

FRONT COVER

Image from Alex In Comras (taken from City Matters)

City Growth & Regeneration

Committee Plan 2025/26



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

Belfast City Council Priorities

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

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

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



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

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

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



Our Economy Priorities

To support our economy in 2025/26 we will:

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

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

Our Place Priorities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Theme	Key Performance Indicator	Target
Economy		
Place		

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Committee Finances

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

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

