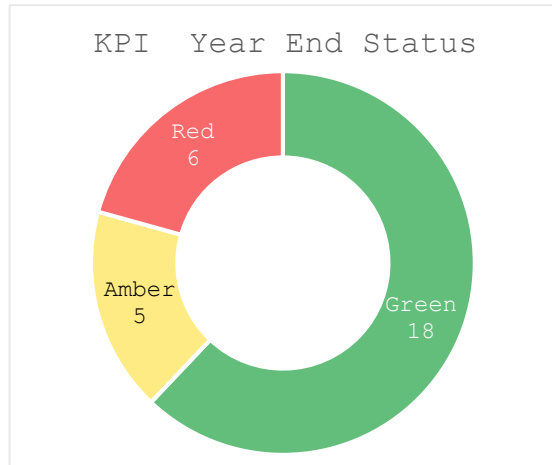
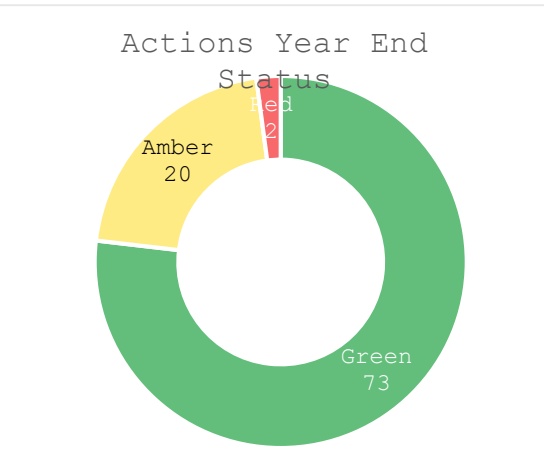
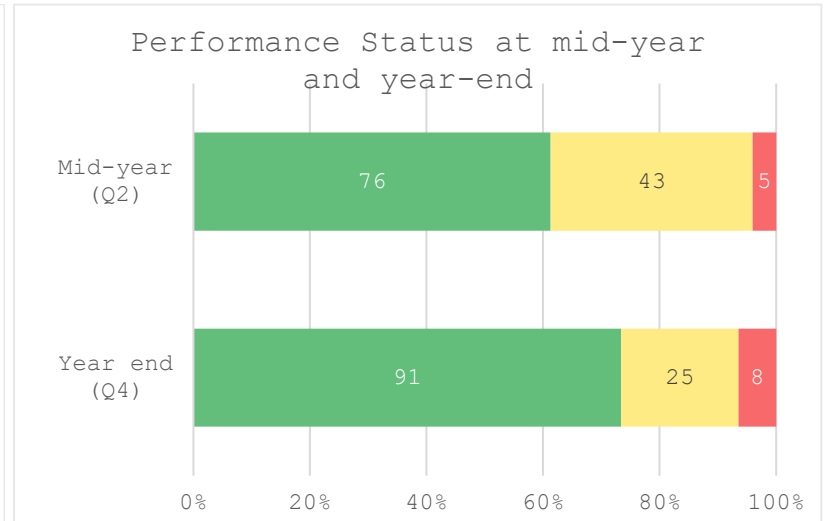
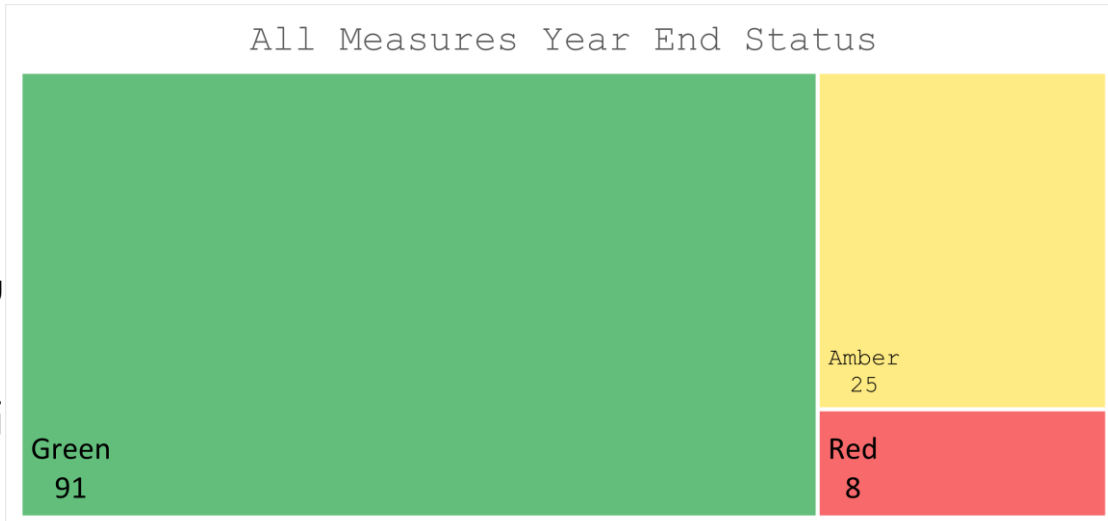
2,820 people attended our localised Jobs Fairs

Belfast ranked 9th as a globally sustainable destination for tourism

Performance Dashboard

At year-end, 91 out of 124 measures (73%) were rated Green (Action delivered as planned or KPI target achieved), with 25 Amber (Action part delivered or delivered with some uncertainty or KPI target almost achieved – within a tolerance level) and 8 Red (Action not delivered or KPI target not achieved). This represents a significant improvement from the mid-year position (at the end of Q2), where we had 76 Green, 43 Amber and 5 Red. The +15 increase in Green ratings and -18 reduction in Amber ratings demonstrates clear progress and effective corrective action during the second half of the year. The year has ended with a clear upward trajectory. The substantial reduction in Amber measures shows that issues identified at mid-year have been actively managed and, in many cases, successfully resolved. Overall, the committee has delivered a strong year-end performance across both Our Economy and Our Place themes.

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Our Economy Priorities

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
Support business start-up and growth by managing and overseeing the delivery of the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) and deliver targeted support in Belfast to meet funder and statutory targets.	Undertake the 'Lead Council' role on NIESS, 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.	The council managed the delivery of the £9.2 million, on behalf of all councils as part of the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Scheme. A further £4.53 million of funding was secured for future delivery.	Green
	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.	Go Succeed was tailored to support Belfast entrepreneurs both through startup activity and for existing businesses wishing to grow or scale. There was a significant uplift in business start-up activity totalling 839 businesses. There were a further 380 businesses supported through Go Succeed support for growth-focused companies. In addition, there were 127 grants were awarded to Belfast based businesses in the 2025/26 year.	Green
	Support 30 SMEs to access finance to support investment and growth through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF).	Seven calls were successfully launched with 31 SMEs being supported to access finance in the 2025/26 financial year.	Green
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.	During the year, there have been 22 new social enterprises assisted through Go Succeed start support and a further 16 existing social enterprises were assisted through Go Succeed growth support. There were 54 new and existing social enterprises supported via the council's bespoke Go Social programme and 17 successful recipients of the Social Economy Incentive Fund enabling new and existing social enterprises to support their business growth aspirations.	Green
	Deliver the Social Economy Incentive Fund, with a renewed focus on establishing new social enterprises addressing barriers in areas of deprivation across Belfast.	The Social Economy Incentive Fund was launched, with just under 100 applications received. There were 49 eligible applications, 22 were invited to pitch and 17 were ultimately awarded funding, totalling just under £90,000 to support business growth.	Green
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 BRCD delivery by integration and alignment with economic development and skills programmes.	Worked with the Belfast Region City Deal team to support delivery of benefits realisation activity, with a focus on SME access and skills development (particularly creating inclusive pathways to employment). The Local Economic Partnership also agreed that the LEP Action Plan should feature City Deal "benefits realisation" projects in order to ensure that residents can access opportunities and businesses are able to develop capacity in key growth sectors.	Green
	Develop an updated economic proposition demonstrating the critical role of Belfast and	The draft Belfast Economic Proposition document was developed by year end and will be used to assist with the promotion of the city for investment and international trade opportunities to support long-term sustainable and inclusive growth. The	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	the Belfast Region in creating good jobs, supporting innovation and driving productivity.	proposition was developed in the context of the council's International Relations framework, Investment Guide and Invest in Belfast website. to ensure consistency on the key messaging on the city's strengths including priority sectors; quality of life proposition; and cultural assets.	
	Contribute to the development of a new strategic approach as part of the DBEC, focusing on promoting economic linkages along the corridor.	The council supported work in line with annual action plan, including taking a lead role on the Peace Plus skills programme.	Green
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.	The Partnership was established, aligned closely with the Labour Market Partnership. Following partner engagement, an action plan was presented to CG&R in March 2026, which was subsequently endorsed by members.	Green
	Agree priority projects for (LEP) financial support and draw down year one funding to mobilise activity	A proposal was submitted to the LMP outlining Belfast's LEP focus, centred on developing sector-specific skills - particularly in film and production linked to Studio Ulster. Suggested programmes from Local Enterprise Agencies and partners are now under review. Following extensive engagement, an action plan was presented to CG&R in March 2026, setting out a programme built around three pillars: creative sector incubation, capital investment for creative growth, and targeted business growth and innovation support. The committee endorsed the emerging priority work areas.	Green
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.	Work was undertaken to prepare for an outward business mission to Boston in the next financial year. The team hosted a successful Connected-Health inward recce from Nashville in March 2026 and is preparing a full inward mission for October 2026. Support was also provided to the Northern Ireland Health Minister ahead of their March 2026 visit to Nashville.	Green
	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.	The new 2025–2028 International Relations Framework was approved by Committee in November 2026. The framework includes a new pillar focused on re-engaging with Europe. The team has also introduced new assessment and tracking processes to measure international activity, impact, and improved targeting.	Green
Support the development and delivery of the Belfast	Undertake a review of the pilot phase of the Belfast Business Promise (BBP) programme to inform the future approach of the scheme.	A review of the Belfast Business Promise was undertaken, and the findings were presented to members of the SP&R Committee in March 2026. Members agreed the preferred way forward which included: greater potential to scale, providing flexibility to adopt the approach and focus depending on the size of the business; improving	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
Business Promise scheme		the added value to specific business sectors/cohorts; and ultimately enhancing the delivery of the desired outcomes.	
	Deliver six Belfast Business Promise Learning Days for existing member organisations.	Three promise learning days were delivered in this financial year with an additional three peer support networks and two confidence and wellbeing days for existing members. During the final quarter, the focus turned to project evaluation and future planning and delivery.	Amber
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.	The Review of the Annual Service Plan (ASP) was complete and a contract extension to be issued following sign off with SRO. Occupancy has significantly increased with Q4 closing out at 94% and the average occupancy for the year at 77%.	Green
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups	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.	At the year-end, 519 participants have successfully started an Employment Academy. A total of 66% have already secured a positive outcome and we continue to track activity until everyone has completed both their participation as well as aftercare. It is important to note that differences in volume across sectors above is not an indicator of investment levels. Academies targeting higher paid roles are significantly more expensive to deliver due to the skills levels required for the role. For example, a Tech Employment Academy can cost over £4000 per person, while a Health & Social Care Employment Academy costs under £1000 per person. Additionally, employment outcomes are continuously monitored and investments subject to review to ensure residents receive the best service possible and underpinned by the implementation of a Quality Assurance Framework. While it is too early to report on outcomes due to the fact that academies are still being delivered, of those who completed participant surveys in 2025/26 so far, 22% of participants reported having a disability, 30% were from an ethnic minority, those who identified as British or Irish had only 4% of a difference.	Green
	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.	At the year-end, a total of 409 participants commenced an Upskilling Academy. These academies focus on low-paid, female-dominated sectors where Level 3–5 qualifications are essential for career progression, such as Childcare, Playwork, Classroom Assistants, and Health & Social Care. Initial capacity was limited due to an attempted transition to partners, but after this proved unworkable, additional LMP funding in Dec 2025 and Feb 2026 significantly increased available places. Given the 18-month delivery timeframe, it is too early to report full outcomes, though	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
		attrition remains low at 6%. During the year, 147 participants completed an Upskilling Academy, with 143 achieving a better job (97%).	
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.	During the year, seven Labour Market Partnership meetings were convened (May 2025, June 2025, September 2025, November 2025, January 2026, February 2026 and March 2026). The LEP was first introduced in September 2025 but the first meeting with LEP representation was November 2025.	Green
	Deliver the Gateway to Choices service, providing independent advice and guidance and encouraging informed decision making to find the right provision for people.	Performance against the contract's key performance indicators has been broadly achieved; however, LMP members have concluded that ongoing uncertainty within the wider Employability and Skills (E&S) ecosystem necessitates a strategic change in direction. Consequently, it has been agreed that the Gateway to Choices contract will be brought to a close and will not continue beyond 31 March 2026. Although a series of potential future options has been identified by LMP/LEP members, no decisions will be implemented until there is greater clarity regarding the post-SPF funding landscape and the transition to the Local Growth Fund. During the 2025/26 period, the Gateway to Choices service supported a total of 1,180 participants, with 224 progressing into employment and a further 372 entering education or training.	Amber
	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.	Delivery will continue until the end of June 2026 and as a result outcomes will not be finalised until then. At the year end, there were 60 participants (against a target of 90); 45 participants had completed the service (of which 100% were satisfied and 100% reported increased confidence; 3 participants progressed into employment and a further 7 progressed into education and training.	Amber
	Host localised jobs fairs in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices and explore other jobs and skills events.	During 2025/26, a total of 25 localised job fairs were delivered in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices, alongside a range of wider jobs and skills events, collectively engaging 2,820 participants. During Quarter 4, the programme delivered multiple large-scale events involving over 80 exhibitors and more than 1,100 attendees. These included a JobStart Apprenticeship Pathway event attended by 220 participants, a JobStart "Meet the Employer" event attracting 658 attendees, and a targeted recruitment event with Mount Charles involving just over 100 participants. In addition, a dedicated support event for carers was delivered with 300 attendees, accompanied by the development of a new resource to assist partners in signposting residents to relevant support services.	Green
	Expand the Labour Market Partnership to encompass the work of the Local Economic Partnership, developing priority projects	New Terms of Reference and guidance were developed with 2 LMP/LEP meetings held (1 with full LEP/LMP membership and 1 pre-LEP formal incorporation). The LEP was first introduced in September 2025 but the first meeting with LEP representation was November 2025.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	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.	The Provider Network grew by 53 new members and 18 new organisations. To support this work, particularly in reaching into local community infrastructure, we commissioned the Belfast Area Partnerships to extend the reach of our Provider Network and to deliver localised outreach and engagement to create a pipeline to our delivery. This has become even more critical with the significant reduction in funding due to Local Growth Fund implementation. Further engagement is planned with the Youth Justice Agency (Department of Justice) to look at proposals to support young people leaving prison.	Green
	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.	Employability and Skills considerations were considered as part of Developer Contributions following engagement with colleagues from the Planning Service in respect of Queens Street PBSA. A further Employability and Skills Plan from McAleer and Rushe was also reviewed during Q3.	Green
	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.	A total of 350 SV points incurred through E&S contracts. Activities included the delivery of Employability & Skills (E&S) initiatives to support priority groups and young people across a total of 191 hours of E&S initiatives for Belfast residents.	Green
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.	Footfall cameras are fully operational, and ongoing data collation will ensure that year-on-year (YoY) figures are captured for more meaningful analysis. During Q4 there were 221,257 visitors to the market. This brings the year-end total to over 1 million visitors (1,048,237) exceeding the annual target.	Green
	Benchmark St George's Market with other comparable visitor attractions in terms of customer experience and visitor feedback.	Tourism NI have paused the Visitor Attraction rating scheme - outside BCC control. Alternative arrangements for feedback and assessing customer satisfactions (reviews) are planned for the 26/27 year.	Amber
	Manage and promote the delivery of the annual Christmas Continental Market and additional market events such as Twilight Markets.	The 2025 Christmas Market and Twilight Market were highly successful, with the Christmas Market attracting over one million visitors during its six-week run, while the Twilight market attracted over 20,000 visitors over two days in November. The 2026 Christmas Market will be the final event delivered under the current contract, which is scheduled to go out to tender in June 2027. Twilight Markets are confirmed to take place in November 2026.	Green
	Review the markets rights policy to ensure that it supports the operation of independent	The Markets Right Policy was approved and is now fully implemented. The new fee structure is in place.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	markets across the city, to enhance animation and vibrancy.		
	Review existing storage policy at the market to increase opportunities for additional rental income/ income generation on non-market days.	The Storage Policy was approved and is now being implemented. Storage and the associated storage fees will officially go into effect on 1st June 2026.	Green

Our Place Priorities

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
Support and work with partners to address housing challenges and delivery high quality housing-led regeneration and place-making	Establish and oversee governance arrangements across the Private Sector Partner indicative work streams ensuring alignment and linkages to the established council governance structures.	Governance arrangements were established across the Private Sector Partner (PSP) including agreement around engagement with elected members. The Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed in Q1. A Party Group Leaders site visit to Loft Lines took place in February 2026.	Green
	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).	The Development Programme was agreed for the site prioritisation to take forward the initial four strategic sites (Corporation Street / Exchange Street, Gloucester Street, INW Smithfield, Ormeau Avenue). An initial Site-Specific Business Plan was drafted, which is to be agreed / approved by Council, and PAD submitted. Development and delivery approaches have been under consideration, and engagement with members on this took place during Q4.	Green
	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)	Positive progress was made during the year on the Tranche 1 SSA Phase 2 sites. Members were engaged during Q4 around this, and a report for consideration by Committee has been drafted to be brought to members in the new financial year.	Amber
	Progress Tranche 2 sites (from the Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2) through feasibility and development options for subsequent consideration by CGR/SP&R.	During the year feasibility options for Tranche 2 SSA Phase 2 sites were completed. Whilst progress was made during the year, there is further work required on complex areas going forward into the next financial year.	Amber
	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).	Worked in partnership with DfC and Clanmil Housing Association during the year in respect of the Inner North-West Development Brief. The site has been registered within the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) and the Association is progressing extensive stakeholder engagement to inform the planning process. Legals will progress into 2026-27.	Amber
	Develop Placemaking Action Plan for lands at Joy Street/ Cromac Street/ Stewart Street.	During the year work was progressed with partners around the development of a Placemaking Action Plan for lands at Joy St, Cromac St and Stewart St, including stakeholder engagement. This included land assembly subject to necessary approvals. Note: SP&R approval in September 2024 on the targeted acquisition of property in the area was completed in Q3; SP&R further agreed (June 2025) a further acquisition to support the land assembly, this acquisition was also completed in Q3.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	Work with partners in relation to developing Placemaking Action Plans for Cregagh Green, Shankill / Glencairn and Tullycarnet.	During the year work advanced with partners in relation to Placemaking Action Plans, notably Shankill which was published in Q4. Work will continue into the next financial year in respect of Cregagh aligned to NIHE's Tower Block Strategy.	Green
Support the delivery of strategic regeneration and investment programmes	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.	In September 2025, the council agreed to purchase the Assembly Rooms and associated adjoining lands and buildings from Castlebrooke Investments, as part of its continued focus to drive forward the regeneration of the city centre. The acquisition of the Assembly Rooms Cluster was completed during Q3.	Amber
	Develop future use / development proposals for Regeneration Assets including 2 Royal Avenue and 35-39 Royal Avenue.	The initial Expression of Interest (EOI) process for the long-term future use of the ground floor of 2 Royal Avenue was concluded and reported to CG&R Committee in October 2025. Committee agreed not to progress with the recommended proposal. Subsequently a new EOI process was agreed and successfully launched. Immediate health and safety building works (including shop frontage improvements and lighting installation) were undertaken at 35-39 Royal Avenue, and the property was actively marketed to let. The Letting of the property at 35-39 Royal Avenue was agreed by the SP&R Committee during Q4.	Amber
	Deliver the Vacant to Vibrant City Wide capital grant scheme to support the reduction of vacancy and promote the revitalisation of the city.	The City Wide Vacant to Vibrant capital grant scheme was fully expended as reported to the CG&R Committee in September 2025. This resulted in £500k (funded by DfC and UKSPF) capital investment of grant awards to 24 applicants; creating 83 direct employment opportunities; presenting an estimated rates return of £911,777.69 over the course of the lease & subject to LPS valuation; and a return of £1.79 on every £1 invested. Internal and external funding was secured to extend the City Wide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme.	Green
	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.	Extensive progress was made during 2025 - 2026 on the outputs from the HOUSE EOI. Agreement was made on the parameters and progression of the HOUSE Programme as the next delivery workstream of the Vacant to Vibrant Toolkit, including actively seeking funding to deliver the proposed pilot project.	Green
	Undertake a scoping study on vacant offices, to include financial, economic and regeneration implications and future use and funding options.	A scoping study on vacant offices (including desktop research and engagement with the office market) was completed and will be used to support the business case for HOUSE Programme.	Green
	Deliver the Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme, administering Department for Communities funding in the Sandy Row area to support	The Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme (£250k DfC Funding) was launched on 18 March 2025, the scheme closed to applications on 31 August 2025 following an agreed grant period extension by the CG&R Committee. At the year-end, 45 applications were received, assessed and Letters of Offer issued representing an	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	eligible businesses and the wider revitalisation of the area.	investment of £225k, with several applicants also availing of the wrap-around support services delivered through the Go Succeed programme. The Marketing & Branding workstream was rolled out across the businesses and wider area, with completion to extend into Q1 2026-27. A Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Scheme (£200k Funding) was also launched during the year and was over-subscribed. A total of 23 applications were received requesting a total of £115k funding against an allocation of £100k. Four Environmental Improvement Grants, representing an investment of £100k, are progressing through the grant process and delivery stage, this is expected to continue into 2026-2027.	
	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.	An update on the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme was presented to the CG&R Committee in September 2025. A Master Plan has been developed with private landowners in the area. Pre-Application Discussions have taken place, and this work will further advance in during 2026-27.	Amber
	Ensure City Regeneration and Development considerations are included within Developer Contributions to maximise the regeneration benefits.	Engaged with colleagues in Planning Service to ensure City Regeneration and Development considerations are included within developer contributions to maximise regeneration benefits. This includes ensuring an internal way of working that enables opportunities for developer contributions, progress has been made, however there is further work required.	Amber
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.	During the year, extensive work was advanced towards finalising the A Bolder Vision strategy. Throughout 2025/26, Queen's Quay Kiosk was opened, delivering on a ABV. Additionally, as an outworking of ABV the Under the Bridges and the Sailortown-Titanic Quarter Bridge projects have come forward as transformational initiatives that deliver on the priority need to connect communities to the city centre. committee agreed the updated supporting interventions to enable the finalisation of the strategy as the Council's position on major infrastructure and policy consultations with the understanding that any consultation responses will be brought back to Committee for approval prior to submitting.	Amber
	Progress the Under the Bridges project to design development RIBA Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination).	During the year, the Under the Bridges project progressed to design development RIBA Stage 3 and planning application was submitted.	Green
	Progress the Sailortown/Titanic Quarter (TQ) bridge project to design development RIBA Stage 2 (Concept Design).	During the year, the Sailortown to TQ Bridge RIBA Stage 1 completed. It is anticipated that RIBA Stage 2 will be completed in Q1 2026-27. During 2025-26, engagement on future funding was advanced.	Amber

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	Progress public realm improvements through design development and statutory approval at Little York Street, Little Patrick Street, 5Cs and Blackstaff Square & Environs.	During the year, the Little York Street-Little Patrick Street scheme design was engaged in a statutory TRO process with DfI, which was approved. The 5Cs and Blackstaff schemes progressed at various stages through DfC governance and design and planning.	Green
	Deliver the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework (NZNF).	The UP2030 Belfast Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework document was finalised during Q3 and was approved by the CG&R Committee at its Special meeting in November 2025. Following this the UP2030 Belfast Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework was submitted to the UP2030 Horizon Europe Consortium after Council ratification on 1 December 2025.	Green
	Support the delivery of relevant priorities in the Climate Action Plan for 2025/26	Officers have been engaging with the council's Climate Team to support relevant actions within the Climate Action Plan for 2025/26 to look at options for future delivery.	Green
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.	During 2025 - 2026 officers worked to Position the City to Compete including through the BCRPP. Officers and elected members advocated and positioned Belfast for inclusive strategic investment to national and international audiences. Engagement with the VCSE Panel in relation to the establishment of a Community Forum / Reference took place with work to be continued on its outworkings. Through the BCRPP the Place Based Growth Proposition has been advanced through advocacy and engagement during 2025-2026.	Amber
	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.	During 2025 -2026 the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition was updated. Alongside this a Business Case was developed and submitted to Treasury seeking place based and regeneration investment funding for Belfast. Extensive strategic engagement took place during 2025-2026 with Elected Members, the NI Executive Departments, Ministers, Belfast MLAs and with Westminster Officials and Belfast MPs.	Green
	Facilitate investment and development related follow ups aimed at positioning the city to compete and promote inclusive development for the city.	Positive investment and development related follow-ups took place across 2025-26.	Green
	Manage and maintain the Invest in Belfast website and complimentary digital platforms and collateral.	Throughout 2025-26 the Invest in Belfast website and complimentary digital platforms and collateral were managed and maintained. This included with regular news digests, investment guide and BCRPP sponsorship and programming information. During the year, there were 4,993 Active Users to the Invest in Belfast website. Active users report the number of people who engaged with the site. The average engagement time per active user was 33 seconds.	Green
Future City Centre Programme	Working with internal and external partners, deliver agreed priorities in the Future City Centre	Positive progress was made in 2025 - 2026 in relation to the development of a Future City Centre Programme with city stakeholders. This was anchored in	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	<p>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).</p>	<p>Community Planning through the establishment of the City Centre Leadership Coordination Group, key priorities have been agreed around operational task and finish and opportunities around Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Deliver Year 5 of A City Imagining, Belfast's 10-year cultural strategy.</p>	<p>Deliver Core Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG) funding to sustain accessible cultural activity (Festivals and events grants) and infrastructure (arts and heritage grants) within Belfast.</p>	<p>All 2025/26 contracts were issued with mid-year monitoring returned in November 2025, and subsequent payments released in December 2025. The application process for the next round of CMAG covering the period 2026-28 was launched and closed on 10th October. Following scoring, the recommendations for future CMAG funding were presented to committee and approved in March 2026. A total of 50 Awards (totalling £1,239,554) were approved across Festival & Events and Arts & Heritage organisations including fourteen uplifts and nine new entrants to the funding programme.</p>	<p>Green</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>All 25/26 contracts issued mid-year monitoring was returned in November 2025 and subsequent payments issued. The application process for the next round of CFF covering the period 2026-27 closed in January 2026. Officers scored the applications in January 2026 and made recommendations to support 23 grants. These have been offered to Community, Cultural and Voluntary organisations in Belfast towards their community festivals.</p>	<p>Green</p>
	<p>Provision of arts and heritage small grants to a minimum of 15 cultural projects to support the outcomes identified within City Imagining.</p>	<p>All 2025/26 contracts were issued and first payments made with mid-year monitoring returned in November 2025. The application process for the next round of A&H covering the period 2026-27 opened in October and closed in January 2026. Officers scored applications for Arts and Heritage in January 2026 and made recommendations to support 17 grants towards creative, cultural and heritage projects which align with the 'City Imagining' Cultural Strategy.</p>	<p>Green</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>A total of 11 organisations were supported through the Artist Studio & Creative Workspace Grants during 2025/26 (£150,000 total investment). This initiative recognises that the impact of artist-led spaces is not adequately captured by conventional metrics such as ticket income or audience numbers. The funding scheme directly supports an estimated 450 artists across Belfast. Organisations or groups operating artist studios and artist led Co-Director spaces were able to apply for up to £10,000 to use towards specified developmental needs within a 12-month period. Grants up to £20,000 were available for organisations that accommodate at least 25 active members, and which meet additional eligibility criteria and supply a suitable business case. In addition, a targeted programme</p>	<p>Green</p>

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
		of skills development workshops, talks, presentations was delivered in partnership with Arts & Business and Visual Artists Ireland.	
	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.	Partnerships with key organisations supported audience development and accessibility provision including Gig Buddies. Gig Buddies delivered by The Black Box works across venues in Belfast. Venue partnerships also included Oh Yeah Music Centre, Voodoo, 2 Royal Avenue, SSE Arena, Limelight, Telegraph Building, American Bar, The Sunflower Bar, The Reporter, Union Street Bar, Crescent Arts Centre and large-scale cultural events across Northern Ireland such as Belsonic, Stendhal Festival, AVA Festival, Learning Disability Pride Festival, St. Patricks Day Parade, Belfast Pride, Belfast 2024, NI Music Prize and more, demonstrating sector-wide engagement in creating a more inclusive cultural scene and providing access to active involvement in mainstream cultural life. During 2025/26, there were 18 active buddy pairings and a total membership (including associate membership) of 30 participants and 33 volunteers. 90% of participants reported feeling less socially isolated since joining Gig Buddies, with many building long-term friendships beyond the project. 85% of volunteers say they have developed a greater understanding of accessibility barriers and disability rights through their involvement.	Green
	Deliver 'Bank of Ideas', a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.	The Bank of Ideas project was delivered in June 2025 with contracts awarded and final monitoring returned during Q3. There were 97 applications received with support of up to £2k each, provided to 34 projects across the city. Delivery of Participatory Budgeting (PB) voting day on 29 th June, with 1,162 votes cast for 69 ideas (from 111 applications) and 34 ideas were funded. The Bank of Ideas programme for 2026-27 was successfully launched and 110 applications were received and processed by end of Q4 with 98 ideas put forward for Voting Day following a criteria check. Voting and delivery of the project will be delivered during Q1 of the 2026/2027 financial year.	Green
	Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified.	Capacity Building for unrepresented genres: Successfully running a programme that develops the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment. Delivered in collaboration with Analogue Catalogue Studios, Start Together Studio and Dream Factory Studios with 30 individuals supported. The Sounds Atypical Music Grant Scheme in collaboration with University of Atypical provides funding for Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent musicians to create accessible music events in various performance spaces across Belfast. Supported a partnership with BLAKMEX to promote diverse and under-represented genres.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	Sectoral development initiatives, including research, support for sectoral forums and establishment of a cultural compact.	The Visual Arts Forum, Festival's Forum and Green Arts Forum have continued to provide sector support providing networking and skills development to artists, galleries, festivals and venues. Forums meet on a regular basis (monthly and quarterly).	Green
	Deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme, a city wide, venue based open call event including supporting marketing activity.	Culture Night returned to Belfast in September 2025 following a six-year absence and was delivered as a venue-led, city-wide programme, prioritising free, accessible and family-friendly activity and operating through a receiving house model. As a pilot to supporting a new approach to Culture Night delivery, a number of artists, cultural organisations and venues were financially supported to participate, and no street-based programming or road closures were included. The event evaluation reported positive audience experiences, sector goodwill and an estimated attendance of 50,000 people with an estimated economic impact of £1.67 million for the city. Audiences also reported feeling safe across the city, supported by coordinated stewarding and emergency planning. Procurement was initiated during Q4 for delivery of the 2026 event.	Green
	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.	A supplier was contracted during Q4 to support the delivery of a heritage capacity building programme and establish an advisory group which will continue over into the 2026/27 financial year. The unit worked with Brink on the 'Growing a museum' project which was completed during Q4.	Amber
Deliver Year 2 of the music strategy, Music Matters – a roadmap for Belfast	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.	As part of UNESCO City of Music, The 'Sounds Atypical' bursaries were launched with University of Atypical for deaf, disabled and neurodivergent community. These opened in January and were selected in February/March. The 'Teenage kicks' scheme also awarded 11 small microgrants to venues and music organisations to put on gigs for under 18s and increase music attendance/participation for this age range. The Gradam Ceoil bursaries opened in Q4 and will be announced/selected in Q1 of 26/27	Green
	Deliver the NI Music Prize & Sound of Belfast, an event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music.	The NI Music Prize awards ceremony took place on 12 th November, at the Ulster Hall, celebrating local music talent, featuring live performances, tributes, and award announcements. This included 66 events across 26 venues in Belfast, 166 NI artists performed to 8,694 (+26% increase).	Green
	Output Belfast – Work in partnership with Score Draw Music to deliver Output Belfast, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase.	Output Belfast was delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme. The conference took place on 25 th September and featured a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music (free to the public). Output 2025 was Ireland’s biggest one-day music	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
		conference and live music showcase and attracted 750 daytime guests, 120 daytime speakers and 4,000 evening attendees.	
Deliver Year 4 of Make Yourself at Home, the 10-year tourism plan for Belfast.	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.	We worked extensively with Visit Belfast for the Maritime Festival including a significant out of state campaign. Investment in Visit Belfast delivered £66m Leisure Economic impact; 400,000 Leisure Bed nights; 455,000 Leisure Day Trips; 150M PR & Comms opportunities to see.	Green
	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.	Delivery as per Service Level agreement, with £200k from BCC and £200k from TNI. Visit Belfast worked to secure bids for conferences, achieving 38,500 business delegates by year end, delivering economic impact of £39m resulting in 100,000 business bed nights for Belfast	Green
	Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme including management of awards to support new or enhanced neighbourhood tourism visitor experiences.	Development of 5 tourism experiences were supported - Arts Across Belfast Tour, Linen & Queen's Quarter Trail, Clifton House Mary Ann McCracken self-guided audio and AR tour, walking tour of Donegal Pass and George Best AR Tour. By Q3, 3 tourism experiences were in market and being delivered and the remaining 2 were launched during Q4.	Green
	Deliver the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme.	Accessibility and Inclusion Plan has been developed for Fleadh 2026; 6 organisations have applied for and been successful in being awarded vouchers; Worked with the industry and delivered workshops and information sessions to encourage them to be more accessible and inclusive as they welcome visitors. Seminar delivered during Q4; Tourism Officer was invited and presented to the World Accessible Tourism conference in Turin, Italy (run by the European Network for Accessible Tourism) - learnings shared with wide audience and the presentations are online.	Green
	Deliver the Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme.	Delivered 3 events in total -Three events were delivered including Learning Journey to Taste Causeway; Mixology Event and Fish Event at Belfast Met; Supported the Fleadh food and drink and engagement event during Q4; Delivered Belfast Flavours Live Conference on 23 rd February at ICC Belfast attracting 250 delegates including producers, restaurateurs, industry stakeholders and media - estimated PR value from listings was 100k to 130k AVE and total reach over 2M audience; and Delivered the What's Your Why at Catalyst Belfast focused on food businesses taking the lead in diversification and innovation.	Green
	Visitor Signage, Wayfinding and Street Dressing and Signage Upkeep.	Tourism signage content completed - liaison with Grand Central Station re location and update; map content and orientation updated.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	Enhance the visitor experience within Belfast, including enhancement of visitor experiences at Council owned assets.	Assets Report developed by CHL. A final report has been received and considered internally in order to agree next steps and implementation plan.	Green
	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.	A Belfast Visitor Attitude Survey was undertaken by Cognisense, an independent research company, to establish baseline data for Belfast from tourists. A pilot Power BI dashboard has been developed to visualise city tourism performance information. The dashboard will be updated to report the key findings from the research and disseminated wider once the necessary licensing is in place.	Green
	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.	The carbon baseline was completed, and the recommendations has been shared with the wider tourism industry. The GDS Index application was submitted, and it was announced that Belfast retained its top 10 position as a sustainability destination, by being ranked 9th in the index for 2025 out of over 80 cities. Work has been undertaken to understand what is required going forward for next year; a Sustainability Plan for Fleadh 2026 has been developed and further input to be undertaken and sharing with industry. Work has commenced on the application for 2026 GDS Index assessment.	Green
Delivery of the annual City Events programme of large-scale public city events and activities attracting local audiences and out-of-state visitors	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.	Family friendly activity and animation was delivered as part of Lord Mayor's Day 2025 focusing on City Hall and other venues – 2 Royal Ave, the Oh Yeah Music centre and the Green House. The event was delivered in partnership with the LM charities and key Council venues. Focus on musical performance and workshops, aimed at youth / families. Estimated audience across all venues 6-7,000. Positive feedback with no complaints received. Planning for the 2026 event is now underway with engagement with the Lord Mayors Office. Date for delivery is confirmed as Saturday 9th May 2026 - Theme is "Give it a Try" - sport, wellness and creativity giving back to youth of community.	Green
	St Patrick's Day 2026 - build on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations.	St Patrick's Day celebrations were delivered successfully with approximately 25,000 attendees - no reported incidents or accidents. The 2026 event involved additional support for other projects under this umbrella, procured previously, including Trad Trail, City Centre Music Festival, Seachtain na Gaelige and other smaller programme elements. Excellent media coverage and feedback.	Green
	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.	The Christmas Lights Switch On was successfully delivered for circa 10,000 attendees. Traditional delivery as per last few years focused on central stage at City Hall showcasing a variety of local talent. Accessible arrangements include accessible platform and audio description. The programme was supplemented by a 6-week programme at 2 Royal Ave 'Winters Den' (50,000 attendees) and a 5-week programme of both music and street theatre throughout the city centre	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
		during the busy Christmas period. No reported incidents or accidents. No complaints received.	
	Deliver the Festive Lighting programme.	Programme delivered for the Christmas period during Q3.	Green
	Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Deliver the 2025 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.	Festival successfully delivered to an audience of circa 57,000. Poor weather affected day 2 of the event. Delivered in-house with support from Maritime Belfast Trust and Belfast Harbour, and other partners. Many new elements for 2025 included an Accessible and Inclusive Zone and incorporating the Festival of Fools into the festival. An evening concert was held on the Slipways. Council was successful in securing £30k of Tourism NI support. Feedback was positive and given the audience figures, remarkably no complaints were received. Planning underway for the next event, where the festival is scheduled to be delivered in June 2027.	Green
Support delivery and maximise benefits from international and major events	Host Oireachtas na Samhna, Ireland's oldest Irish language and arts festival, from October 29 to November 2, 2025	Event delivered by Oireachtas with significant local stakeholder support and BCC Staff support.	Green
	Work with city partners to plan for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy.	The delivery of this action is dependent on the outworking of the Events Action Plan.	Amber
	Develop an Events Action Plan for the city, incorporating an ongoing approach to bid for events.	FEI were appointed to develop a 5-Year Events Action Plan for City Events underpinning both A City Imagining (10-year Cultural Strategy) and Make Yourself at Home (10-year Tourism Strategy) enabling Council to consider options and make recommendations for the identification, securing, funding and delivering of events and festivals in Belfast. The Events Action Plan is almost complete and will be brought to a future Committee meeting.	Amber
	Develop options for enhanced city animation during the summer.	Options were developed but didn't proceed during Summer 2025. This is linked to decision on a Sunday Trading pilot, and a public consultation exercise was launched during Q4 following the subsequent council decision in July 2025.	Red
	Engage with NI partners on maximising Belfast's position in Euro 2028.	Belfast is no longer a host city for Euro 2028.	Red
Delivery of 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.	The Core Fleadh Team were established including Operations, PMO and Programming. An Outline BCC Resourcing Plan was developed to facilitate delivery in August 2026. Agreements are in place with all key partners including Eventsec, Volunteer Now and The Traffic Management Company. At the year end, more than 1,000 volunteers have expressed an interest in supporting the	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
		delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil - on target to meet the circa 1,500 required. Outline on the ground Volunteering and Deployment Plan in place with training pending.	
	Development of Outline Business Case and implementation of governance structures and arrangements including establishment of a Fleadh Executive Committee.	An Outline Business Case has been progressed and TNI monies secured. Full governance structure has been stood up across Fleadh Executive Committee, Programme Board, Operations, Programming, Marketing, Finance and Risk with various subsets of governance below including Traffic and Transport, Security and Stewarding, Volunteering, Sponsorship. Governance continues to be streamlined and consolidated as the move to delivery continues. A Multi - Agency Group and Safet Advisory Group have also been established.	Green
	Develop and deliver the event Programme Plan and Operational Project Plan and initiate event procurement exercise.	A Full Programme Plan has been developed for Fleadh Cheoil and continues to be delivered through the governance structures. An Operational Project Plan has also been developed to support the delivery of all aspects of the Event Management Plan. Weekly meetings have been progressed over many months with CPS colleagues to ensure all necessary procurement exercises are in place - this is documented in a 'live' action tracker of procurement exercises.	Green
Commercial Assets (Belfast Castle, Malone House, Belfast Zoo and Belfast Bikes)	Effective management and operation of Belfast Castle and Malone House providing a safe, welcoming and attractive venue for all visitors; Promoting both venues as premier conference, event and wedding venues and progressing options to ensure long-term value for money.	Belfast Castle has been seeing positive volumes in relation to events and usage of cafe/restaurant. Malone House is quieter, with an ongoing trend of welcoming 'short lead' event bookings. High operational costs for security and cleaning continue to be analysed; reduced security costs at Malone were introduced in Q3. Both venues have faced operational difficulties with the Council's new security contractor for manned guarding. Belfast Castle has a new financial agreement in place (annual fixed operator fee) with the catering partner. Discussions have taken place with the contractor at Malone House (verbally agreements in place) but this has not yet been formally agreed via contract change. This will be confirmed in the new financial year.	Amber
	Efficient and effective management and operation of Belfast Zoo with a focus on enhancing the visitor experience, safety, conservation, education and animal welfare; and develop proposals to deliver long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo.	Various events and promotions took place during Q1-Q4 to encourage footfall and revenue, including the relaunch of interactive animal experiences, Christmas workshops, discounted admission offers and introduction of a new visitor land train. Health and Safety improvements have continued to be a major focus for improvement during the year. A range of improved measures and documentation are now in place and being followed by zoo staff. The first Member workshop on the zoo's long term financial sustainability took place in Q3, with a site visit and further workshop held during Q4.	Amber
	Oversee the implementation and mobilisation plan for changing to the new Belfast Bikes operator/ operating model in September 2025.	The new operator commenced in September 2025.	Green

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables	Year End Progress Update	Status
	Oversee the delivery of the Belfast Bikes public bike hire scheme, maximising revenue and reducing vandalism costs.	The new scheme is now fully installed following the delayed arrival of new pedal bikes. Whilst bike rentals were quiet during autumn/winter months, rentals and new users increased in March, as expected, with a 21% Year-on-Year increase compared to March 2025. We expect this growth to continue into the new financial year. The new scheme has a highly reduced vandalism fee for the Council.	Green

Performance Monitoring

The below Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets are used to monitor performance.

Theme	Key Performance Indicator	2025/26 Target	Year End Actual	Status
Our Economy	Number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity. (Statutory indicator)	325	326	Green
	Number of Regional individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	4,300	5,085	Green
	Number of Belfast individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	839	873	Green
	Number of Regional businesses supported through business growth activity.	2,000	2,244	Green
	Number of Belfast businesses supported through business growth activity.	380	434	Green
	Percentage of Regional Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	50%	54.6%	Green
	Percentage of Belfast Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	50%	55%	Green
	Percentage of participants who move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy.	75%	66%	Amber
	Number of participants on Employment and Upskilling Academies	675	928	Green
	Number of organisations accredited as Belfast Business Promise Supporters	100	80	Red
	Occupancy levels at Innovation Factory	70%	77%	Green
Number of social enterprises and co-operatives supported	110	109	Amber	
Our Place	Total number of previously vacant city-wide properties that are occupied as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention.	20	24	Green
	Number of visitor servicing enquiries (Visit Belfast)	805,000	724,514	Red
	GDS-Index ranking	Top 10	9th	Green
	Number of people attending the annual programme of large-scale public city events	111,000	148,500	Green
	Number of attendees at major Cultural Festivals	410,000	669,207*	Green
	Number of people engaged at engaged at arts and heritage organisations	Est. baseline	1,384,133*	Green
	Number of citizens engaged through participatory budgeting and cultural interventions.	Est. baseline	1,162	Green
Number of visitors to St. George's Market	1,000,000	1,048,237	Green	

	Number of external events at St. George's Market	16	14	Amber
	Number of Belfast Bike journeys	142,000	101,074	Amber
	Number of bookings for conferences, wedding and events at Belfast Castle	342	299	Red
	Number of bookings for conferences, wedding and events at Malone House	202	160	Red
	Number of visitors to Belfast Zoo	208,984	152,878	Red
	Total revenue generated from Belfast Bikes scheme	£126,000	£129,952	Green
	Total income generated by Belfast Castle	£282,675	£300,099	Green
	Total income generated by Malone House	£130,848	£98,013	Red
	Total income generated at Belfast Zoo	£1,894,716	£1,800,042	Amber

* Provisional figures based on actual, estimated and projected figures from interim CMAG monitoring reports submitted at the mid-year point.

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City Growth &

Committee Plan



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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><u>Cllr Ian McLaughlin</u> (Chair) Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Court</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Joe Duffy</u> (Deputy Chair) Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Collin</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Fiona McAteer</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Titanic</p>
 <p><u>Ald James Lawlor</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Christina Black</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Court</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Sarah Bunting</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Balmoral</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Séamas de Faointe</u> Party: Social Democratic and Labour Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Sammy Douglas</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Titanic</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Aine Groogan</u> Party: Green Party District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Eric Hanvey</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Donal Lyons</u> Party: Social Democratic and Labour Party District Electoral Area: Balmoral</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Áine McCabe</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Black Mountain</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Siobhan McCallin</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Collin</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Andrew McCormick</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Emmet McDonough-Brown</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Conor McKay</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Ronan McLaughlin</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Black Mountain</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Luke Meenehan</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Castle</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Sam Nelson</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Castle</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Tomás Ó Néill</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Oldpark</p>	

Belfast City Council Priorities

Since its launch in 2017 and subsequent refresh in 2024, the [Belfast Agenda](#) has been and remains 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 Belfast Agenda sets out a bold level of ambition and demonstrates strong collective leadership commitment to delivering the long-term vision and outcomes previously agreed. It is both 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 several 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 city’s ambitions.

The council’s corporate plan reflects 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 five 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 the section that follows.



Our Economy Priorities

To support our economy in 2026/27 we will:

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Support business start-up and growth by managing and overseeing the delivery of the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NISS) and deliver targeted support in Belfast to meet funder and statutory targets	Undertake the 'Lead Council' role on delivery of NISS on behalf of the 11 councils to improve business start-up rates and support business growth. Undertake further work to develop a more sustainable funding model for the service and commence the commissioning process for service delivery beyond April 2027 (subject to available resources).
	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 (subject to funding).
	Undertake targeted outreach and engagement, particularly where there is a need for cultural change amongst under-represented groups to attract more people into the entrepreneurial pipeline.
Support the development of the social enterprise sector	Develop the social economy sector by providing mentoring, workshops and upskilling support
	Support social enterprises to increase their levels of earned income and explore appropriate investment models to support this
Maximise the benefits emerging from Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)	Regular engagement with BRCD and Innovation City Belfast to ensure alignment of plans and programmes of support.
	Support delivery of the benefits of first phase of BRCD delivery by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investing in business incubation support delivered by Studio Ulster & the Ulster Screen Academy that aims to give creative businesses access a dedicated desk space for 6 months within a professional working Virtual Production studio and environment promoting and supporting local SMEs to access opportunities emerging through BRCD investments and funding programmes.
	Finalise and publish the Belfast Economic Proposition demonstrating the critical role of the city and the wider region in creating good jobs, supporting innovation and driving productivity; outlining the attributes that make our city an ideal destination for investment; and showcasing our innovation-driven indigenous businesses competing on a global scale or successfully trading around the world.
	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	Provide strategic leadership through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) convening meetings and bringing partners together to address local economic barriers, boost productivity, and support job creation.
	Oversee the delivery and monitoring of three projects identified within the local Action Plan including Northern Lights - Studio Ulster; Capital Investment for creative growth; and business growth and innovation support.
Develop and maximise international linkages to support inclusive economic growth	Engage and collaborate with city partners on collaborative business engagement activities with the cities of Nashville, Boston and New York to 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.
	Deliver a new approach to international engagement activity by creating new connections and engaging in key networks to ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the world stage and that

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	collaborative opportunities for promoting economic development are maximised.
Support the development and delivery of the Belfast Business Promise scheme	Create a community of organisations committed to doing “business for good” and work with local partners to drive engagement in activities aligned to key service commitments
Oversee the management of the Innovation Factory to maximise occupancy levels and optimise inclusive growth opportunities for existing tenants.	Support the efficient operation of the Innovation Factory, in line with the agreed Annual Service Plan obligations, while actively working to reduce the net cost to council.
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups.	<p>Delivery of Employment Academies (into work) within sectors with high job demand/good jobs or sustainable self-employment options such as caring professions, practical sectors and professional services, in line with business demand.</p> <p>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.</p>
Support the management and development of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership (LMP).	<p>Convene and chair up to six LMP meetings, to identify key labour market challenges and co-design solutions and co-ordinate delivery of agreed programmes of work.</p> <p>Work with partners to progress the 'Health & Work' agenda, influencing policy direction on integrating health and employability/employment systems in line with the NICS Transformation Programme</p> <p>Design of the Belfast Employer Hub driven through a working group with key partners including EPIC Futures, DfC, DfE and Invest NI.</p> <p>Develop a new three-year LMP Action Plan 2027-2030 underpinned by a Strategic Assessment of supply, demand, policy and provision.</p> <p>Host localised jobs fairs and meet the employer events in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices and explore other jobs and skills events.</p>
Deliver social value while supporting the wider employability and skills ecosystem.	<p>Consolidate the Employability and Skills Provider Network to focus on engaging groups and organisations within local community infrastructure as well as those supporting target groups for those with barriers to work. This will include acting as the convenor of a Belfast-wide employability and economic inactivity ecosystem.</p> <p>Continue to operate as an RSA City of Learning, hosting other providers to be able to create and issue digital badges and work with other cities to enhance the functionality and ease of use of Digital Badging for the benefit of residents gaining vocationally specific credentials.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Provide guidance to contractors to meet their Social Value job requirements and support inclusive recruitment practices on current labour market issues.</p>
Improve the visitor experience at St George’s Market to drive footfall and enhance customer satisfaction and provide support for city markets.	Undertake a development plan with a focus on usage maximisation. This will consider a number of elements including: potential for additional market days; revamping the existing market days (with a specific focus on the Friday market); considering the balance between market days and other commercial uses; exploring opportunities for third-party market operations and/or market hire.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<p>Maximise stallage income by monitoring payments and addressing vacancies. Track weekly stall income in line with projections, addressing non-payments through enforcement process.</p>
	<p>Develop effective systems to manage the market operations, utilising CRM system to track and monitor all trader interactions, including correspondence issued and compliance data.</p>
	<p>Maintain engagement with all traders and their representatives to ensure effective communication of planned activities and develop terms of reference for engagement with the National Market Traders' Federation group to clarify roles and responsibilities.</p>
	<p>Manage and promote the delivery of the annual Christmas Continental Market and additional market events such as Twilight Markets and investigate the potential for additional market days and explore opportunities for third-party market operations and/or market hire.</p>
	<p>Ensure that St George's Market is a central focus of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann programme</p>

Our Place Priorities

To support our place in 2026/27 we will:

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
<p>Support and work with partners to address housing challenges and delivery high quality housing-led regeneration and place-making</p>	<p>Progress the housing-led regeneration programme, working in partnership with the Private Sector Partner (PSP) and other external partners including Housing Associations. Includes PSP workstreams aligned to the Strategic Partnership Agreement for the seed sites and additional opportunity sites as agreed- including agreement on site specific business plans, funding options, progression of planning and stakeholder engagement as appropriate; progressing the Strategic Site Assessment Phase 2 sites including delivery routes for development as appropriate; progressing the development of the lands within the Inner North West Development Brief area, in conjunction with the nominated Housing Association. Progress land assembly as appropriate as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Programme, subject to funding and investment criteria, Consideration of funding, financing, intervention options, models for delivery and aligned advocacy and engagement to advance the Housing Led Regeneration Programme.</p>
	<p>Undertake detailed analysis in relation to the changes to the Total Cost Indicator and Housing Association Grant rates to inform a detailed evidence base around emerging implications for the delivery of social housing within the city, particularly in respect of the city centre.</p>
	<p>Lead and support a collaborative approach to housing led placemaking regeneration action plans as agreed.</p>
<p>Address the challenges facing the city to maximise investment, generate rates and support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods and wider region</p>	<p>Advance the strategic engagement programme aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, working in partnership with city, regional and national government bodies to secure place-based and regeneration investment funding.</p>
	<p>Progress an overarching City Development and Investment programme aligned to city strategy, the council's regeneration assets and vacancy and dereliction work programmes. This includes implementing the recommendations from the City Centre Investment Fund Review and progression of a Targeted Regeneration Investment Strategy; advancing the next stages in relation to the Assembly Rooms Cluster; progressing options for vesting and/or acquisition by agreement of the Tribeca site in whole or in part (as agreed by Members); progressing options for the future use and development of the Sixth in partnership with the council's LLP partner; and progressing a Castle Street Regeneration Plan (aligned to Inner North West Masterplan).</p>
	<p>Develop future use /development proposals and investment strategy for Regeneration Assets to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly Rooms Cluster • 2 Royal Avenue • 33-39 Royal Avenue • The Sixth • Commission House as part of the Dunbar Cluster • Housing Led Regeneration Sites (including lands at Joy Street/ Cromac Street) • Consideration of future targeted investment /strategic acquisitions approach (subject to funding)
	<p>Deliver the City Wide Vacant to Vibrant capital grant scheme as part of the Vacancy & Dereliction Toolkit Programme.</p>

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<p>Progress the proposed Homes On Upper Spaces for Everyone (HOUSE) Programme as the next delivery workstream of the Vacant to Vibrant Toolkit Programme, including actively seeking funding to deliver the proposed pilot project.</p> <p>Undertake a scoping study on vacant offices (as part of the Vacancy & Dereliction Toolkit Programme), to include financial, economic and regeneration implications and future use and funding options.</p> <p>Progress the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme (including council 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.</p> <p>Conclude 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.</p> <p>Creative /Artists Workspaces – Progress options for capital investment for creative growth in line with LEP and Belfast Creative Workspaces Action Plan, explore capital investment in seed-funding approach to act as a catalyst in addressing initial viability challenges that the creative sector experiences in securing their own assets.</p> <p>Progress work programmes and city marketing and investment initiatives aligned to ‘Positioning the City to Compete’, working in partnership with the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership.</p> <p>Conclude the EOI for the sustainable long - term use of the ground floor for 2 Royal Avenue, aligned to overall building development and management considerations.</p> <p>Work with external partners to deliver the Future City Centre Programme, as part of the Community Planning ‘Our Place’ Board governance structures.</p>
<p>Transform connectivity within the city</p>	<p>Deliver an overarching programme to support enhanced Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel across the city under the strategic design lens of A Bolder Vision (ABV) including support for the Late-Night Service pilot project, development of strategic projects aligned to the Waterfront Promenade Framework and ABV and progression of Section 76 public realm improvements at Little York Street, Little Patrick Street, 5Cs and Blackstaff Square & Environs.</p> <p>Approve and implement the full ABV Strategy, which will unlock critical design considerations, with a particular focus on connectivity with surrounding communities. Work in partnership with city stakeholders, government departments, and delivery partners to align with the Council’s investment priorities as set out in the Belfast Place-Based Growth Proposition, and secure collaborative funding and delivery mechanisms for the successful implementation of ABV.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with partners and government to facilitate, progress, and deliver major infrastructure projects, policies, and strategies in alignment with the approved ABV Key Moves and updated interventions. This includes shaping the Council’s consultation response to the Eastern Transport Plan and other relevant emerging strategies and strategic projects.</p>
<p>Deliver Year 6 of A City Imagining, Belfast’s 10-year cultural strategy.</p>	<p>Deliver Core Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG) funding to sustain accessible cultural activity (Festivals and events grants) and infrastructure (arts and heritage grants) within Belfast.</p> <p>Provision of Community Festivals Fund small grants (in partnership with the Department for Communities) to assist Community and Voluntary organisations to celebrate their identity, enhance community relations by delivering community festivals.</p> <p>Provision of arts and heritage small grants to cultural projects to support the outcomes identified within City Imagining.</p>

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<p>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.</p> <p>Manage 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.</p> <p>Deliver a Fleadh themed 'Bank of Ideas' participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.</p> <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 2026 Culture Night programme, a city wide, venue based open call event including supporting marketing activity.</p> <p>Deliver next phase of the Heritage Audit and Roadmap, including the development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes.</p> <p>Work in partnership with Belfast Stories to build on the Neighbourhood heritage programme which will build capacity within communities to gather and shape stories of place and embed heritage skills within communities.</p>
Delivery of Fleadh Cheoil	<p>Oversee the delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil na hEirean in August 2026, stimulating a sense of belonging and pride amongst local people, attracting international visitors and showcasing Belfast and Northern Ireland on a local, national, and international platform.</p> <p>Undertake an evaluation of the 2026 Fleadh, capturing lessons learned (both strategic and operational) to feed into the delivery of the 2027 event.</p> <p>Create a lasting legacy from hosting the Fleadh by enhancing Belfast and Northern Ireland's international reputation as a destination for investment, tourism, and social impact, while promoting traditional music and cultural awareness across the region.</p> <p>Planning and preparation to host the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann 2027.</p>
Deliver Year 3 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 2026 and Sound of Belfast 2026, an event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music.</p> <p>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 5 of Make Yourself at Home, the 10-year tourism plan for Belfast.	<p>Deliver the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme to include support of new or enhanced neighbourhood tourism visitor experiences.</p> <p>Deliver the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme to include industry planning session, annual seminar, capacity building, training toolkit and innovation vouchers.</p> <p>Deliver the Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme including delivery of Food and Drink Village for Fleadh 2026; Food Toolkit for industry; secure support from DAERA to enhance 2026-2027 programme; expand the network to 100 businesses.</p>

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<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 and social impact.</p> <p>Deliver the sustainability programme in partnership with Visit Belfast and the council's Climate team to improve Belfast's performance in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index and maintain its place as a sustainable tourism destination; and support the delivery of the sustainability promises as part of Fleadh 2026.</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 association conferences.</p> <p>Enhance the visitor experience within Belfast, including enhancement of the visitor experiences at Council owned assets; secure expertise to examine the delivery of visitor servicing at key sites in Belfast in a changing environment.</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 2026 - Delivery of a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at other venues such as 2 Royal Ave,</p> <p>Christmas 2026 - delivery of the Christmas Lights Switch on event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall and work with partners to align plans.</p> <p>St Patrick's Day 2027 - build on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations, featuring the in-house delivered parade and city-wide projects delivered by partners. Work will also commence in 2026-27 on the new tender for Creative provision for St Patricks Day 2028-2030</p> <p>Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Plan the 2027 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.</p>
Support delivery and maximise benefits from international and major events	<p>Work with city partners to plan for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy. Continue to explore other opportunities for the city to host significant international events, aligning with the outcomes of the d Events Action Plan.</p> <p>Agree the new five-year Events Action Plan for the city, incorporating an ongoing approach to bid for events.</p> <p>Develop options for enhanced city animation.</p> <p>Engage with NI partners on maximising Belfast's position as part of the UK-wide bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035</p>
Commercial Assets (Belfast Castle, Malone House, Belfast Zoo and Belfast Bikes)	<p>Effective management and operation of Belfast Zoo, maintaining its reputation as a popular family-focused visitor attraction and welcoming and inclusive experience for all ages and abilities.</p> <p>Develop proposals to deliver long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo, generating additional revenue and achieving efficiencies, to reduce the net cost to council.</p> <p>Maintain Belfast Castle's reputation as a premier wedding, tourism, function and event venue in the north or the city, generating additional revenue and achieving efficiencies, to reduce the net cost to council.</p> <p>Maintain Malone House's reputation as a premier wedding and conference venue in the south of the city, generating additional revenue and achieving efficiencies, to reduce the net cost to council.</p> <p>Oversee the delivery of the Belfast Bikes public bike hire scheme, maximising journeys and subsequent revenue.</p>

Performance Monitoring

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.

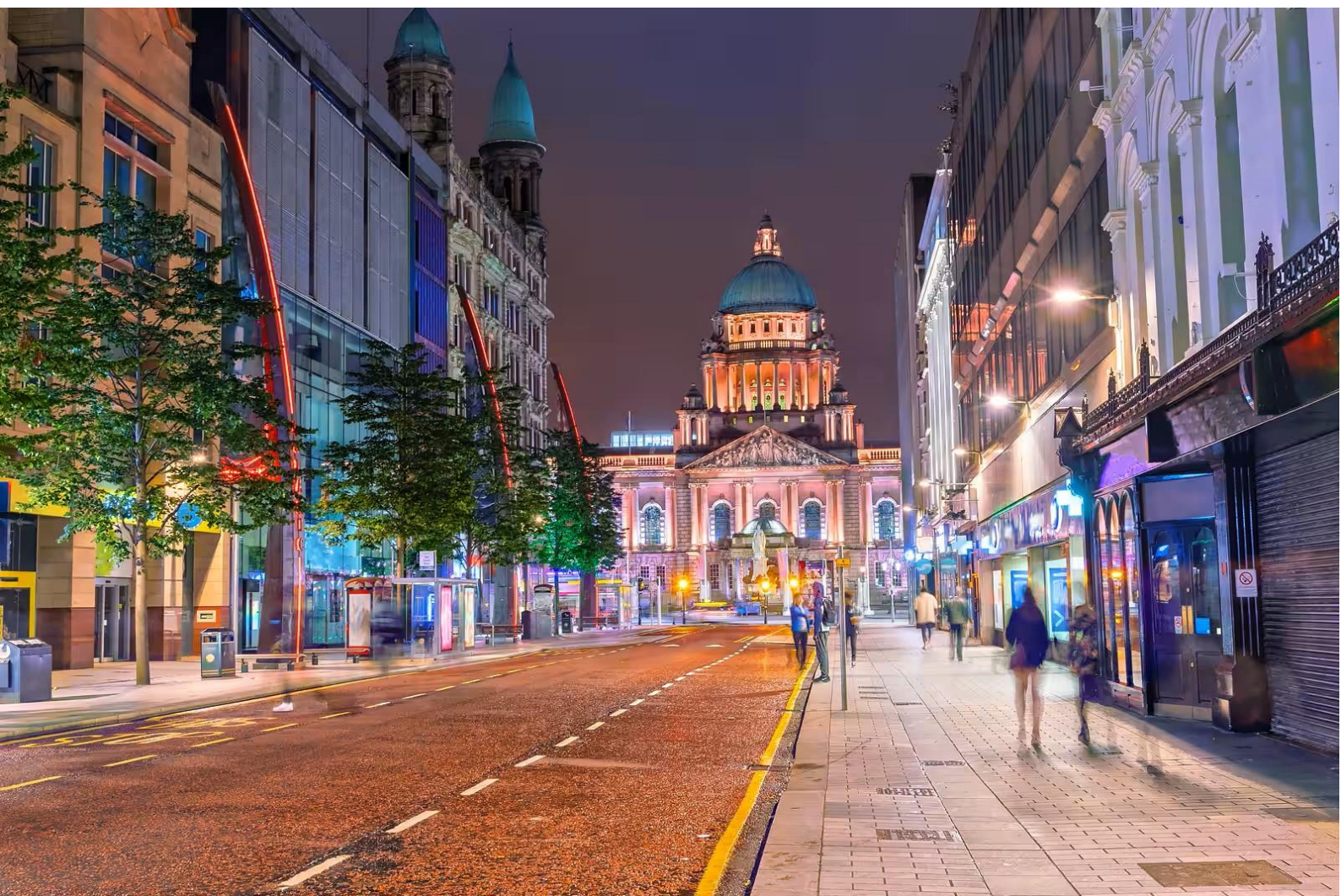
Theme	Key Performance Indicator	2025/26 Baseline	2026/27 Target
Our Economy	# of jobs promoted through business start-up activity. (<i>Statutory indicator</i>)	326	325
	# of participants engaged at the early stage of the entrepreneurial life cycle.	839	712
	# of regional individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	5,085	3,655
	#of Belfast individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	873	712
	# of regional businesses supported through business growth activity.	2,244	1,700
	# of Belfast businesses supported through business growth activity.	434	323
	% of regional Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	55%	50%
	% of Belfast Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	55%	50%
	% of participants who move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy.	66%	75%
	# of participants on Employment and Upskilling Academies	928	675
	# of social enterprises and co-operatives supported	109	110*
	Our Place	# of previously vacant city-wide properties that are occupied as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention.	24
# of visitor servicing enquiries (Visit Belfast)		724,514	825,000
GDS-Index ranking		9 th	Top 10
# of people attending the annual programme of large-scale public city events		148,500	46,000
# of attendees at major Cultural Festivals		669,207*	410,000
# of people engaged at engaged at arts and heritage organisations		1,384,133*	500,000
# of visitors to St. George's Market		1,048,237	1,000,000
# of external events at St. George's Market		14	16
# of Belfast Bike journeys		101,074	129,520
Total revenue (£) generated from Belfast Bikes scheme		£129,952	£80,000
# of bookings for conferences, weddings and events at Belfast Castle		299	300
Total income (£) generated by Belfast Castle		£300,099	£263,737
# of bookings for conferences, weddings and events at Malone House		160	160
Total income (£) generated by Malone House		£98,013	£122,340
# of visitors to Belfast Zoo		152,878	175,000
Total income (£) generated at Belfast Zoo		£1,800,042	£1,932,645

* Provisional figures based on actual, estimated and projected figures from interim CMAG monitoring reports submitted at the mid-year point.

Committee Finances

The expenditure for the 2026/27 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan is based on a total planned investment of £23.96 million, as agreed at the Strategic Policy & Resources committee meeting on 13th February 2026, as follows:

Service	Budget 2026/27
Off-Street Car Parking	-1,042,160
City Regeneration	2,578,657
Economic Development	19,718,245
Place and Economy Directorate	2,703,812
Committee Total	23,958,554



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