



<b>Subject:</b>	Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge
<b>Date:</b>	21 November 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mark McCann, City Innovation Manager Stephen Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport & Open Spaces and Street Scene Brenda Murphy, Innovation Broker

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b></p> <p>Insert number <input type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>  After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update Members on the final submission to the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayoral Challenge competition.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the ongoing work on the Bloomberg alleyways transformation proposal</li> <li>2. Note Bloomberg's final funding decision will be shared with Members at the following Committee meeting.</li> <li>3. Note the invitation to the second Belfast: Inclusive Futures event on Monday, 24 November from 16:00 in the Great Hall. The guest speak is Dr Nell Watson, a national AI expert and advisor to Google.</li> </ol>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<b>Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge 2025</b>
3.1	Following Member approval, Belfast City Council applied to Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge in April 2025 with an outline concept <i>'to re-imagine Belfast's network of alleyways'</i> .
3.2	<p>Belfast was one of only 100 cities (from 640 applications worldwide) selected to further develop this concept into a more detailed proposal. Belfast was subsequently one of only 50 cities awarded \$50,000 to support local engagement and to carry out research to develop the proposal into a funding bid. This bid was submitted to Bloomberg on 17 October. Bloomberg are currently assessing the final 50 applications, of which only 25 will be awarded \$1 million each to deliver their projects. This decision is expected in the next few weeks.</p> <p><b>The Belfast bid</b></p>
3.3	The bid builds on existing work over the years by communities, Members, and council services on a series of successful alleyway transformations that have had a positive impact on the lives of local people. The challenge for the city going forward is how we can scale and replicate such successes across many more parts of the city and do in ways that are sustainable and community-led. Bloomberg are particularly interested in how the Council will design an approach that is bottom-up and directly engages our residents and impacts their lives.
3.4	The Belfast proposal therefore seeks to establish, over a two-year period, a city programme that can support the sustainable development of up to 25 miles of transformed alleyways. These projects might range from quite modest interventions to much more radical transformations, depending local circumstances and on the interest of each community. The programme would seek to harness our services in an integrated way and work directly with communities and with other public bodies (such as DfI, DfC and NIHE) and utilise digital and data tools, co-design techniques and innovative funding models. The bid outlined a concept that included: a single 'alleyway service commitment' that is responsive to local needs; develop local resource hubs

	with inventories recycled from our waste stream; digital tools for advice and volunteering; and a micro-grant scheme.
	<b>Next steps</b>
3.5	A decision from Bloomberg is expected in the next few weeks. They had previously indicated that cities need to be ready to commence work on their programme almost immediately and advised that shortlisted cities should begin making preparations ahead of any decision. Given the challenging timeframe, and time of year, council officers have thus begun work on a detailed programme and resourcing plan and engaging with local stakeholders.
3.6	Members are asked to note the ongoing work on the Bloomberg proposal, the nature of the bid, and that the Bloomberg's final decision will be shared with Members at the next immediate Committee.
3.7	<b>Belfast Inclusive Futures</b> In May 2025 Members approved a series called ' <i>Belfast: Inclusive Futures</i> ' brings together city leaders (private, public and community) and senior policymakers to build understanding and consensus about the challenges and opportunities that digital technologies represent for our city's shared commitment to inclusive growth.
3.8	The first event which had over 80 attendees welcomed Professor Kate Devlin, Chair-Director of the Digital Futures Institute, King's College, who explored the implications of AI across a broad range of social and economic policies associated with 'inclusive growth'.
3.9	The second event is planned for <b>Monday, 24 November from 16:00 in City Hall</b> . The guest speak is Dr Nell Watson, a national AI expert and advisor to Google. Nell will be helping Members and senior decision-makers in the city explore the implications for inclusive public services, particularly related to health. A follow up panel discussion will include the NI Chief Scientific Officer Helen McCarthy and Mark Lawler, Professor of Digital Health at Queen's University. Members will have received an invitation via Democratic Services and are encouraged to come along.
	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
3.10	Resources for these initiatives have been identified within the existing departmental budgets.
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.11	None at present. A successful Bloomberg proposal will be subject to an Equality screening.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None.