



Subject:	Belfast Region City Deal – update
Date:	22 nd August 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services

Is this report restricted?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.			
Insert number <input type="text"/>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. 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 matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime			
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?			
After Committee Decision			
After Council Decision			
Sometime in the future			
Never			

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and seek approval for the BRCD Annual Report 2024/25.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the BRCD Annual Report for 2024/25 • Note the update in relation the Implementation and Financial Plan
3.0	Main report
	Annual Report 2024/25
3.1	<p>The agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires the production of an Annual Report and the requirement to meet with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation' which is arranged to take place at the end of August this year.</p>
3.2	<p>A high level, outward focused Annual Report has now been produced for 2024/25 and outlines the specific progress made at the overall programme level with some very tangible progress achieved in this reporting year. Key highlights as of 31 March 2025 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 16 projects with Outline Business Cases (OBCs) now approved alongside three Full Business Cases (FBCs) with a combined project value of £620m. • Following FBC approval this year iREACH Health hosted an official sod cutting ceremony in February 2025, with the construction phase for the world-class clinical research centre having now commenced. • In June 2024, construction commenced at the state-of-the-art Factory of the Future at Global Point in Newtownabbey marking a major milestone for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC). Due to open in early 2026, the innovation centre with capacity for 150 staff, is set to reinvigorate local industrial potential and address the future technology and skills challenges faced by the region's manufacturing sector. • Augment the City successfully progressed through and completed the first two phases of its 3-phase SBRI programme. • Four Contracts for Funding and funding agreements were signed – including Gobbins Phase 2 and Destination Royal Hillsborough. • 21 contracts associated with BRCD projects now include social value clauses, to date these contracts that have commenced reporting to the SIB portal have committed to delivery of a total of 10,935 Social Value Delivery Points. Mainly through interventions such as paid employment opportunities for apprentices, student placements and graduates, health and wellbeing initiatives and climate change and carbon reducing training.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studio Ulster moved into full operation and as previously reported the official launch took place in June 2025 marking a new era for virtual production, creating opportunities and positive economic impacts for Belfast residents, and for our city and region. • Two additional cross deals skills assessments were completed for the Virtual Production and Digital Sectors and a review of identified actions is underway to determine those suitable for inclusion in a BRCD Collaborative Employability & Skills action plan.
3.3	<p>The Annual Report, which was approved by the BRCD Executive Board on 18 June 2025, is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration. The individual BRCD partners will also be seeking approval for the Annual Report through their own governance structures. The report will be formally published after all approvals have been secured.</p>
3.4	<p>The report will then be shared with the Department of Finance in advance of the Annual Conversation.</p>
3.5	<p>Moving into Year 4 (2025/26) and as partners focus on delivery and maximising the benefits of the investment, we will see significant progress across the programme with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opening of Studio Ulster and the UK Digital Twin Centre already completed. • Construction continuing at pace at both iREACH Health and AMIC and contractors expected on site at Momentum One Zero, Newry City Centre Regeneration and Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge. • Approval of the OBC for Belfast Stories anticipated by the end of 2025. • 3 additional CfFs currently in process for approval – committing an additional £140m • 2 FBCs at advanced stages of the approval process • The BRCD draft Benefits Realisation Framework being refreshed to ensure that benefits are effectively delivered and captured in alignment with the overall programme objectives. • Completion of the Life and Health Sciences (LHS) skills assessment <p>Financial and Implementation Plan</p>
3.6	<p>The overarching deal document is supported by a Financial and Implementation Plan and the annual submission for 2024/25 was produced alongside the Annual Report. As the programme is now firmly in delivery phase this year's financial and implementation plan was combined into one document. The document includes the expenditure profile of all the projects broken down annually and the high level project milestones based on the Quarter 4 financial and performance returns. The PMO engaged closely with partners and following consideration by the Finance Directors' Group and the Executive Board it was formally submitted to the Department of Finance in June as required by the Contract for Funding.</p>

3.7	During 2024/25 a further £46.3m was drawn down from both the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities demonstrating the positive progress being made across the programme. Up to 31 st March 2025, claims totalling £41m have been processed by Programme Management Office (£36m in FY24-25).
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;</p> <p><i>‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’</i></p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Appendix 1 – BRCD Annual Report 2024/25 – RESTRICTED