

# Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast  
City Council**

13th April, 2022

## **MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room and via MS Teams on Friday, 15th April, 2022 at 9.30 am., for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

### **AGENDA:**

#### **1. Routine Matters**

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

#### **2. Restricted Items**

- (a) Appointment of Director (Operational) of City and Neighbourhood Services (Pages 1 - 2)
- (b) Update on Industrial Action (Pages 3 - 6)
- (c) Update on Organisational Recovery (Pages 7 - 10)
- (d) City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress (Pages 11 - 16)
- (e) Requests for the use of Council Parks (Pages 17 - 22)
- (f) Official visit of US Secretary of Labor (Pages 23 - 26)
- (g) 2 Royal Avenue (Pages 27 - 48)
- (h) Update on Physical Programme (Pages 49 - 56) (restriction removed 2/8/23)

**3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

- (a) Motion - Energy Price Crisis (Pages 57 - 60)

**4. Governance**

- (a) Revision to Scheme of Allowances (Pages 61 - 86)

**5. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (a) Update on Belfast Region City Deal (Pages 87 - 114)
- (b) PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report: Taking Action on Levelling Up (Pages 115 - 164)
- (c) NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in Northern Ireland (Pages 165 - 212)
- (d) Advancing Community Wealth Building in Belfast - CLES Spend Analysis of Belfast Procurement and Commissioning Working Group (Pages 213 - 226)

**6. Physical Programme and Asset Management**

- (a) Asset Management (Pages 227 - 242)
- (b) Update on Area Working Groups (Pages 243 - 250)

**7. Finance, Procurement and Performance**

- (a) Update on Contracts (Pages 251 - 258)

**8. Equality and Good Relations**

- (a) Race Champion and Race Action Plan (Pages 259 - 262)
- (b) Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership (Pages 263 - 292)

**9. Operational Issues**

- (a) Minutes of Meeting of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum (Pages 293 - 296)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall Grounds (Pages 297 - 300)
- (c) Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality (Pages 301 - 306)
- (d) Minutes of Meeting of Active Belfast Limited Board (Pages 307 - 326)

**10. Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

(a) Illumination of the City Hall

(Councillor M. Kelly to request that the City Hall be illuminated on the night of Saturday, 28th May to mark Menstrual Hygiene Day)

(b) Additional Item

Councillor Walsh to propose:

“This Council supports the campaign for Irish language rights and the implementation of Irish language legislation. It is long overdue that the citizens of this City and beyond are recognised in law, as promised in many of our peace agreements.

On Saturday 21st May, thousands will travel to the City Hall to support the Dream Dearg campaign. We call on the Council to support their campaign and also extend a huge welcome and céad míle fáilte to the thousands who will travel to be here for An Lá Dearg 2022.

As an act of solidarity and support from the Council, we will, on Friday 20th May, illuminate the City Hall in red, symbolising the campaign for language rights.”

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Physical Programme</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The Council's Physical Programme currently includes 170 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. This report requests agreement on implementation of procurement processes in relation to the non-recurrent programme, 2 Royal Avenue, in connection with the proposed extended meanwhile use and/or the Levelling Up application (if agreed by the Committee) and externally funded projects, as well as a summary of recently awarded contracts.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Procurement process for Non-Recurrent Programme, 2 Royal Avenue and Externally Funded projects:</b> agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the</li> </ul>

	<p>invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated for any non-recurrent projects for 2022/23, 2 Royal Avenue in connection with the extended meanwhile use and/or the Levelling Up application and any externally funded projects for 2021/22 and 2022/23 as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</p> <p>- <b>Contracts awarded in Q4 2021/22:</b> Note the update in relation to contracts awarded between January and March 2022, and the emergency works completed under Standing Order 56.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p><b>Non-Recurrent Programme 2022/23</b></p> <p>Members will be aware that the incremental nature of the capital programme allows the Council the opportunity to allocate an element of the 2022/23 capital financing budget to finance a number of one-off (non-recurrent) projects within year. It is recommended that this is focused on progressing projects which the Council is required to take forward either from a health and safety perspective and/or a legislative perspective. <b>Members are asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated for any non-recurrent projects for 2022/23, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</b></p> <p><b>2 Royal Avenue – Meanwhile Use/Levelling Up Funding Round 2</b></p>
3.2	<p>Members will be aware that a report on the future use of 2 Royal Avenue is also on the agenda for consideration by Members at this meeting, which considers a proposed extended meanwhile use and also seeks approval from Members to progress the submission of 2 Royal Avenue as the Council’s bid under Levelling Up Round 2. If the approach as outlined in this paper is agreed by Members it is further <b>recommended that Members agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated to support the extended meanwhile use and/or the Levelling Up bid as required, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</b></p>
3.3	<p><b>Externally funded projects 2021/22 and 2022/23</b></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Council is now the ‘delivery agent of choice’ for a range of funding partners and that external funding is an increasingly important component for securing funding for projects. Committee is asked to note that letters of offer and amended letters of</p>

	<p>offer have now been received for a number of projects where the Council is acting as the delivery agent. Amended letters of offer are commonly received to reflect minor adjustments required following tender returns. Several of these projects are match funded by the Council, either under the various funding streams i.e. LIF/BIF/SOF or through close alignment with ongoing Council initiatives. The details are attached at Appendix 1 and Members are asked to note the summary provided. <b>Members are also asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects including externally funded projects for 2021/22 and 2022/23 as required, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</b></p>
3.4	<p>Members are asked to note that the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits for Members/ Party Groups to any capital project, with appropriate arrangements in place as required under latest Covid-19 guidance.</p>
3.5	<p><b>Contracts awarded – Q3</b></p> <p>Members are asked to note the recently awarded tenders for capital works at Appendix 2.</p>
3.6	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p><i>Financial</i> – External funding secured as outlined in the report</p> <p><i>Resources</i> – Officer time to deliver as required</p>
3.7	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Documents Attached</b></p> <p>Appendix 1 – Capital Letters of Offer</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (Jan – Mar 2022) and Emergency Works completed under Standing Order 56</p>

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## Appendix 1 - Capital Letters of Offer

Projects	Funder	Amount
COVID-19 Letter of Variance	DfC	4,039,000.00
Pro-Kick Community Gym	DfC	73,525.00
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	DfI	750,000.00
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	DfC	500,000.00
St. James Community Forum - revised CFF	DfC	85,000.00
Lagan Valley/Village Youth & Community Centre	DfC	35,000.00
Lagan Gateway Greenway	DFI	2,000,000.00
Marrowbone Playing Fields	DFC	200,000.00
City Cemetery	DFC	75,000.00
New Colin Park	DFC	600,000.00
Blanchflower Improvements	DFC	250,000.00
Avoniel	DFC	250,000.00
Ballysillan Playing Fields	DFC	200,000.00
Colin Glen Trust	DFC	310,000.00
Lagan Gateway	DFC	469,638.51
St Comgalls - revised LoO (date extension)	SIF	3,492,500.00
Colin Glen TRPSI - Letter of Variation	DAERA	437,618.00
Colin Glen Zip Lines - Letter of Variation 3	DAERA	500,000.00
Blackmountain Shared Space - Phase 2	IFI	500,000.00
Mornington Community Project	SIF	411,186.00
COVID-19 Letter of Variance No. 3	DfC	4,039,000.00
Belfast Bikes Project (COVID)	DfI	100,000.00
Colin Active Travel Route - Appointment of Consultants OBC	DfC	7,317.00
Colin Glen Zip Lines - Letter of Variation 4	DAERA	500,000.00
Páirc Nua Chollan	TEO	5,544,944.00
Glenbryn Play Park	TEO	391,736.00
Pro-Kick Community Gym	TEO	191,471.00
Marrowbone Millennium Park	TEO	2,309,677.00
Grosvenor Playpark Upgrade	DFC	145,000.00
COVID-19 Letter of Variance No. 4	DfC	4,039,000.00
Girdwood Procurement of ICT team	DFC	410,274.35
Fixtures and Fittings for new Walkway Community Centre	DFC	133,690.18
Colin Glen TRPSI - Letter of Variation 2	DAERA	437,505.00
Marrowbone Millennium Park	TEO	2,309,677.00
Ballysillan Playing Fields	TEO	5,085,636.00
Walkway Community Centre	SIF	1,600,993.70
Avoniel Leisure Centre - Additional Funding Request	DFC	200,000.00
Blanchflower Playing Field Improvements	DFC	400,000.00
Public Realm Work in Adelaide Street	DfI	271,250.00
Clarawood Playpark	DFC	97,860.00
Colin Glen Tust - Additional funding	DFC	105,000.00
Colin Valley Football Club Community Club House	UV	712,164.00
Whiterock 3G Pitch (Carpet Replacement)	DFC	69,594.15
Ballysillan 3G Pitch (Carpet Replacement)	DFC	78,176.90
Black Mountain Shared Space Project	SEUPB	€ 6,302,716.83
Colin Glen Ziplines LoV5	DAERA	500,000.00
Black Mountain Shared Space – Community Office Units	DFC	354,200.00
Colin Glen Tust - Additional funding ii	DFC	84,000.00
Berlin Swifts Fencing - Additional funding	DFC	12,000.00
Colin Urban Village - Active Travel Network OBC	DFI	7,317.00
COVID-19 Letter of Variance No. 5	DfC	4,039,000.00
New Colin Park (Páirc Nua Chollan) - Additional Funding	DFC	90,000.00
Active Travel Projects	DFI	207,500.00
Black Mountain Shared Space - Replace fencing on the 'Finlay's Site'	DOJ	318,000.00
Lagan Gateway at Stranmillis	DFC	537,638.51
VOYPIC revised tripartite CFF and delivery agreement	DFC	945,222.00
Paisley Park - Appointment of Consultants	DFC	62,600.00
The Entries - Phase 2	DFC	150,000.00
Re-development of Pitt Park (UV)	TEO	1,351,224.00
Marrowbone Millennium Park - Amendment Letter (3)	TEO	2,584,433.00
Public Realm Works - Heritage Centre (Roddy McSorley Museum - SOF)	DFC	250,000.00
Living With Water in Belfast	DfI	436,004.92
Frederick Douglass Statue	DfC	98,000.00
Paisley Park - Refurb Contract	DfC	1,296,000.00
Holylands Alleygating	DfC	120,000.00
Five Cs Enhanced Revitilisation	DFC	162,000.00
ABC Trust	DfC	700,000.00
St Comgalls - revised LoO	SIF	3,652,679.00
Coffee Culture	TEO	528,923.00

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## **Appendix 2**

**Table 1: Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (Jan – Mar 2022)**

<b>Contract Awarded</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Date of Award</b>
Replacement of Vinyl Flooring at 4 Belfast City Council properties	JJ Henebry & Son Ltd	04/01/2022
MTC for repairs and maintenance of lift installations at various Council properties and locations	ThyssenKrupp	07/01/2022
UV- Pitt Park Redevelopment ICT	McCartan Muldoon	01/02/2022
PEACE IV - Main Contractor for Shankill Shared Women's Centre	P&K McKaigue Ltd	07/02/2022
UV - Main works contractor for new community clubhouse at Colin Valley Football Club	Kelly McEvoy & Brown	08/02/2022
Whiterock Leisure Centre 3G Pitch Replacement	Tony Patterson Sportsgrounds	15/02/2022
UV - Sport in the Community Gym Equipment	Podium 4 Sport	15/02/2022
Tender for Term Service Contract for the demolition, securing or repair of dangerous or ruinous buildings in Belfast	Eastwood Demolitions	03/03/2022
Ballysillan Leisure Centre 3G Pitch Replacement	Tony Patterson Sportsgrounds	10/03/2022
Main Contractor for extension to hall at Braniel Methodist & Presbyterian Church	Piperhill Construction	21/03/2022
Integrated Consultant Team for urban design & place making at Little Patrick & Little York Street, Belfast	McAdam Design	29/03/2022

**Table 2: Emergency works completed under Standing Order 56**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>
Whiterock Leisure Centre – urgent works to the boiler and water system following detection of high levels of legionella caused by a failure of the boiler	Up to £60,000	S Grimes
City Hall heating and cooling system – system has failed on the ground floor in the Office of the Chief Executive and Members Party Rooms. Replacement parts for the original system cannot be obtained. Failure to fix the system would have placed the Council in breach of its health & safety requirements in respect of the Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978.	Up to £40,000	S Grimes

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Motion – Energy Price Crisis</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
	To bring to Members' attention a motion on the Energy Price Crisis, which the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th March, referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
	The Committee is asked to consider the motion.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
3.1	The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February, considered a report providing details of the motions which had been received for consideration by the Council on 1st March.

In accordance with Standing Order 37(h), the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor O'Hara, was referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration.

### **Energy Price Crisis**

“This Council notes the spiralling cost of energy bills and the increased pressure on households across the City, particularly the most vulnerable. In order to provide long-term solutions to escalating energy prices the Council will:

- commit to civic leadership on the development of community energy projects across the City. These projects will focus on developing renewable energy in partnership with communities and expert organisations, including the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and sourcing financing for these community energy projects;
- engage with the Department for the Economy for support in developing community energy schemes; and
- write to the UK Government Treasury stating its support for a Windfall Tax on the Energy Companies which have recorded record profits.

For the purpose of this motion, the use of the term ‘community energy’ to mean community projects or initiatives focused on the four strands of reducing energy use, managing energy better, generating energy or purchasing energy. This included communities of place and communities of interest. These projects or initiatives share an emphasis on community ownership, leadership or control where the community benefits”.

3.2 The People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th March, agreed at the request of Councillor Smyth, the proposer, to refer the motion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on the basis that it was considered to fall more within the remit of that Committee.

	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>No financial implications at this stage.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>All potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications will be taken into consideration.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Revisions to Scheme of Allowances</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider amendments to the Council's Scheme of Allowances to increase the rate of Basic Allowance and the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. consider whether it wishes to apply the increase in the Basic Allowance from £15,486 per annum to £15,757, with effect from 1st April, 2021, and</li> <li>2. consider whether it wishes to increase the total maximum Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) from the current £117,774 per annum to £119,835 as set out in Appendix 2, with effect from 1st April, 2021.</li> </ol>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>3.1.1 The Department for Communities issued a circular, LG 10/2022, which set out revised maximum limits for basic and special responsibility allowances with effect from 1st April, 2021.</p> <p>3.1.2 The Committee, at its meeting in March 2022, agreed to apply the increase in the basic allowance from £15,057 per annum to the current £15,486. Local Government Circular LG 10/2022, dated 28th March, 2022, has increased the maximum basic allowance, which Councils may pay to Members, to £15,757 with effect from 1st April, 2021.</p> <p>3.1.3 The Committee is also requested to consider whether to apply the increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) budget, with effect from 1st April, 2021. For a number of years, the Council has agreed a split in the special responsibility allowance budget so as to pay both the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Party Officers (Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader and Party Secretary – depending upon Party size). The current division of SRAs is set out in Appendix 1. If the increase in the overall budget is increased, a suggested split is set out in Appendix 2.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>3.1.4 The increase to the maximum rates of each of the allowances has already been considered and can be met through existing budgets.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>3.1.5 There are not any Good Relations, Equality or Rural Needs issues associate with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Current division of SRAs</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Revised division of SRAs if the increase in the maximum is applied</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Proposed Scheme of Allowances 2022-2023</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Local Government Circular LG 10/2022</p>

**Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – Current****Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons**

Position	Allowance	Number of Positions	Total
Chairpersons	£5,460.00	7	£38,220
Deputy Chairpersons	£2,730.00	7	£19,110
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£2,730.00	1	£2,730
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,365.00	1	£1,365
<b>Total</b>			<b>£61,425</b>

**Political Party Officers**

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,465.00

Deputy Leader/Secretary Basic Allocation £3,150

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £162.15 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per Party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	18	£162.15	£2,534.94	£3,465	£6,383.70
SF Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
SF Secretary				£3,150	£3,150
DUP Party Leader	15	£162.15	£2,112.45	£3,465	£5,897.25
DUP Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
DUP Secretary				£3,150	£3,150
Alliance Party Leader	10	£162.15	£1,408.30	£3,465	£5,086.50
Alliance Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
SDLP Party Leader	6	£162.15	£844.98	£3,465	£4,437.90
SDLP Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
Green Party Leader	4	£162.15	£563.32	£3,465	£4,113.60
PBPA Leader	3	£162.15	£422.49	£3,465	£3,951.45
UUP Leader	2	£162.15	£281.66	£3,465	£3,789.30
PUP Leader	2	£162.15	£281.66	£3,465	£3,789.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>				<b>£56,349</b>

**Total**

**£117,774**

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**Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – with increase applied****Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons**

Position	Allowance	Number of Positions	Total
Chairpersons	£5,555.54	7	£38,888.78
Deputy Chairpersons	£2,777.77	7	£19,444.39
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£2,777.77	1	£2,777.77
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,388.89	1	£1,388.89
<b>Total</b>			<b>£62,499.83</b>

**Political Party Officers**

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,525.63

Deputy Leader/Secretary Basic Allocation £3,205.12

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £164.99 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per Party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	18	£164.99	£2,969.82	£3,525.63	£6,495.45
SF Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
SF Secretary				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
DUP Party Leader	15	£164.99	£2,474.85	£3,525.63	£6,000.48
DUP Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
DUP Secretary				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
Alliance Party Leader	10	£164.99	£1,649.90	£3,525.63	£5,175.53
Alliance Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
SDLP Party Leader	6	£164.99	£989.94	£3,525.63	£4,515.57
SDLP Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
Green Party Leader	4	£164.99	£659.96	£3,525.63	£4,185.59
PBPA Leader	3	£164.99	£494.97	£3,525.63	£4,020.60
UUP Leader	2	£164.99	£329.98	£3,525.63	£3,855.61
PUP Leader	2	£164.99	£329.98	£3,525.63	£3,855.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>				<b>£57,335.16</b>

**Total**

**£119,834.99**

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# **Scheme of Allowances**

## **Payable to Councillors 2022/2023**

Revised April, 2022

This Scheme is made under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and will take effect from 1st April, 2021.

### **Councillors' allowances**

Councillors' allowances are governed by statute and provision is made for the following types of payments:

#### **(a) Allowances:**

- (i) Basic Allowance
- (ii) Special Responsibility Allowance
- (iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance
- (iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance
- (v) District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Allowances (DPCSP)
- (vi) Renunciations
- (vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

#### **(b) Expenses**

- (i) Travel
- (ii) Subsistence

In issuing the payment of allowances to elected members the Council follows the instructions set out by the Department of Environment in 'Guidance on Councillor Allowances' March 2012 and further circular updates.

Information regarding other provisions for Councillors is also included:

#### **(c) Additional Information**

- (i) IT/Phone Package
- (ii) Councillors' Support Services

(a) **Allowances**

(i) Basic Allowances

A basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all Councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and approved duties. Basic allowance is also intended to cover incidental costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity, such as the use of their homes and the cost of any telephone calls, including mobile phone calls.

The maximum annual allowance with effect from 1st April, 2021 is £15,757 payable monthly.

This allowance will be paid in equal monthly instalments via the Council's Payroll and is subject to tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable.

If a Councillor ceases to be a Councillor before the end of his or her term of office, payment of the allowance will cease and a pro rata calculation will be made to ensure that the Councillor receives the correct amount of allowance. If necessary, an adjustment for under or over payment may be made to ensure that the final payment is correct, and the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Basic Allowance.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall continue.

## (ii) Special Responsibility Allowances

In addition to Basic Allowance the Council also pays Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors it considers to have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor. These special responsibilities are related to the discharge of the Council's functions.

The maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance is determined by the Department for Communities. The division of the Special Responsibility Allowance is based upon the positions held by individual Councillors as agreed.

- The Council agreed a special responsibility allowance threshold of £119,835 which may be paid to holders of positions of responsibility. No more than 50% of the Councillors can receive a special responsibility payment and no individual member can receive more than one special responsibility payment.

Special Responsibility Allowance is paid in equal, monthly instalments. Special Responsibility Allowances are liable for tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable

In the event of a Councillor ceasing to hold an office which entitled him or her to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance before the term of office is completed, payment of the Allowance ceases. If necessary, an adjustment for under or overpayment may have to be made to ensure that the final payment is correct, and the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Special Responsibility Allowance.

Rates of Special Responsibility Allowances with effect from 1st April, 2021 are:

Position	Committee	Allowance
<b>Chairperson's Allowance</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources	£5,555.54
	City Growth and Regeneration	£5,555.54
	People and Communities	£5,555.54
	Licensing	£5,555.54
	Planning	£5,555.54
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	£2,777.77
	Brexit Committee	£5,555.54
	Standards Committee	£5,555.54

<b>Deputy Chairperson's Allowance</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources	£2,777.77
	City Growth and Regeneration	£2,777.77
	People and Communities	£2,777.77
	Licensing	£2,777.77
	Planning	£2,777.77
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	£1,388.89
	Brexit Committee	£2,777.77
	Standards Committee	£2,777.77

<b>Position</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Allowance</b>
<b>Party Group Leader</b>	Sinn Fein (18 Members)	£6,495.45
	DUP (15 Members)	£6,000.48
	Alliance (10 Members)	£5,175.53
	SDLP (6 Members)	£4,515.57
	GREEN (4 Members)	£4,185.59
	PBPA (3 Members)	£4,020.60
	UUP (2 Members)	£3,855.61
	PUP (2 Members)	£3,855.61
<b>Deputy Party Group Leader</b>	Sinn Fein	£3,205.12
	DUP	£3,205.12
	Alliance	£3,205.12
	SDLP	£3,205.12
<b>Party Secretary</b>	Sinn Fein	£3,205.12
	DUP	£3,205.12

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of any special responsibility allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of any special responsibility allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be

payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, that part of any special responsibility allowance (to which the partial suspension relates) payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, that part of any special responsibility allowance (to which the partial suspension relates) payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

### (iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance

Section 32 of the Finance Act provides that a council may pay to the Civic Dignitaries such allowances as it considers reasonable to meet the expenses of those offices and they should be considered totally separate from SRA arrangements.

The Civic Dignitary Personal Allowances are paid in equal, monthly instalments and are liable for tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable.

The entitlements, per annum, are:-

- Lord Mayor                    £34,800
- Deputy Lord Mayor        £6,250
- High Sherriff                £6,250

Where a Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor is suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the part of Civic Allowance payable to the Councillor in respect of the period for which the Councillor is suspended will be withheld.

## (iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance

Any Member who is the main carer of a dependant, where care is required to enable that Member to perform an Approved Duty (see page 9), may claim Dependent Carers' Allowance (DCA). The rate for Standard Care is based on the hourly national living wage for age 25 or over, and the rate for Specialised Care is double the rate for Standard Care. The rates from 1st April, 2022 are:

- Standard Care           £9.50 per hour limited to £494.00 per month
- Specialist Care         £19.00 per hour limited to £988.00 per month

A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or older, where there is medical / social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with recognised physical/mental disability where there is medical / social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependant. A specialist carer is a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance.

Receipts must be obtained from specialist carers and must accompany the claim form. Councillors may claim only once for each occurrence of an approved duty (page 9) and only one Dependants' Carers' Allowance rate is payable, even if there are two or more dependants being cared for.

Councillors must disclose any financial support provided under this allowance when applying for other care services offered by another public body.

This allowance claim may also include the duration of essential travel time, up to a maximum of one hour before the approved duty starts and ending up to one hour after it finishes.

## (v) District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Allowances (DPCSP)

This allowance is paid to councillors who are members of the District Policing and Community Safety Partnership. Each councillor is entitled to claim £60 per attendance at each meeting and may claim for up to a maximum of 20 meetings a year. Each member can also claim for mileage for attending each meeting directly from DPCSP.

Chairpersons of each DPCSP are entitled to claim for an additional 10 meetings per year of the DPCSP. In addition the Chairperson of the 4 DPCSPs also sit on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and are entitled to claim for up to 20 meetings per year of this partnership.

## (vi) Renunciations

Councillors may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, chairperson, vice chairperson or special responsibility allowances. They can do this by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.

(vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

The Local Government Commissioner for Standards may impose sanctions on a Councillor who is found to have breached the Northern Ireland Code of Conduct for Councillors. Such sanction may be imposed at the conclusion of the Commissioner's adjudication process of the alleged breach or at the conclusion of an interim adjudication by the Commissioner.

For the purpose of this Scheme of Allowances, the following action will be taken upon receipt by the Chief Executive of a decision by the Commissioner which results in the disqualification or the suspension of a Councillor:

**Disqualification**

If a Councillor is disqualified, then the payment of all allowances and the provision of all support services outlined in this Scheme will cease with immediate effect from the date of disqualification.

**Suspension**

If a Councillor is wholly suspended for a period, then the payment of all allowances and the provision of all support services outlined in this Scheme will cease with immediate effect from the date of suspension.

**(b) Expenses****Travel and Subsistence Allowances**

All claims for travel and subsistence should be submitted within three months. Any claims made outside of this time limit cannot be processed.

**(i) Travel**

- **Motor Mileage Claims**

The rates of Travel and Subsistence Allowances, including motor mileage and pedal cycle rates, are reviewed annually by the Department for Communities, following consultation with the Northern Ireland Joint Council for Local Government Services.

Claims can only be made where expenditure is incurred in relation to the Councillors undertaking Approved Duties.

Travel claims may be made through Democratic Services and it is a matter for each individual Councillor to ensure that the details contained in any claim are accurate and only include actual expenditure for which they are entitled to make a claim.

In some instances, mileage claims may be liable for tax and National Insurance deductions.

The following rates are currently in use, with most Councillors getting the maximum amount of 65.0p per mile:

	Motor Cars				Pedal Cycle	Motor Cycle (all engine capacities)
	450-999cc	1000-1199cc	1199 + cc	Electric Car		
0-8,500 miles	46.9p	52.2p	65.0p	45.0p	20p	24p
After 8,500 miles	13.7p	14.4p	16.4p	25.0p		
Passenger rate	5.0p					

- **Public Transport**

Expenditure on public transport in relation to attending approved duties can be claimed back only when accompanied by proof of purchase. Any journeys made using public transport should be noted separately in any travel expenses claim.

**(ii) Subsistence**

If Councillors attend conferences, courses or undertake visits as representatives of the Council they are entitled to receive appropriate subsistence allowances.

Before a Councillor attends an event, they must obtain Committee approval. Councillors may also attend approved events as part of their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Any accommodation or travel arrangements for conferences are made directly by the Council.

Councillors should take a careful note and keep receipts for any expenses they incur while they are away on Council business because they may be able to claim for these as part of their subsistence allowances or as incidental expenses. This relates to such things as meals, bus and taxi fares, necessary telephone calls, etc. Purchases of any alcoholic beverages may not be claimed for.

***Within the UK***

The rates for subsistence allowance are determined by the Department for Communities. The following table shows the current rates of subsistence which may be claimed for:

<b>Maximum Subsistence Rates</b>		
	<b>BRITISH ISLES</b>	<b>LONDON</b>
<b>Accommodation Allowance</b>	<b>£100.70</b>	<b>£122.45</b>
<b>Meal Allowance</b>		
Breakfast	£11.50	
Lunch	£13.50	
Tea	£4.70	
Dinner	£20.95	
<b>Total Meal Allowance</b>	<b>£50.65</b>	

Departments will assist Councillors in the completion of claim forms and Councillors should make contact with an appropriate officer immediately upon returning from the conference to give details of additional expenses incurred and to sign the necessary claim forms.

Claims without receipts should rarely happen. However, Councillors must use the '[Lost or Unobtainable Receipt Voucher](#)' to claim reimbursement for expenditure they have incurred when no receipt is available.

***Outside the UK***

For travel outside the United Kingdom, the Council will pay advanced subsistence at the rate of £75.00 per 24-hour period, or £45 per part 24-hour period.

## Approved Duties

Under the existing Regulations Councillors are entitled to claim expenses in relation to an approved duty. An approved duty may be defined as:-

- (a) attendance at a meeting of the Council or of any of its Committees. Members may only claim travelling allowance for attending Committees to which they have been appointed. A Member, however, may claim mileage allowance for attending a meeting of a Committee to which he or she has not been appointed if he or she is attending at the invitation of the Committee concerned or has been sent by another Committee to state a particular case.

Or

- (b) attendance approved by the Council for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the Council:
- attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of Advisory/Liaison Committees Steering Groups/ Working Groups;
  - attendance at approved conferences, courses, study visits or seminars as a representative of the Council;
  - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of PCSP's and DPCSP's;
  - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of community centre committees ;
  - attendance on a Council or Committee deputation relevant to the functions of the Council; and
  - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of outside bodies only if the functions of the Outside Body relates to the statutory functions of the Council, and where remuneration is not made by the Outside Body to which the Councillor has been appointed.
  - Attendance at training courses or briefing sessions provided by or through the Council

In addition, the Council's Chief Executive can authorise as approved duties certain miscellaneous functions.

## Tax

Useful information on treatment of tax for councillors could be found at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs website via <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim65900>.

## Councillors' Pension Scheme

Councillors are automatically enrolled in the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Scheme (NILGOSC). The main purpose of the scheme is to provide a pension in retirement for Councillors. The benefits paid under the Scheme are based on length of membership of the Scheme and career average pensionable pay.

The pensionable pay of a councillor consists of the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance payments only. The contribution rate depends on how much each Councillor is paid but will be between 5.5% and 7.5% of the pensionable allowances received.

If a Councillor no longer wishes to participate in the pension scheme, or has any queries regarding the scheme, NIGOSC should be contacted directly on 0345 3197 320

### (c) Additional Information

#### (i) IT /Phone Package

Personal computer equipment can be provided by the Council to each Councillor on the basis that the Council owns the equipment and lends it to those Councillors who request it.

Councillors IT Package currently consists of the following:

- Tablet PC
- All-in-one printer (printer, fax and scanner)
- Smartphone, which includes a call, text and data allowance

- **Tablet PC**

Each Councillor is entitled to receive a tablet PC for their duration as a Member of Belfast City Council. The device is provided by the Council to assist Councillors in undertaking their role more effectively. The main benefits are having online access to the council minutes system and other Council provided software and to engage more effectively with constituents.

Where a Councillor has been provided with a tablet PC, hard copies of Council, Committee and Working Group report packs will not be provided.

- **Mobile Telephone costs**

Each Councillor will be offered the use of a mobile phone for the duration they remain a Councillor of Belfast City Council. The device is available for upgrade periodically.

The Council will cover the cost of line rental which includes:

- a. the cost of all phone calls to UK landlines or UK mobile phones whilst within the UK;
- b. the cost of all text messages to UK landlines or UK mobile phones whilst within the UK; and
- c. 4GB of data usage per month.

All costs incurred by calls, texts or data usage outside of that detailed above, are met by the Councillor and will be deducted the following month from the Councillor's basic allowance.

### **Hands free mobile phone equipment**

The Council will contribute towards the cost of purchase and installation of hands free mobile phone equipment for use in the Councillors' cars on the following basis:-

- Reimbursement will be made in respect of the costs of installation of the equipment in the Councillor's own private vehicle and shall be subject to the submission of appropriate receipts
- The maximum amount of reimbursement on each occasion to be £250.00.

- **Home Telephone**

The Council may meet the costs of basic monthly/quarterly line rental of the home telephone of each Councillor. Councillors are required to pay the rental cost in the first instance and, having submitted the telephone bill, will then be reimbursed this amount, subject to any tax deductions being applied through the Council's payroll system.

The Department for Communities has determined that as the Councillor's Basic Allowance covers incidental expenses involved in being a Councillor, such as the use of a home telephone, it is therefore not possible to reimburse the cost of telephone calls made on a landline.

- **Broadband Internet Access**

In order to encourage Councillors to use the Council's IT system remotely (from home or office), Councillors may claim part of their home broadband internet rental costs (maximum £25 per month).

As with phone line rental reimbursement, Councillors are required to pay the cost of the broadband in the first instance and, having submitted the appropriate bill, will then be reimbursed up to £25.00 per month, subject to any tax deductions being applied through the Council's payroll.

Access to the Council's systems is provided by means of a virtual private network (VPN). Councillors should speak to officers in Democratic Services to arrange to have the VPN set up on their computer.

- **Electronic Minutes System**

The electronic minutes system is accessible on the Council's website as well as the corporate intranet. The purpose of the system is to have a range of information relating to councillors and the Council's decision-making process in one place.

The system allows Councillors and members of the public to:-

- View the schedule of meetings;
- Access agendas, reports and minutes of Council, Committees, and Working Group Meetings; and
- Search for historical decisions.

The system is also used to alert Councillors that Committee summonses, agenda, minutes and reports have been published and, when any amendments or changes have taken place, Councillors can then access electronically.

(ii) **Councillors' Support Services**

The Council provides Councillors with a wide range of support services to assist them in carrying out their work as Councillors. Support services include typing of correspondence, post, message and enquiry services, council stationery, research service, room bookings, Councillors training, travel arrangements, expenses and subsistence payments and general enquiries.

- **Members' Common Room**

The Members' Common Room is located at the reception area of the City Hall, adjacent to the Committee Rooms. Individual mail boxes and a kitchen are available for Councillors' use.

- **Party Rooms**

In addition to the Members' Common Room, the Council provides Party Rooms for each of the political party groups within the Council. These may be used for meetings, work or discussions with constituents.

All accommodation and facilities provided are for use in connection with Council or constituency business only.

In addition to a conference table, printer, scanner, television, tea/coffee making facilities and filing space, each Party Room has at least one PC in addition to docking stations for use with the Council provided tablet PCs.

- **Correspondence**

Items for typing may be left with Democratic Services, where a confidential secretarial service is available for letters, reports and all other correspondence related to Council or constituency work.

After typing, letters will be left in the Councillor's mailbox in the Members' Common Room or can be posted to the addressee.

- **Post**

A postal service is available for correspondence which relates to Council or constituency work.

Letters must be addressed to individuals living within the City boundary although letters to public bodies and government Departments with addresses outside the City will also be accepted.

Circularised mail will not be accepted.

Councillors can also be provided with prepaid envelopes for use in their routine correspondence to constituents etc. Please speak to Democratic Services officer to request an allocation of prepaid envelopes.

Postal facilities are not available for party political issues.

- **Message and Inquiry Service**

Democratic Services staff act as a point of contact for all enquiries and telephone messages concerning Councillors from the general public, constituents and Council officers.

The telephones in the party rooms are set to divert to staff on no reply and telephone messages for Councillors will be taken. Urgent messages will be relayed immediately to Councillors, if contact is possible, and other messages will be emailed or left in their mail boxes.

- **Council Stationery**

Personalised headed-paper, compliment slips and business cards with the Council logo will be provided for each Councillor during their term of office. Standard Council stationery items are also available in the Members' Common Room.

- **Civic Gifts**

A limited range of Belfast City Council branded gifts is available for use by Councillors. The gifts are intended for VIP guests to City Hall or for special individuals or groups which a Councillor wishes to recognise. Councillors may also request civic gifts when visiting special individuals or groups when on Council business in other countries. When requesting Civic Gifts, the Councillor must sign a receipt of goods and a database of issued gifts is maintained.

- **Research and Information Service**

Democratic Services staff will be available to assist Councillors in obtaining information and carrying out research on items related to Council and constituency business.

- **Receiving Constituents**

Councillors may make arrangements to receive constituents or visitors in their party room if space is available. Councillors may also request to book a committee room to meet with a group of up to 3 visitors. Visitors will not be permitted access to party rooms or the committee rooms unless accompanied by a Councillor.

- **Car parking**

Councillors have 24 hour access to the City Hall car park. A pass for display in Councillors' vehicles will be provided by Democratic Services.

Car parking for guests of Councillors is limited. However, if this is required, please contact Democratic Services staff. The visitors' name and the registration number of the vehicle will be required for the purposes of admittance by Security staff.



Chief Executive of each District Council  
 Finance Officer of each District Council  
 Other Interested Parties

Local Government and Housing  
 Regulation Division  
 Finance Branch  
 Causeway Exchange  
 1-7 Bedford Street  
 BELFAST  
 BT2 7EG  
 Phone: 028 9082 3346  
 email: [Anthony.carleton@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Anthony.carleton@communities-ni.gov.uk)

Our ref: CO1-21-1742

28 March 2022

**Circular LG 10/2022**

Dear Sir/Madam

**CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES CIRCULAR – UPDATED  
 MARCH 2022**

This Local Government Circular provides a consolidated record of all councillor allowances and supersedes Local Government Circular 07/2021.

This consolidated circular is required to determine and reflect an increase in maximum rates for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2021 and an increase in Dependants' Carers' Allowance from 1 April 2022.

All determinations are made by the Department under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019.

If you have any queries on the content of this circular please contact Jeff Glass on 028 9082 3375 or Ian Lewis on 028 9082 3506 or by email [jeff.glass@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:jeff.glass@communities-ni.gov.uk) or [ian.lewis@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:ian.lewis@communities-ni.gov.uk).

Yours faithfully

**ANTHONY CARLETON**  
 Director  
 Local Government and Housing Regulation

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## 1. Basic Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2021

<b>Basic Allowance</b>	Maximum £15,757 per annum ≠
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≠ (The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity. In 2015/16 this element was £1,000 and each year this amount is uplifted in line with the increase applied to the basic allowance, therefore this element within the basic allowance is £1,109 from 1 April 2021.)

## 2. Dependants' Carers' Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

<b>Dependants' Carers' Allowance</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>	<b>Maximum monthly amount</b>
Standard	£8.91 <sup>^</sup>	£463
Specialist	£17.82	£927

<sup>^</sup>(Based on national living wage)

- valid from 1 April 2022

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

<b>Dependants' Carers' Allowance</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>	<b>Maximum monthly amount</b>
Standard	£9.50 <sup>^</sup>	£494
Specialist	£19.00	£988

<sup>^</sup>(Based on national living wage)

### 3. Travel Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2017

The following table states the maximum rates for travel allowances.

Type of Vehicle	Rate per Mile
A pedal cycle	20.0p
A motor cycle (all engine capacities)	24.0p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 450cc but not exceeding 999cc	46.9p *13.7p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 999cc but not exceeding 1,199cc	52.2p *14.4p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 1,199cc	65.0p *16.4p
An electric car	45.0p **25.0p
Passenger rate (per passenger)	5.0p

\* For mileage above 8,500 miles

\*\*For mileage above 10,000 miles

#### 4. Special Responsibility Allowance

– valid from 1 April 2021

The following table states the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance that a council may pay. The maximum rate is based on the size of the council population. Each council's population figures are updated each year by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and it is the duty of each council to operate within the total maximum rate appropriate to its population band. For ease the maximum any councillor can receive, within each band, is also provided.

Population of council	Maximum Special Responsibility Allowance £	Maximum (1/5 <sup>th</sup> ) for individual councillor £
Less than 120,000	55,479	11,096
120,000 to 199,000	77,671	15,534
200,000 +	119,835	23,967

## 5. Subsistence Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2015

The following table states the maximum rates for subsistence; however, where councils believe it is necessary there is flexibility for councils to increase these rates by applying a suitable measure of price inflation.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES £	
	British Isles	London
<b>Accommodation allowance</b> - An absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	100.70	122.45
<b>Breakfast allowance</b> - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	11.50	
<b>Lunch allowance</b> - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	13.50	
<b>Tea allowance</b> - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	4.70	
<b>Evening meal allowance</b> - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	20.95	



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Belfast Region City Deal</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	This report seeks to update the Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) which was formally signed on 15th December 2021 by the Belfast region partners, the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. The report also includes an update on development of the Outline Business Cases (OBCs) and an overview of next steps in the implementation of the deal.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• note the update on the signing of the Belfast Region City Deal in December 2021.</li> <li>• note the programme overview and the next steps in the implementation of the deal.</li> <li>• note the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.</li> </ul>

3.0	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>Programme Update</b></p> <p>The Belfast Region Deal Document and Governance Framework was approved by the SP and R Committee in October 2021 and individual BRCD partners also sought approval through their own governance structures in tandem. Following these formal approvals by partners including UK and NI Government the deal was formally signed on 15 December 2021 at the ICC Belfast, representing a key milestone for the Belfast region.</p>
3.2	<p>As Members will be aware, the original planned event had to be scaled back and moved to an online format due to the emerging revision of Covid-19 restrictions at that time. Whilst this was not how partners had envisaged marking the signing of the Deal, moving to an online format allowed for a wider audience than would have been possible with an in-person event. Over 200 people viewed the event online on the day, including partners, Elected Representatives, Government officials and representatives from the business community.</p>
3.3	<p>It was a momentous day for partners across the Belfast region, with the first ever signed City Deal for Northern Ireland securing £1billion co-investment to help transform the region's economy over the next decade. On the day of the signing the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Finance Minister signalled their full support for the implementation of the deal and for the partners' aim to deliver a "Decade of Opportunity", resulting in significant press and media coverage for BRCD both on the day of the announcement and in the days following.</p>
3.4	<p>A number of communications products were developed in line with the announcement, including a programme video and an updated BRCD Summary document which is attached at Appendix 1. Plans for strategic engagement and programme communication reflecting the new phase of the deal are currently being developed and Members will be updated as this progresses.</p>
3.5	<p><b>Investment Priorities</b></p> <p>BRCD Partners have now developed Business Cases for their projects across the programme and Business Cases representing a majority of programme expenditure are now at an advanced stage.</p> <p><b>Innovation</b></p>
3.6	<p>There has been significant progression in the Innovation Pillar with all five Innovation projects at an advanced stage of development, with a number of the projects having been progressed to RIBA stage 2 (design), through substantial investment at risk by the project sponsors.</p>

3.7	The Queen's University led Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) and the Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) projects have all received OBC approval from the Economy Minister and the Department of Finance.
3.8	The OBC for the Ulster University led Studio Ulster (formerly Screen Media Innovation Lab (SMIL)) project has been approved both by the Economy Minister and Department of Finance and the OBC for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) has approval from the Economy Minister but is awaiting approval from the Department of Finance.
<b>Digital</b>	
3.9	Following Programme Business Case approval, the Digital pillar is commencing a new phase of work through the development of project OBCs. The Digital Programme is at an earlier stage of development, with one project, the i4c Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks in Ballymena at a more advanced stage with Economy Minister approval for its OBC received in early April. OBCs for other projects, including investment in advanced wireless and Regional Innovation Hubs in Newry, Mourne and Down and Ards and North Down have commenced.
3.10	An OBC for a proposed Digital Twin project, led by Digital Catapult with support from industry, is also being progressed and is due to be further considered by the Digital Advisory Board in summer 2022.
<b>Tourism and Regeneration</b>	
3.11	OBCs for all three regeneration projects, Carrickfergus, Newry City Centre and Bangor Waterfront, have received approval from the Communities Minister and Department of Finance.
3.12	In relation to the Tourism projects the Mourne Mountains Gateway project has received approval from the Economy Minister and Department of Finance. Casework for the Gobbins Phase 2 is now complete with feedback pending and Destination Royal Hillsborough casework is scheduled for June.
3.13	Belfast Stories is being progressed by BCC and it is expected that following engagement with the Department for the Economy, Tourism NI and BCC, that BCC will now progress design to RIBA 2 to enable a full OBC to be developed, with Casework review in summer 2023.

## **Infrastructure**

3.14 Following signing of the Deal and confirmation of funding, the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge will now progress to the next stage of project delivery which involves development of the procurement strategy to procure a Design and Build Contractor to develop the project.

3.15 Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) Phase 2 and the Newry Southern Relief Road are at an earlier stage of development. The public consultation on BRT2 is now complete, with a Belfast City Council response agreed by CG&R Committee in October 2021. The project team are now preparing the draft consultation report for consideration by the Minister and following Ministerial decisions an Outline Business Case will be prepared.

## **Employability and Skills (E&S)**

3.16 The Employability & Skills Board has been reconfigured as we move into the next phase of the Deal with a focus on delivery and responding to collaboration opportunities aligned to priority sectors where city deal investment is focused. The new Board initially focused on the programme of work, with the Action Plan for Year 1 now agreed set within the thematic priorities of the deal's E&S Proposition i.e. skills for inclusion, skills for growth and skills for a digital future. The work programme will integrate the contribution made by partners through alignment of their E&S interventions, including through Labour Market Partnerships, as well as seeking to create new opportunities for partnership working to drive improvements in employability prospects and increase skill levels in priority areas. A more flexible way of working that remains closely aligned to the priorities of DfE in terms of the 10X Skills Strategy and will continue to respond to the changing economic landscape resulting from the pandemic and other changes as they occur.

3.17 Recognising the scale of employment potential created via the city deal investment, partners are forming a dedicated project team who will have a key role in assessing the need for future skills intervention, working collaboratively to secure new funding in this area and to ensure that inclusion opportunities are maximised across the deal. In this regard work is underway across the programme of investment to integrate social value requirements within upcoming procurements, reflecting local and regional procurement policies and guidance.

3.18 The BRCD partners have already responded to the collaboration opportunity with new interventions such as Digital Futures, led by the FE Colleges and Digital Surge, led by Councils resulting in new interventions being offered within the market. Further success has also been achieved through the City & Growth Deal Complementary Fund with a up to £7.1m pot of funding ring fenced for a Digital Transformation Flexible Fund project. Work is currently underway to develop a business case for this project on a cross deal basis, offering grant support for small businesses to invest in hardware/software to support digital transformation.

## **Next Steps – Delivery Phase**

### **Accountable Body**

- 3.19 Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is the Lead Authority for the BRCD, which means it carries out a range of functions that support and enable regional partnership working, such as employing the Programme Management Office and providing administrative, professional and technical support as required to support the Deal.
- 3.20 Now that the deal is signed, Belfast City Council will act as the Accountable body for the Deal ensuring that the partnership makes decisions in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements. Steps are being taken to put in place the financial and budget management arrangements and processes to ensure the BRCD funding is managed and accounted for appropriately. Appropriate accounting and reporting arrangements in line with specified requirements will also be established. Arrangements are also being made with partners to fund and establish programme management arrangements on a permanent basis

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

- 3.21 As part of the long-term arrangements for working together across the BRCD partnership a Memorandum of Understanding is being developed to reflect partners' commitments to invest collectively and work collaboratively to achieve the ambitions for inclusive growth through delivery of the Deal. Once finalised and agreed this will then sit alongside the formal Deal Documentation.

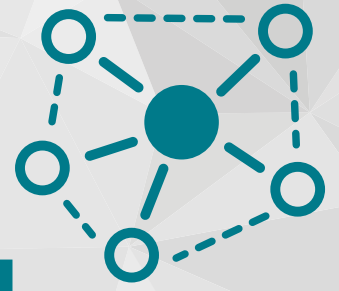
### **Implementation and Financial Plans**

- 3.22 The overarching deal document is supported by both an Implementation Plan and Financial Plan and the committee were provided with an update on both in the update to November committee. The Programme Management Office has been engaging closely with the Department of Finance and project leads to finalise both documents.

### **Contracts for Funding**

- 3.23 Before funding can flow directly to projects Contracts for Funding (previously referred to as Letters of Offer) need to be agreed between Departments and the Accountable Body and between the Accountable Body and Project Sponsors. The BRCD Partners have been working intensively with Departments over recent months to agree key commercial and practical issues and the BRCD Executive Board had previously written to the relevant government departments to emphasise the need for the issue to be prioritised. Following agreement on the key framework for the Contracts for Funding, it will need to be reviewed by all partners, contracts developed in relation to individual projects and appropriate legal advice will need to be taken.

	<b>BRCD Council Panel</b>
3.24	Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest parties.
3.25	A virtual meeting of the Panel was held on 23 February 2022 hosted by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. At this meeting the Panel received an update on the signing of the Deal, progress on the overall BRCD programme of activity and key next steps. Members also received a presentation from Professor Paul Maropoulos on the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), one of the five Innovation centres of Excellence to be delivered by BRCD.
3.26	The minutes of the April and November meetings have also been approved and are attached at Appendices 2 and 3. The next meeting will be hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council on 22 June 2022.
	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b>
3.27	All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.
	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>
3.28	The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that:  <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>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 – BRCD Summary Document Appendix 2 – Minutes of the BRCD Council Panel of 28th April, 2021 Appendix 3 – Minutes of the BRCD Council Panel of 4th November, 2021



# BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

Summary  
December 2021



A decade of opportunity  
starts **now**



# THE BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

The highly ambitious Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), signed in December 2021, arrives at a critical time. The Deal represents a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners and secures a bespoke package of investment from central government and the BRCD partners of more than £850 million to support the delivery of our shared vision of:

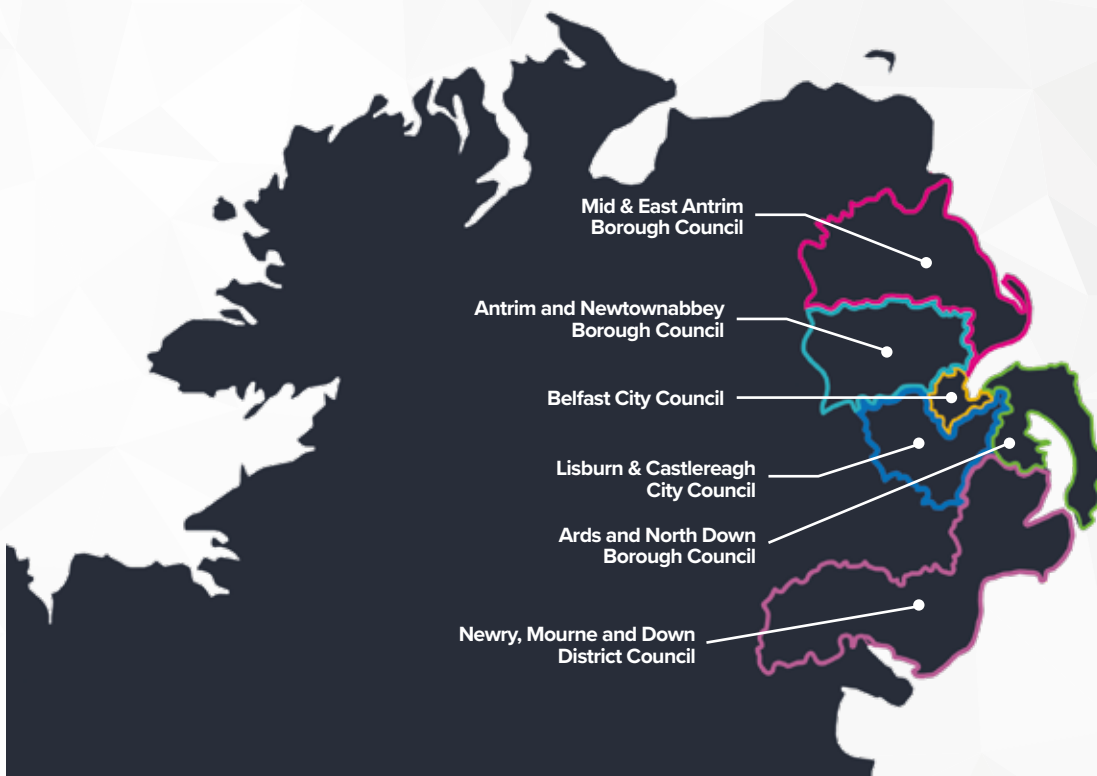
**“Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and a balanced spread of benefits across the region.”**

This substantial financial commitment, which will be further supplemented by the private sector to create a programme in excess of £1 billion, will generate up to 20,000 jobs as it is delivered over the next 10 to 15 years - an exciting, once in a generation opportunity to accelerate economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way.

This Deal will strengthen the region’s offer in growth sectors such as life and health sciences, the digital and creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. It will support next generation digital capabilities, boost tourism and support the regeneration of our region, underpinned by infrastructure developments and investment in skills to connect people to jobs and services.

The Deal involves an integrated programme of investment that cuts across the responsibilities of local councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. The BRCD partners comprise the six local authorities; Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, the region’s two universities; Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University, and four of the region’s further education colleges; Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, Southern Regional College and the South Eastern Regional College.

The BRCD region has a population of over 1 million residents. The region is young, ambitious and growing - over half the population is under the age of 40. The place-based nature of the City Deal presents an enormous opportunity to drive economic recovery and boost competitiveness, improving the region’s resilience to future shocks and stresses and complementing key plans for economic recovery post the Covid-19 pandemic.



It is estimated that over the lifetime of the programme the Belfast Region City Deal will:



support the creation of up to **20,000 jobs**



**connect local people to new and better jobs**



place the region at the **top table of digital innovation**



deliver **£400 million in GVA** directly on-site and within the region



target delivery of almost **£1 billion of private sector leverage**



create compelling **world-class visitor attractions**



help to **regenerate major towns and cities**



foster **collaborative working**

The ambitions for inclusive growth will be delivered through the following pillars of investment:

# BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL



## Innovation and Digital

Achieving world leading competitive advantage in key sectors: building our innovation and digital capability - facilitating invention, commercialisation and widespread adoption as a driver of economic prosperity and increased well-being

## Tourism and Regeneration

Boosting tourism and regenerating our region - creating world-class visitor attractions and investing in towns and cities to provide a year-round destination that will provide stand out in international markets

## Infrastructure

connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure

## Employability and Skills

Putting in place arrangements to enable a constant pipeline of talent to support the growth created by the BRCD investments and ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support the emerging job opportunities

# INNOVATION

The BRCD will invest more than £300 million in five industry-led centres of excellence, focusing on the industries of the future, providing new tools and utilising data insights to support increased productivity and business competitiveness.

**AMIC - Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre** will provide the springboard for manufacturing innovation in NI, providing a specialised environment for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sectors to access the very latest manufacturing technology and Industry 4.0 smart automation, supported by experienced, professional engineers and a state-of-the-art Factory of the Future.



**CDHT - Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology** will provide a world-class space for academia, industry and clinicians to innovate and boost the productivity of the life and health sciences sector by accelerating the development of medical technology devices and diagnostics. Technology, Community and Clinical Living Labs will be based beside the Ulster University Belfast campus and at the Royal Victoria Hospital.



**GII - Global Innovation Institute** is a unique combination of expertise, combined with a ground-breaking partnership approach to delivering scalable computing solutions. GII is aiming to transform Northern Ireland's digital economy by substantially increasing both the volume and range of digital innovation taking place within the region, and developing skill sets to meet industry needs, focussing on health and agri-food.



## **i-REACH - Institute of Research Excellence for Advanced Clinical Healthcare**

an integrated clinical research centre of excellence, iREACH is an NHS, industry, and research facility. It will transform the region's ability to test new drugs, medical-technology, care pathways and societal interventions. It will leverage the opportunities that exist at the interface of medical research and digital transformation.



## **Studio Ulster (formerly Screen Media Innovation Lab - SMIL)**

will provide a large-scale Virtual Production studio complex to include world-class commercial Virtual Production stages, fully supported by an integrated research, development and innovation centre of excellence in real-time and Virtual Production. Studio Ulster will drive a revolution in production pipelines across converging sectors with application in film, broadcast, commercial, animation, games, immersive and visual effects.



# DIGITAL

The BRCD will invest £125 million in a challenged, flexible digital programme that will maximise the benefits and opportunities of the Innovation centres of excellence and focus on areas where the region can be distinctive and competitive. The key interventions include:

## The Belfast Region Innovation Challenge Fund

- This £55 million fund will support an agile approach to address the emerging needs and unique characteristics of the region and be designed to stimulate collaborative innovation and investment.
- The fund will stimulate innovation to address the region's 'Grand Challenges' of (i) artificial intelligence and data, (ii) health and wellbeing and (iii) sustainability and resilience.
- Funding opportunities are likely to include a range of financial instruments including capital grants, small business research initiatives, challenge prizes and equity/debt investments.



## Enabling Infrastructure

- £40 million of funding to invest in digital connectivity (including advanced wireless), data infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure to support the Belfast Smart District and wider regional innovation.



## Regional Innovation Hubs

- £30 million of investment will deliver a series of Innovation Hubs across the region.
- The Hubs will build upon and leverage existing sectoral strengths including cleantech and creative industries in order to promote innovation activity and new business growth across the region via local hubs.
- **The i4C Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks** regeneration site, Ballymena represents the first of these Hubs which will provide a physical base and support to increase levels of SME innovation and commercialisation activity. It will also provide skills and training solutions in the cleantech sector including the Hydrogen Training Academy.



# BOOSTING TOURISM AND REGENERATING OUR REGION

The BRCD will invest more than £300 million in delivering globally visible tourism products and reimagined town and city centres that will support sustainable year round tourism and drive economic recovery.

## **Bangor Waterfront**

will reconnect the town with the sea through a range of attractions and experiences. The investment will provide high quality public spaces, a new Music Hub and will regenerate assets including Bangor Marina, Pickie Fun Park and watersports facilities at Ballyholme Yacht Club, enhancing the town and encouraging further investment.



**Belfast Stories**, a transformational anchor visitor attraction in Belfast will allow people to connect with the city and one another through stories, screen and social spaces. The experience will include a state of the art multi-screen film centre and vibrant public spaces allowing for lively event programming and animation.



Image for illustrative purposes only c/o BDH Grimshaw.

## **Carrickfergus Regeneration**

will provide investment in Carrickfergus Castle, including its visitor hub and historic walls. Its connection to the town centre will regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town placing it firmly on the map as an authentic, heritage-led tourism hub - a 'must visit' starting point to the Causeway Coastal Route.



## **Destination Royal Hillsborough**

will further enhance Hillsborough Castle by restoring and developing the historic Courthouse and Fort and investing in the Forest. This will include opening a Social Enterprise Café and integrating and improving connections between these attractions and the wider village through improved public realm, to attract more visitors to this world class heritage village.



**The Gobbins** aims to build on this exhilarating visitor attraction through the addition of a stunning staircase, an upgrade to the cliff top path - to include a new rope bridge that stretches across the coastline - and the development of a new Welcome Hub which will include Augmented Reality experiences.



## CONNECTING OUR REGION

The **Mourne Mountains Gateway** will redefine visitors' experience of the Mourne Mountains whilst supporting the sustainable growth of tourism and protecting the natural heritage and habitat of the region. The project will deliver a world class visitor attraction, and will create improved, and more sustainable access to the Mournes.



**Newry City Centre Regeneration** will deliver a civic hub, theatre and conferencing facilities which, together with new public realm and grade A office provision, will revitalise the city. The regeneration will also create and sustain jobs, increase visitor numbers, appeal to residents and stimulate the evening economy.

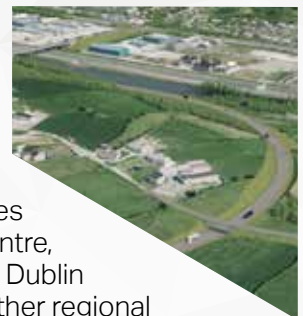


Our investment of £140 million will help to connect people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure.

**Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge** will connect Belfast city centre with Ormeau Park, providing access to jobs, leisure space, services and opportunities for residents and visitors, contributing to the improved health and well being of local communities.



**Newry Southern Relief Road** will link the A1 bypass with the A2 Warrenpoint dual-carriageway providing an alternative strategic route for traffic that reduces pressure on Newry city centre, facilitates onward travel to Dublin and improves access to other regional gateways.



**Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2** - BRCD funding will support enabling investment for the extension of this public transport network which will support improved access to health, education, leisure and job facilities and improve economic return across the region.



# EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS

The employability and skills profile of the local labour market is a critical factor in competitiveness. Despite a positive upward trend in skills over recent years, NI continues to lag behind its competitor regions in terms of the pace of change. The future skills system will need to be increasingly agile if it is to be in a position to respond effectively to these challenges and to changing market conditions such as automation and the pace of technological change.

New NI Executive strategies and plans for employability and skills are also seeking to respond to this challenge. City / Growth deals offer an ideal opportunity to support, enhance and contribute to arrangements emerging through the creation of Local Labour Market Partnerships and the NI Skills Strategy for more joined-up employability and skills planning.

The BRCD investment will support efforts to rebalance our local economy by building on our competitive strengths, increasing productivity and supporting the creation of more and better jobs. However, for it to succeed it will be critical that the right skills are in place to enable people to avail of the opportunities arising from this investment and that pro-active measures are put in place so that the opportunities emerging reach as wide a range of people as possible - a fundamental aspect of City / Growth deals across the UK.

The BRCD partners will therefore work together to align our plans and resources in the following priority areas to help prepare an appropriately skilled workforce that can benefit from the

employment opportunities that will emerge as a result of the transformative investments in innovation and digital, tourism, regeneration and infrastructure.

**Skills for Growth:** working with employers to align skills programmes and employment opportunities with the growth in sectors supported by BRCD; helping to create new apprenticeship pathways and fostering development of higher level skills;

**Skills for Inclusion:** creating opportunities to address skills imbalances and improve access to employment opportunities across the region through socially inclusive progression pathways; and

**Skills for a Digital Future:** helping to build our digital literacy from grassroots up and enhancing the digital transformation of businesses across the region, with a specific focus upon smaller enterprises.

The impact of Covid-19 further underlined the need to harness collective effort and investment in digital technology. Early in 2020, a Digital 'Task and Finish' group was established by the BRCD partners to consider how to support an inclusive and sustainable recovery. Arising from this work, Further Education Colleges, working with industry partners, and supported by funding from the Department for the Economy, delivered the **Digital Futures Programme**, an innovative skill development and work experience initiative providing unemployed and under employed graduates with the opportunity to reskill in relevant digital areas, including Cloud Computing, Data Analytics or Cyber Security.



# DEAL DELIVERY TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2018



Proposition submitted to UK Government

OCTOBER 2018



Chancellor announced BRCD

MARCH 2019



Heads of Terms signed

MARCH 2021



Outline Business Cases developed

DECEMBER 2021



Deal Document signed

2022 ONWARDS



Deal Delivery

- Stakeholder engagement
- Project delivery
- Further private investment leveraged
- Collaborative working
- Full Business Cases approved
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Project completion
- Benefits delivered





Images courtesy of Tourism Northern Ireland and partners.

 #BRCityDeal

 [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal)



**Belfast**  
City Council



**Antrim and Newtownabbey**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**Ards and North Down**  
Borough Council



**Lisburn & Castlereagh**  
City Council



**Mid & East Antrim**  
Borough Council



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin**  
**Newry, Mourne and Down**  
District Council



**QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY**  
BELFAST



**Ulster University**



**NORTHERN**  
Regional College



**SERC**  
INSPIRING. TRANSFORMING. ENRICHING.



**Southern Regional College**



**Northern Ireland Executive**



**UK Government**



## BRC D Council Panel

<b>Subject:</b>	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRC D) Council Panel
<b>Date:</b>	12:30 pm, 28 April 2021
<b>Councillors in attendance:</b>	<p>Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Trevor Cummings – Mayor, Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Councillor Richard Smart - Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council  Councillor Eric Hanvey - Belfast City Council  Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council  Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Councillor Sorcha Eastwood – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council</p>
<b>Officers:</b>	<p>Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Suzanne Wylie – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council  Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council  Damien Martin – BRC D Programme Director, Belfast City Council  Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council  Nicola Rowles – Interim Director of Development, Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Ursula O’Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Professor Frank Lyons - Professor of Music and Associate Dean of Research and Impact in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University  Emer Husbands, Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Theresa Slevin – BRC D Programme Office</p>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
1.1	<p>Mayor of Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council, Cllr Trevor Cummings welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council.</p> <p>Stephen Reid, Chief Executive of Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council, outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Cllr Glenn Finlay (Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council)</p> <p>Alderman Phillip Brett (Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council)</p> <p>Councillor Robert Logan (Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council)</p> <p>Councillor Willie Clarke (Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council)</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council</p> <p>Anne Donaghy (Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council)</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
3.1	Cllr Cummings asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>
4.1	<p>Cllr Cummings asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Dunlop proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Seconded – Cllr Burgess.</p> <p><b>Members agreed the minutes.</b></p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>BRCD Programme Progress Update &amp; Deal Development</b>
5.1	<p><b>Programme Progress Update</b></p> <p>Stephen Reid, Chief Executive of Ards and North Down Borough Council and Damien Martin, BRCD Programme Director for BRCD provided a progress report to the Council Panel highlighting the progress in completing Outline Business Cases (OBCs), the majority of which had now been submitted for formal review by NI Government (and UK Government where applicable).</p> <p>Specifically, four of the five projects under the Innovation Pillar had been submitted for formal review and had started to progress through Casework Committee, including the Screen Media Innovation Lab, which Members</p>

	<p>would receive a specific update in relation to at the meeting. The final project, the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology was expected to be submitted in late May/June 2021.</p> <p>Stephen Reid explained that all projects within the Tourism &amp; Regeneration pillar had been formally submitted to NI Government for review ahead of the scheduling of Casework Committees for the most advanced projects.</p> <p>A digital innovation programme business case had been submitted to NI and UK Government in January 2021 and detailed and constructive engagement with Government had been occurring in recent months ahead of an updated programme business case being completed in May 2021.</p> <p>In relation to the Infrastructure pillar, one OBC, relating to the Lagan Bridge had been approved and interim OBCs for the Belfast Rapid Transit Phase II and Southern Relief Road projects had been completed.</p> <p>Stephen Reid explained that employability &amp; skills had also been progressing well, with positive engagement with the private sector taking place in recent months. A final draft Employability &amp; Skills proposition would be brought to the Employability &amp; Skills Advisory Board during May.</p> <p>Stephen Reid set out the recent positive engagement that had taken place with a range of senior political representatives, including Executive Ministers, regarding the BRCD and noted the support for City &amp; Growth Deals which had been included within the Department for Economy Economic Recovery Action Plan. Stephen Reid explained that plans for enhanced business engagement were also being progressed.</p>
5.2	<p><b>Deal Document</b></p> <p>Stephen Reid explained that positive progress had been made in relation to development of the draft Deal Documentation, including the development of an overall draft Deal Document. Progress had also been made on a draft Implementation Plan and Financial Plan. Work on the Deal Documentation was taking place in parallel to the development and submission of Outline Business Cases – and members were reminded that a signed deal document was required in order to establish the Accountable Body and allow funding to flow to projects which had OBCs approved.</p> <p>Stephen Reid outlined the contents of the Deal Documents and explained the approach taken by the BRCD, including that there has been a recognition of the impact of Covid-19 across the programme and projects. The Deal Document has been based on best practice from other Deals across the UK and a draft governance framework has been developed which builds on existing structures and includes the BRCD Council Panel remaining as an important element, providing political leadership for the next phase of the Deal.</p> <p>Stephen Reid also outlined progress on a draft Implementation Plan which focuses on key milestones, risks and benefits of projects and explained that the next step was further engagement with NI Departments in relation to the Deal Documentation.</p>

Alderman Kingston noted the long-term nature of Belfast Rapid Transit Phase II and Southern Relief Road projects and asked for assurances that these could be delivered within the BRCD timescales. Damien Martin explained that that these projects were being led by the Department for Infrastructure and were still in early stages of development and there are ongoing discussion with officials on next stages which would include updated timescales.

Alderman Ewart requested clarification around the submission of OBCs and the timescales for Casework Committees. Damien Martin explained that 4 projects within the Innovation pillar (the Screen Media Innovation Lab, the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, I-REACH and the Global Innovation Institute) had either attended the Casework Committee or had a date scheduled during May. The final innovation project, the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology, was also expected to be submitted for Casework by June.

In relation to Tourism & Regeneration, the Carrickfergus Regeneration and Newry Regeneration projects were expected to attend Casework Committee in the next month with the most advanced Tourism projects progressing to Casework during June. Damien Martin further explained that the Belfast Destination Hub and Destination Hillsborough, had produced OBC1s and therefore would not attend Casework Committee but would be reviewed by a Departmental Panel.

Alderman Ewart asked how a project moved from a Project Type B to a Type A. Damien Martin explained that a Project Type B reflected the current stage of development of a project and an OBC1 would demonstrate the strategic and economic case of a project, with further work required, for example relating to commercial and operating/management models which are required for a full OBC. Damien Martin noted that an approved OBC1 would still release capital BRCD funding to support further development of the project (such as detailed design), but an OBC2 would be required before the project could move to procurement of a construction contractor.

Cllr Casey stated that Southern Relief Road was a key project for their Council area and welcomed the clarification on the process provided.

Cllr Hanvey noted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our economy and welcomed that the BRCD has been conscious of this in its development of projects and programmes. Cllr Hanvey urged expenditure to be released as soon as possible due to the criticality of City & Growth Deals to NI. Cllr Hanvey asked for clarification of the role of CPD in the BRCD.

Damien Martin welcomed Cllr Hanvey's comments and stated that a lot of work had gone into developing approaches which can also help in the short-term, pre signing of Deal Document, including the Digital Futures programme. He further explained that CPD were currently engaged in providing cost validation advice on

	<p>BRCD projects to the NI Departments and that the Executive had agreed to fund these costs. CPD will also have a role in advising on procurement going forward – but more clarity will be provided in due course.</p> <p>Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, highlighted that there remained an affordability issue in relation to delivery of all of the projects, at their current scale, within the NI Executive funded Tourism &amp; Regeneration and Infrastructure pillars – and wished to highlight that there may be some difficult decisions to be made by partners – with discussions ongoing with DoF, DfI, DfE and DfC.</p> <p><b>Members noted the programme update and the next steps- proposed by Alderman Henderson and seconded by Cllr Smart.</b></p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Impact of Innovation Investment- example of Screen Media Innovation Lab</b>
6.1	<p>Cllr Trevor Cummings introduced Professor Frank Lyons, Professor of Music and Associate Dean of Research and Impact in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University.</p> <p>Professor Frank Lyons provided a detailed presentation outlining the impact of BRCD investment within the innovation pillar, through the Screen Media Innovation Lab, a project focused on virtual production which could place NI as a world leader, leveraging significant private sector investment and providing local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne welcomed the presentation, stating that the benefit for the whole Belfast Region and beyond is extremely exciting and that projects like this should be highlighted more strongly.</p> <p>Cllr Casey also strongly welcomed the presentation and thanked Prof Lyons.</p> <p>Alderman Henderson reiterated the views of Cllr Byrne and Cllr Casey, strongly welcoming the presentation and exciting project.</p> <p>Alderman Kingston emphasised that the project was an excellent example of future proofing and stated that he agreed with the comments of others in their support.</p>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Press Release</b>
7.1	<p>Cllr Cummings asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Proposed – Ald Kingston  Seconded - Ald Henderson</p> <p><b>Members agreed the press release.</b></p>

<b>8.0</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>
8.1	The next meeting would be hosted by Belfast City Council and it was noted that a date would be agreed and circulated amongst Members.



## BRCD Council Panel

<b>Subject:</b>	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Council Panel
<b>Date:</b>	9.30 am, 4 November 2021
<b>Councillors in attendance:</b>	<p>Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council  Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council  Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Barra O’Muirí – Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council</p>
<b>Officers:</b>	<p>Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council  David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council  Damien Martin – BRCD Programme Director, Belfast City Council  Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council  Ursula O’Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Theresa Slevin, Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Lorraine Beggs, Lesley Holmes – BRCD Programme Office</p>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
1.1	Cllr McLaughlin welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Belfast City Council and outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Cllr Glenn Finlay - Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Richard Smart - Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Robert Logan – Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council</p>

	<p>Alderman Philip Brett – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Eric Hanvey - Belfast City Council  Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council  Councillor Sorcha Eastwood – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>Suzanne Wylie – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council  Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
3.1	Cllr McLaughlin asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>
4.1	<p>Cllr McLaughlin asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Ald Kingston proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Seconded – Cllr Byrne</p> <p><b>Members agreed the minutes.</b></p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>BRC D Deal Document</b>
5.1	<p>Ronan Cregan, BRC D Senior Responsible Officer, delivered a presentation summarising the Deal Document and Governance Framework, the timeline of its development and the approval process currently underway. It was noted that approval is now in place from BRC D partners, the NI Delivery Board and NI Executive. Approval from the UK Government is outstanding, however this is expected to be provided in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>The content of the deal document was outlined, its funding structure and its expected outcomes. Governance arrangements for the delivery of the deal were outlined; these will be similar to current arrangements with the current Executive Board and Pillar Board structure. It was reported that the role of the Finance Directors Group will be enhanced reflecting the increasing role for financial oversight and management of funding. The Council Panel will continue to fulfil a key role in overseeing the implementation of the deal, as well as providing leadership on further collaboration opportunities beyond the city deal.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne queried the plans for the promotion and launch of the overall deal, stressing the importance of promoting the collective package of investment.</p> <p>Ronan Cregan outlined plans to hold a launch event at the end of Nov/start of December, subject to UK Government approval of the deal, to profile the complete programme of investment and all partners will be involved in this event. Damien Martin commented that the scale of the event will be significant, but it will be delivered in line with covid guidelines and. it is hoped that the date for the event will be agreed within the next week.</p> <p>Cllrs Byrne, McLaughlin and Casey stressed the importance of scheduling the event as close to deal approval as possible to maximise the PR potential and avoid the risk of communication being leaked in advance.</p> <p><b>Members noted the report on the Deal Document and the Government Framework.</b></p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>BRC D Programme Update &amp; Next Steps</b>

6.1	<p>Damien Martin, BRCD Programme Director, delivered a presentation on the progress of the overall BRCD programme of activity and outlining the key next steps. Whilst securing the deal is a critical milestone further work is required to develop key documentation to enable funding to flow .The PMO have developed the financial and implementation plan for the deal and are currently working with government departments to agree grant letters of offer and advance the approval of business cases for projects that are at an advanced stage of development.</p> <p>It was highlighted that significant work has been undertaken over recent months to progress business cases. To date four business cases in the innovation pillar have been approved by Ministers and two projects within the tourism and regeneration pillar have progressed through casework (Mourne Mountain Gateway and Carrickfergus Castle &amp; Regeneration), with the latter also securing DfE ministerial approval. The Digital innovation Programme Business Case has also been approved and further work is required to develop individual Outline Business Cases (OBC) for the projects contained within this aspect of programme. It was stressed that whilst the deal signing is a welcome stage to unlock funding, further work is required to advance many of the projects through the business case process, the approval of which is also required to enable funding to start to flow to individual projects.</p> <p>It was reported that beyond the capital investment pillars, joint working across the partners continues to take place through the employability and skills programme and reference was made to digital graduate programmes that had been developed as a result of the BRCD, research undertaken on apprenticeship pathways and exploratory work to identify means to increase inclusion and diversity within high growth sectors.</p> <p>Cllr Dunlop enquired as to the current position with regard to funding for two infrastructure projects (Newry Southern Relief Road and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2) and the funding commitment for the innovation hubs.</p> <p>Damien Martin responded highlighting that across the tourism and infrastructure pillars the decision of partners was made to prioritise tourism and regeneration projects and that there are therefore some funding constraints within the infrastructure pillar. However, funding is in place for Newry Southern Relief Road and funding is also available for enabling investment in Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2, as detailed within the Deal Document, and engagement is taking place with government departments as to how the scheme can be fully delivered. It was also confirmed that funding for innovation hubs has been secured through the overall Digital Programme but individual business cases will need to be developed for each hub, as per the approach for the i4C project.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne queried the timeline for the approval of OBCs, specifically from the completion of casework through to ministerial and DoF approval.</p> <p>Damien Martin reported that experience to date suggested that it has been around 3-months. However, it is difficult to be definitive as caseworks often result in additional queries, impacting upon the speed of approval. Ronan Cregan followed up by highlighting that individual project budgets have been ringfenced. Therefore the allocation of funding is not determined by the speed of approval through the casework process.</p> <p>Cllr Cathcart congratulated everyone involved in the progress achieved to date, highlighting key projects including the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Scheme and emphasising the importance of the innovation hubs to job creation.</p> <p>Damien Martin reported that the partners are working on advancing the OBCs for the innovation hubs, highlighting the complexity of developing robust, sustainable financial models for these projects. Reference was made to the progress of the i4C project in helping to develop a pathway through the approval process.</p>
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	<b>Members noted the report.</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Communication &amp; Engagement</b>
7.1	<p>A video produced for the Digital programme was showcased and Damien Martin outlined the key communication products being developed for the launch, including a summary deal document and a refreshed look and feel for the deal signing. Plans are also underway to develop a new website for the delivery phase.</p> <p>It was reported that significant engagement work has been underway across the partners aligned to specific projects. In recent months a key focus for engagement activity has been focused upon government partners to secure approval of business cases and approval of the deal. However, recently strategic engagement has also been taking place with key business representative bodies. A draft communication protocol outlining the arrangements between partners and government departments has been developed and this is currently with departments for review.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne welcomed the creation of the video, referencing its ability to promote the collective programme of investment and the benefits it will deliver.</p> <p><b>Members noted the report and plans for further engagement with government department on the draft communications protocol.</b></p>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>
8.1	<p>Cllr McLaughlin highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council in February; the date for the meeting is to be agreed and will be circulated amongst Members.</p>



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report: Taking Action on Levelling Up</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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 or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on PwC's Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report: Taking Action on Levelling Up.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the update on PwC's Good Growth for Cities 2022: Taking Action on Levelling Up report, which measures the performance of cities and regions across the UK as indicators of 'Good Growth' and ranked Belfast as the highest-ranking city from the devolved nation.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b>Background</b>
3.1	The Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index is an annual report which looks at broad measures of economic performance alongside well-being indicators to develop a metric for

	<p>'Good Growth' of cities. Specifically, the report ranks 50 of the UK's largest cities based on people's assessment of 12 key economic wellbeing factors, including jobs, health, income and skills, as well as work-life balance, house affordability, travel-to-work times, income equality, environment and business start-ups. This year's report also includes two new indicators covering safety and vibrancy of local high streets. Indicators within the report align to the Council's strategic objectives such as the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan, BRCD. Belfast City Centre and Regeneration Strategy (BCCRIS), Bolder Vision for Belfast and the Reset for Growth report, as well as a number of other strategies and programmes.</p>
3.2	<p>Using these 'Good Growth' indicators, the report ranked Belfast in eighth place, and highest ranked city from the devolved nations. Other cities in the top 10 include London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Leicester, Sheffield and Bristol. Members will be aware of the projects and programmes Council are delivering aimed at job creation, regeneration and place making, vibrancy and making Belfast a city a great place to live, work, visit and invest. The recent findings from this report are a positive sense check in terms of our direction and focused priorities, and also highlighting the need to ensure that we continue to work to position the city to compete both nationally and globally.</p>
3.3	<p>Contained within the report are case studies of best practice at how investment in townscapes, support in community cohesion, efforts to foster local pride and attract new types of businesses are being used to boost growth. Belfast was selected as a case study for inclusion within the report, referencing a balanced and deliberately interventionist approach to regeneration. Work being undertaken by the city to invest in place-making, open and green spaces, community infrastructure, connectivity and cultural and tourism offerings in order to create a more attractive, accessible, and vibrant city centre which connects to surrounding communities are highlighted as best practice. It also referred to city investment plans including a citywide commitment to investing in neighbourhoods, leisure and community facilities and to strategies that integrate physical regeneration with cultural, social and environmental regeneration. It highlighted the Bolder Vision for Belfast as being key to a stronger and more resilient city core and acting as a call to action for the council, civic partners, local businesses and the wider local community. It also highlighted how Belfast is working to establish itself as a cultural centre in order to realise its global cultural and economic ambitions, referencing the 10-year cultural programme, UNESCO City of Music and the Belfast Stories development plans. The city's innovation and inclusive economic growth plans, supported by the BRCD investment and Belfast's position as the number one city for FinTech investments were referenced and that further investment in</p>

	digital connectivity and supporting centres of excellence would drive Belfast forward as a global digital and scientific centre and globally significant destination for innovation.
3.4	While the report welcomes the Levelling Up White Paper, analysis within the report demonstrates that Government, public and private sectors need to continue to work collaboratively to address regional inequalities and capitalise on the once in a generation opportunity to create successful places and deliver good growth. Members will be aware that the Council is working collaboratively with public, private, community and key anchor institution partners across a number of partnerships including Innovation City Belfast, Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, Belfast Region City Deal and the Climate Commission and to deliver strategic programmes of work including A Bolder Vision, a Future City Centre Programme and neighbourhood regeneration aimed at delivering our shared collective ambitions as outlined within the Belfast Agenda.
3.5	The report notes that in general cities which performed well in this year's index had strong local economies, and strong environmental and safety credentials. It also notes that the pandemic has caused a shift in public priorities, with people wanting to be more connected with their local communities and to live in greener, fairer places. Members will be aware of the effects of the pandemic in Belfast, and efforts by the Council to address the impact on our communities and businesses, including the delivery of the DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme and via Belfast: Our Recovery plan. The report has found that the shift in public priorities has also altered the growth prospects of cities and regions as people change how and where they want to work and live, with small and provincial cities benefitting more in the context of the levelling up agenda. This provides an opportunity for Belfast in terms of its desire to attract and retain residents in the city to deliver on our Belfast Agenda ambitions including to attract 66,000 new residents by 2035.
3.6	The report tracks regional and city recovery across different demographic and societal groups including young workers, ethnic groups, and women, however it does not publish the breakdown per city and region.
3.7	The report also proposed four key areas for cities and regions to consider as they develop Levelling Up plans and continue to address economic recovery. In order to secure a fairer economic recovery and build sustainable growth it highlights that local and central government and the private sector should focus on the following:

3.8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Levelling up and the reality of regional inequality</li> <li>2. Capitalising on growth outside the larger metropolitan cities</li> <li>3. Driving social mobility and addressing intergenerational inequality</li> <li>4. Green growth to provide the basis for all future action</li> </ol> <p>There are various actions that sit below these priority areas for central and local government and businesses relating to investment in relationships across the public, private and third sectors to develop place strategies for place-based transformation; investment in high streets; sector focused employment investment; reskilling and apprenticeships; local economic strategies; housing education; improved transportation links; circular economy and green growth; net zero and sustainability.</p> <p>These action areas align to Belfast’s strategic ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, and propositions outlined within the Innovation &amp; Growth Commission ‘Reset for Growth’ report aimed at amplifying the city and region’s future success focused around priorities on being more globally relevant; immediate action on climate change and turning this into an economic opportunity; housing development; developing a stronger core city and delivery of a Bolder Vision and a focus on building world-renowned business clusters.</p>
3.10	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.11	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Document attached</b></p>
4.1	<p>PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022: Taking action on Levelling Up report</p>

Industry in Focus

# Good Growth for Cities

Taking action on levelling up

#IndustryInFocus #GoodGrowth



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As we emerge from the pandemic, one of the country’s priorities must be the delivery of a fair recovery – one that benefits all people and places.

Though damaging in so many ways, the pandemic does appear to have driven a shift in public preferences, which now presents an opportunity. Building on the increased emphasis many people are placing on their communities and the environment, we now have the chance to reset and address some of the regional inequalities that have characterised our country for generations.

The recently published Levelling Up White Paper is a welcome start, but as the analysis in this year’s Good Growth for Cities report demonstrates, the Government, businesses and local leaders will need to work together if we are to capitalise on this once in a generation opportunity to create successful places right across the UK.”

**Carl Sizer**, Head of UK Regions, PwC

# Executive summary

**As the pandemic loosens its grip on the UK, we are beginning to understand how it has exacerbated already deep-rooted inequalities in our society. The more we understand what drives these inequalities, the better our prospects of securing a fair economic recovery for all.**

For the last decade, our annual Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index has measured the performance of cities and regions right across the country. The Index looks beyond performance against purely economic indicators, and focuses on additional measures of wellbeing, such as access to jobs, income, health, skills, work-life balance, housing, transport and the environment. In addition, and to reflect some of the more obvious issues highlighted by the pandemic, this year's Index includes two new indicators<sup>1</sup> covering safety and the vibrancy of local high streets.

As in previous years, we asked members of the public to provide their views on the measures they think matter most. This year, the results of our survey were stark. There has been a marked shift in public preferences, with greater weight being placed on issues such as work-life balance, income distribution and the environment.

Though it is possible we will see a shift back to a more predictable pattern of preferences in future years – one in which access to employment and skills re-emerge as the measures on which the public place the greatest importance – there is a clear emphasis being placed on the need to press for a fairer deal for all regarding income, protection of the environment and having the time to enjoy it safely. There would appear to be significant support for a nationwide programme to improve equality and level up.

While it is difficult to be precise about the extent to which the pandemic has driven these changes, it is reasonable to argue that the way we have all been living over the past two years, along with relatively strong confidence in the employment market, has caused a proportion of the population to reflect on the things they value. The data included in this report suggests this is having a significant impact on the relative fortunes of different places – the cities that perform well against this year's Index have strong local economies but are also characterised by strong environmental and safety credentials.

Our analysis also suggests some city dwellers have been moving to commuter belts or rural areas amid the growing focus on wellbeing, the environment and income distribution. In some cases, this is prompting a faster economic recovery in provincial cities. Based on total population count for each city, we estimate that many of the smaller cities in our analysis – such as Bournemouth, Exeter and Plymouth – will see stronger Gross Value Added (GVA) growth rates in 2021 and 2022 compared to the larger metropolitan cities.

Though the improved performance of some smaller and provincial cities is to be welcomed in the context of the levelling up agenda, it is also clear that the majority of places benefitting from the trends referenced above are in the South of the country. Many of the issues underpinning the relative underperformance of cities in the Midlands and the North have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Though the economies in some of these cities are in reasonably good shape, they have been unable, as yet, to capitalise on the changing nature of public preferences and may need further help or intervention to catch up with those moving more quickly.

Nevertheless, our analysis indicates there are numerous opportunities for cities and other areas to benefit from the changing nature of the way we live and bring greater precision to their plans to deliver Good Growth. This year, we interviewed several different local leaders at the heart of the place-shaping agenda, to explore how they plan to take action to drive economic growth in their areas. Included in the case studies throughout our report are examples of how investment in townscapes, support for community cohesion, efforts to foster local pride and attract new types of businesses are being used to boost growth in these places.

While the pandemic has exacerbated many of the more systemic challenges in our society, shifting public preferences, coupled with the political will to deliver levelling up signalled by the publication of the White Paper, present a window of opportunity to reset and deliver Good Growth across the UK. Achieving this will require imagination, bold action and collaboration by government, businesses, and local leaders. Only by working together will we secure Good Growth now and for the future.

1) For this reason, it is not legitimate to compare the relative performance of cities in this year's report with their performance in previous years.

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A widespread shift in public priorities has been triggered by the pandemic – people want to be more connected to their communities and to live in greener, fairer places. This shift has led to a change in how and where people live and work – altering the makeup of the UK economy, and the shape of growth prospects for every city and region across the nation.”



# Public priorities for growth

**Living through two years of a pandemic has challenged the work, home and social framework of people across the UK. It has prompted the public to reassess their lives, and adjust their priorities and ways of living accordingly. In recognition of this, we have taken the opportunity to re-engage with the public and refresh our research approach.**

We published our first Good Growth for Cities Index with the think tank Demos a decade ago<sup>2</sup>, measuring the performance and characteristics of cities and regions in a composite 'Good Growth' Index. The Index seeks to recognise that if growth is essentially about improving the prosperity, opportunities and wellbeing of the general public, the focus must go beyond traditional measures of economic success, such as GDP or GVA.

Our annual Index covers a list of broad measures of economic wellbeing – factors the public identifies as most important to their work and finances, and are therefore essential for judging economic success. This year, we worked with Demos to understand if these factors remain relevant – and to explore what else the public may now prioritise.

We found that all our original measures of economic success are still consistent with public views. But our research revealed that low crime rates, having a safe neighbourhood and a vibrant local high street are also core topics of public interest.

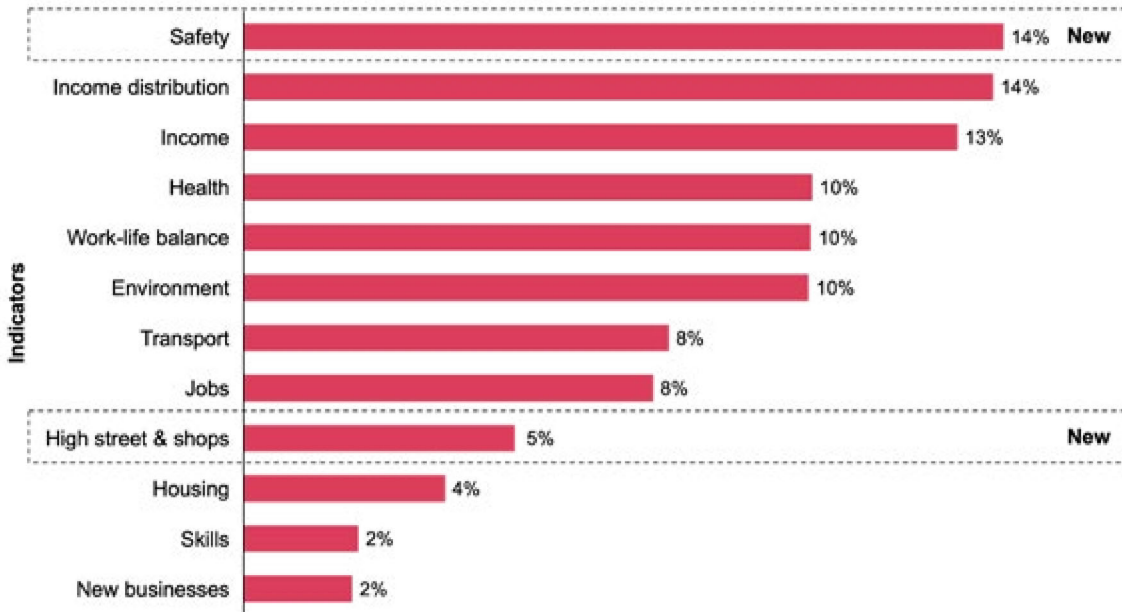
The popularity of these topics, and the emphasis placed on it in our analysis of public priorities, prompted us to update the Index. We now include two new measures of economic success the public feels strongly about: high streets and safety.



<sup>2</sup> We published our first Good Growth Index in 2011. The first Good Growth for Cities report was published in November 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The Good Growth for Cities Index measures life expectancy, this was selected to give an overarching portrayal of the state of health outcomes.

**Figure 1: Measures of economic success, ranked highest to lowest in terms of their weightings, rounded to nearest whole number**



Source: Demos / PwC Analysis (2021)

Compared to 2020, the weightings for our variables this year see a significant shift in their importance relative to the other and new variables. **Table 1** outlines our weightings from last year’s Index and compares them to our weightings this year.

Jobs and Skills, two of the most important variables in our Index last year, see significant decreases in

their relative importance in our updated Index, most likely due to current confidence in the employment market. In contrast, income, environment and income distribution see significant increases. It is possible this change of emphasis is a temporary response to the pandemic and we may see the relative weightings even out in future years.

**Table 1: Our revised Good Growth weightings compared to 2020**

%	Jobs	Income	Health	Work-life balance	New businesses	Housing	Transport	Skills	Environment	Income distribution	Safety	High Street & Shops
2020	14	12	14	8	6	10	8	12	8	8	N/A	N/A
2021	8	13	10	10	2	4	8	2	10	14	14	5
Change	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	–	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	–	

As in our previous reports, our variables are weighted according to their level of relative importance. This year, the weights of each variable were determined via a public polling run by Demos. We used a robust stated preference approach through conjoint analysis in order to deduce these weightings. Further details can be found in the Appendix section.

**Important note: Comparison to last year’s report is not possible**

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year’s report and those included last year.

## Responding to public priorities

Our [Future of Government](#) research has consistently highlighted our view that for the levelling up agenda to succeed, it needs to reach beyond geographic inequalities and better respond to the public's priorities and concerns around the inequalities within regions and communities.

With the publication of the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) on 2 February 2022, we now have a clearer understanding of the Government's vision. Though this vision focuses exclusively on geographic inequality, it recognises there are multiple inequalities which affect people and acknowledges the need for more rounded strategies of economic recovery.

The White Paper outlines 12 national levelling up 'missions' and sets out plans to:

- expand devolution across England
- increase pay, employment and productivity
- commit to domestic investment outside London and the South East
- upgrade infrastructure and public services
- reduce crime
- improve health, wellbeing and pride in local communities

The variables we captured as part of our Index refresh fall broadly in line with the Government's 12 well-rounded missions (as demonstrated by **Table 2** opposite). As cities and regions across the UK develop their levelling up plans, they will need to adopt a similar well-rounded approach. They may find it helpful to consider their performance on the Good Growth Index this year, in order to identify the most and least successful indicators within their geography.

It is interesting to note that in the White Paper's 12 missions, the environment is omitted (in relation to sustainability / climate change). Environment continues to be an important measure of economic success according to our analysis, and our view is that cities and local leaders should consider this indicator in their levelling up plans.

## Inequality within London and the South East

While the Levelling Up White Paper turns its attention to improving the economies outside of London and the South East, it is important to recognise there are areas within these regions which experience significant challenges. We explore this further on page 23 in the section on 'Economic recovery as indicated by employment'. The case for focusing on inequality within London and the South East is stronger if other types of inequalities are referenced, such as those between different ethnic groups, men and women, and different generations. Though the focus on regional disparity is critical, so is addressing inequality within regions.



**Table 2: Comparison of the 12 missions in the Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) with Good Growth indicators**

Missions / Focus Area in the Levelling Up White Paper	How we measure each LUWP mission in Good Growth for Cities 2021
Living Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs – Unemployment rate</li> <li>• Income – GDHI per head scaled by regional price indices</li> <li>• Income distribution – Ratio of median to mean income</li> </ul>
Transport & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport – Average commuting time to work</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills – Skills (16-24)</li> </ul>
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills – Skills (25+)</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health – Life expectancy</li> </ul>
Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work-life balance – % in employment working more than 45 hrs per week</li> </ul>
Pride in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High streets &amp; shops – Retail store openings &amp; closures</li> <li>• New businesses – New businesses per head of population</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing – Housing price to earnings ratio and owner occupation rate</li> </ul>
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety – Total crime count discounting fraud &amp; cybercrime per head of population</li> </ul>
Research & Development (R&D)	-
Digital connectivity	-
Local leadership	-

# Work-life balance drives Good Growth

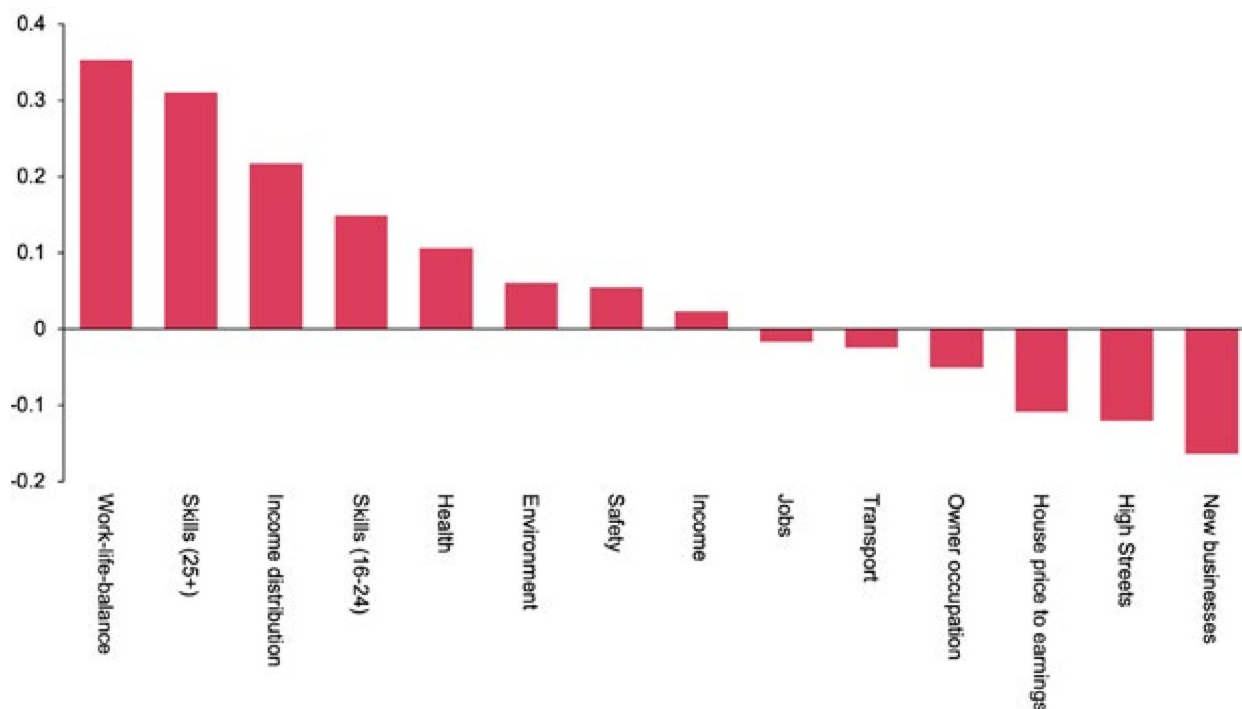
Though there are significant hurdles to be faced on the path to a fair recovery, most cities continue to see improvements in their Good Growth scores<sup>4</sup>. It is also encouraging to see the pandemic has levelled the playing field to some degree between the highest and lowest ranked cities, with the gap narrowing slightly this year.

The 12 variables in this year's index consist of 14 indicators, with housing composed of owner-occupation and house price to earnings ratio, and skills consisting of youth skills and adult skills. Of these 14 indicators, the biggest driver of improvement between 2017-19 and 2018-20 is work-life balance (Figure 2). There are also broad improvements in the skills of workers (aged 25+), as well as income distribution and life expectancy, perhaps

reflecting the rise in flexible working patterns.

However, there are signs of declining high streets and new business openings, with the pandemic putting pressure on businesses to find new ways to generate cash. Housing has also been impacted, with a sharp decline in the house price to earnings ratio, highlighting how housing affordability and owner-occupation rates have fallen since the start of the pandemic. Despite efforts from the Government to address housing affordability, through schemes such as the Stamp Duty exemption, the historic increases in house prices are still very much apparent<sup>5</sup>. We expect prices to continue to rise in 2022, though at a slower rate than in 2021 as economic conditions return to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 2: Average change in score since 2017-19, by indicator of the Index



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

4) Since we have added two new indicators in our composite Index and have an entirely new weighting system, we have rebased our analysis to 2017-19. This enables us to understand the annual changes that we would usually see with the Index.

5) PwC comments on ONS November house price figures



**Figure 3: 2018 - 2020 Good Growth Index results by city, ranked highest to lowest**



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

**Good Growth scores by city**

Oxford and Bournemouth are the two highest performing cities in this year's Index. Oxford performs well on income, health, safety, new businesses and skills (25+), helping to secure its first place position. Bournemouth was last year's highest ranked city, but slipped to second place this year due to a poor performance on jobs and house price to earnings in 2020. Swindon is in third place, performing relatively well across the board on all metrics, with jobs performing particularly strongly this year. Reading rounds off our top four, performing strongly on income and skills (25+).

**Figure 3** presents the overall distribution of cities' scores, defined by travel to work areas (TTWAs) and our baseline over 2017-19.

**Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible**

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

# Spotlight on Edinburgh:

## Scottish capital focuses on the ‘missing middle’

The raw assets of Edinburgh give it an undeniable headstart for Good Growth. As a capital city, it is home not only to extraordinary natural and architectural beauty, but to keystone institutions, such as the Scottish Parliament, three universities, a slew of private sector headquarters and its own financial district in the West End.

Yet local leaders are aware that the legacy of the past may not lend itself well to the future. Edinburgh’s rich history and creative scene means it continues to attract workers from surrounding areas, and will always draw tourists. But in the short-term, COVID-19 has hit the tourist sector hard, and more broadly it may have prompted inequalities to widen, leading to a polarised workforce.

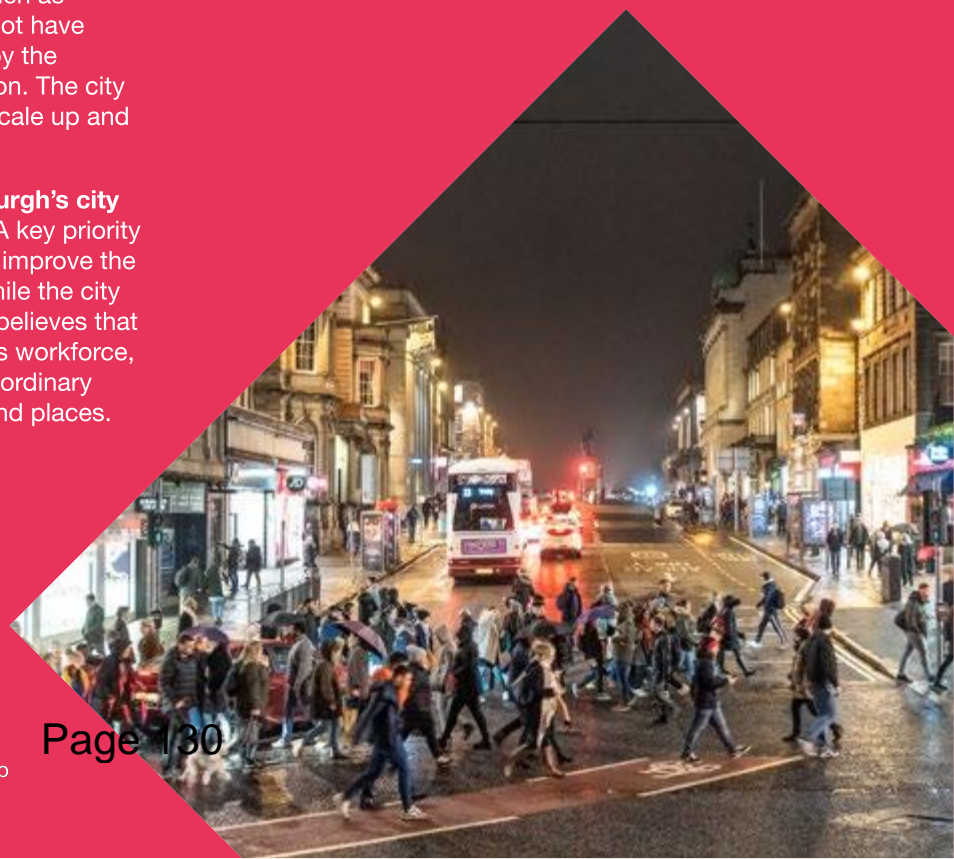
The city has a great deal of high paid jobs and low paid jobs, but there is a big gap in between – pointing to a missing middle in Edinburgh’s workforce. The local authority and its partners are **focusing on reskilling opportunities to support workers to progress in their careers, and to bridge the growing labour market gap.** But this reads across another constraint: encouraging a balanced labour market and innovation led growth is putting pressure on supply of the right office and workplace offer.

Unlike many other large metropolitan cities, such as Manchester or Birmingham, Edinburgh does not have large numbers of brownfield sites left vacant by the demise of industrialisation that it can build upon. The city needs to offer more space for businesses to scale up and grow sustainably.

Another key challenge is **transforming Edinburgh’s city centre environment to be fit for the future.** A key priority is to address traffic congestion in the city and improve the quality of the public realm in key locations. While the city is confident of a strong economic recovery, it believes that prospects for progress rest on the quality of its workforce, reducing inequalities, and enhancing the extraordinary legacy of some of Europe’s greatest spaces and places.

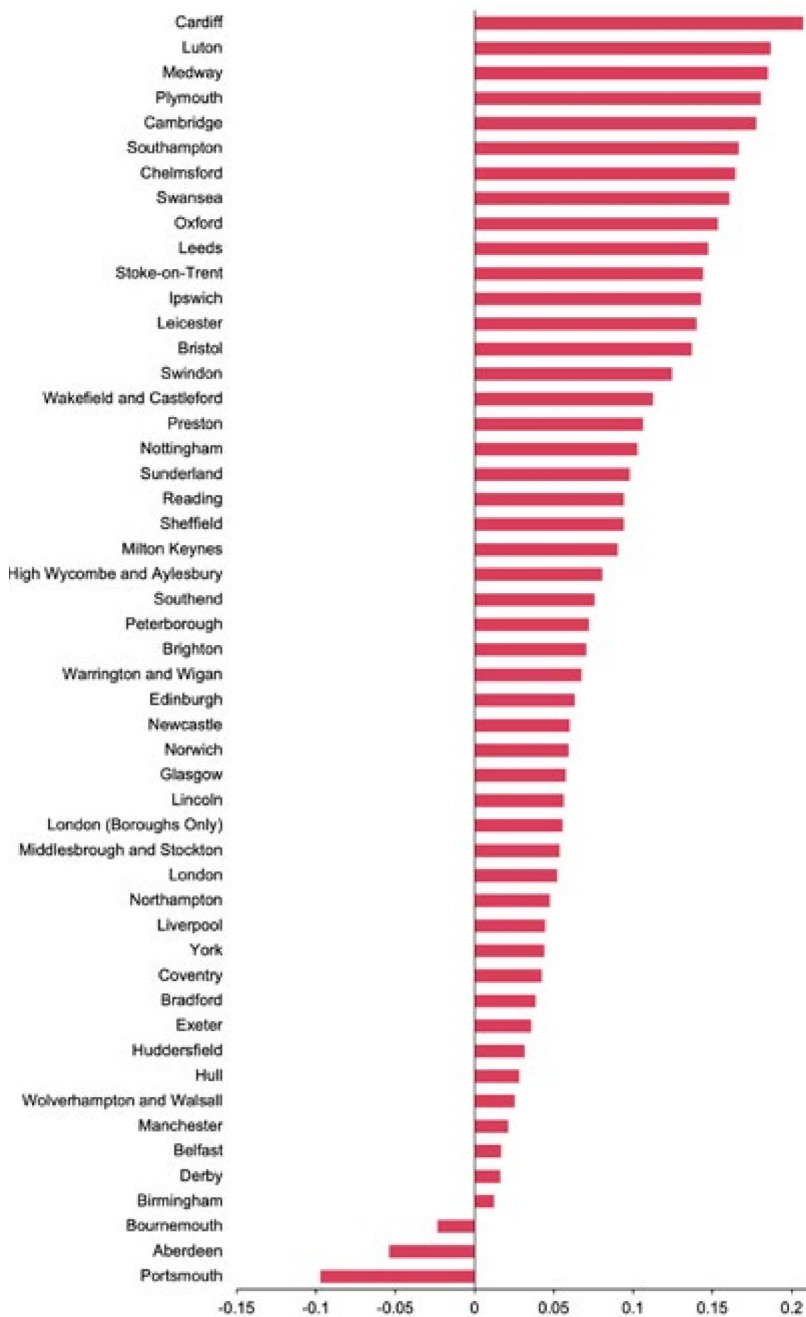
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Edinburgh is working to establish a better relationship between innovation growth and the commercial property sector, in order to provide opportunities for indigenous companies and anchor institutions to stay close and to scale up.”





**Figure 4: Change in Good Growth Index score by city, from a new 2017-19 baseline index to 2018-20 Index, ranked by highest to lowest change**



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

As shown in **Figure 4**, we observe a marked improvement for Cardiff this year, thanks to improvements in jobs, income and health. Luton and Medway also make significant gains, stemming from improvements in jobs, income distribution and work-life balance.

**Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible**

This graph shows the difference in Index scores between this year and last, had we used our refreshed methodology for the period 2017-2019.

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

# Spotlight on Belfast:

## City targets holistic connection with surrounding communities

Belfast takes a **balanced and deliberately interventionist approach to regeneration**. Local leaders are pro-development in the city core, but believe that any development has to be right for the communities surrounding it. This includes diversifying the city centre to offer more residential accommodation, house greater numbers of students and provide more hotel rooms, office space and improved cultural offerings. All the while, local leaders are investing in place-making, open and green spaces, community infrastructure and connectivity, to create a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city centre – a people focused city centre which draws the wider community in.

City investment plans include a citywide commitment to invest in Belfast's wider neighbourhoods with strategies that **integrate physical regeneration with cultural, social and environmental regeneration, and elongating the city / civic spine**. The city has invested heavily in neighbourhood assets, such as community centres and sports facilities, and will continue to do so through funds at neighbourhood level. These funds allow local organisations to apply for support, in return for allowing the local community to access facilities. Over the last few years, for example, Belfast has invested c.£105m in new leisure facilities for communities.

Central to plans for the city centre is creating a cleaner, stronger and more resilient city core. This is underpinned by the Bolder Vision for Belfast, which aims to rethink how the city's streets and places are used to build sustainable and inclusive growth. The vision sets out the importance of safe, accessible and vibrant local places, and offers a call to action for the council, civic partners, local businesses and the wider local community.

Looking ahead, Belfast is working to establish the city as a cultural centre in order to realise its global cultural and economic ambitions. As part of a **10-year cultural programme** to 2028, it is focusing on providing the right cultural offering, including encouraging independent retailers, unique pubs and art projects. Plans for a Year of Culture in 2024 are already underway, bolstering Belfast's position as a UNESCO City of Music and developing a £100m landmark tourism anchor in the city centre – an authentic experience with Belfast's people and personality at its heart.

For business, Belfast's ambition extends from tourism to financial services to research and development (R&D). The city's innovation and inclusive economic growth plans seek to capitalise on its dual market access, supported by a **£1bn Belfast Region City Deal investment**. Engagement so far has led to Belfast becoming the number one city for global FinTech investments and top European city for new medical software development. This further investment in digital connectivity, funding innovative industry solutions and supporting centres of excellence is intended to drive Belfast forward as a global digital and scientific centre and globally significant destination for innovation.

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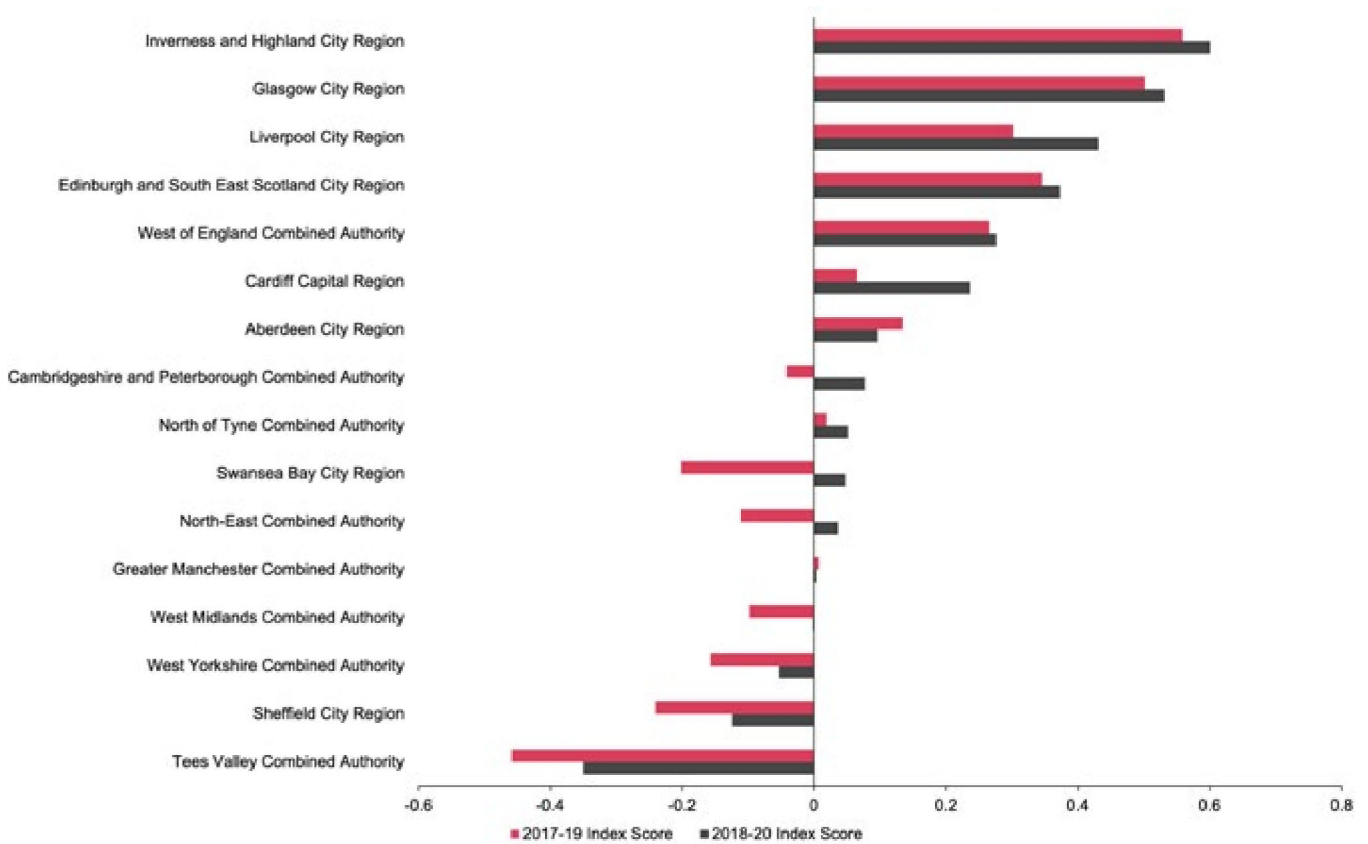
Belfast's regeneration plans include accelerating city centre residential development, with ambitions fixed on encouraging the unique cultural offerings the city can present to the world.”





## Good Growth scores by Combined Authorities

Figure 5: Good Growth Index scores by Combined Authority area, ranked by highest to lowest 2018-20 score<sup>6</sup>



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

Figure 5 shows the Good Growth Index scores for combined authorities in England and equivalent areas in Scotland and Wales between 2017-19 and 2018-20. Almost all Combined Authorities show an improvement over this time period, with Cardiff Capital Region's significant improvement most notable.

### Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

<sup>6</sup> Combined authorities are typically more similar in size to LEPs than cities, and hence LEPs have been chosen as a more appropriate group for comparison. This comparison sheds light on how combined authorities perform relative to other areas across the country.

# Spotlight on Cardiff:

## Welsh capital renews focus on private sector partnerships

Looking back at the decade leading up to the pandemic, Cardiff's workforce grew by more than 20% – boasting growth of around 5,000 new jobs a year. That's a faster rate than all but one of the core cities in this report. While the city's economy grew across the board, the financial services sector grew the fastest – adding 2,000 new jobs every year and accounting for two-fifths of all new net jobs growth.

Looking ahead, the city's challenge is to share the opportunities around – to develop sustainable communities that **build a workforce for the future**. The local authority wants to connect the right kind of jobs and opportunities in the growth sectors to young people and those in poverty.

With this in mind, the city is **renewing its focus on links with private business and the education sector**. It has secured multi-billion pound investments and private business partnerships for Central Square, Wales' first Central Business District of scale, which is now home to the new headquarters of BBC Cymru. This comes amid investments from Cardiff University in its innovation campus developments and the University of South Wales in its School of Creative Industries.

The city is taking a **sector-focused approach to growth**, targeting key sectors including FinTech, the creative industries and advanced manufacturing and technologies like compound semiconductors. It has given rise to a number of homegrown start ups, such as Delio and Wealthify in the FinTech cluster and the TV production studio Bad Wolf in the creative sector.

As part of its recovery strategy, the local authority is investing in reinvigorating its city centre as it emerges from the pandemic. Footfall in Cardiff has returned to pre-pandemic levels already and the investment in and around Central Square means the city is well placed to lead the economic recovery for Wales. In addition the local authority is also looking at development outside of Cardiff city centre – prioritising investment in infrastructure that will **connect the wider region to the city**. The **£1bn plans for the Metro** aims to cut journey times across the network and more than double the frequency of services on some routes. Further investment is planned to link with the improved Metro

and develop a comprehensive urban public transport system. It is hoped this infrastructure will support the new £150m Arena in the Cardiff Bay waterfront development, which the council sees as an anchor for the wider regeneration of the Atlantic Wharf site.

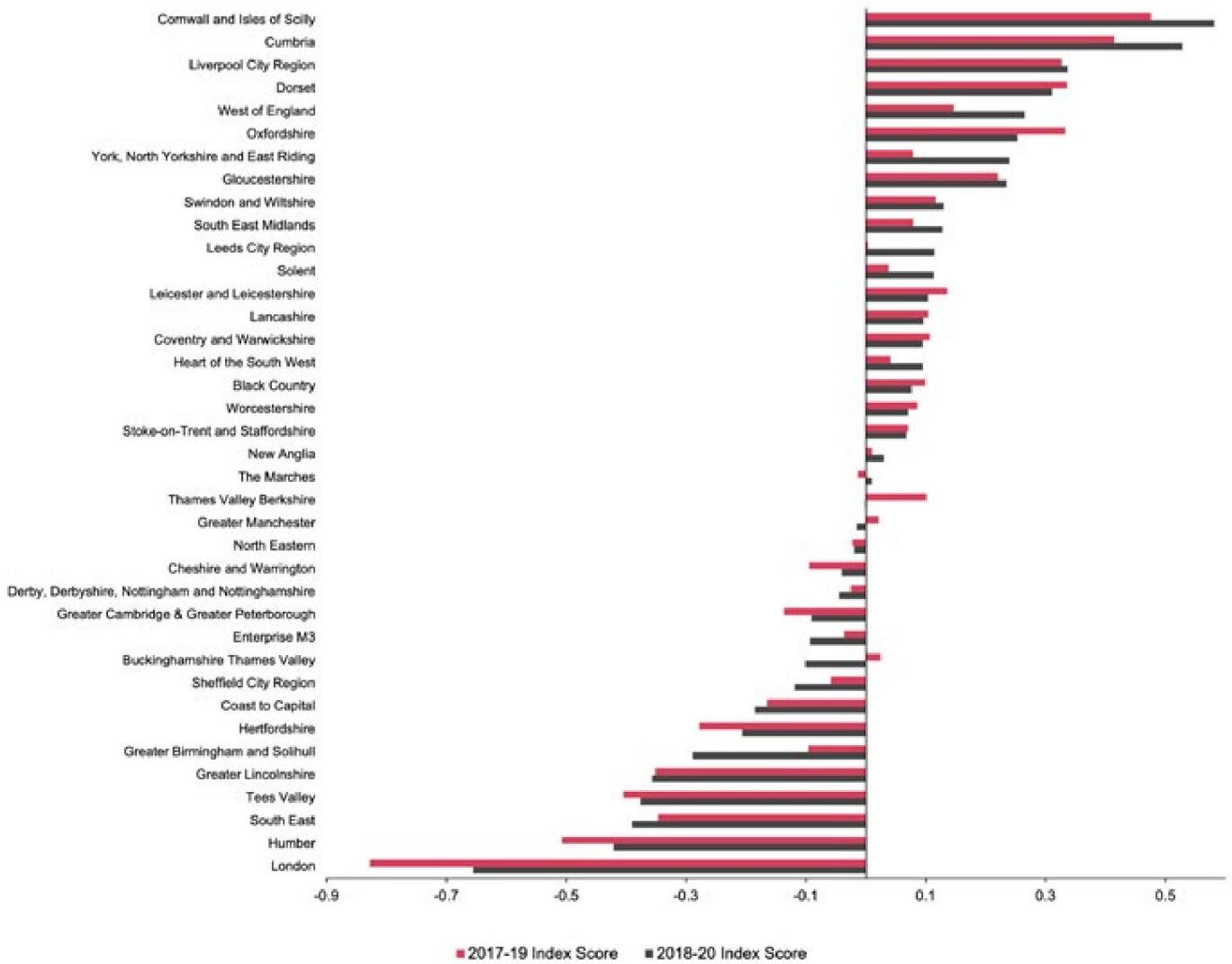
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Cardiff's use of assets to attract and sustain private sector investment has led to strong partnerships, including one with a large insurance firm that is considered the most successful regeneration project in Wales.”



## Good Growth scores in England's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas

Figure 6: Good Growth Index score by LEP, ranked by highest to lowest 2018-20 score



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

We have also analysed the Good Growth Index scores for the 38 LEP areas in England. **Figure 6** represents the score for each LEP, relative to the average score for all English LEP areas in 2017-19.

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly is the highest ranked LEP this year, outperforming Cumbria which has a similar high score when looking at the 2018-20 baseline index. London and York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEPs are the biggest improvers from the 2017-19 baseline index.

**Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible**

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

# Spotlight on Cornwall:

## Region plays to strengths with green growth agenda

While Cornwall may not feature in our list of Good Growth cities, it attracts attention for **challenging the concept of a traditional city**. The region gained global recognition as host of the 2021 G7 summit at Carbis Bay, and is currently in the running for 2025 City of Culture. Local leaders often describe it as an exploded city, while maintaining that regions and rural populations can also be engines for growth, not just urban cities.

The Council and Local Enterprise Partnership have made very **deliberate decisions around the type of growth they want to pursue**, exploring opportunities to power growth nationally with clean renewable energy for example. By playing to its strengths as a region rich in natural resources, Cornwall's decarbonisation agenda works with industry and academia to attract investment and kickstart new industries, such as the geothermal energy industry. Cornwall has invested large sums in the first geothermal wells in the UK, including £1.4m in a 4.5km deep well which will heat the Eden Project's iconic Biomes, as well as other greenhouses and offices.

Beyond geothermal energy, Cornwall is focusing on **promoting other renewable energy sources**, developing lithium and critical tech metals, tackling agricultural methane and supporting horizontal satellite launches. In a first for Europe, horizontal satellites will be launched from **Spaceport Cornwall** this year, as part of the UK's pioneering National Space Strategy.

These local growth priorities are driven largely by putting the voice of residents at the heart of both the Council's plans and the 2050 vision for Cornwall shared by all partners. Major listening campaigns have revealed a striking demand among the public for action on climate change, and on housing. As a result, any decisions now made in the region are based on doughnut economics – which incorporate a visual framework for sustainable development. In this case, all assessments are backed by the local authority's 'decision wheel', which ensures **social and environmental considerations** inform all decisions, not just economics alone.

“

Behind the picturesque postcards and reports of soaring house prices, Cornish communities are grappling with inequalities that strike at the heart of the nation's levelling up agenda, such as low wages and a housing supply crisis.”



# Small cities lead UK recovery

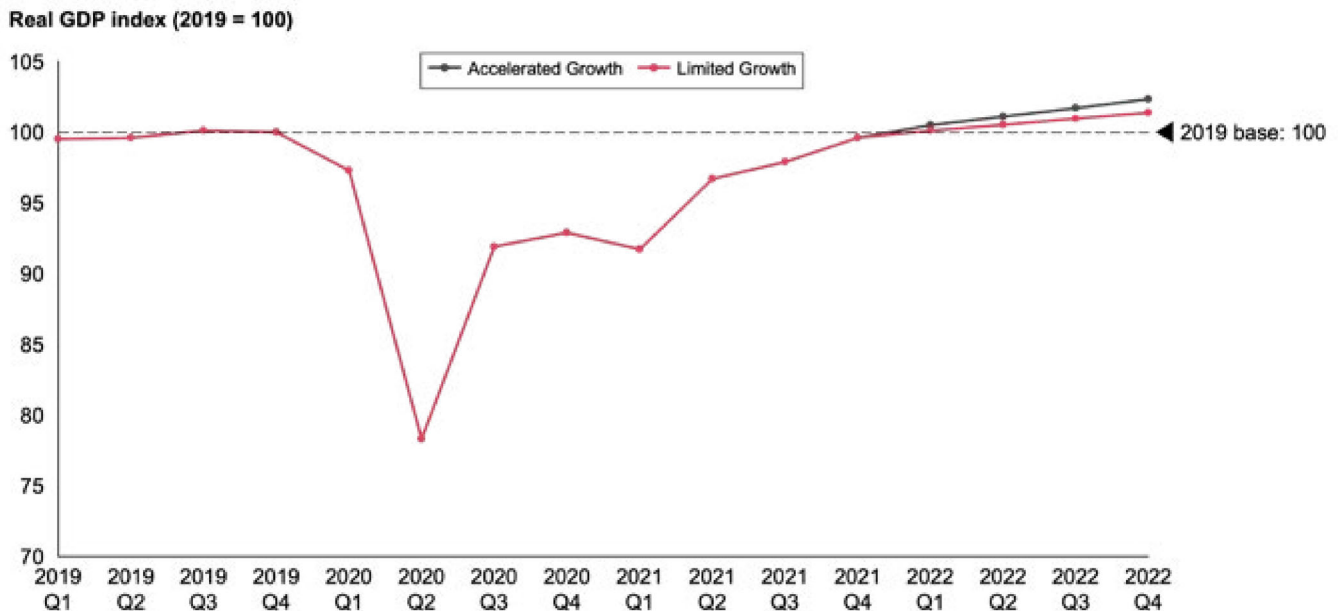
Just as the pandemic has played out unevenly across sectors, regions and households in the UK, we expect this trend to continue to impact the nation's economic recovery and progress with the levelling up agenda, at least in the medium term.

Our analysis points to stronger growth in smaller cities, which we believe is largely driven by the rise of hybrid or home-working patterns. Cities such as Plymouth and Exeter, for example, are expected to see stronger GVA growth rates in both 2021 and 2022 than larger cities more generally. Meanwhile, the South West is estimated to see the highest GVA growth rate over the same time period.

## UK's economic recovery from COVID-19

Figure 7 demonstrates our forecast for the UK economy over the 2019 - 2022 period<sup>7</sup>. Based on our latest estimates, the UK economy will reach its pre-pandemic outputs at around 2022 Q1. Figures published by the ONS in February 2022 show the UK economy grew by 7.3% in 2021. We expect the UK economy to continue growing at 5.1% under the 'Accelerated Growth' and 4.5% in the 'Limited Growth' scenario in 2022.

Figure 7: Quarter-on-Quarter growth for UK Real GDP (2019 Q4 = 100)



Source: ONS Gross Domestic Product: chained volume measures, PwC UK Economic Outlook – December 2021

It is important to note that our annual forecasts are based on the economic activity in previous years (base-year effects). In 2020, certain sectors felt the impact of nationwide lockdowns more so than others. Industries such as 'Accommodation & Food services' and 'Arts, Entertainment and recreation'

were hit hard (42.4% and 25.9% decrease in 2020 compared to 2019 levels respectively). These sectors therefore, began 2021 on the backfoot more so than others and significant upturns should be expected if more normal consumption patterns return.

<sup>7</sup> PwC UK Economic Update, December 2021



## How well positioned are UK cities for economic recovery?

The sectoral mix of a city or region, coupled with its demographics, will impact its economic recovery. In response to the significant downturns we saw in 2020, we estimate some sectors will see sharp recoveries as consumers begin to return to more normal spending patterns. In the latest [PwC Hotels Forecast](#), we estimate hotels in London will be earning 43%-86% of their pre-pandemic revenues per available room (RevPAR) and hotels in the regions to be earning 64%-100% of their RevPAR by the end of 2022.

We have reviewed our wider forecasts for sectors in 2022 by exploring key economic data, events and information published over the past year, and the existing expectations we have for the forthcoming recovery.

## 2021 / 2022 Sector recovery rates

The PwC UK [December 2021 Economic Outlook](#) outlines our GVA estimates on recovery rates by sector for 2021 and 2022. Since then, the ONS has published the [UK-wide annual GVA impacts to each sector in 2021](#). It notes the retail sector is now almost 10% ahead of where it was before the pandemic, while our latest [Consumer Sentiment survey](#) confirms consumer confidence has returned quickly to reach levels above pre-pandemic average. Retail sales recovered quickly after lockdowns or enhanced restrictions, leading to a strong bounce-back for the sector in 2021.

Meanwhile, other sectors are expected to see slower recoveries from the pandemic due to supply chain effects. Real estate, for example, declined slightly in 2021 by 0.2% but we estimate the sector will see a stronger recovery of 1.6% in 2022 as consumer confidence returns in the year<sup>8</sup>. Sectors such as Mining and quarrying, for example, saw significant supply side effects in 2021, prompting continued decline as the sector contracted by 13.4%. We expect these effects to reverse in 2022 with the sector growing by 7.6% in 2022.

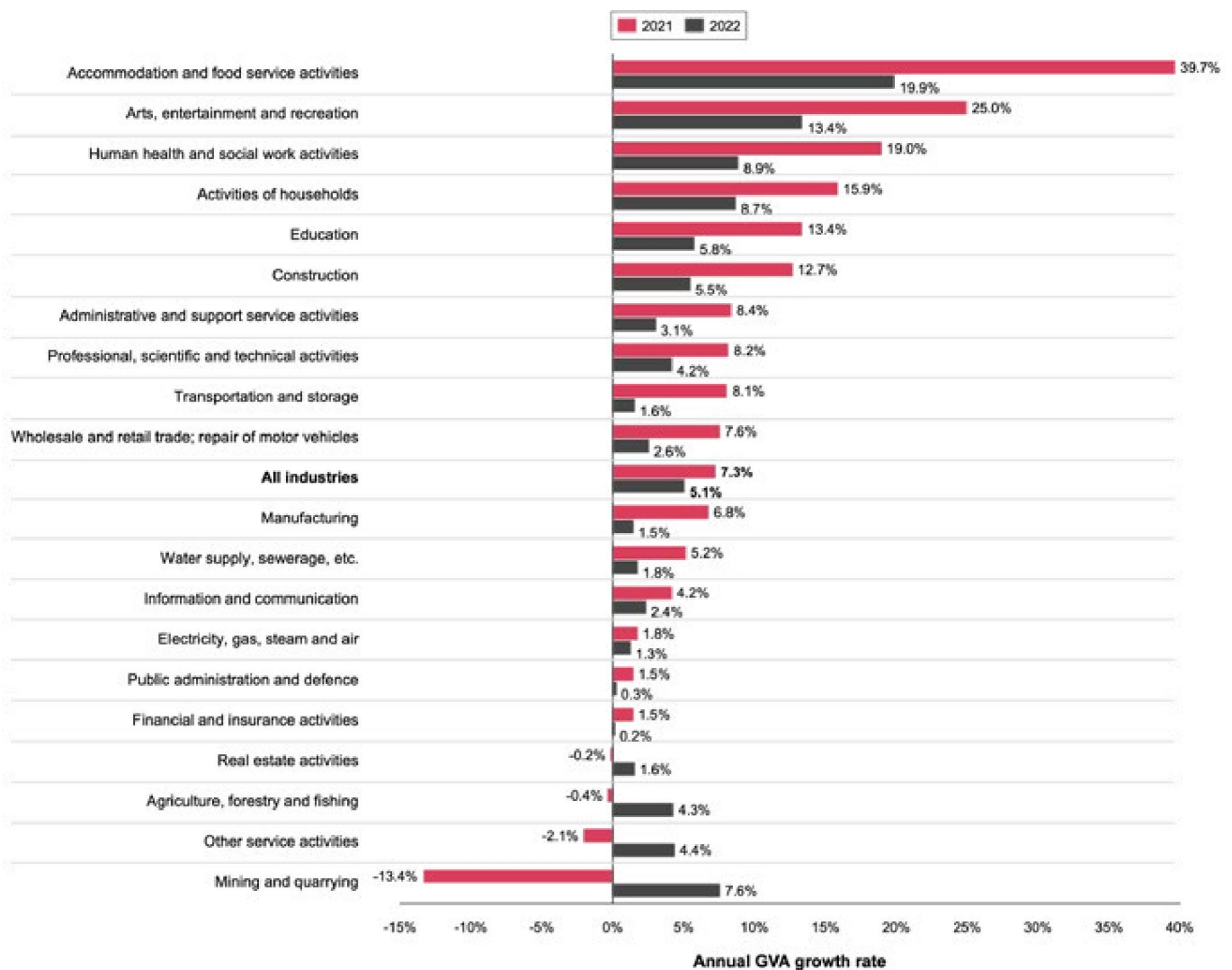
Our full estimates by sector are in **Figure 8**.

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8) PwC – December UK Economic Outlook



**Figure 8: Actual & Projected GVA growth rate by industry sector. 2022 projections under 'Accelerated growth' scenario, % annual change in 2021 and 2022<sup>9</sup>**



Source: ONS Gross Domestic Product: chained volume measures, PwC UK Economic Outlook, December 2021

This national level analysis is one of the inputs we use when calculating the GVA impacts to each city's economy in the Index. The other components of the GVA calculation

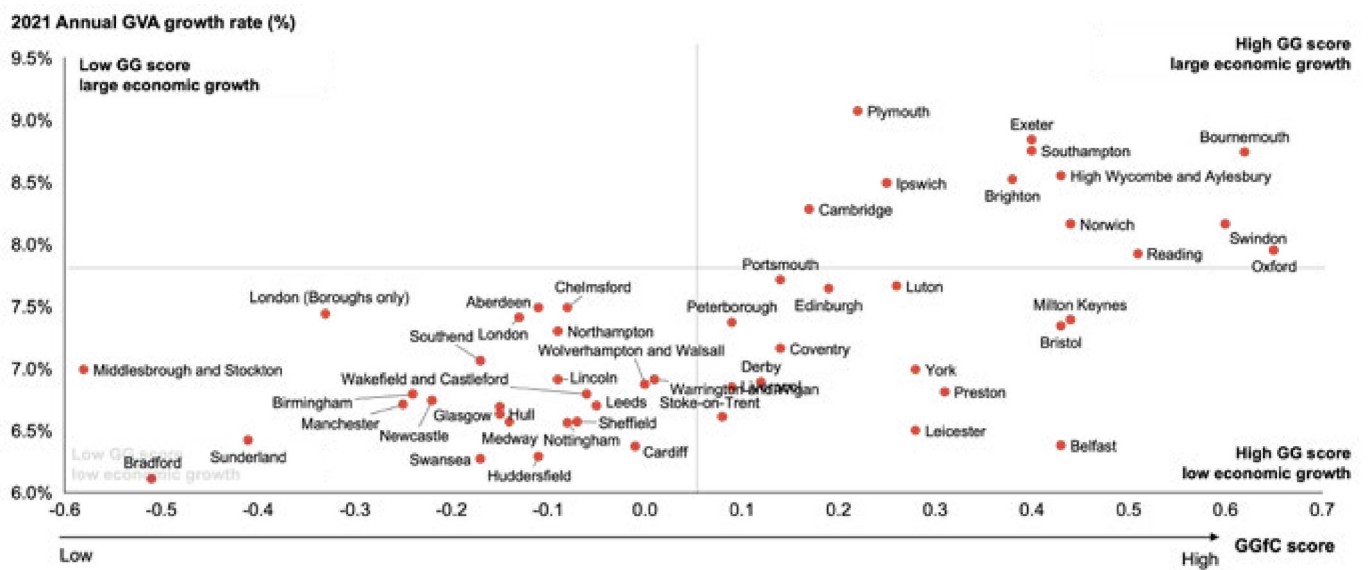
include the COVID-19 local infection rates, the Google Mobility index and Universal Claimant Count statistics (see the Appendix for further details).

<sup>9</sup> Given current conditions, our projected GVA growth rate is based on a 'Accelerated growth' scenario. However, in our UK Economic Outlook, we also include a 'Limited growth' scenario where the GVA growth rates are lower to each sector in the economy.

Figure 9 illustrates where each city lies in terms of its annual change in GVA growth rate in 2021 and its score in the Good Growth for Cities Index. It is clear that cities will

have very different opportunities as they recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Figure 9: 2021 annual GVA growth rate (%) and Good Growth for Cities Index score



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)



Generally, cities that perform well in the Index are expected to see stronger economic recoveries in 2021 (our GVA analysis is indicative of full year figures for 2021 and 2022 as local authority data has not been published yet, see the Appendix for details).

Cities along the south coast of England are projected to see the strongest GVA growth rates in 2021: Plymouth, Bournemouth and Southampton all have recovery rates of more than 8.0% in 2021. This is largely due to the higher proportions of high-growth sectors in these cities than the UK city average – such as Accommodation & Food Services, which grew by 39.7% in 2021 according to the ONS.

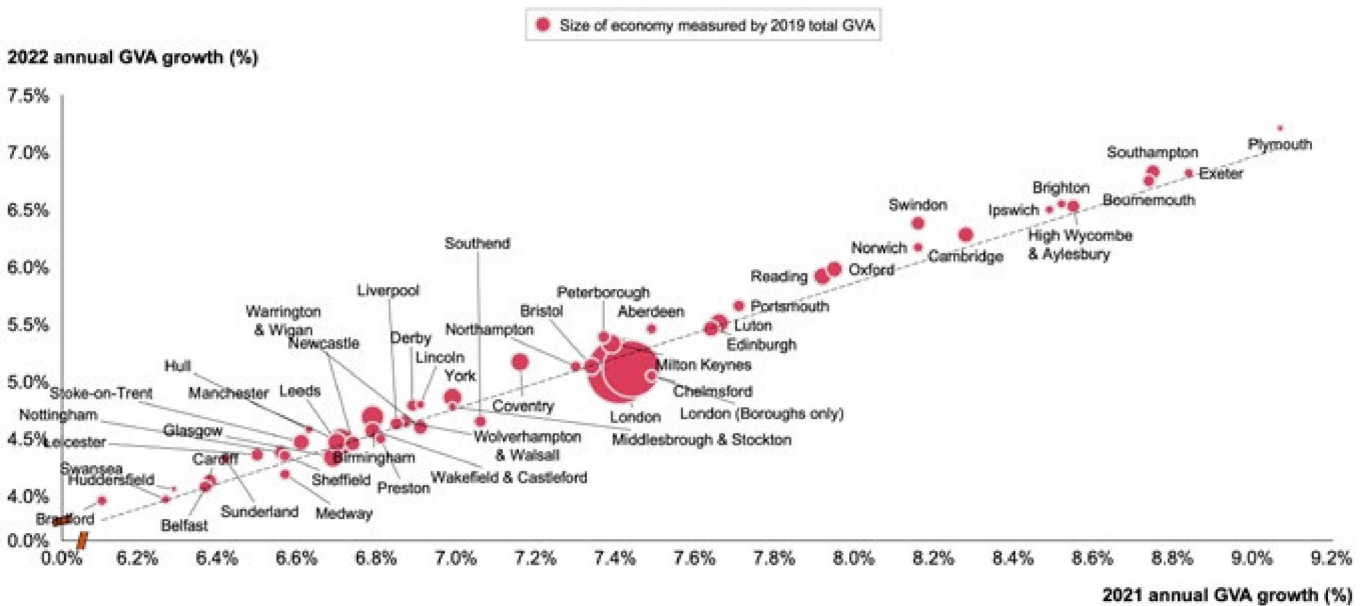
Conversely, cities that perform poorly in the Index are expected to see slower economic recoveries in 2021.

Bradford, Huddersfield and Sunderland all perform poorly in the Index and are expected to recover more slowly in 2021 relative to other cities.

London, meanwhile, is expected to grow by 7.4% which is largely in line with the UK average rate in 2021. Though it is too early to be certain, there is anecdotal evidence that a boomerang effect could be driving better than expected growth in London to some extent. It is possible that, as the pandemic eases, more people will return to the city than some commentators have previously suggested.

**Figure 10** highlights the 2021 GVA recovery rates with the 2022 GVA impacts. As 2022 begins, we can expect GVA growth rates to range from 4.0% (Bradford) to 7.1% (Plymouth), with an average GVA growth rate in 2022 of 5.0% across all cities in the Index<sup>10</sup>.

**Figure 10: 2021 and 2022 annual GVA growth rates**



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

**Economic recovery as indicated by employment**

Employment continues to be one of the most important indicators in the Index (‘Jobs’ and ‘Income’ variables alone account for around a fifth of our Index when combined). Higher levels of employment naturally lead

to an increase in consumer spending which provides a boost to the overall economy. Measuring levels of unemployment therefore, allows us to see how economic recovery rates are faring across the country.

<sup>10</sup> Note: This differs to the UK wide GVA forecast of 5.1%. This is due to not all local authorities being under consideration in our cities for the Good Growth Index

### Impact of the furlough scheme

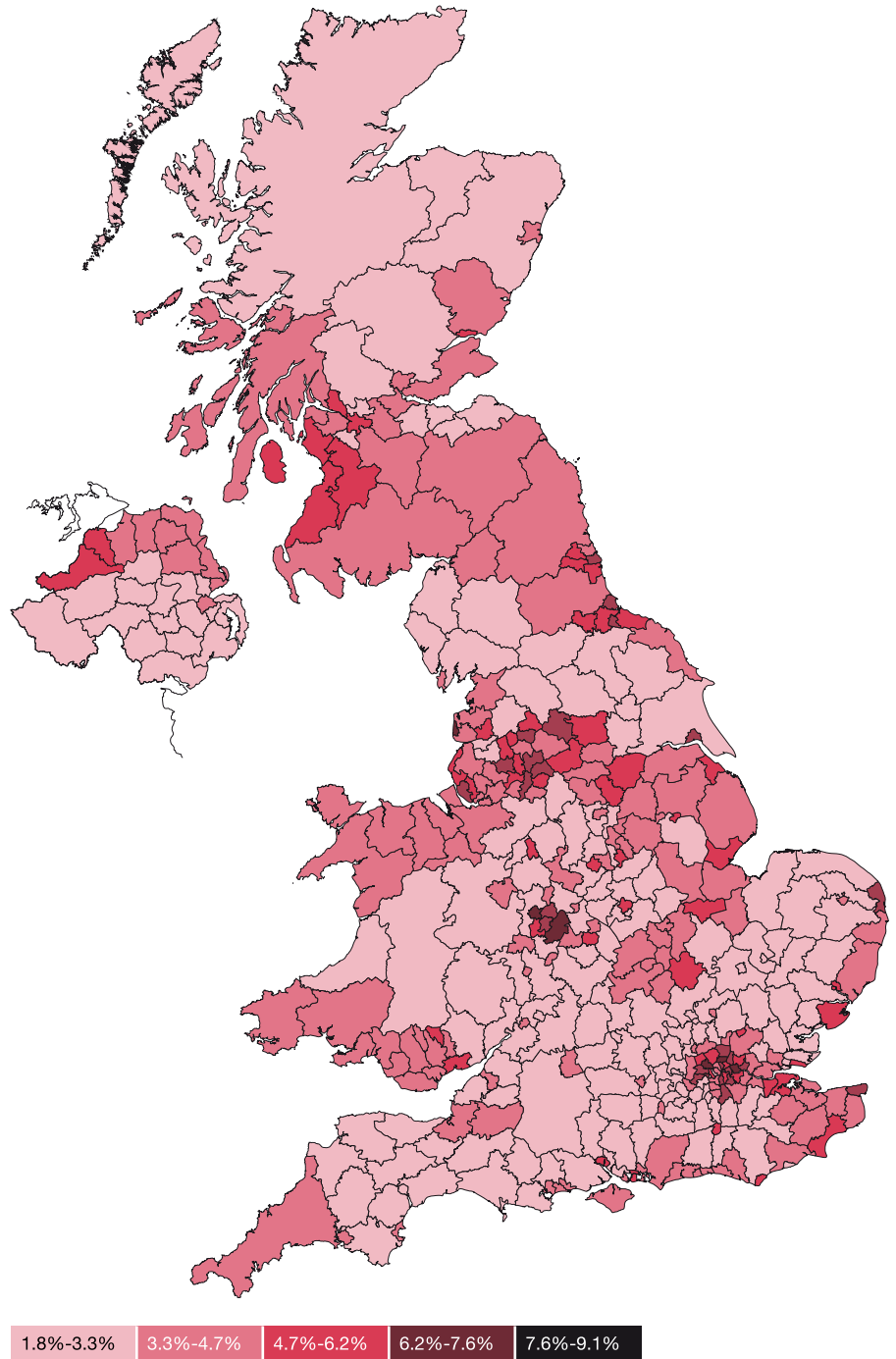
We included statistics from the UK Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in our economic analysis last year, in order to see how reliant each region was on the furlough scheme. Following the end of the scheme in September 2021, we reflect that:

1. Emerging evidence suggests the end of the scheme has not set back the labour market recovery
2. It will take time to understand the full impact of the end of the scheme
3. The short-term outlook for the labour market is cautiously optimistic
4. There will inevitably be a period of adjustment over the coming months

Overall, we are yet to see the end of the furlough scheme have a substantive impact on the economic recovery across UK cities. However, whether businesses will survive without the support may be called into question as we continue to recover over the next few months. Further lockdowns for new variants could challenge businesses in generating revenue, affecting workers as businesses aim to minimise future business impacts.

As **Figure 11** demonstrates, there continues to be a high unemployment rate in the larger cities in our Index, indicating that recovery is being negatively impacted by Universal Credit claim rates in Birmingham, Bradford, Liverpool, Leeds and London.

**Figure 11: Percentage of population aged from 16 to 64, based on mid-year 2020 population estimates, claiming Universal Credit, UK, correct as of 19 February 2022**



Source: CC01 Regional labour market: Claimant Count by unitary and local authority (experimental) – January 2022



According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the percentage of those on Universal Credit fell by 1.6% across the UK between November 2020 - November

2021, which we see relatively consistently across our cities.

**Table 3: Top 10 and bottom 10 city claim rates of Universal Credit, correct as of 19 February 2021**

Highest Universal Credit claimant city	Jan 2022	Jan 2021	Lowest Universal Credit claimant city	Jan 2022	Jan 2021
Birmingham	6.8%	8.5%	Bristol	3.1%	4.7%
Bradford	6.3%	8.1%	Chelmsford	3.0%	4.7%
London (Boroughs only)	5.7%	8.1%	Norwich	3.0%	4.2%
Leeds	5.5%	7.4%	Southampton	2.9%	4.4%
Liverpool	5.5%	7.5%	Swindon	2.9%	4.1%
Manchester	5.3%	7.2%	High Wycombe	2.8%	4.3%
London	5.3%	7.5%	Cambridge	2.8%	4.4%
Middlesbrough	5.1%	7.1%	Oxford	2.8%	4.1%
Wolverhampton	5.0%	6.8%	Reading	2.7%	4.2%
Sunderland	5.0%	6.8%	Exeter	2.5%	4.0%

Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

**Table 4** shows that the largest and smallest decreases in the claim rate of Universal Credit. We see the greatest decrease in London (Boroughs only), where the claim rate fell from 8.1% in January 2021 to 5.7% in January 2022. Meanwhile, Swindon has seen the lowest decrease since

January 2021, largely because the city's labour force was less impacted by the pandemic originally. This is signified by the change of 4.1% to 2.9% of the working age population claiming Universal Credit in Swindon.

**Table 4: Top five and bottom five city increases in the Universal Credit claimant rate, by percentage point (pp), January 2021 to January 2022**

Greatest decrease since January 2021		Lowest decrease since January 2021	
London (Boroughs only)	-2.4pp	Leicester	-1.3pp
London	-2.3pp	Belfast	-1.3pp
Liverpool	-2.0pp	Oxford	-1.3pp
Glasgow	-2.0pp	Norwich	-1.3pp
Southend	-2.0pp	Swindon	-1.2pp

Source: CC01 Regional labour market: Claimant Count by unitary and local authority (experimental) – February 2022

# Spotlight on Birmingham:

## City focuses on those left behind by rapid development

While Birmingham has been very successful in attracting inward investment for development in recent years, city leaders are acutely aware that the growth has not been sufficiently inclusive. The city has a young and growing population, but unemployment is double the national average, and there is a decade's gap in life expectancy between the poorest and most affluent areas. During the pandemic, these widening gulfs have become even more real and more urgent, with the rising cost of living a particular worry.

The city plans to tackle these inequalities with a **decade of inclusive growth** – which will be driven by an ambitious levelling up strategy and a focus on five strategic 'levelling up accelerators'. This decade will be sandwiched between two major events for Birmingham: the **Commonwealth Games** in summer 2022 and the **opening of HS2** in the early 2030s.

To drive the growth agenda, Birmingham is pursuing a levelling-up strategy that aims to **boost the city economy by £9bn a year**, creating c.75,000 jobs. This strategy is built around five key accelerators that will drive change at scale:

1. Longer-term, more efficient **single pot funding** and increased devolved powers for the city to enable increased freedom for investment.
2. The **East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy**, an approach to drive regeneration and tackle deprivation for a quarter of a million of Birmingham's poorest residents.
3. Birmingham's **early intervention and prevention model** to offer support services to residents across the age range that prevent them needing crisis services.
4. **Regional connectivity**, including both green and digital infrastructure, and a comprehensive, affordable transport network.
5. **Retrofitting of social housing at scale** across the three cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton to decrease carbon emissions, improve housing standards and create green jobs.

The local authority is also making efforts to better understand the strengths and challenges the city and its people are facing by creating a **City Observatory**. The observatory will publish and share data and insight on Birmingham, including a baseline of the current state of the city and tracking of progress on levelling up. Insights will be used to understand key issues in the city, the causes of those issues and to drive potential solutions and partnership approaches.

“

Birmingham's challenge is putting the engine of growth to work for those who need it most – the poorer communities that live right up alongside the rapid growth but can't yet feel the benefits.”





## Regional recoveries

Based on our mapping of UK cities to regions, **Table 5** illustrates the weighted 2021 and 2022 GVA growth rates by region. The South West is estimated to see the highest GVA growth rates in 2021 and 2022, chiefly

based on the underlying performance of the cities in the region. The South West includes cities estimated to see strong recoveries in both years: Plymouth, Exeter and Bournemouth to name a few.

**Table 5: 2021 and 2022 GVA growth rate by region<sup>11</sup>**

Region	2021 GVA growth rate	2022 GVA growth rate
South West	8.2%	6.1%
South East	7.9%	5.9%
East of England	7.8%	5.7%
London	7.4%	4.7%
Scotland	7.1%	4.9%
East Midlands	6.9%	4.8%
West Midlands	6.9%	4.8%
North West	6.8%	4.5%
Yorkshire and The Humber	6.7%	4.5%
North East	6.7%	4.5%
Northern Ireland	6.4%	4.1%
Wales	6.3%	4.0%

Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

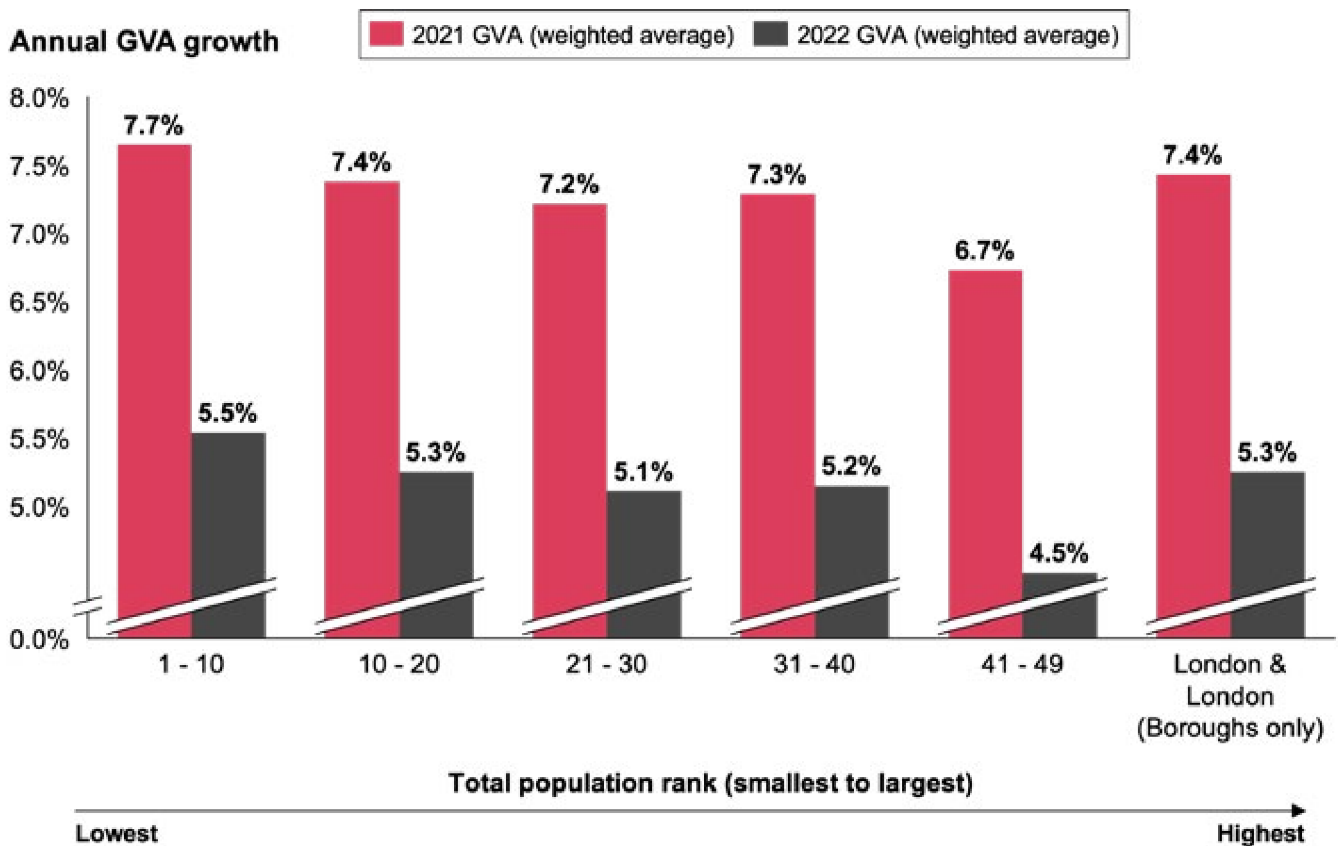
<sup>11</sup> Regions are not exhaustive of all local authorities in the region. The weighted GVA growth rates are based only on the cities and proportions of local authorities that constitute the region. Some local authorities in each region are excluded as a result of the mapping.

### Economic growth between smaller and bigger cities

Figure 12 outlines the 2021 and 2022 GVA growth rates by total population count (smallest to largest). Based on total population count for each city, the smallest sized cities in our analysis, such as Plymouth and Bournemouth (ranks 1-10), are estimated to see stronger GVA growth rates in both 2021 and 2022 than larger cities generally, with the exception of London & London (Boroughs only). This is likely due to a number of factors, but we believe the main driver is the shift in working patterns caused by the pandemic.

We believe that smaller, provincial cities with lower population counts are benefitting from an increase in hybrid or home working patterns. As people spend less time commuting to larger urban cities, a rise in local spending can be expected, boosting the recoveries of smaller, city economies more so than larger cities. However, it is too early to know if this trend will be sustained – London sees a slightly above average recovery rate in 2021 which could suggest that migration away from some larger cities could be temporary.

Figure 12: 2021 and 2022 weighted average annual GVA growth rates ranked by smallest to largest cities in our Index



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

## Recovery among different social groups

While it is important to track the recovery of cities and regions, it is also vital that we understand how different demographics and societal groups are set to benefit from the recovery.

As previously mentioned, the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) focuses on inequalities between geographical areas, but government, businesses and local authorities would do well to take it a step further and look at the broader inequalities found within each region. This will help to embed fairness in the structure of local policies going forward.

### Young workers

Despite the disproportionate impact on young workers during the pandemic, we are seeing indications that the economic recovery for young workers is relatively strong.

As **Figure 13** highlights, 2021 Q3 saw the lowest relative unemployment among 16-24 year olds since records

began in 2001. The quarter saw unemployment levels for this group drop below 4% of total 16-24 year olds for the first time in 20 years, signalling the success in the measures that the government implemented to shield youth unemployment from the pandemic.

In the same quarter however, we also saw the largest quarter on quarter increase in economically inactive young adults. This could partly be explained by the reported rise in further education or early career breaks. The perception of a pandemic stricken economy, where job demand is perceived to be relatively low, is likely to have driven this increase in economically inactive young adults.

While these individuals are not currently contributing to the economy, this should not necessarily be perceived as a poor sign of economic recovery. Rather, adoption of further studies will benefit the economy in the future, as a more upskilled workforce enters the labour market with greater training, making them more productive when they do ultimately enter the economy.

**Figure 13: Percentage of young people economically inactive and unemployed from 2001 Q4 – 2021 Q3**



Source: ONS – Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) November 2021

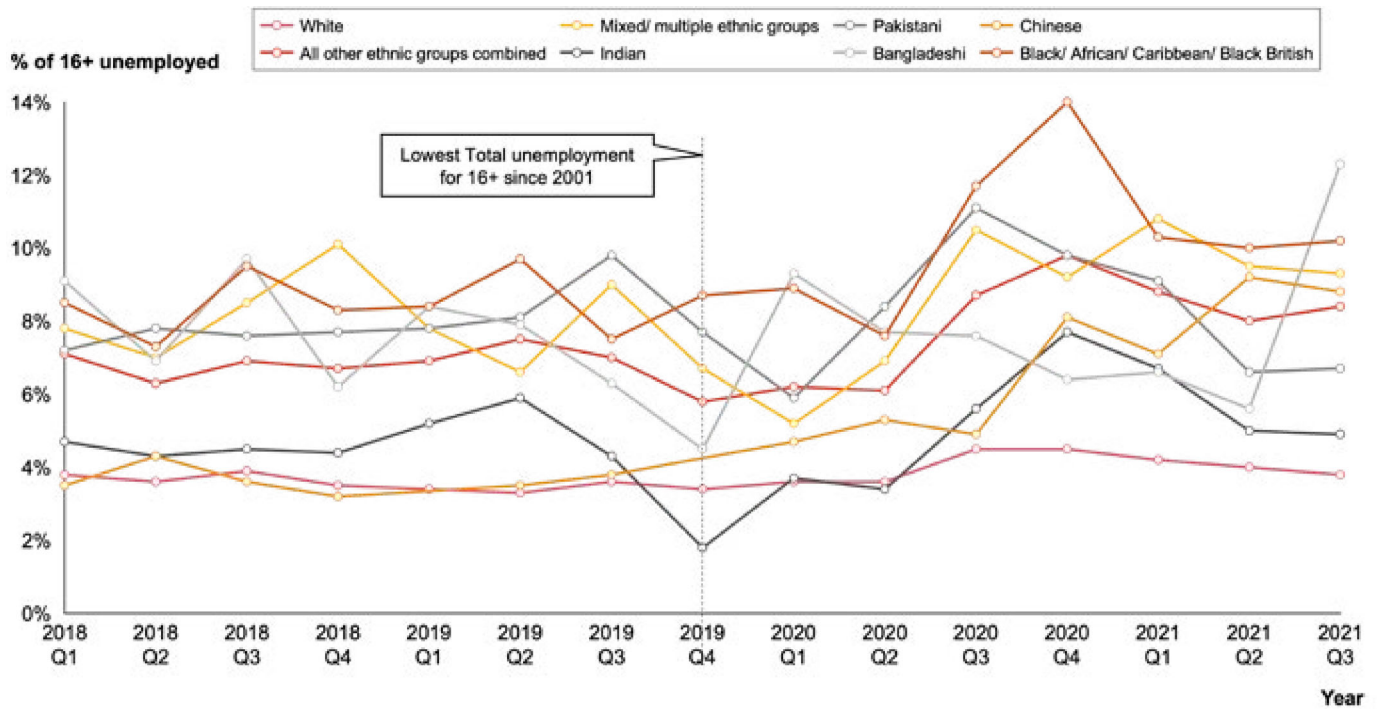
## Ethnic groups

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on racial and ethnic minority communities<sup>12</sup> has been well documented. In the UK, these individuals are reported to be more vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic than their White counterparts. A number of studies since our report last year have explored the likely causes, and in summary it is largely due to racial and ethnic minority groups:

- Coming from poorer socio-economic backgrounds on average;
- Having a higher representation of workers in frontline sectors (such as hospitals); and
- Tending to work on insecure contracts rather than full-time contracts<sup>13, 14</sup>

The extent of the economic recovery for individuals from different racial and ethnic groups is mixed. **Figure 14** reveals unemployment figures by ethnic group for people aged 16+.

**Figure 14: Unemployment by ethnic group, based on people aged 16+ (2018 Q1 to 2021 Q3)**



Source: A09: Labour market status by ethnic group – Unemployment by ethnicity: People (not seasonally adjusted). Latest released on 16 November 2021.

12) For the purposes of this report, we define racial and ethnic minority communities as those people who are non-White

13) [House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee: Unequal impact? Coronavirus and BAME people – December 2020](#)

14) [UNISON – October 2020](#)

According to the latest figures, all ethnicities are seeing higher unemployment rates than their pre-pandemic levels. However, comparing the difference in unemployment levels between each ethnic group from pre- to post-pandemic paints a more striking picture regarding economic recovery.

White individuals have the lowest unemployment rate of all ethnic groups – with 3.8% of those aged 16+ across all groups categorised as unemployed in 2021 Q3, compared to 3.6% of White individuals. The differences in percentage of people 16+ that are unemployed is summarised in **Table 6**.

**Table 6: Percentage of unemployed 16+ people, (2018 Q3 - 2021 Q3)**

	2018 Q3	2019 Q3	2020 Q3	2021 Q3
Total	4.3%	4.0%	5.1%	4.4%
White	3.9%	3.6%	4.5%	3.8%
Mixed / multiple	8.5%	9.0%	10.5%	9.3%
Indian	4.5%	4.3%	5.6%	4.9%
Pakistani	7.6%	9.8%	11.1%	6.7%
Bangladeshi	9.7%	6.3%	7.6%	12.3%
Chinese	3.6%	3.8%	4.9%	8.8%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	9.5%	7.5%	11.7%	10.2%
Other	5.5%	7.4%	7.0%	9.6%

Source: A09: Labour market status by ethnic group – Unemployment by ethnicity: People (not seasonally adjusted). Latest release on 16 November 2021.

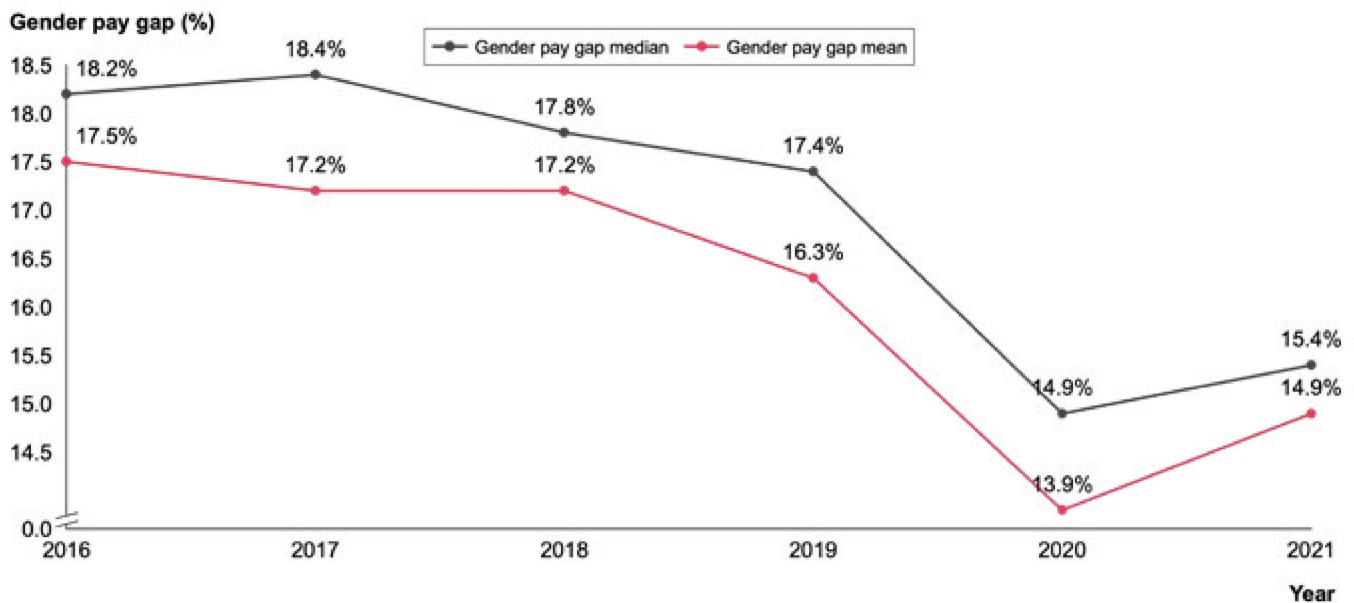
Meanwhile, our [Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2021](#) shows ethnicity pay penalties have remained stubbornly high over the past seven years in the UK. There are significant differences in the pay between ethnic groups that are magnified once you factor in gender and region, and have worsened during the pandemic. It is evident the economic recovery is not playing out evenly across the major ethnicity groups, and is more supportive for individuals from White backgrounds than those from non-White backgrounds.

## Women

Finally, **Figure 15** illustrates the differences in gender pay gap<sup>15</sup> between men and women in the UK. The pay gap has generally improved over a six year period, with the gender pay gap perhaps surprisingly improving in 2020 despite negative impacts of the pandemic on women.

15) For clarity, we define gender pay gap in line with the ONS's definition of the terminology. It is defined as the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings as a percentage of men's earnings.

Figure 15: Median & Mean gender pay gap at UK-wide



Source: ONS – Earnings and hours worked, place of residence by local authority: ASHE Table 8.12 – Gender pay gap

However, since the furlough scheme came to an end, we have seen the gender pay gap increase. Caution therefore needs to be taken when assessing whether women are benefitting from the economic recovery. The shift towards hybrid working, alongside new and growing industries, has the potential to increase wellbeing and productivity for both men and women in the workforce. Yet our Future of Government [research](#) shows there is a risk women will not benefit as much as men. Targeted measures will be required in order to support the economic recovery for women going forward.

### Green jobs: an opportunity to embed gender equality in the future workforce

According to our Future of Government report, [Targeting gender equality](#), most women believe they are ill-equipped for green jobs, lacking the right skills and opportunities to benefit from the green economy revolution. Just 21% of women are aware of opportunities for green jobs, compared to 32% of men. Similarly, just 20% of women feel they have the right skills to work in a role in the green economy, compared to 31% of men.

Our research supports the view that targeted measures by the government would help women to apply for roles in the green economy. Career support schemes, improvements in parental leave and flexible working patterns are all measures that can be applied to roles in the green economy in order to make the roles more appealing for women.

# Agenda for action

**As central government, businesses and local leaders come together to think innovatively about how the UK adapts to the impact of the pandemic and moves forward, they should do so in a way that does not leave people, or places behind.**

**We believe that efforts to secure a fair economic recovery and build sustainable growth should focus on the following:**

## **1) Levelling up and the reality of regional inequality**

It is well documented that the UK is one of the most geographically unequal countries in the developed world, and that despite the presence of deprivation within the region, productivity is highest in London and the South East.

### **Actions for central government**

The Levelling Up White Paper announced a package of 12 missions for levelling up for the UK to achieve by 2030. The Government may wish to now focus on the detail of how these missions will be delivered at pace, and should look to:

- Work with local leaders and industry to develop a roadmap for the delivery of each of the 12 missions, including outlining measurable and achievable targets to translate goals into visible outcomes.
- Establish a UK-wide outcomes framework, encompassing a broad definition of economic success, and gather hard evidence against this framework, to track the impact of government funding and deliver targeted interventions to support levelling up.
- Leverage the funding packages referenced in the White Paper with a view to addressing the fragmented nature of how some investment decisions are made, refreshing the processes associated with decision making and resourcing to use the available funds as efficiently as possible.

### **Actions for local leaders**

Our research shows the public's priorities for levelling up go beyond investment in infrastructure and transport. Local leaders should consider responding to the public's concerns in order to deliver Good Growth for their region. We suggest that local leaders look to:

- Invest in relationships across the public, private and third sectors as a foundation for developing comprehensive strategies for place-based transformation, facilitated by a frictionless and enabling planning system.
- Focus on providing high quality employment through sector-focused investment, including investment in human capital, to boost available jobs and match these to local skills, particularly for young people.
- Develop and implement integrated programmes of investment in infrastructure and local services, including investment into high streets, to create safe, sustainable and vibrant local communities.

### **Actions for businesses**

Our previous research shows businesses have the opportunity to build public trust by playing a greater role in the levelling up agenda – improving the opportunities, social mobility and equality in the places they operate. Businesses can look to:

- Take a proactive role in developing local economic strategies, in partnership with local and regional leaders, to identify strategic priorities to boost productivity and support innovation.
- Play a greater role in delivering a fair recovery across the UK, with a particular focus on reskilling and upskilling, to ensure people are equipped with the right tools for future jobs, particularly in green growth industries.
- Seek collaborative ventures, including partnership and coordination roles, with central and local government, charities and community groups to create business opportunities and improve the effectiveness of levelling up interventions.



## 2) Capitalising on growth outside larger metropolitan cities

The Government's levelling up agenda focuses on inequalities between regions, but inequalities within regions can be just as challenging, particularly when comparing urban and provincial areas. The latter are commonly challenged by low wage levels, connectivity issues, and skills deprivation.

Yet strong interdependencies exist between urban and rural areas. Almost 16% of England's GVA in 2019 was attributed to predominantly rural areas – highlighting the need to maintain traditional rural produce, and propel new technologies, such as agri-tech and energy generation.

### Actions for central government

The Government should continue to recognise the potential in provincial areas and the interdependencies that exist between urban and rural. Provincial areas are at risk of greater social and economic exclusion without serious improvement and investment from the Government in digital connectivity.

- The Government has made progress in combating the digital divide through initiatives such as Building Digital UK – with Project Gigabit aiming to reach 85% coverage by the end of 2025. When it comes to levelling up initiatives such as these, the Government may wish to be transparent about how budgets will be allocated, and set realistic targets in order to maintain trust.
- Government policy should aim to help places help themselves. Business and local growth requires sustained support at a local level which is sensitive to local opportunity and context. The Government could reassure local leaders that its proposal for capital investment and development is worthwhile, by building on the principles it has announced for county deals, and providing a 'devolution framework' which sets the parameters within which deals will be agreed.

### Actions for local leaders

Local leaders should explore the opportunities and inequalities that exist within their regions. They have the opportunity to capitalise on the recent success of rural or provincial areas through sustainable Good Growth that can power neighbouring cities and bring economic and social benefits back to the rural areas. Understanding these interdependencies will be the first step for regions, as a whole, to build Good Growth.

- As stated previously, almost 16% of England's GVA came from predominantly rural areas in 2019, and there are many examples of successful rural environments capitalising on their rural assets, such as Cornwall (see Spotlight on Cornwall). Regions and local leaders must seek alternative opportunities to power growth nationally and benefit their communities through investment.
- The pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of people's living and working arrangements in urban areas, and placed greater value on surrounding green and/ or garden space. Local leaders may wish to emphasise their offerings of greater work-life balance as viable alternatives for city living, by creating affordable housing options, shared working spaces, and improving transportation links between urban and rural areas.
- Building an intra-region circular economy could be a focus for local leaders, in a way that incentivises green growth and shopping locally, promoting the consumption of produce from within the region.



### Actions for businesses

Businesses have a vital role to play in managing the gap between urban and provincial areas by recognising and capitalising on the potential in local areas, from skill retention and asset building to pioneering the future of flexible working.

- Provincial economies typically experience a deprivation of skilled workers as a result of low wages or better opportunities being offered in more urban areas. Businesses can improve this by investing in the development of talent, through retraining and apprenticeship programmes.
- Businesses should continue to explore ways to increase flexibility for their employees in a hybrid working environment. Greater flexibility and the opportunity to decide when and where to work may encourage more employees to help support rural and provincial economies, at the same time as helping larger metropolitan areas recover.
- In partnership with local leaders, businesses can push forward the circular economy and green growth agenda by exploring opportunities to localise supply chains as much as possible, reducing excessive carbon emissions from production and transportation and capitalising on local assets.

# Spotlight on Northumbria:

## NHS Trust sets sights on becoming regional powerhouse

In its response to COVID-19, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation pushed the boundaries of its expected role. It set up a PPE factory which not only revived the local textile industry, but is now set to become the country's leading PPE supplier for NHS Trusts.

While the Trust does not operate in a city, it is inextricably linked to the economics and culture of both the Newcastle City region and the North of Tyne Combined authority, pointing to the important role it plays in both rural and urban communities across Northumbria. The Trust was the first in the UK to formally commit in 2021 to tackling the issues that drive health inequality – the **Community Promise package** reaches across six broad pillars: poverty, education, economy, environment, wellbeing and employment.

In a bid to **improve resilience and skills in the community** the Trust has set up the Northumbria Manufacturing and Innovation Hub. During the pandemic, the hub set up the PPE factory in order to guarantee a PPE supply for local healthcare workers and reduce costs. By the end of 2020, the factory had produced more than two million gowns, and expanded into other products such as isolation gowns, scrubs, masks and even pillows.

The expansion of the factory has brought the **local textile industry back to life** – initially re-engaging retired seamstresses as volunteers, the hub now trains a paid workforce as part of a high-tech future textile industry and offers facilities and equipment such as a clean room, lasers and branding machines.

There are plans to go further, to train a future workforce in healthcare as well as textiles. It has committed to a **30% increase in apprentices**, with programmes offering opportunities to Looked After Children and people from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds. Through its outreach programme, the PPE factory is also producing miniature scrubs to send to schools to engage children with the NHS and to widen participation in local communities.

“

Northumbria Trust seeks to use its position as an anchor institution to drive a strong local supply chain – increasing local jobs for local people and providers, rather than defaulting to national providers.”



### 3) Driving social mobility and addressing intergenerational inequality

The pandemic has set back social mobility in the UK, deepening divides between generations in particular, with younger generations hit hard over the last two years. The impact of the pandemic, coupled with rising inflation, cost of living, and house prices, will continue to widen the prosperity gap between the old and the young, unless significant action is taken.

#### Actions for central government

Central government should continue to seek ways to alleviate the housing crisis. Our Future of Government report [Driving social mobility](#) found that only 27% of young people consider home ownership to be representative of social mobility, compared to 41% of older people, highlighting the fact that home ownership has become largely unattainable for many young people.

- Despite responses from the Government to address housing affordability, through schemes such as the Stamp Duty exemption and ‘Help to Buy’, neither of these have seen significant improvements in lower-price housing access due to an unresponsive housing supply in areas with greater job opportunities, such as Greater London. The Government should seek alternatives to increasing the access of housing in desirable areas.
- Central government can work with local authorities to boost housing growth in commutable locations, in order to boost levelling up and development outside London and major metropolitan areas.
- Amending policy to allow the building of new houses on green belt land with no environmental or amenity value has been successfully pursued in some areas<sup>16</sup>.

#### Actions for local leaders

Young people (employees under 25) were the primary receivers of the furlough scheme<sup>17</sup> during the pandemic, as a result of the large impact on the hospitality and retail sectors. Looking ahead, respondents to the [Social Mobility Barometer 2021](#) said boosting employment should be a top priority for the Government’s recovery programme (47%)

followed by addressing mental health issues (46%) and improving access to education (33%)<sup>18</sup>. Local leaders can support in actioning this in the following ways:

- Local leaders work with central government to shape local education requirements, build partnerships and highlight opportunities to assist the Government’s devolution agenda.
- Local leaders may wish to engage with schools early in the education cycle to help share insights on varied employment options and encourage networking and mentoring programmes (see Spotlight on Northumbria for how the Healthcare NHS Foundation has engaged young children with the NHS).

#### Actions for businesses

This year’s Good Growth Index shows a significant difference in how 16-25 year olds rank the importance of skills compared to those 25+, with younger people placing lower importance on skills compared to other Index measures, such as income. Businesses should engage with this shift and actively engage with young people and the skills system.

- Businesses should recognise the cost that the pandemic has had on the upskilling experience for young people, whether that be virtual fatigue and the perception of online training, or that new hybrid ways of working have made it increasingly difficult to learn from colleagues on the job.
- Businesses can begin to reimagine the upskilling journey, but first they may wish to increase their involvement with education and training providers, as well as apprenticeship schemes, to understand where improvements can be made to reinvigorate the learning experience.
- Businesses should look strategically at the skills system, focusing on skills that will enable the capabilities of the future.

<sup>16</sup> [LSE: The UK housing crisis](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Job retention statistics](#) – Furlough by age

<sup>18</sup> Social Mobility Barometer

# Spotlight on Cambridge:

## City looks beyond ‘best in class’ to deliver fairness

Cambridge is renowned for its historical and intellectual assets, which draw more than eight million visitors from across the world every year. Since the 1960s, growth in Cambridge has been driven by the ‘**Cambridge phenomenon**’, a boom in innovation and industry focused around technology and the life sciences. This rapid growth continued throughout the pandemic, with Cambridge ranked as the leading regional technology city in the UK last year.

Demand for ‘best in class’ research and development space in the city this year was three times the available capacity, as the city attracted more than £1.3bn in investment for companies rich in intellectual property. Cambridge’s growth, however, has brought challenges, in the form of **widening inequality in the city** and a lack of social mobility – with the city among the lowest 20% of local authority areas for social mobility.

In response, Cambridge’s strategy for the city focuses on **delivering fairness and holistic growth**. This includes committing to £70m funding for social housing, and £100m for affordable housing in the wider devolution area, as well as setting out a five year plan to end homelessness. The latter includes innovative initiatives, such as working with SoloHaus, to provide 18 safe and sustainable pods as a stepping stone out of homelessness.

The city aims to **create a sustainable, connected region** to support these housing initiatives. As part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, £500m has been earmarked for transport infrastructure, particularly green public transport and cycleways, up to 2030. Further investment is destined for green infrastructure, in areas such as waste and energy. Some £227m in government investment is being used to support the relocation of Anglian Water’s wastewater treatment plant to create a zero-carbon plant nearby. In its place, the city is seeking to **build a new sustainable district for the city**, consulting with local residents to design a low-carbon site with space for nature.

Cambridge’s growth will continue to attract inward investment, new jobs and innovative businesses. To support plans for fairer, greener growth the city council has kicked off a conversation with residents and

businesses around corporate citizenship. Many local businesses are developing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies and recognise that they can make an important long-term contribution, with public and third sector partners, to help address social inequality, achieve net zero and promote greater biodiversity.

“

There is a pressing need for more affordable housing, with Cambridge consistently ranking among the top five least affordable cities in the UK, as well as being deemed the most unequal UK city for income.”



#### 4) Green growth to provide a basis for all future action

The appetite for green growth continues to expand amid increasing calls from the public for the Government, businesses and local leaders to prioritise sustainability. Our [Green Jobs Barometer](#) has built an evidence base to track the relative performance of UK regions and industry sectors on their progress in developing green jobs over time. As the country works towards net zero and a greener economy, regional differences are emerging. It is clear support and investment is needed to ensure accessible green employment grows in the places it is needed most.

##### Actions for central government

Sustainability continues to climb the Government agenda, with Glasgow hosting COP26 in 2021 and the publication of the Government's Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. Central government needs to deliver against sustainability targets, while ensuring the green economy acts to decrease, not widen, inequalities. The Government should look to:

- Outline a bold approach to delivering its Net Zero Strategy, using investment to drive change at the forefront of innovation and incentivise local leaders and businesses to prioritise green initiatives.
- Integrate equality measures into green objectives to ensure the legacy of the green transition is not a reduction in economic opportunity for regions that have yet to capitalise on green opportunities.
- Prioritise investment into accessible green technologies and infrastructure, such as electric charging infrastructure, to provide jobs, increase resilience and promote use by the general public.

##### Actions for local leaders

Over the last year, the number of local authorities declaring a state of climate emergency rose by 13%. Delivering green growth will require the right decision-making processes, investment and skills. Local leaders should look to:

- Embrace the green opportunity by updating regional industrial strategies to focus on emerging green sectors, such as renewable energy supplies, green transport and low-carbon infrastructure.
- Embed sustainability at the heart of local and regional development through the creation of holistic decision making frameworks, accounting for social, environmental and economic considerations.
- Boost productivity by investing funds and resources into green upskilling, to match workforce skills with emerging green jobs.

##### Actions for businesses

Our [25th Annual CEO Survey](#) reveals that commitments to purpose and environmental, social and governance (ESG) are on the rise. There is a growing focus among business leaders on trust, transparency and personal accountability. Successful strategies, as referenced in our report [ESG and Growth: A New Way of Thinking](#), are grounded in an honest assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, with an eye on the future. With this in mind, businesses should look to:

- Craft a coherent and actionable strategy to deliver sustainable growth by breaking down ESG considerations into a set of manageable actions and selecting the areas in which they want to compete.
- Make use of innovation hubs and grants to collaborate across public and private institutions, to embrace innovative ways of working and disruptive technologies.
- Unlock efficiencies through incentivising better use of resources, including decreasing waste and energy usage.
- Drive social mobility, as well as racial and gender equality, in green sectors by offering accessible educational pathways, including skills programmes and apprenticeships, and increased support for career progression.

# Appendix

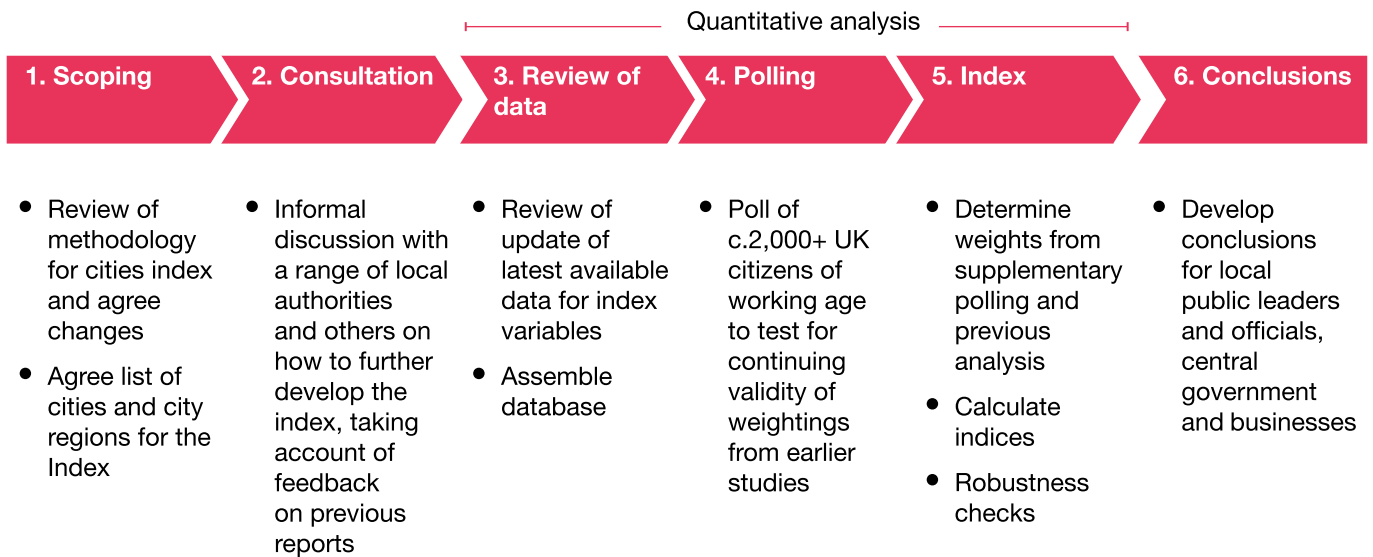
## Good Growth Index methodology

In developing the Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index this year, we have used the same methodology as in previous editions. This year, we have made our usual minor adjustments to the periodic data that we assess, but have made more significant changes to our geographic definitions and have included two new variables in our Index. The way we have included our two new indicators remains consistent with the method observed in our first edition. The variables, and the weights applied to them, are outlined in Table A1 below.

Due to the differences in the way we have captured the analysis this year, we caution against drawing comparisons to our report last year as the underlying methodology is inconsistent. Our overall approach to developing the Index is summarised in **Figure A1**.

Where local authority level data is missing gaps have been benchmarked to an appropriate local or regional alternative. However, this has not had a material impact on the results.

**Figure A1: Our Approach**



**Table A1: Index variables, geographical areas and weights**

Category	Measure	Time period	Geography	Weight
Safety	Violence against the person, weapons and drugs offences	2017-2020	LA	14%
Income distribution	Ratio of median to mean income	2017-2020	LA	14%
Income	GDHI per head scaled by regional price indices	2017-2020	LA	13%
Health	Life expectancy	2017-2020	LA	10%
Work-life balance	% in employment working more than 45 hrs per week	2017-2020	LA	10%
Environment	Carbon emissions: gCO2/£ GVA	2017-2020	LA	10%
Transport	Average commuting time to work	2017-2020	LA	8%
Jobs	Unemployment rate	2017-2020	LA/TTWA	8%
High street & Shops	Stores openings & closures	2017-2020	LA	5%
Housing	Housing price to earnings ratio and owner occupation rate	2017-2020	LA	4%
Skills	Share of population, aged 16-24 & 25-64, with NVQ 3+	2017-2020	LA	2%
New businesses	New businesses per head of population	2017-2020	LA	2%

### Measure refresh: Health

With health remaining an important indicator, in this iteration of the Index, the health metric has been updated from the proportion of the workforce not working due to long-term sickness, to the more widely used life expectancy at birth. This has resulted in a re-ranking of cities in terms of health outcomes in the Index, but ultimately represents a better measure of health outcomes, with life expectancy being linked to living standards, lifestyle and health services<sup>19</sup>.

### Constructing the Index

The scores for each city are given relative to a base period of 2017-19 (i.e. a score of zero means that a city's Index score in 2018-20 is equal to the 2017-19 average score for all UK cities in the Index). For each element of the Index, a city receives a score equivalent to the number of standard deviations it is away from the mean score on that indicator for all cities. As a result, a score of +0.2 means a city performs 0.2 standard deviations better than the sample mean for that element of the Index in the base year. The scores for each element are then weighted and summed to create the overall Good Growth Index score for that city. The approach is the same for the analysis of different geographies, such as those covered by Combined Authorities. This is the same approach that we have taken in previous reports and is standard practice when constructing such indices.

<sup>19</sup> <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/life-expectancy-at-birth.htm>

## Our list of cities

Alongside refreshing our Index this year with new public priorities, we have also refreshed our framework of how we decide which cities we include or exclude from our analysis. Our refreshed decision criteria is outlined below.

- **Population size:** all cities contain 350,000 or more people, based on 2019 population data<sup>20</sup>.
- **Mix:** one of the most important criteria for any city list is to ensure there is a mix of economies in order to provide interesting good growth comparisons.

- **Spread:** we ensure we have a good geographical spread, including cities in the devolved nations.

The use of this new methodology has meant that the total list of cities in our index has increased from 42 to 50 cities<sup>21</sup>. The full list of cities included in this year's Index is set out in **Table A2** below. It is important to note, the use of our new framework has led two cities from last year's Index, Doncaster and Birkenhead, to be excluded.

**Table A2: All 50 cities included in our index). \*indicates new entry**

City	City	City	City	City
1 London	11 Nottingham	21 Medway	31 Middlesbrough and Stockton	41 Ipswich*
2 Manchester	12 Leeds	22 Southend	32 Exeter*	42 Huddersfield*
3 Birmingham	13 Warrington and Wigan	23 Reading	33 Derby	43 Lincoln*
4 Glasgow	14 Cardiff	24 Oxford	34 Preston	44 Peterborough*
5 Newcastle	15 Wolverhampton and Walsall	25 Portsmouth	35 High Wycombe and Aylesbury	45 Bournemouth*
6 Liverpool	16 Luton*	26 Bradford	36 Swansea	46 Plymouth
7 Leicester	17 Cambridge	27 Stoke-on-Trent	37 Aberdeen	47 Wakefield and Castleford
8 Belfast	18 Edinburgh	28 Hull	38 Swindon	48 York*
9 Sheffield	19 Southampton	29 Chelmsford*	39 Sunderland	49 Brighton
10 Bristol	20 Coventry	30 Norwich*	40 Milton Keynes	50 Northampton*

20) Based on mid-2019 Small Area Population Estimates

21) We engaged the ONS to understand what the proportion of each local authority was in each TTWA in June 2021. Source: ONS (2021), "Listing of 2021 UK local authorities by component 2011 travel to work areas based on mid-2019 Small Area Population Estimates"

## Cities included in the Demos-PwC Good Growth Index (defined as TTWAs).

A full list of local authorities covered in the TTWA definitions is available on our website.

We also apply the Good Growth Index methodology to:

- **10 Combined Authorities:** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North of Tyne, North East, Sheffield City Region, Tees Valley, West of England, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. We also look at the performance of six city regions in Wales and Scotland, including Aberdeen City Region, Edinburgh City Region, Inverness City Region, Glasgow City Region, Cardiff Capital Region and Swansea City Region.
- All 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) areas in England

## Economic impact analysis methodology

Our economic analysis assesses the economic growth rates of cities in our Index. We have predicted the economic impacts based on Gross Value Added (GVA).

The core modelling we have used to determine GVA impacts at a city level is the application of nation-wide sectoral impacts to each city's local authorities. Using the latest data available at the time of writing from the ONS, we have applied the sectoral impacts and forecasts to all local authorities in the UK, to understand and predict the economic growth rate of each city. We have used our [UK Economic Outlook: December 2021](#) sectoral forecasts under the 'Accelerated Growth' scenario to the [ONS 2019 Regional GVA by industry figures](#) from 2020 to 2021. Based on the proportion of each city's industry relative to the entire UK economy, we applied the sector impacts to each local authority from 2019 and mapped these to the cities included in the Good Growth Index.

Additionally, we have used other measures as proxies to further refine our economic analysis. This includes the Google Mobility Index, the Universal Claimant count and the case rate of COVID-19 at local authority levels in the UK.

We have weighted each proxy in order to account for all proxies, but have more strongly weighted proxies that we feel are the most accurate measures of GVA. In this instance, we have weighted the sectoral analysis as the most accurate measure of GVA at the city level.



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2. We're authentically cross-party, working across party lines with community leaders, businesses and activists to create a movement for social change.
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee - Planning in Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer(s):</b>	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management) Keith Sutherland, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published a report and recommendations in relation to Planning in Northern Ireland. This paper provides an overview of the PAC report and recommended response from the Council. The proposed response was considered by the Planning Committee on 12 April 2022 for notation. A full copy of the PAC report is provided at <b>Appendix 1</b> . The Council's proposed response is provided at <b>Appendix 2</b> .
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note this report and agree the proposed response to the PAC report at <b>Appendix 2</b> .

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
3.1	<p>In February 2022, the Planning Committee considered two recent reviews of the NI planning system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firstly, the Northern Ireland Audit Office’s review of the NI planning system, a copy of which can be accessed here: <a href="https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/planning-northern-ireland">https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/planning-northern-ireland</a> and</li> <li>• Secondly, the Department for Infrastructure’s review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, a copy of which can be accessed here: <a href="https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-planning-act-ni-2011-report">https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-planning-act-ni-2011-report</a></li> </ul>
3.2	<p>Following publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report, the NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has been hearing evidence from key stakeholders. The following sessions were held.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence from the Department for Infrastructure – 10 February 2022</li> <li>• Evidence from SOLACE – 17 February 2022 (including evidence from Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control, Belfast City Council)</li> <li>• Evidence from NILGA – 24 February 2022</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>The PAC subsequently published its report on “Planning in NI” on 24 March 2022. This paper provides an overview of the PAC report and includes a recommended response from the Council. A full copy of the PAC report is provided at <b>Appendix 1</b>.</p>
3.4	<p>As further background reading, Members are referred to the agenda item to the February Planning Committee on the NI Audit Office report and the Departmental review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, see link below:</p> <p><a href="https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=167&amp;MIId=10643&amp;Ver=4">https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=167&amp;MIId=10643&amp;Ver=4</a></p>
	<b>Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI</b>
	<u>Overview</u>
3.1	<p>Consistent with the findings of the NIAO report published in February 2022, the PAC report is extremely critical of the NI planning system. It concludes that the planning system in Northern Ireland is not working effectively or efficiently. The PAC calls for a fundamental review, led by</p>

	<p>someone independent from the Department for Infrastructure, to bring about the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose.</p>
3.2	<p>In relation to performance, the PAC observes that since the transfer of functions in 2015, planning authorities have failed to deliver on many of their key targets, particularly on major and significant development. The PAC was “appalled” by the performance statistics. It states that it is simply unacceptable that almost one-fifth of the most important planning applications aren’t processed within three years highlighting that such poor performance has an impact on applicants, developers and communities and is risking investment in Northern Ireland.</p>
3.3	<p>The PAC notes that progress on Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been equally poor – with none of the plans being able to progress to adoption in the seven years since transfer in 2015. The PAC heard of the potential for LDPs to shape communities and make decision-making processes easier, but noted that the process has been hindered by the complete underestimation of the complexity and volume of work required; a lack of key skills and resources available to councils. These challenges were considered to have been compounded by a series of unnecessary “checks and balances” implemented by the Department. The PAC urges all those involved in plan-making to work together to streamline remaining LDP processes and produce these important plans as soon as possible.</p>
3.4	<p>The PAC goes onto to express concerns about the poor quality of planning application submissions (BCC is the only Planning Authority that has so far sought to directly address this through publication of its <i>Application Checklist</i> in 2018). The PAC is also concerned about a lack of transparency in decision making (officers advise that BCC follows good practice in this regard through clearly minuting the reason/s for the Committee’s decision where it overturns the officer recommendation. Committee reports also clearly explain where applications have been referred to the Committee by an individual Elected Member and reasons why).</p>
3.5	<p>The PAC is critical of the role of the Department and its lack of action to address under performance in the system. It observes that the Department is not providing strong leadership in driving change and that it does not grasp the severity of the issues facing the NI planning system. In this regard, the PAC recommends that a commission is setup to oversee much needed change to the NI planning system, but that it should be chaired by someone independent of the Department.</p>

3.6	<p>The PAC is extremely concerned about the significant level of silo working within the planning system itself and comments that it one of the worst examples of silo working in the public sector that it has ever encountered. It notes the fragmentation between central and local government, statutory consultees and even within the Department itself highlighting that it will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way going forward.</p> <p><u>PAC Recommendations</u></p>
3.7	<p>The PAC report makes 12 recommendations, some of which overlap with the recommendations of the NIAO report. The recommendations are reproduced below with additional context around each provided in the PAC report (see <b>Appendix 1</b>).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The planning system in Northern Ireland is not working. The Committee recommends that a Commission is established to undertake a fundamental review to ascertain the long-term, strategic changes that are needed to make the system fit for purpose. This should be led by someone independent from the Department.</li> <li>2. The Committee has heard that there are a number of opportunities to make immediate improvements to the planning system. We recommend that a commission is established to identify tangible improvements that can be achieved in the short term. This must focus on problem solving, delivery and achieving outcomes within a fixed time frame.</li> <li>3. The Committee expects action to be taken to improve the planning system. In lieu of any accountability for performance within the system, the Department will provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months' time.</li> <li>4. The Committee recommends that the Department considers ways to streamline the remaining LDP processes, and works with councils to learn lessons from those that have been through the independent examination process with a view to taking a more pragmatic approach to the remaining plans. The Department and councils need to work collaboratively to produce these important plans as soon as possible.</li> <li>5. The Committee recommends that all those involved in decision-making ensure that processes are open and transparent, particularly where a high degree of interpretation</li> </ol>

has been exercised. The Department and councils should consider how checks on good record keeping, to ensure transparency, could be carried out effectively.

- 6.** The Committee recommends that the Department should ensure that there is suitable and proportionate means of engaging with the planning system. This should include a deeper consideration of the appropriateness of limited third-party rights of appeal.
- 7.** The operation of the planning system for rural housing is at best inconsistent and at worst fundamentally broken. The Committee believes that it is essential that policy in the area is agreed and implemented equally and consistently across Northern Ireland. The Department should ensure this is the case.
- 8.** The Committee recommends that the Department urgently considers how it exercises its oversight of the planning system. In the Committee's view, this must be accompanied with a cultural change. Intervention should be to support delivery and to make improvements. The current minimal approach is no longer sustainable.
- 9.** The Committee recommends that the Department and local government should implement immediate changes to improve the quality of applications entering the system. Whilst this may require legislative change, we do not believe that this should be an excuse for delay.
- 10.** The Committee recommends that planning authorities regularly review past decisions to understand their real-world outcomes, impact on communities and the quality of the completed development.
- 11.** The planning system must be financially sustainable and this requires an appropriate, long-term funding model. The Committee recommends that all those involved in delivering planning work together to achieve this. In the short term the Department should take the lead on bringing forward legislation on planning fees as a matter of urgency.
- 12.** There is a fundamental need for a cultural change in the way local and central government interact around planning. Whilst cultural change will take time, this should be reflected immediately in a more inclusive planning forum which includes representation from developers and communities.

	<b>Next Steps</b>
3.8	As reported to the Planning Committee in February 2022, this is a pivotal time for the NI planning system. Publication of the NIAO and Public Accounts Committee reports represents a significant opportunity for much needed change and improvement.
3.9	The Department for Infrastructure must provide a formal response to the PAC report within 8 weeks of its publication (i.e. by 19 May 2022). The recommendations also require an update be given to the successor Public Accounts Committee on the improvements made in six months' time.
3.10	SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in NI) is expected to provide a response on behalf of the 11 councils. It is recommended that Belfast City Council also formally responds. A recommended response to the PAC report is provided at <b>Appendix 2</b> for agreement by the Committee.
3.11	The PAC's recommendation to establish a commission to oversee the fundamental change necessary for the NI planning system is welcome along with the proposal to include representatives of the development industry and communities. It is only through the participation of all key stakeholders that appropriate solutions can be developed and the necessary improvements delivered. The Council has a very important leadership role in this change process and will be seeking representation on the commission and any structures that feed into the proposed processes.
3.12	The Department is organising an all-day workshop with local government officers on 29 April 2022 to formulate the beginning of a potential plan or approach to addressing the issues identified. In order to achieve the stated objectives the discussions will need to resolve a number of aspects including: the overall purpose and scope of the review, governance including representation, assurance, monitoring and reporting arrangements, potential for outside support and expertise, resourcing and approach to implementation.
3.13	It is hoped that these various reviews will establish a momentum and commitment to addressing the structural and operational challenges. It is therefore proposed that progress and any emerging proposals will be brought back to Committee as updates going forward.

	<b>Financial and Resource Implications</b>
3.14	The existing NI planning system is inefficient and underperforming and the PAC report correctly identifies the need to address its longer-term financial sustainability. In January 2021, the Council reported to NIAO that the net cost of its Planning Service is nearly £1.2m after fee income which demonstrated the Council commitment to the effective resourcing of this function. However, the Planning function is far from the cost neutral model suggested at the time of Transfer and the PAC's recommendation that the longer-term financial sustainability of the NI planning system should be addressed is therefore welcomed.
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.15	No adverse impacts identified.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee report (March 2022)</p> <p><b>Appendix 1a</b> – Press Release</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> – Proposed Belfast City Council response to PAC report</p>

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Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Public Accounts Committee**

# PLANNING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

This report is the property of the Public Accounts Committee. Neither the report nor its contents should be disclosed to any person unless such disclosure is authorised by the Committee.

Ordered by the Public Accounts Committee to be published 22 March 2022

This report is embargoed until 00.01am on 24 March 2022

Report: NIA 202/17-22 Public Accounts Committee

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## Powers and Membership

The Public Accounts Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Standing Orders under Section 60(3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is the statutory function of the Public Accounts Committee to consider the accounts, and reports on accounts laid before the Assembly.

The Public Accounts Committee is appointed under Assembly Standing Order No. 56 of the Standing Orders for the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has the power to send for persons, papers and records and to report from time to time. Neither the Chairperson nor Deputy Chairperson of the Committee shall be a member of the same political party as the Minister of Finance or of any junior minister appointed to the Department of Finance.

The Committee has 9 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Chairperson: Mr William Humphrey MLA

Deputy Chairperson: Mr Roy Beggs MLA

Mr Andrew Muir MLA<sup>2</sup>

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA

Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Mr William Irwin MLA<sup>1 4</sup>

Mr David Hilditch MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA<sup>3 5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With effect from 17 February 2020 Mr Harry Harvey replaced Mr Gary Middleton

<sup>2</sup> With effect from 31 March 2020 Mr Andrew Muir replaced Mr Trevor Lunn

<sup>3</sup> With effect from 19 May 2020 Mr Matthew O'Toole replaced Mr John Dallat

<sup>4</sup> With effect from 21 June 2021 Mr William Irwin replaced Mr Harry Harvey

<sup>5</sup> With effect from 18 October 2021 Ms Cara Hunter replaced Mr Matthew O'Toole

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report

C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General
DAERA	Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PAN	Planning Advice Note
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
The Act	Planning Act (NI) 2011
The Committee	Public Accounts Committee
LDP	Local Development Plan

## Executive Summary

1. The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) met on 10, 17 and 24 February and 10 March 2022 to consider the Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) report "Planning in Northern Ireland". The main witnesses were:
  - **Mrs Katrina Godfrey**, Department for Infrastructure
  - **Mr Angus Kerr**, Department for Infrastructure
  - **Ms Julie Thompson**, Department for Infrastructure
  - **Ms Alison McCullagh**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland (SOLACE)
  - **Ms Kate Bentley**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland
  - **Councillor Steven Corr**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
  - **Councillor Robert Irvine**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
  - **Ms Karen Smyth**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
  - **Mr Kieran Donnelly**, Northern Ireland Audit Office
  - **Mr Stuart Stevenson**, Department of Finance
  - **Ms Nuala Crilly**, The Gathering
  - **Mr Dean Blackwood**, The Gathering
  - **Ms Anne Harper**, The Gathering
  - **Mr George McLaughlin**, The Gathering
  
2. Performance issues within the planning system are widely known and are a source of considerable concern for this Committee. Since the transfer of functions in 2015, planning authorities have failed to deliver on many of their key targets, particularly on major and significant development. The Committee is appalled by the performance statistics. It is simply unacceptable that almost one-fifth of the most important planning applications aren't processed within three years. Such poor performance has an impact on applicants, developers and communities and is risking investment in Northern Ireland.
  
3. Progress on Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been equally poor - seven years into the process these plans are yet to materialise. The Committee heard of the potential for LDPs to shape communities and make decision-making processes

easier, but the process has been stymied by a complete underestimation of the complexity and volume of work required, a lack of key skills and resources within councils, compounded by a series of unnecessary “checks and balances” implemented by the Department. The Committee urges all those involved in plan-making to work together to streamline remaining LDP processes and produce these important plans as soon as possible.

4. Issues with quality at all stages of the planning process are pervasive, affecting applications, statutory consultation, plan-making and the appeals system. The Committee is concerned about the long-term, cumulative effect of widespread quality issues. A planning system that allows poor quality applications risks poor quality development, which will only lead to further issues and additional costs for the future. The Committee heard that there are opportunities to improve application quality, but these have not been taken either centrally or locally. The Committee simply cannot understand the reluctance to implement change in this area.
5. Whilst these performance issues are concerning, and must be addressed, it is the Committee’s strong view that the problems presented are symptomatic of a planning system that is beset by more fundamental issues.
6. The Committee was alarmed by the volume of concerns around transparency that were presented during the course of its inquiry. In the Committee’s view, a planning system that lacks transparency leaves decision makers ill equipped to defend themselves against allegations of impropriety and contributes to public mistrust. This, in turn, damages the reputation of the system and places Northern Ireland at a huge disadvantage to other regions when competing for investment.
7. The Committee heard concerns about the lack of transparency from witnesses and through submissions received. The basis for making key decisions was often absent and this is extremely worrying. In particular the Committee are seeking urgent remedial action to ensure better transparency for those planning applications called in and for applications overturned by a Planning Committee contrary to the recommendation of the planning officers. The Committee are also seeking more transparency as to how councils exercise enforcement powers given the considerable variation across councils.

8. Having discussed its concerns with the Department, SOLACE and NILGA, the Committee was struck by the lack of accountability for poor performance. A system that allows all those involved to miss targets, without seeking improvements, is a system in chronic failure. The Committee is worried by the Department's misunderstanding of accountability, and was left with the impression that it is more interested in talking about issues, than taking the action needed to address them. This cannot continue, and the Committee expects the Department to provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months time.
9. In the Committee's view, the Department is not currently providing the strong leadership needed drive transformational change within the planning system. The Committee is very concerned that the Department does not grasp the severity of issues facing the planning system, does not recognise the urgent need for change and has a poor understanding of its role in implementing change. The Committee urges the Department and the Head of the Civil Service to consider how leadership could be significantly strengthened so as to exercise an effective oversight role.
10. The operation of the planning system is one of the worst examples of silo-working within the public sector that this Committee has encountered. There is fragmentation at all levels - between central and local government, within statutory consultees, amongst the local councils and even the Department itself appears to operate in functional silos. The Committee believes that there is an urgent need for a radical cultural change in the way in which central and local government interact. If the planning service is to improve, the Department and councils must start to collaborate as equal partners. This will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way.
11. The Committee were astounded to hear of the case of Knock Iveagh where a wind turbine was granted planning permission on the site of an historic monument. Whilst the planning permission was granted by the Department of the Environment before planning powers passed to local government, there have been many opportunities since where the Department and the local council could have worked collaboratively to find a solution. The council are now in a legal dispute with the Department regarding this. The Knock Iveagh case clearly demonstrates the enormous damage caused by an incorrect planning decision and also the inability of the Department and

council to work together to rectify the position in an expedient way instead of wasting valuable resources and causing extreme distress to those affected.

12. The planning system in Northern Ireland is clearly not working. Given the widespread, severe and entrenched nature of the issues outlined, the Committee is calling for a fundamental review, led by someone independent from the Department, to identify the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose.

## Summary of Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

13. The planning system should act as key economic driver for Northern Ireland and has a crucial role in leveraging investment, protecting the environment and delivering places that people want to live and work in. However, on the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee, it is clear that the system is failing on delivering its key functions - major applications take years to decide, plan-making is incredibly slow, and enforcement is inconsistent. Given such obvious issues, the Committee believes that a significant programme of reform is needed.

**The planning system in Northern Ireland is not working. The Committee recommends that a Commission is established to undertake a fundamental review to ascertain the long-term, strategic changes that are needed to make the system fit for purpose. This should be led by someone independent from the Department.**

### Recommendation 2

14. Whilst there are widespread, systemic issues affecting planning in Northern Ireland, the Committee could not understand the reluctance, amongst many of those it heard evidence from, to initiate changes that could improve performance within a shorter timeframe. This inaction is stifling the system and cannot be allowed to continue.

**The Committee has heard that there are a number of opportunities to make immediate improvements to the planning system. We recommend that a commission is established to identify tangible improvements that can be achieved in the short**

**term. This must focus on problem solving, delivery and achieving outcomes within a fixed time frame.**

### **Recommendation 3**

15. In the course of its inquiry, it became clear to the Committee that the planning system lacks robust accountability arrangements. Missed targets and poor performance have become accepted as the norm. The Committee was alarmed by the Department's misunderstanding of accountability. Publishing data is not accountability. The Committee is also concerned that the Department has been more focussed on talking about performance than implementing the significant actions that are so clearly needed.

**The Committee expects action to be taken to improve the planning system. In lieu of any accountability for performance within the system, the Department will provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months time.**

### **Recommendation 4**

16. Northern Ireland's planning system is intended to be a plan led system. Despite this, the production of Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been both slow and expensive. Whilst there was an initial expectation that plans would be completed within three and a half years, seven years following the transfer of planning powers to local government no council has an approved LDP.

17. Current projections mean that it will be 13 years into the 15-year cycle before all councils have a completed plan in place. Without these, many councils are relying on outdated area plans to guide decisions, which in some cases are over 30 years old.

**The Committee recommends that the Department considers ways to streamline the remaining LDP processes, and works with councils to learn lessons from those that have been through the independent examination process with a view to taking a more pragmatic approach to the remaining plans. The Department and councils need to work collaboratively to produce these important plans as soon as possible.**

## **Recommendation 5**

18. Core to much of the Committee's work has been the promotion of the highest ethical values in public services. During the inquiry into planning the Committee heard a number of concerns around record keeping and the transparency of decision making. Given planning decisions are often amongst the most contentious decisions that will be taken within the public sector, adherence to the highest ethical standards are essential. Monitoring the level of transparency will be key going forward to engender trust in the planning system.

**The Committee recommends that all those involved in decision-making ensure that processes are open and transparent, particularly where a high degree of interpretation has been exercised. The Department and councils should consider how checks on good record keeping, to ensure transparency, could be carried out effectively.**

## **Recommendation 6**

19. Confidence in the planning system is low. Members of the public feel excluded and often believe they have no choice but to launch legal proceedings, in the form of judicial reviews, to challenge decisions that impact their communities. This is expensive, time consuming and confrontational for all those involved. Greater engagement is needed.

**20. The Committee recommends that the Department should ensure that there is suitable and proportionate means of engaging with the planning system. This should include a deeper consideration of the appropriateness of limited third-party rights of appeal.**

## **Recommendation 7**

21. Planning must play an essential role in helping to address many of the issues being experienced with housing in Northern Ireland. In particular, the Committee is concerned by the evidence it has heard in relation to rural development. The level of variation in how this policy is being applied across Northern Ireland is of particular concern, along with what appears to be a disproportionate interest in this area from some planning committees.

22. The Committee is also concerned that work to clarify this policy had been commenced by the Department but was abandoned only two months after the Planning Advice Note was published. It is essential that this work be resurrected urgently, but accompanied with proper engagement between central and local government.

**The operation of the planning system for rural housing is at best inconsistent and at worst fundamentally broken. The Committee believes that it is essential that policy in the area is agreed and implemented equally and consistently across Northern Ireland. The Department should ensure this is the case.**

### **Recommendation 8**

23. The Department told the Committee that amongst its responsibilities within the two-tier system in Northern Ireland was oversight. However, the Committee heard evidence that the Department was overwhelmingly focused on matters of process rather than on the strategic issues which require strong, decisive leadership. The Department told us it was challenging to identify when it was appropriate to intervene - the Committee believes the Department has got this balance wrong.

**The Committee recommends that the Department urgently considers how it exercises its oversight of the planning system. In the Committee's view, this must be accompanied with a cultural change. Intervention should be to support delivery and to make improvements. The current minimal approach is no longer sustainable.**

### **Recommendation 9**

24. The planning system should be key to providing places that people want to live and work in. Whilst timely decisions are essential, it is perhaps even more important that development that is approved is of high quality. Allowing poor quality applications into the system will only result in poor quality development. Despite this, the Committee heard that the system has been incredibly slow to implement relatively simple changes which could improve the quality of applications. This cannot be allowed to continue.

**The Committee recommends that the Department and local government should implement immediate changes to improve the quality of applications entering the**

**system. Whilst this may require legislative change, we do not believe that this should be an excuse for delay.**

#### **Recommendation 10**

25. Without any review of past decisions, it is hard for those who make decisions to properly understand how the outcomes of those decisions impact on the communities around them. A key means of improving the quality of future decisions must be to reflect on the consequences of planning decisions.

**The Committee recommends that planning authorities regularly review past decisions to understand their real-world outcomes, impact on communities and the quality of the completed development.**

#### **Recommendation 11**

26. If the planning system is to deliver its key functions, it must be properly resourced and financially sustainable. However, at local council level, the planning system has been running at an ever-increasing shortfall since the transfer of functions in 2015. The Committee believes the current funding model does not recognise the importance of the planning system, and needs to be revised. Current planning fees, set by the Department, do not reflect the needs of the system. If developers are willing to pay higher fees for a better service, then at least part of the solution to financial sustainability is obvious. The Committee cannot understand why this hasn't been progressed.

**The planning system must be financially sustainable and this requires an appropriate, long-term funding model. The Committee recommends that all those involved in delivering planning work together to achieve this. In the short term the Department should take the lead on bringing forward legislation on planning fees as a matter of urgency.**

#### **Recommendation 12**

27. Underpinning many of the issues that the Committee found hampering the planning system was a lack of joined-up working. The Committee has stressed the importance of joined-up working in many of its inquiries, but the planning system is amongst the starkest examples of the negative consequences when public bodies don't work together.

28. Changing this will require leadership - but will also require both central and local government to step up and work together in the interests of the planning system and its users rather than individual bodies. This will require a cultural change, but is essential to allow a more responsive, effective planning system.

**There is a fundamental need for a cultural change in the way local and central government interact around planning. Whilst cultural change will take time, this should be reflected immediately in a more inclusive planning forum which includes representation from developers and communities.**

## Introduction

29. The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) met on 10, 17 and 24 February and 10 March 2022 to consider the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report “Planning in Northern Ireland”. The main witnesses were:

- **Mrs Katrina Godfrey**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Mr Angus Kerr**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Ms Julie Thompson**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Ms Alison McCullagh**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland
- **Ms Kate Bentley**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland
- **Councillor Steven Corr**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Councillor Robert Irvine**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Ms Karen Smyth**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Mr Kieran Donnelly**, Northern Ireland Audit Office
- **Mr Stuart Stevenson**, Department of Finance
- **Ms Nuala Crilly**, The Gathering
- **Mr Dean Blackwood**, The Gathering
- **Ms Ann Harper**, The Gathering
- **Mr George McLaughlin**, The Gathering

## Background

30. A properly functioning planning system should proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland.

31. The Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the Act) established a two-tier system for the delivery of planning functions in Northern Ireland. The planning system has three main functions: development planning, development management and enforcement. Under the Act, responsibility for delivering the majority of operational planning functions passed to local councils in April 2015.

32. The Department for Infrastructure (the Department) retained a central role in the planning system in Northern Ireland and is responsible for preparing regional planning policy and legislation, monitoring and reporting on the performance of councils' delivery of planning functions and making planning decisions in respect of a small number of regionally significant applications.
33. A number of central government organisations provide specialist expertise to council planning officials on technical matters. The main organisations that councils consult with are Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads, Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), DfI Rivers, NI Water and the Historic Environment Division within the Department for Communities.
34. There were around 11,000 planning applications processed in Northern Ireland in the 2020-21 year. Of these, around 95 per cent were approved.

## **The planning system is in need of fundamental improvement**

35. Evidence presented to the Committee is clear that the current planning system simply isn't working. It is slow, fails to provide certainty for those involved in it, and lacks the confidence of those both inside and outside the system. These are significant deficiencies given the importance of the planning system - it should be acting as a key economic driver, helping to leverage investment into Northern Ireland whilst protecting the environment and delivering places that people want to live and work in.
36. On the basis of many key metrics, the system is simply inefficient. Almost half of major applications, those likely to have significant economic social and environmental implications, take more than a year to decide upon. Three years after application, one in five of these major applications is still not decided. The Committee heard that even the target timescales were "eye-watering", and the system must aim for better. In comparison with elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the system is much slower.
37. Performance in preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been incredibly slow. The most recent projections provided by councils suggest that it will be 2028 before

there is an LDP in place in each council area, 13 years into a 15-year cycle. The Committee also heard concerns around the effectiveness and equity of enforcement across Northern Ireland. Taken together, the Committee was left with the impression of a system that can't plan for the future; isn't doing well on deciding today's applications; and doesn't appear to be properly enforcing the decisions it made in the past.

38. Some of the underperformance undoubtedly relates to the transfer of functions in 2015. The Committee heard that the budget that transferred was inadequate, the staffing model was inappropriate and the future funding model needs to change. Most concerning of all appears to be the widespread recognition that the system isn't working. The Committee is clear that change is now needed and 'a sticking plaster' will not suffice. Given such obvious criticism, it is hard to understand why action hasn't been taken until now.

**The planning system in Northern Ireland is not working. The Committee recommends that a Commission is established to undertake a fundamental review to ascertain the long-term, strategic changes that are needed to make the system fit for purpose. This should be led by someone independent from the Department.**

39. Whilst there is an obvious need to look again at the structure and operation of the planning system, the Committee have been struck by the number of changes that could be made now to improve performance. In our view, there has been an inertia throughout the system and many of those involved appear reluctant to make much needed changes. This cannot be allowed to continue.

**The Committee has heard that there are a number of opportunities to make immediate improvements to the planning system. We recommend that a commission is established to identify tangible improvements that can be achieved in the short term. This must focus on problem solving, delivery and achieving outcomes, within a fixed time frame**

## **No one has been willing to take responsibility for the overall performance of the planning system**

40. The Committee has discussed concerns around the performance of the planning system with the Department, SOLACE and NILGA. No one was able to explain how poor performance is addressed. It is now clear to the Committee that there is no accountability for poor performance. Statutory consultees, councils and the Department have all missed targets with impunity and without seeking improvements. This is a serious failing.
41. The Committee was also alarmed by what appears to be the Department's fundamental misunderstanding of what accountability is. The Committee was told that the Department felt there was accountability in the system because "we are publishing more now than we ever published before". The Department also told the Committee that, "data just gives you the questions to ask". However, the Committee can't see evidence of the Department actually asking those questions, be it on variation in performance, overturns, enforcement or delegation.
42. The Department also said, "the more you talk about performance, the more focus there is on improving it" - the Committee sees no evidence that this has been true for the planning system, and is concerned that the Department is focussed on talking, rather than on the significant action the system so clearly needs.

**The Committee expects action to be taken to improve the planning system. In lieu of any accountability for performance within the system, the Department will provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months time.**

43. There is a clear need for many organisations to work together to deliver an effective planning system. This is not happening. Whilst the Committee heard that planning is provided by a number of "autonomous public bodies", this cannot be used as an excuse for bodies to act in narrow self-interest. Public bodies exist to provide a public service - not to defend their own role. At this most basic level, the committee expects

all of those involved in the planning system to act in the interests of the public, not themselves.

## **Progress on Local Development Plans has been slow and the Department's input has led to further delays**

44. Northern Ireland's planning system should be plan-led. However, the expectation that all councils would have a fully completed LDP within three and a half years of beginning the process has proved completely unrealistic. The Committee heard that a combination of inadequate funding, a lack of plan-making skills within councils and insufficient understanding of the complexity of the LDP process at the point of transfer has resulted in no council having an approved LDP seven years later.
45. The Committee is also concerned that the Department has implemented an excessive range of "checks and balances" at either side of the Independent Examination which have contributed to delays, and do not happen in other jurisdictions. The Committee did not get any sense of the value added by these checks and is concerned that this level of interference is symptomatic of the culture within the Department, and its approach to the planning system in general. The system has become so legalistic and bureaucratic that professional planners are tied up in processes, not adding value or place-making. This is expensive for public bodies and discouraging for staff.
46. The Committee was left with the impression that plan-making is excessively process driven and unlikely to deliver what is needed any time soon. Indeed, the current projections show that it will be 13 years into the 15-year planning cycle before all councils have an LDP in place, and there is now a risk that plans will be out of date by the time they are implemented. Whilst the Committee does not want the work done so far on LDPs to be wasted, attention must now be turned to streamlining and speeding up the remaining processes.

**The Committee recommends that the Department considers ways to streamline the remaining LDP processes, and works with councils to learn lessons from those that have been through the independent examination process with a view to taking a more**

pragmatic approach to the remaining plans. The Department and councils need to work collaboratively to produce these important plans as soon as possible.

## **There is a lack of transparency around key decision-making processes, undermining confidence in the planning system as a whole**

47. Openness and transparency are at heart of the credibility of any public service, yet during its inquiry, the Committee received a large number of concerns about the lack of transparency in the planning system, and how hard it is for the public to engage. The Department itself told the Committee that it had concerns around record keeping and the transparency of decision-making processes at council level, but the Committee got no sense of any actions it has taken as a result of these concerns. In the absence of any real accountability the onus appears to have fallen on members of the public to call out poor practices and ensure process is followed.
48. A number of concerns around transparency were presented to the Committee, across every evidence session, with both central and local government and members of the public. Whilst there is a need to improve transparency across the system, the Committee believes urgent remedial action is needed in three specific areas:
- Call-in procedures;
  - Overturn of planning officials' recommendation; and
  - Enforcement.
49. Whilst each planning committee has a Scheme of Delegation setting out the applications to be decided by the planning committee, and those which are delegated to officials, elected members retain the right to "call-in" applications from the delegated list, for consideration and decision by the planning committee. The Committee was presented with evidence that call-in procedures vary considerably, and it is not always clear, even to members of the same planning committee, why certain applications are called in. Whilst there may be valid reasons for calling in applications, such variation in process and lack of detail leads to speculation and a lack of trust, particularly when planning committees appear to take an interest in

particular types of development. In this context, the Committee was especially alarmed to hear that lobbying is happening, even though it shouldn't be.

50. The NIAO's report found that one in eight decisions taken by planning committees was made contrary to the advice of the planning officer. Whilst the Committee understands that planning committees are not expected to agree with official recommendations in all cases, it expects so-called "overturns" to be supported by robust planning reasons which are publicly available. Witnesses agreed that this was not always the case, and that record keeping processes vary considerably across planning committees.
51. The Committee views enforcement as crucial to the integrity of and confidence in the planning system, however evidence suggests that this is another area where there is considerable variation across planning authorities. For example, in one council, a quarter of enforcement cases was deemed not expedient to pursue, compared to less than one in ten in another council. The Committee was told that enforcement is a discretionary function, but cannot understand why outcomes are not more consistent, and is concerned that discretion is being used as an excuse not to carry out enforcement action in some cases. Such large variations in key planning processes and outcomes do not lead to public confidence, and warrant more attention from both the Department and local government.
52. Finally, the Committee also heard frustrations that the Department is particularly difficult to engage with. However, the Department told the Committee that it is leading on the Planning Engagement Forum and wants to engage the public more. The Committee is concerned that the Department is completely disconnected from the reality of the system, largely as a consequence of its hands-off approach since the transfer of functions.
53. The extent of concerns around transparency and openness are causing reputational damage to the Northern Ireland planning system. The Committee has been made aware of developers who are unwilling to risk investment in Northern Ireland, and this has the potential to undermine development, such as housing, that is so badly needed. The Committee is concerned perception of a dysfunctional planning system places Northern Ireland at a huge disadvantage to other regions when competing for foreign direct investment.

54. Witnesses told the Committee that, although they were aware of a perception of ethical issues within the planning system, they did not believe these existed in practice. However, in the Committee's view, the planning system lacks transparency, leaves decision makers ill-equipped to defend themselves against allegations of corruption and contributes to mistrust. The Chief Planner remarked that there is "more work to be done" on transparency. The Committee feels this is a massive understatement. Transparency around decision-making is key to enabling accountability and public confidence in the planning system.

55. The Committee recognises the importance of making planning decisions within a framework of high ethical standards. It is therefore important that both planning officers and decision makers are constantly reminded of the required standards and that there are adequate checks and balances within the system to ensure such standards are adhered to.

**The Committee recommends that all those involved in decision-making ensure that processes are open and transparent, particularly where a high degree of interpretation has been exercised. The Department and Councils should consider how checks on good record keeping to ensure transparency could be carried out effectively.**

## **Members of the public feel excluded from planning and more meaningful access to the system is needed**

56. The Committee heard a range of concerns from members of the public who felt excluded from the planning system. The Committee is clear that whilst it is important that the system works for applicants and developers, it must also work for those communities in which development takes place.

57. Many of those that the Committee heard from criticised the overly legalistic atmosphere that had been created around the planning system. However, by strictly limiting access, the system is currently contributing to this culture. Third parties are

left with no option to challenge decisions, other than by pursuing judicial reviews. This is expensive, time consuming and confrontational for all those involved.

58. Many of the responses to the Department's Review of the Planning Act reflected a desire for more access to the planning system, potentially through a new appeals system, or allowing for third party challenge. The Department was not persuaded of the need to make any amendments to the planning appeals process. The Committee recognises that there will be a trade-off between allowing access to the system for third parties and the speed of decisions - but currently the Northern Ireland system appears to have the worst of both worlds.

**The Committee recommends that the Department should ensure that there is suitable and proportionate means of engaging with the planning system. This should include a deeper consideration of the appropriateness of limited third-party rights of appeal.**

## **The Committee is concerned by how planning is operating for rural housing**

59. Much of the evidence heard during the Committee's inquiry centred on decisions around rural development and housing. In the Committee's view, some council planning committees appear to be excessively involved in decisions around the development of new single homes in the countryside. The NIAO report notes that, despite often being relatively straightforward, rural housing accounts for 16 per cent of all planning applications but comprises 40 per cent of all overturns. This represents a disproportionate use of planning committee time and resources.
60. The Department told us that the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) sets out how applications for rural housing should be approached. However, they are concerned that so many of these decisions are not delegated, or overturned and that different decisions are reached.
61. The Committee is concerned, based on evidence presented to it, that there appears to be an increasingly fine line between planning committees interpreting planning

policy and simply setting it aside. As a result, these differing interpretations are threatening to create a patchwork of varying rural planning policy across Northern Ireland. The Committee is simply not convinced that what is relevant in one rural area is considerably different to what is relevant in another.

62. The Committee heard about the Department's Planning Advice Note (PAN) which was issued in August 2021 and subsequently withdrawn just over two months later. This was prepared without consultation between the Department and councils. As a result of the Department's approach, relationships have been damaged, confidence in the planning system undermined and inconsistency has been allowed to persist.

**The operation of the planning system for rural housing is at best inconsistent and at worst fundamentally broken. The Committee believes that it is essential that policy in the area is agreed and implemented equally and consistently across Northern Ireland. The Department should ensure this is the case.**

## **The Department's leadership of the planning system has been weak**

63. The evidence provided to the Committee by witnesses and in the NIAO report makes it clear that leadership is desperately needed to improve the planning system. The Department isn't providing this. The Committee is very concerned, based on the evidence it has heard, that the Department does not grasp the severity of issues facing the planning system, does not recognise the obvious need for change and has little understanding of its role in implementing change.

64. The Department's evidence to the Committee was overwhelmingly focused on process - it highlighted that it had completed 19 out of 30 actions in relation to the planning forum and processed 55 responses for the Planning Review to identify the 16 key issues. The Committee was surprised to learn that the Department has around 80 staff assigned to planning matters. Evidence provided by others noted that the Department exercised a number of checks and balances which appeared to only delay decisions, frustrate the system and its users, and fail to add any value.

65. However, at no point did the Department seem to have considered what impact any of this would have on the planning system itself. Rather than providing transformational leadership which would drive the change that is so badly needed, the Department is overly focused on process. Reviewing the Department's role in respect of planning might reduce the need for the large number of staff.

66. There are some areas where it is obvious that the Department must take a more proactive leadership role. For example, the Committee heard that legislative change is required on a number of areas, and that the Department is the only body capable of taking this forward, but has made no efforts to do so. The Committee shares some of the witnesses' views that the recent review of the Planning Act was ineffective and that many important issues raised as part of the consultation were not adequately considered by the Department. The Committee notes that because of the timing of the Department's review, any legislative changes will need to wait until the next mandate. Therefore, even the limited changes that the Department has accepted are necessary will not be implemented soon. The Committee urges the Department to drive forward legislative change as a matter of urgency.

67. Having heard the Department's evidence, this Committee considers that the Department has been too remote in its oversight of the planning system and is not confident that the Department is providing the leadership that will drive the necessary transformational change.

**The Committee recommends that the Department urgently considers how it exercises its oversight of the planning system. In the Committee's view, this must be accompanied with a cultural change. Intervention should be to support delivery and to make improvements. The current minimal approach is no longer sustainable.**

## **The planning system has been slow to respond to quality issues**

68. The Committee has significant concerns around the evidence it heard of widespread issues with the quality of applications entering and progressing through the planning system. Allowing poor quality applications into the system risks poor quality development. This is storing up issues for Northern Ireland's future. A poor planning

system will not only cost Northern Ireland today, but will have a long-lasting negative impact over many years to come.

69. The Committee can see little evidence of changes implemented to improve the planning system to date, and often there has been inertia on effecting change that would improve the system. An example of this is the validation checklist. Councils have been asking the Department to put this on a legislative footing since 2016, and yet nothing has happened. The Committee, however, was unconvinced by evidence provided by local government representatives that councils were unable to take independent action on this issue.

70. The Committee heard that there is strong evidence that validation checklists will improve the quality of applications, however most councils haven't attempted to implement these as they would be voluntary. The Committee can't understand the reluctance around making basic changes, despite the positive experience of the one council who had implemented a checklist. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Department's inaction is being used as an excuse and councils are pre-empting reasons for failure rather than learning from good practice elsewhere and trying to implement it.

**The Committee recommends that the Department and local government should implement immediate changes to improve the quality of applications entering the system. Whilst this may require legislative change, we do not believe that this should be an excuse for delay.**

71. As well as allowing poor quality applications in, the system as currently designed, allows serial amendments at every stage of the process, right up to appeal. The Committee heard that dealing with poor quality applications clogs up the system and professional planners are constantly "firefighting". Addressing these issues could free up staff time to process applications in a more timely manner.

72. The Committee believes that a properly functioning planning system should encourage quality, however as it stands, there is no mechanism at either end of the system to do so. In addition to there being no robust mechanism to stop poor quality applications entering the planning system, the Committee heard that planning authorities do not review the outcomes of past decisions, despite this being Departmental guidance. The Committee was therefore left with the impression of a

system that has little interest in the impact of its decisions and learning from experience.

**The Committee recommends that planning authorities regularly review past decisions to understand their real-world outcomes, impact on communities and the quality of the completed development.**

## **The current funding model does not recognise the value of the planning system and is not financially sustainable**

73. The planning system plays a key role in economic development, shaping communities and protecting the environment and its value should be assessed in this context. It is therefore vital that it is financially sustainable. The Committee heard evidence that the current funding arrangements do not properly recognise the potential of the planning system as an economic enabler and public service and that the gap between income and expenditure has grown so large that the system is becoming financially unsustainable.
74. Local government witnesses told the Committee that, despite assurances, planning did not transfer to councils as a cost-neutral service in 2015 and that the funding package was insufficient to meet the costs of running the planning service. The shortfall in funding has continued year-on-year, with additional costs borne by councils, as opposed to any additional central government funding or meaningful uplift in planning fees. The NIAO reported that the gap between costs and income has risen from £4.1 million in 2015-16 to £8.2 million in 2019-20. The Committee was also concerned to hear that the true costs of the LDP process have not yet been fully realised, and this will also have an impact on councils' finances.
75. The Committee was disappointed to hear that the devolution of planning to local government hasn't yet achieved any economies of scale. Witnesses told the Committee that insufficient budgets and inappropriate staffing models from the point of transfer made this almost impossible and that funding models needs to be overhauled before any improvement will be seen.

76. Since 2015, planning fees have increased once, by around 2 per cent. Any further changes to planning fees will require legislation to be brought through the Assembly. The Committee heard that applicants are generally willing to pay higher fees in return for a better and more efficient service. The Committee was also told that resources are one of the major constraints in processing applications. The solution is frankly self-evident and the Committee struggles to understand how this hasn't been progressed by the Department. In the Committee's view, the Department has paid insufficient attention to ensuring that the planning fees it sets reflect the needs of the system. It is hugely frustrating that there will not be a chance to address planning fees until the next mandate. Bringing forward this legislation should be an urgent priority for the Department.

**The planning system must be financially sustainable and this requires an appropriate, long-term funding model. The Committee recommends that all those involved in delivering planning work together to achieve this. In the short term the Department should take the lead on bringing forward legislation on planning fees as a matter of urgency.**

## **The planning system is badly fragmented and this hampers effective delivery**

77. The Committee views the operation of the planning system as one of the worst examples of silo-working that it has come across. Despite an urgent need for better performance, there appears to be a lack of joined-up working between central and local government, silos within statutory consultees, a lack of co-operation amongst local councils, and even silos within the Department itself. Despite this, the Committee was surprised to hear from the Department's evidence that it felt it had been working collaboratively on multiple levels and multiple aspects. In contrast, councils told the Committee that they felt there was a level of mistrust and, that seven years into the system, this needed to change.

78. Departmental witnesses frequently referred to the work of the Planning Forum, however there was little evidence presented of tangible outcomes achieved. The Committee was surprised to learn that only three councils were represented on the

Forum, and that they were only invited to participate a year after it was established. The Committee is also concerned that the Department believes they have already brought everyone involved in the system together despite there being no representation from many of those who are essential to the system - councillors, developers or local communities. This is not an inclusive, joined-up approach to service improvement and must improve.

79. The Committee was disappointed to learn that one of the poorest performing statutory consultees, DfI Rivers, is part of the Department for Infrastructure. Such a failure within the Departmental boundary gives the Committee reason to question whether the Department fully grasps the consequences of its own actions or indeed the importance of the planning system. More generally, the Committee is concerned that, despite what it was told by the Department about the significant work ongoing with statutory consultees, there is no improvement in performance. The existence of a silo culture amongst consultees is also a significant concern, particularly the evidence that some consultees are protecting their own organisation's performance to the detriment of the overall system. This is not acceptable and urgent remedial action must be taken.

80. Within both statutory consultees and local government, we have also seen silo thinking predominate. The Committee has heard that some consultees have sought to protect their own performance, at the expense of the performance of the system as a whole. Likewise, the Committee remains highly concerned at one council implementing its own IT system and the consequences this will have for the rest of the planning system in Northern Ireland.

81. The consequences of silo working were laid bare in the evidence provided to the Committee. Professional planners were spending much of their time dealing with enquiries and chasing responses to applications that should have been progressed. Unbelievably, the Committee heard evidence that this was likely to represent much more than 40 per cent of planners' time. This is bad for the users of the system, bad for those employed by the system and bad for Northern Ireland. It must improve.

82. The Committee has also been left with the belief that not only is there a silo-mentality, but a strong sense of "us" and "them". The Committee was particularly alarmed by the case of Knock Iveagh where the council and the Department are in the midst of a

legal dispute. This is a stark example of where two parts of the planning system are at odds with each other rather than working in the interests of the system as a whole. This could and should have been avoided. The Committee is incredulous to learn that the costs of legal action to date, between two public sector bodies, have significantly exceeded what it may have cost to resolve the issue at the very outset.

83. The Committee believes that there is an urgent need for a cultural change in the way in which central and local government interact. The successful delivery of any service, but especially planning, will necessitate both the Department and councils collaborating as equal partners. More effort is needed from all those involved to work in a more productive way.

**There is a fundamental need for a cultural change in the way local and central government interact around planning. Whilst cultural change will take time, this should be reflected immediately in a more inclusive planning forum which includes representation from developers and communities.**

## Links to Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Printable version of Report**

Download a printable version of this report [SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

### **Appendix 2: Minutes of Proceedings**

View Minutes of Proceedings of Committee meetings related to the report  
[SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

### **Appendix 3: Minutes of Evidence**

View Minutes of Evidence from evidence sessions related to the report  
[SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

### **Appendix 4: Correspondence**

View Correspondence issued and received

### **Appendix 5: Other Documents relating to the report**

View other documents in relation to the report [SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

### **Appendix 6: List of Witnesses that gave evidence to the Committee**

- **Mrs Katrina Godfrey**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Mr Angus Kerr**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Ms Julie Thompson**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Ms Alison McCullagh**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland (SOLACE)
- **Ms Kate Bentley**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland
- **Councillor Steven Corr**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
- **Councillor Robert Irvine**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Ms Karen Smyth**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Mr Kieran Donnelly**, Northern Ireland Audit Office
- **Mr Stuart Stevenson**, Department of Finance

- **Ms Nuala Crilly, The Gathering**
- **Mr Dean Blackwood, The Gathering**
- **Ms Anne Harper, The Gathering**
- **Mr George McLaughlin, The Gathering**

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## PRESS RELEASE

23 March 2022

PAC 08/21/22

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2022**

### **COMMITTEE SAYS PLANNING SYSTEM NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE**

The Northern Ireland Assembly Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) has today published a report, entitled *Planning in Northern Ireland*. The report examines how the Department for Infrastructure (the Department) and local government has delivered planning decisions since 2015, when the two tier planning system was established.

Chairman of the Committee, William Humphrey MBE MLA said, **“We recognise the importance of a properly functioning planning system which should contribute towards a more socially, economically sustainable Northern Ireland. The Committee is therefore very concerned at the failure of the planning system to deliver.**

**“The Committee was both alarmed and appalled at the performance of the planning system. Planning decisions are unacceptably slow; nearly one fifth of the most important planning applications are not processed within three years. Not only does this have an impact on applicants, it also risks investment in Northern Ireland.**

**“We also were shocked that seven years on, no council has been able to produce a local development plan. The Department underestimated the complexity of progressing Local Development Plans. These plans should make a real difference to local communities, but have been hampered by a lack of key skills and resources within councils, compounded by a series of unnecessary “checks and balances” by the Department.**

The report also highlighted concerns about transparency around planning decisions. Not only is this against best practice, it can also contribute to public mistrust in any decisions taken.

Mr Humphrey said: **“The basis for making key decisions was often absent and this is extremely worrying. There needs to be urgent remedial action to ensure better transparency around decision making and how councils exercise enforcement powers given the considerable variation across councils.**

**“What is even more troubling is that there appears to be a lack of accountability for poor performance. This is a serious concern and demands immediate change. We have made it clear that the Department must provide the Committee with a radical action plan. We also expect the Department to provide the successor Committee with an update on improvements made in six months.**

Mr Humphrey said: **“The planning system is one of the worst examples of silo-working within the public sector that we have encountered. There is an urgent need for a radical cultural change in the way in which central and local government interact. If the planning service is to improve, the Department and councils must start to collaborate as equal partners. This will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way.**

**“The planning system in Northern Ireland is clearly not working. We are calling for a fundamental review, led by someone independent from the Department, to identify the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose”.**

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The full Report, *Planning in Northern Ireland*, can be found on the Assembly website:

The Committee's recommendations from the Report are:

### **Recommendation 1**

The planning system should act as key economic driver for Northern Ireland and has a crucial role in leveraging investment, protecting the environment and delivering places that people want to live and work in. However, on the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee, it is clear that the system is failing on delivering its key functions - major applications take years to decide, plan-making is incredibly slow, and enforcement is inconsistent. Given such obvious issues, the Committee believes that a significant programme of reform is needed.

**The planning system in Northern Ireland is not working. The Committee recommends that a Commission is established to undertake a fundamental review to ascertain the long-term, strategic changes that are needed to make the system fit for purpose. This should be led by someone independent from the Department.**

### **Recommendation 2**

Whilst there are widespread, systemic issues affecting planning in Northern Ireland, the Committee could not understand the reluctance, amongst many of those it heard evidence from, to initiate changes that could improve performance within a shorter timeframe. This inaction is stifling the system and cannot be allowed to continue.

**The Committee has heard that there are a number of opportunities to make immediate improvements to the planning system. We recommend that a commission is established to identify tangible improvements that can be achieved in the short term. This must focus on problem solving, delivery and achieving outcomes within a fixed time frame.**

### **Recommendation 3**

In the course of its inquiry, it became clear to the Committee that the planning system lacks robust accountability arrangements. Missed targets and poor performance have become accepted as the norm. The Committee was alarmed by the Department's misunderstanding of accountability. Publishing data is not accountability. The Committee is also concerned that the Department has been more focussed on talking about performance than implementing the significant actions that are so clearly needed.

**The Committee expects action to be taken to improve the planning system. In lieu of any accountability for performance within the system, the Department will provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months' time.**

### **Recommendation 4**

Northern Ireland's planning system is intended to be a plan led system. Despite this, the production of Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been both slow and expensive. Whilst there was an initial expectation that plans would be completed

within three and a half years, seven years following the transfer of planning powers to local government no council has an approved LDP.

Current projections mean that it will be 13 years into the 15-year cycle before all councils have a completed plan in place. Without these, many councils are relying on outdated area plans to guide decisions, which in some cases are over 30 years old.

**The Committee recommends that the Department considers ways to streamline the remaining LDP processes, and works with councils to learn lessons from those that have been through the independent examination process with a view to taking a more pragmatic approach to the remaining plans. The Department and councils need to work collaboratively to produce these important plans as soon as possible.**

#### **Recommendation 5**

Core to much of the Committee's work has been the promotion of the highest ethical values in public services. During the inquiry into planning the Committee heard a number of concerns around record keeping and the transparency of decision making. Given planning decisions are often amongst the most contentious decisions that will be taken within the public sector, adherence to the highest ethical standards are essential. Monitoring the level of transparency will be key going forward to engender trust in the planning system.

**The Committee recommends that all those involved in decision-making ensure that processes are open and transparent, particularly where a high degree of interpretation has been exercised. The Department and councils should consider how checks on good record keeping, to ensure transparency, could be carried out effectively.**

#### **Recommendation 6**

Confidence in the planning system is low. Members of the public feel excluded and often believe they have no choice but to launch legal proceedings, in the form of judicial reviews, to challenge decisions that impact their communities. This is expensive, time consuming and confrontational for all those involved. Greater engagement is needed.

**The Committee recommends that the Department should ensure that there is suitable and proportionate means of engaging with the planning system. This should include a deeper consideration of the appropriateness of limited third-party rights of appeal.**

#### **Recommendation 7**

Planning must play an essential role in helping to address many of the issues being experienced with housing in Northern Ireland. In particular, the Committee is concerned by the evidence it has heard in relation to rural development. The level of variation in how this policy is being applied across Northern Ireland is of particular concern, along with what appears to be a disproportionate interest in this area from some planning committees.

The Committee is also concerned that work to clarify this policy had been commenced by the Department but was abandoned only two months after the Planning Advice Note was published. It is essential that this work be resurrected urgently, but accompanied with proper engagement between central and local government.

**The operation of the planning system for rural housing is at best inconsistent and at worst fundamentally broken. The Committee believes that it is essential that policy in the area is agreed and implemented equally and consistently across Northern Ireland. The Department should ensure this is the case.**

#### **Recommendation 8**

The Department told the Committee that amongst its responsibilities within the two tier system in Northern Ireland was oversight. However, the Committee heard evidence that the Department was overwhelmingly focused on matters of process rather than on the strategic issues which require strong, decisive leadership. The Department told us it was challenging to identify when it was appropriate to intervene – the Committee believes the Department has got this balance wrong.

**The Committee recommends that the Department urgently considers how it exercises its oversight of the planning system. In the Committee's view, this must be accompanied with a cultural change. Intervention should be to support delivery and to make improvements. The current minimal approach is no longer sustainable.**

#### **Recommendation 9**

The planning system should be key to providing places that people want to live and work in. Whilst timely decisions are essential, it is perhaps even more important that development that is approved is of high quality. Allowing poor quality applications into the system will only result in poor quality development. Despite this, the Committee heard that the system has been incredibly slow to implement relatively simple changes which could improve the quality of applications. This cannot be allowed to continue.

**The Committee recommends that the Department and local government should implement immediate changes to improve the quality of applications entering the system. Whilst this may require legislative change, we do not believe that this should be an excuse for delay.**

#### **Recommendation 10**

Without any review of past decisions, it is hard for those who make decisions to properly understand how the outcomes of those decisions impact on the communities around them. A key means of improving the quality of future decisions must be to reflect on the consequences of planning decisions.

**The Committee recommends that planning authorities regularly review past decisions to understand their real-world outcomes, impact on communities and the quality of the completed development.**

### **Recommendation 11**

If the planning system is to deliver its key functions, it must be properly resourced and financially sustainable. However, at local council level, the planning system has been running at an ever-increasing shortfall since the transfer of functions in 2015. The Committee believes the current funding model does not recognise the importance of the planning system, and needs to be revised. Current planning fees, set by the Department, do not reflect the needs of the system. If developers are willing to pay higher fees for a better service, then at least part of the solution to financial sustainability is obvious. The Committee cannot understand why this hasn't been progressed.

**The planning system must be financially sustainable and this requires an appropriate, long-term funding model. The Committee recommends that all those involved in delivering planning work together to achieve this. In the short term the Department should take the lead on bringing forward legislation on planning fees as a matter of urgency.**

### **Recommendation 12**

Underpinning many of the issues that the Committee found hampering the planning system was a lack of joined-up working. The Committee has stressed the importance of joined-up working in many of its inquiries, but the planning system is amongst the starkest examples of the negative consequences when public bodies don't work together.

Changing this will require leadership – but will also require both central and local government to step up and work together in the interests of the planning system and its users rather than individual bodies. This will require a cultural change, but is essential to allow a more responsive, effective planning system.

**There is a fundamental need for a cultural change in the way local and central government interact around planning. Whilst cultural change will take time, this should be reflected immediately in a more inclusive planning forum which includes representation from developers and communities.**

For media enquiries, please contact:

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Your reference

Our reference JW/lc

Date April 2022

William Humphrey MLA  
Chair, Public Accounts Committee  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
By email: [Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Humphrey

### **NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI**

Belfast City Council was extremely keen to engage with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on first hearing of its review of the NI planning system. Council officials met NIAO at the outset in December 2020 then followed this up with detailed written representations in January 2021 calling for fundamental change.

The Council notes the tonality of the Public Accounts Committee report and shares its high degree of frustration about how the NI planning system was designed and currently operates.

Both Belfast and wider region have enormous potential – economically, socially and environmentally. Belfast is the *First City*, economic driver for the region and of huge importance socially and culturally. If our City is to truly realise its tremendous potential, and to deliver on the *Belfast Agenda*, its Community Plan, then it must be supported by an efficient, effective and fit for purpose planning system.

To deliver on this, it is our firm opinion that further devolution must take place and that Belfast should enjoy the same autonomy and powers as other regional cities in these Islands if it is to truly compete with them. Therefore, the Council must have responsibility for transport, regeneration, technical advice on most heritage assets and a much greater say on city wide infrastructure.

Consequently, Belfast City Council welcomes the Public Accounts Committee report, its recommendations and requirement for fundamental change.

The Council's Planning Service has been able to innovate to an extent, for example, through publication of its *Application Checklist* in 2018 as a means to improve the quality of planning applications on submission, but this like many other things is essentially a work around of the existing legislative process. There is no doubt that significant reform and change to planning legislation is required to address both the slow Local Development Plan process and

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underperformance in Development Management. This legislative change must be a key priority for the NI Assembly following the upcoming election.

The NI planning system must be about delivery and outcomes, rather than focus on process and red tape.

In our view it is necessary to have a much deeper understanding of how planning operates in NI in a systems context. In this regard, there are four main pillars for us to collectively focus on: Culture, Systems, Delivery and Quality Outcomes.

We recognise that the only way to address the significant challenges with the current system is through collaboration and by truly working together. The Council recognises that it has an important leadership role in this journey of change and it very much looks forward to working with the Department for Infrastructure, the other 10 councils, development industry, communities and other key stakeholders to bring about the fundamental reform that is needed. To this end, we have already been engaging with the Department and fellow councils on how to move forward.

I am also expecting the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in NI (SOLACE) to provide a response to the Public Accounts Committee report on behalf of the 11 councils. As sovereign local authorities, the other 10 councils may also wish to make separate representations to the Committee.

Please let me know should the Committee require any further information, insight or assistance.

Yours sincerely

**John Walsh**  
**Chief Executive**

Copied to: SOLACE NI  
Other 10 councils in NI  
Department for Infrastructure



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Advancing Community Wealth Building in Belfast - CLES Spend Analysis of Belfast Procurement and Commissioning Working Group</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Claire Patterson, Inclusive Growth Policy and Programme Officer Mark Mulholland, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To update the Committee on the emerging high-level spend analysis of the Belfast Anchors Procurement and Commissioning working group, which was established to explore how procurement and commissioning can embed community wealth building across the city to support inclusive and sustainable growth. This information was presented to the Social Policy Working Group in February 2022.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. note the initial high level spend analysis in the attached appendix and next steps, as outlined at paragraph 3.7; and</li> <li>ii. note that CLES will present the completed analysis to a future meeting of Party Group Leaders and provide party briefings if required, to allow further consideration</li> </ul>

	of the next steps for this project and how procurement and commissioning can be used to build and create local community wealth.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The purpose of the Belfast Procurement and Commissioning working group is to carry out a spend analysis within their organisation, as part of commissioned work on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership. It includes representatives from the city's anchor institutions, the VCSE Panel as well as interested representatives from the city's large private sector organisations (AllState and BT).
3.2	Four anchor organisations formed the first tranche for the analysis that the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) carried out working with the respective procurement teams: Belfast City Council, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Queen's University and Ulster University. This analysis includes consideration of the Belfast and NI business base to explore strengths and weaknesses in the region to identify good practice and opportunities for development.
3.3	Following initial consideration by the Belfast Procurement and Commissioning Working Group, the high-level analysis was presented to the Social Policy Working Group (SPWG) on 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2022 (see attached). The SPWG has asked that this be shared more widely with Party Group Leaders and the SP and R Committee to raise awareness of this work and to help inform the action plan and next steps.
3.4	<p>The following summarises the key points in the initial high-level analysis attached to this report. This will be enhanced as the data from the second tranche of anchors is added, strengthening the city's evidence base on the role of procurement in the local economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The four Belfast Anchors annual spend amounts to £443m, with 72% of this being spent with suppliers in Belfast and the rest of NI.</li> <li>- 28% of spend from the 4 Belfast Anchors is with Belfast based SMEs.</li> <li>- Belfast anchor institutions procure from relatively large local firms (of those available), but their largest suppliers are based outside NI.</li> <li>- A sectoral analysis of the spend outside of NI shows that this tends to be on administrative and support services and manufacturing.</li> <li>- There are few current suppliers which are 'socially owned' (7 out of 900).</li> </ul>

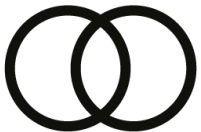
3.5	Spend data has now been provided directly to CLES by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust with Belfast Metropolitan College also agreeing to participate in this second tranche spend analysis. The NI Housing Executive and Belfast Harbour Commissioners have agreed to participate, in principle, subject to further discussion with CLES.
3.6	<p>Supported by CLES, this will inform the development of a shared action plan focused on the intelligence gathered of the local supply chain and local business environment. Some of the key questions being considered through this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can we use this information about public sector supply chains to better support the local economy?</li> <li>- How does market intelligence flow into the procurement life cycle and how does it influence how we develop tender specifications?</li> <li>- How do we understand our local and social economy better through procurement?</li> <li>- Are there opportunities to improve organisational processes by sharing practices and develop a procurement toolkit?</li> <li>- Social Value Procurement is a key tool but is there scope for Anchor organisations to connect/signpost resources to better support small local enterprises/social economy.</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>The next steps for this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CLES to provide individual organisational feedback on the spend/market analysis for each participating organisation</li> <li>- Completion of the data supply and analysis for the second tranche of participating Anchors in the spend analysis to deepen our understanding of the potential to use procurement and commissioning to support community/local wealth building</li> <li>- Co-design and develop a draft action plan with the Network</li> <li>- Inform and raise awareness amongst the Community Planning Partnership of progress and the role that procurement can play to build local wealth in delivering inclusive growth.</li> </ul>

3.8	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>This work has been commissioned by the City and Organisational Strategy Department on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership and is covered within 2021/22 departmental estimates and is aligned to the Council’s bespoke membership of CLES held by the Place and Economy Department.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p>
3.9	<p>There are no equality, good relations, or rural needs implications at this stage.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Document Attached</b></p>
	<p>CLES presentation on the high level spend analysis for four Belfast Anchors to SPWG (28.02.22)</p>

# Advancing Community Wealth Building in Belfast

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Stuart MacDonald, Associate Director  
David Burch, Senior Researcher  
Oliver Seabarron, Analyst



**CLES**  
the national organisation  
for local economies



@CLEStinkdo




# Proposal

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## Focus on anchor commissioning and procurement

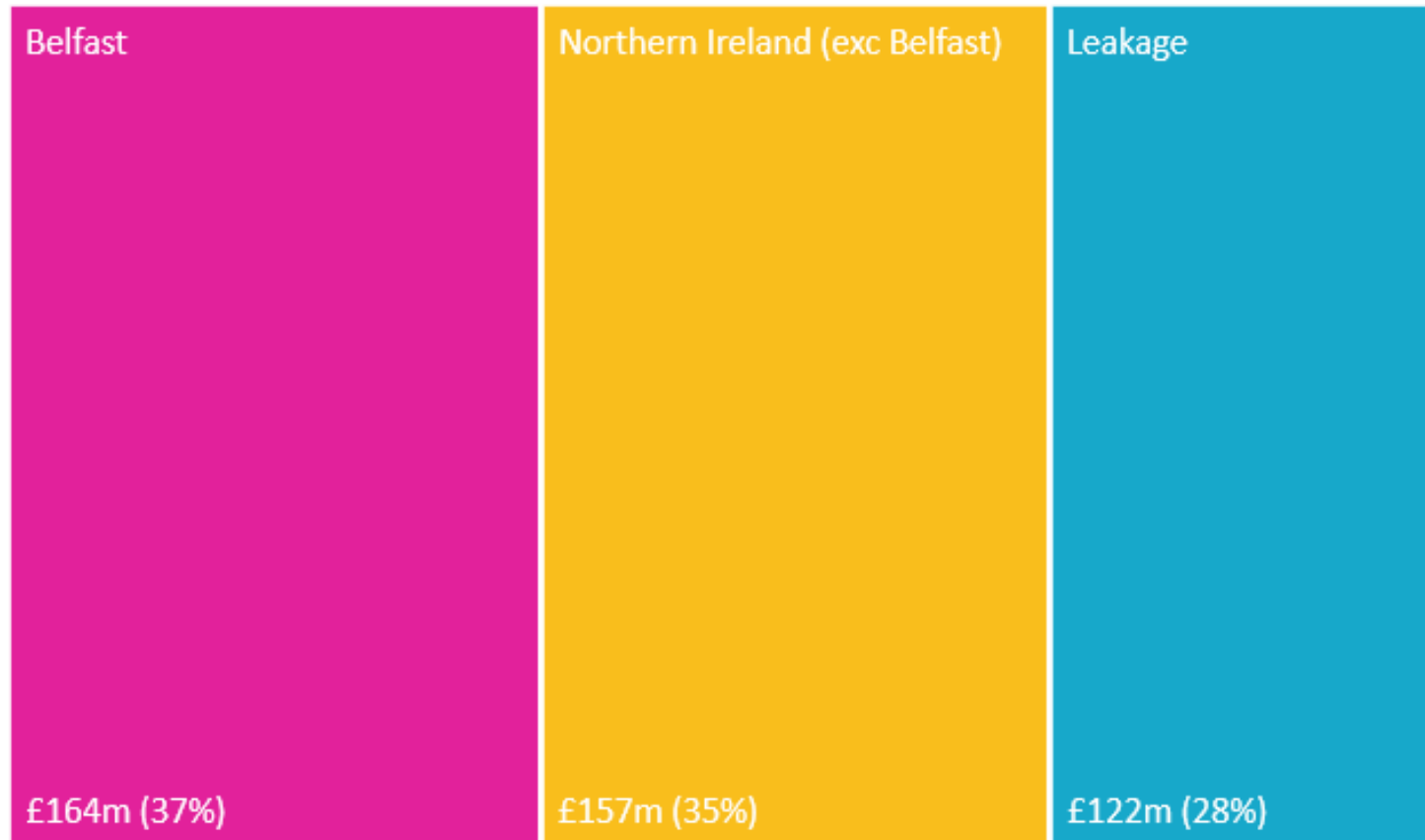
- Commissioned to work with BCC and Anchors to explore how procurement & commissioning can support local /community wealth.
- Aims is to redirect wealth back into the local economy while ensuring value for money and compliance with all relevant legislative requirements.
- Grow local & community ownership of the economy

1. Convening Belfast Anchors
2. Establishment of a Procurement Commissioning Group
  - i. An initial workshop
  - ii. Sharing existing practice
  - iii. Understanding each institutions priorities/opportunities/challenges.
  - iv. Spend analysis (past, current and planned).
  - v. Understanding which institutions may need further support.
3. Anchor Wide Spend Analysis
  - (4 institutions/1/3<sup>rd</sup> of CPP – Belfast Council, Ulster University, Queens University, South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust)
  - £443m annual spend
4. Market & Gap Analysis
5. Sector Action Plans 



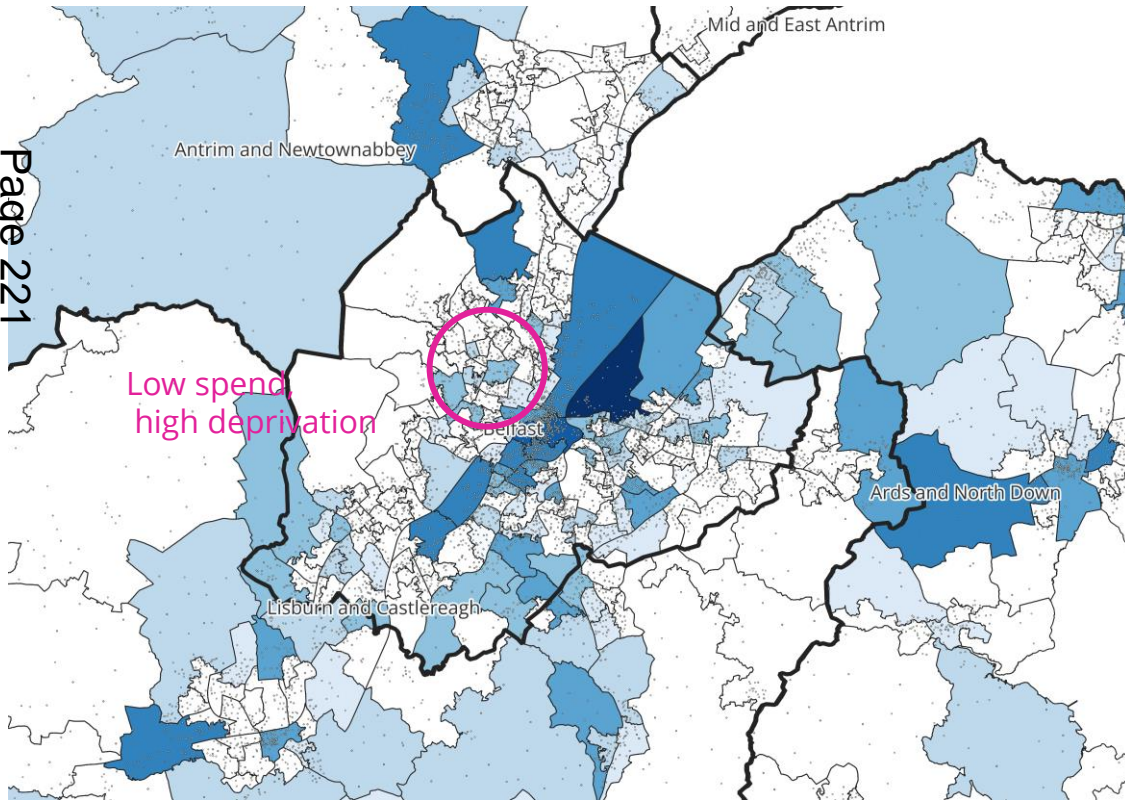
# Geography of Spend

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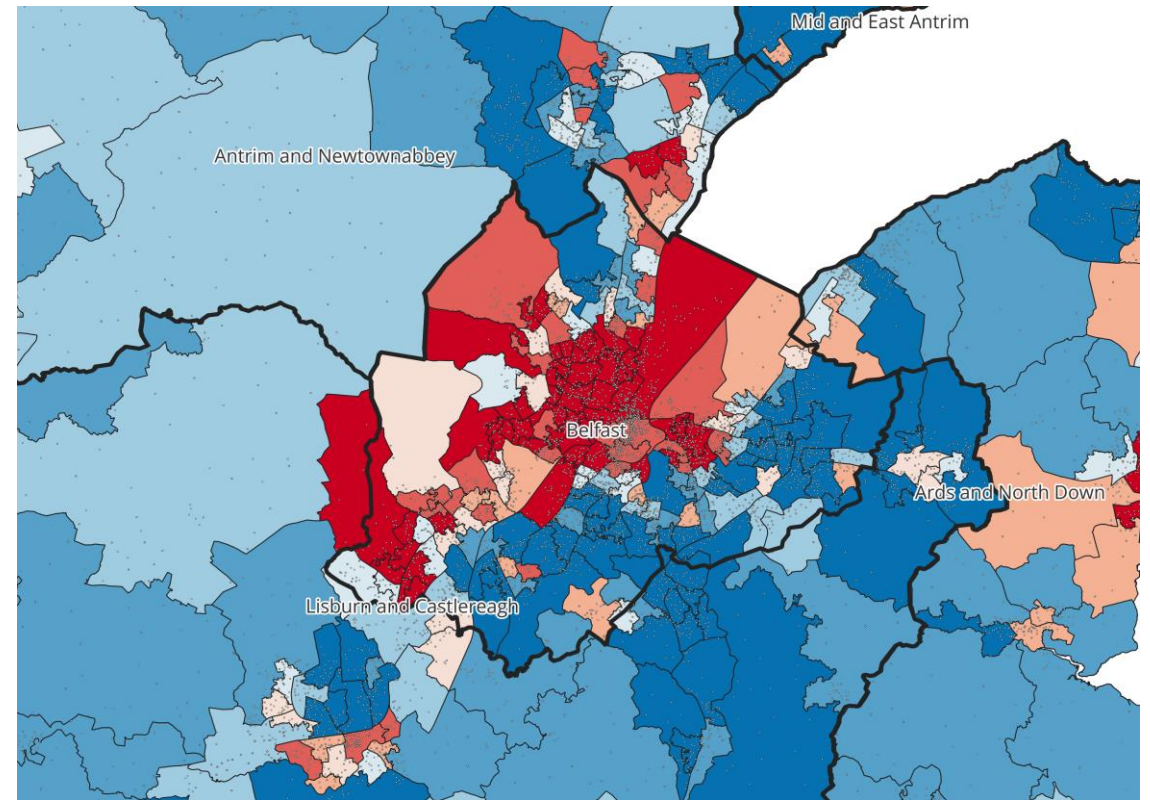


# Spend vs Deprivation - Belfast

*Geography of spend*

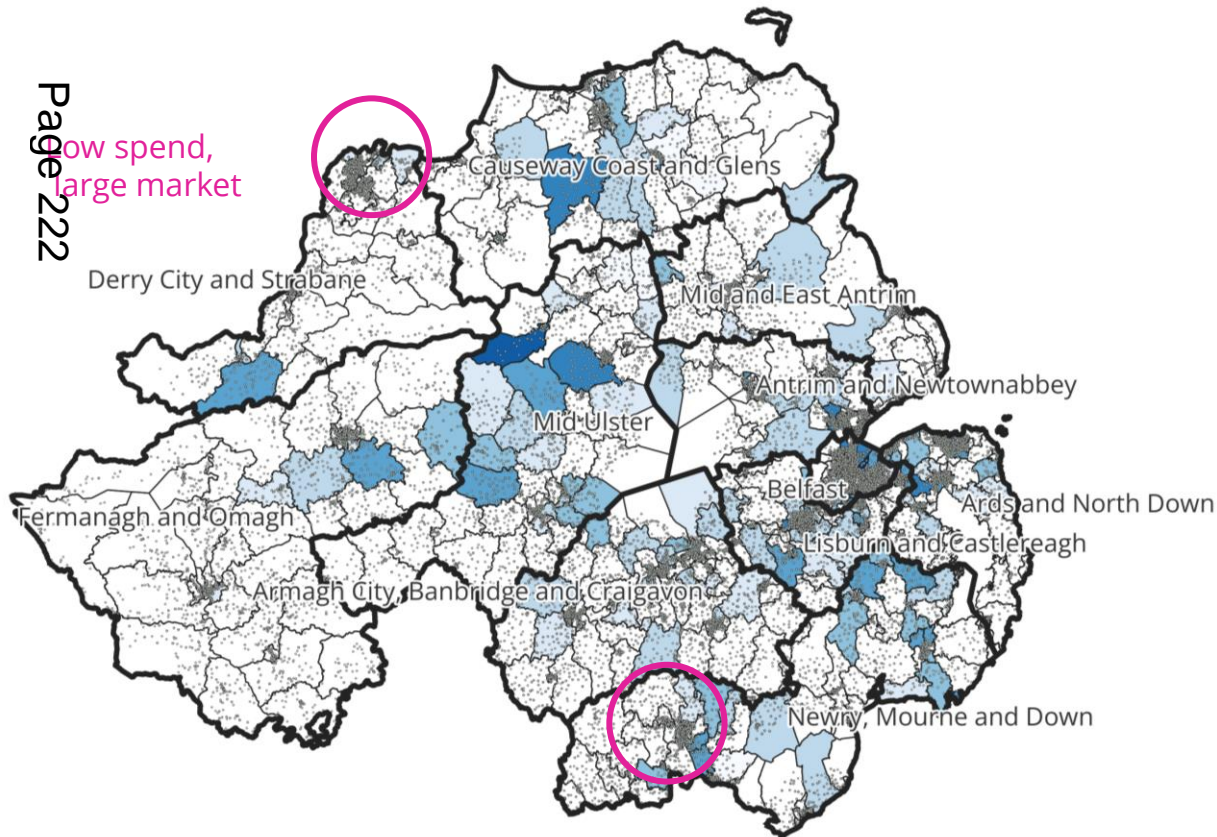


*Index of Multiple Deprivation*



# Spend vs Deprivation – Northern Ireland

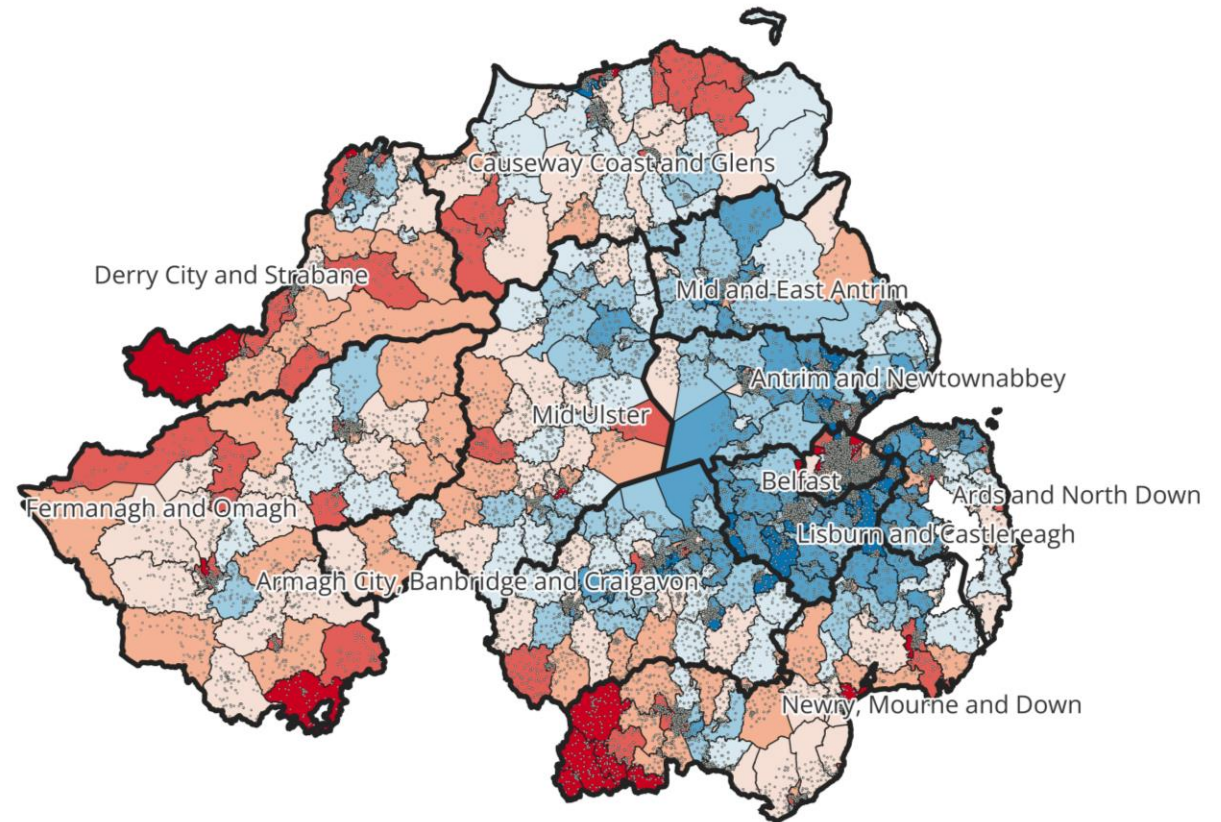
*Geography of spend*



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low spend,  
large market

*Index of Multiple Deprivation*

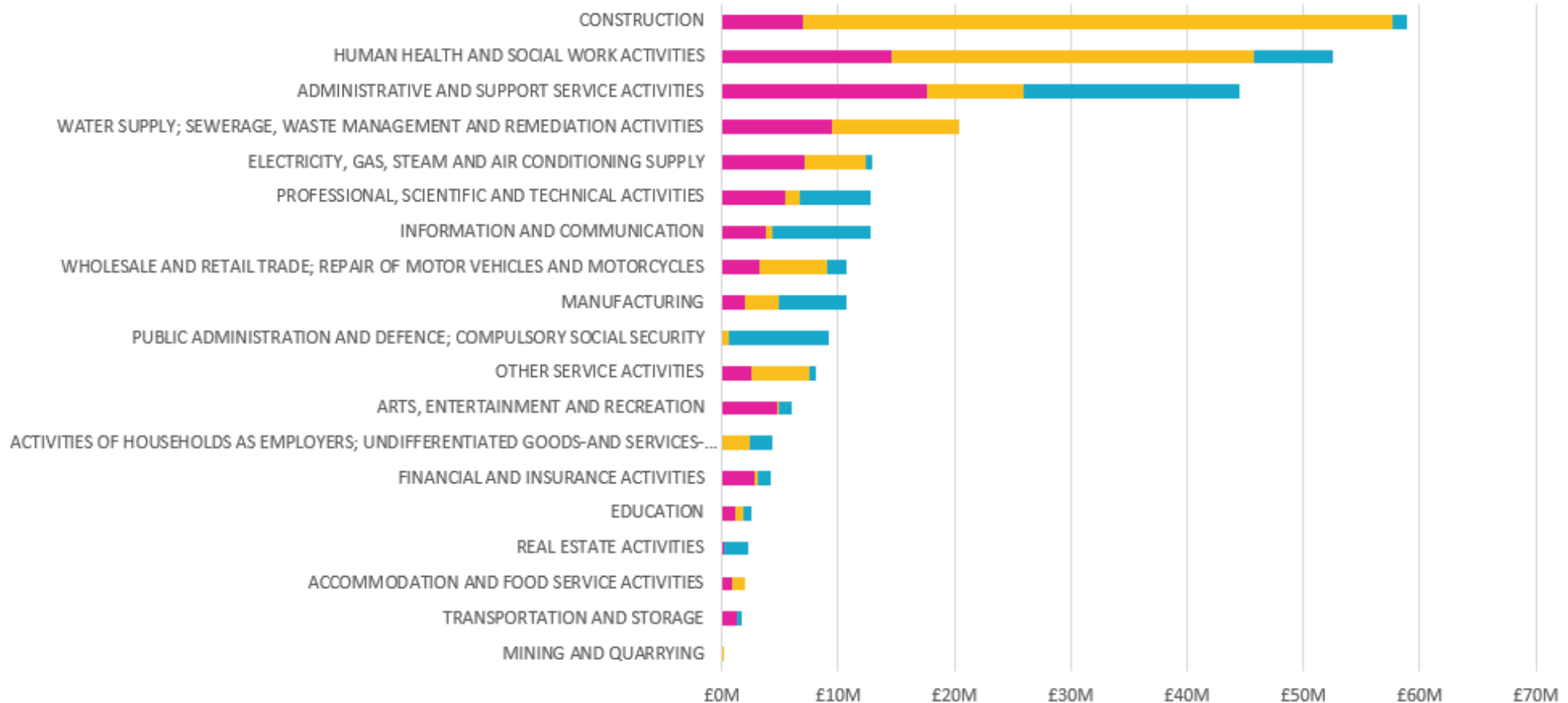




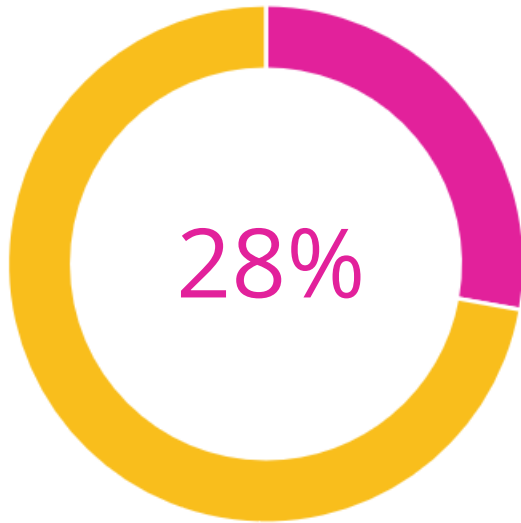
# Spend by Industrial Sectors

## Spend within Belfast vs Northern Ireland vs leakage

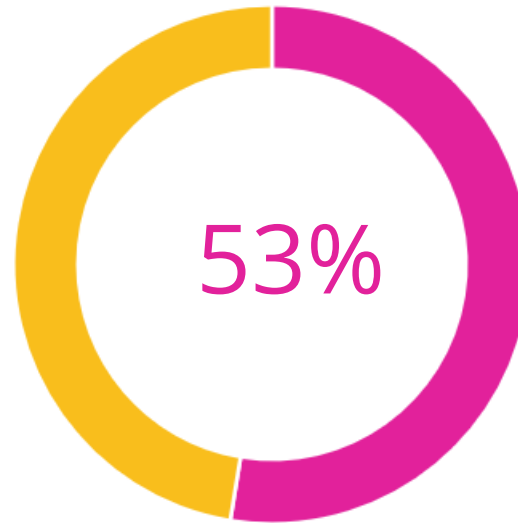
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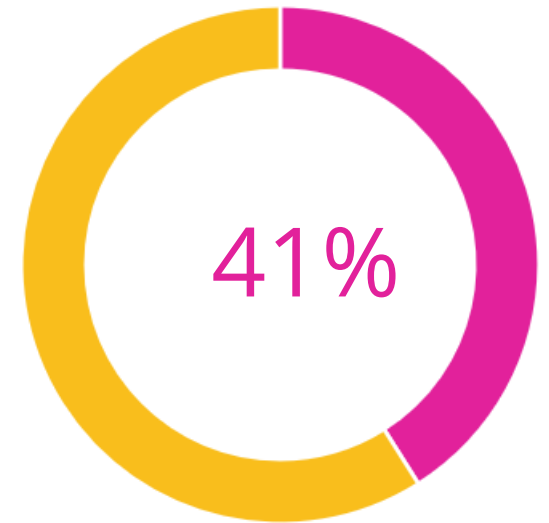
## Belfast



## Northern Ireland



## All spend





# Market Analysis

Page 225

- Belfast anchor institutions procure from relatively large local firms (of those available), but their largest suppliers are based outside Northern Ireland.
- In both Belfast and Northern Ireland the average current supplier is significantly larger than the average business across both Belfast and Northern Ireland's business base.
- For example the average Belfast-based current supplier has 20 times as many employees as the average organisation in the wider Belfast business base.
- The suppliers outside Northern Ireland are even larger still, having an average 3 times as many employees as current local suppliers.
- There are very few current suppliers which are 'socially owned' (only 7 from 900). This is despite 2,300 socially owned organisations in Northern Ireland, excluding up to 5,000 charities not included in the business base data used here.

# Key Findings & Next Steps

Start to co-produce a shared Action Plan....

Brief individual anchors on granular findings to develop next steps

Explore 2<sup>nd</sup> wave cohort to build/strengthen evidence base

1. Develop supply chain intelligence on local SMEs.
  - Target spend with the most deprived areas in Belfast.
  - Target spend with local 'socially owned' organisations.
2. Dig deeper into areas of leakage from Belfast/Northern Ireland
  - Administrative and support contracts outside NI? *Applicable to others?*
  - Construction and health and social care contracts outside Belfast ? *Applicable to others?*



<b>Subject:</b>	<p><b>Asset Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Shankill Shared Women’s Centre - Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority</li> <li>ii) Land at Grampian Avenue Children’s Playpark</li> <li>iii) 2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use</li> <li>iv) 2 Royal Avenue – Lease for bins stores and an electricity cabinet.</li> <li>v) Ballysillan Playing Fields - Deed of Partial Surrender of land leased to Iceland Foods Limited</li> <li>vi) Site 10 Union Street – Renewal of a short-term licence for a bin store to Sunflower Belfast Limited.</li> </ul>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Pamela Davison, Estates Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition and estates matters.

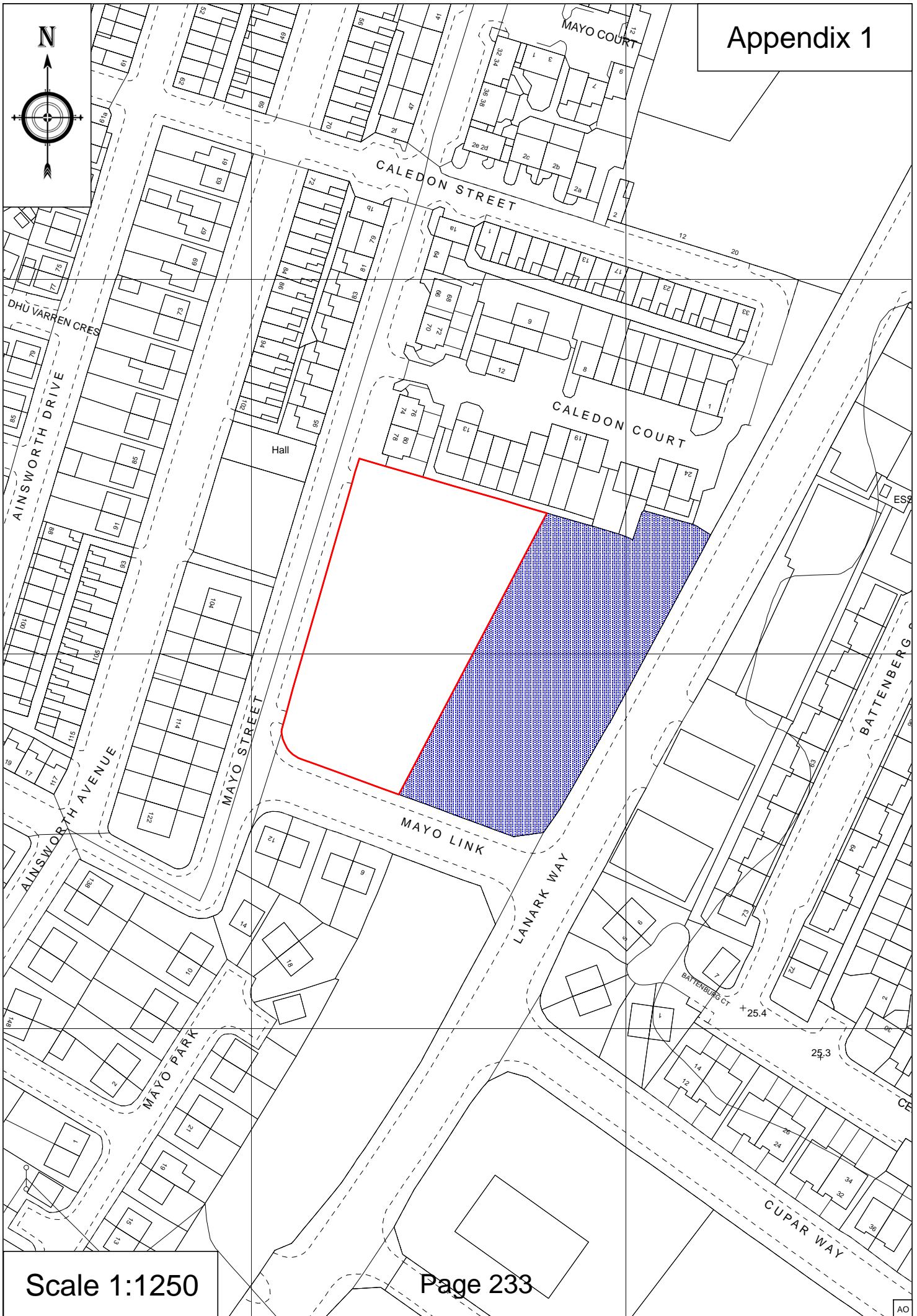
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i) Shankill Shared Women’s Centre- Permission to Enter Agreement</b> - approve the completion of a Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority to complete the boundary realignment and subsequent construction works.</li> <li><b>ii) Land at Grampian Avenue Playground</b> - note the updates on the land acquisitions previously agreed by the SP&amp;R Committee for the playground.</li> <li><b>iii) 2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use-</b> approve retrospectively an Addendum to the existing Contract with Small World Music Limited, extending their services to 19 April 2022.</li> <li><b>iv) 2 Royal Avenue – Lease for bins stores and electricity cabinet</b> - approve entering into a Lease with DfC to regularise the arrangement for bins stores and an electricity cabinet which encroach onto Council owned lands at 2 Royal Avenue.</li> <li><b>v) Ballysillan Playing Fields - Deed of Partial Surrender of Land</b> - approve the surrender of a 1.56-acre plot of land which is currently part of lands leased to Iceland Foods Limited to facilitate the redevelopment of the Playing Fields.</li> <li><b>vi) Site 10, Union Street – Renewal of a short- term Licence for a bin store</b> - approve the renewal of a short-term licence to Sunflower Belfast Limited to use a small area of land at Site 10 for bin storage for a period of 9 months from 4 May 2022.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>i) Shankill Shared Women’s Centre - Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>Shankill Shared Women's Centre (SSWC) is a £5.6 million purpose-built shared space for women and their families that will open in 2023. The new facility will be on Lanark Way adjacent to Edenderry Nursery School which is owned by the Education Authority (EA). See map at Appendix 1 showing the SSWC lands outlined red and EA lands highlighted blue. The Council’s design team have noted that the boundary fence between the SSWC lands and EA lands needs re-aligned to facilitate adequate fire escape from the new building as per the approved planning drawings. The boundary realignment works will be completed by the Council’s Contractor in April 2022 with the construction works on the SSWC building to commence in May 2022 and run until end August 2023. The EA have agreed to provide the Council with a Permission to Enter agreement to complete the boundary re-alignment and subsequent construction works. The Permission to Enter Agreement shall be in place for the boundary works in April 2022 and for the duration of the contract to build the SSWC project.</p>

	<p><b><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>The Council's Contractor will realign the boundary fence and complete the subsequent construction works under the agreed contract.</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.2	<p><b>ii) Land at Grampian Avenue Playground</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>In June 2018, the SP and R Committee approved the acquisition of two plots of land from DFI and Radius Housing Association (shown on Appendix 2) within the Grampian Avenue playground. Following further due diligence and engagement with both landowners Committee is asked to note that DFI has agreed to grant a sublease for 99 years for their lands (as shown outlined in blue) and Radius Housing Association have agreed to assign the residue of their long leasehold interests land (shown in green at Appendix 2) to the Council. Radius Housing are providing qualified possessory title to the lands coloured yellow as shown in Appendix 2. Members are asked to note these updates.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Acquisition of the leasehold interests by the Council will be subject to two payments of £1500. Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit will complete the acquisitions.</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
3.3	<p><b>iii) 2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>Following the acquisition of 2 Royal Avenue, Council appointed Small World Music Limited to facilitate a Meanwhile Use. The existing Contract expired on 31 March 2022 however it provided for an option to extend subject to Committee approval. A short-term extension of the Contract from 1 April to 19 April 2022 is proposed. Legal Services prepared an Addendum to the Contract extending the Contract period. All other provisions of the Contract remain unchanged. Retrospective Committee consent is being sought to ensure the building remains open and there are activities during the Easter period.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Small World Music Limited fee of £4,000+vat per month shall continue to be paid.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None</p>

3.4	<p><b>iv) 2 Royal Avenue – Lease for Bins stores and an Electricity Cabinet</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>DfC owned bin stores and an electricity cabinet located within Bank Square encroach onto the lands now owned by the Council at 2 Royal Avenue (see Appendix 3). No formal arrangement was in place with the previous owner of 2 Royal Avenue; therefore, a Lease is required to regularise the situation. The proposed Lease would be for a term of 25 years and would provide for a mutual 6-month break option at any time throughout the term. DfC would retain responsibility for repairs and maintenance and will continue to sublet the bins stores.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Officer time from Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None</p>
3.5	<p><b>v) Ballysillan Playing Fields– Deed of Partial Surrender of land leased to Iceland Foods Limited</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>In May 2001, the Council leased a 5.37-acre site in Ballysillan Playing Fields to Iceland Foods PLC (whose successor in title is Iceland Foods Ltd) for the construction of an Iceland retail store, two shop units and associated car parking (as shown outlined in red at Appendix 4). The site was fully developed with the exception of a plot adjoining the Iceland car park which was reserved for future expansion. A planning application was submitted in January 2022 for a major redevelopment of the Playing Fields as part of a £ 5.3m project jointly funded by Urban Villages, DfI and DfC designed to enhance the overall area by means of extensive landscaping with new facilities including new pitch, upgraded pavilion and new play area. To complete the scheme and provide an improved access from the Ballysillan Road, negotiations have taken place with Iceland Foods Limited to secure the surrender of the area they had retained for future expansion. Iceland have agreed to surrender the lands shaded green as shown in Appendix 4 subject to a reduction in rent to £8,000 pa from the date of surrender to reflect the retained land. The surrendered lands will be restricted in use to provide public open space, parkland and recreational/sporting facilities in line with the project funding. Detailed terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and Legal Services.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Deed of Partial Surrender to be agreed by Legal Services and Estates with Iceland Foods Limited. Renegotiation of the rent in line with the surrender of land to facilitate the Playing Fields upgrade.</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None</p>

3.6	<p><b>vi) Site 10, Union Street – Renewal of a short- term Licence for a bin store to Sunflower Belfast Limited</b></p> <p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>On 1 October 2021 the Council acquired Site 10 at Royal Avenue/North Street/Union Street/Kent Street for the development of the Belfast Stories project. A small area of land on Site 10 (c4m x 5m) accessed off Union Street, is currently licensed to Sunflower Belfast Limited for use as an area for storing bottle bins. This area is required by Sunflower to enable them to free up space adjacent to the Sunflower Bar (located directly across Union Street), to provide a larger outdoor seating area during COVID restrictions. (See site map at Appendix 5 showing the property outlined in red). Sunflower Belfast Limited has requested a renewal of the Licence Agreement for a period of 9 months from 4 May 2022 at a nominal fee.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>The Licence Agreement to be prepared by Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit</p> <p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Shankill Shared Women’s Centre - Map showing the SSWC lands and EA lands at Lanark Way</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Grampian Avenue playground - Site location map</p> <p>Appendix 3 – 2 Royal Avenue - Map showing location of DFC bins stores and electricity cabinet</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Ballysillan Playing Fields – Iceland Site Map</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Site 10 - Site Map Union Street showing proposed area of land required for the bin store.</p>

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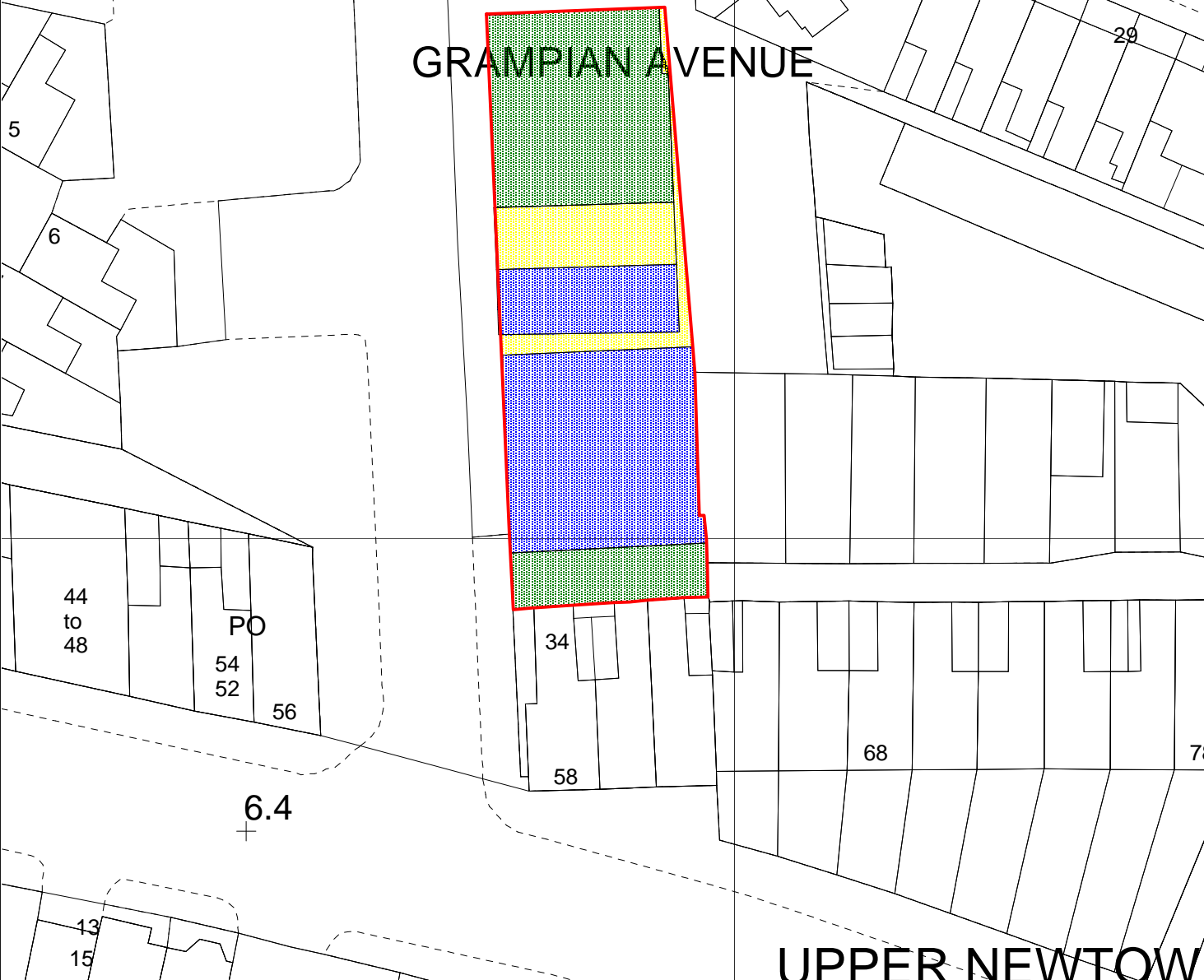


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Car Park


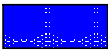


GRAMPIAN AVENUE



UPPER NEWTOWN

Bloomfield  
Bapt Ch

Scale 1:500

-  BCC Playground
-  Dfl
-  RadiusHousing
-  Radius Housing providing qualified possessory title

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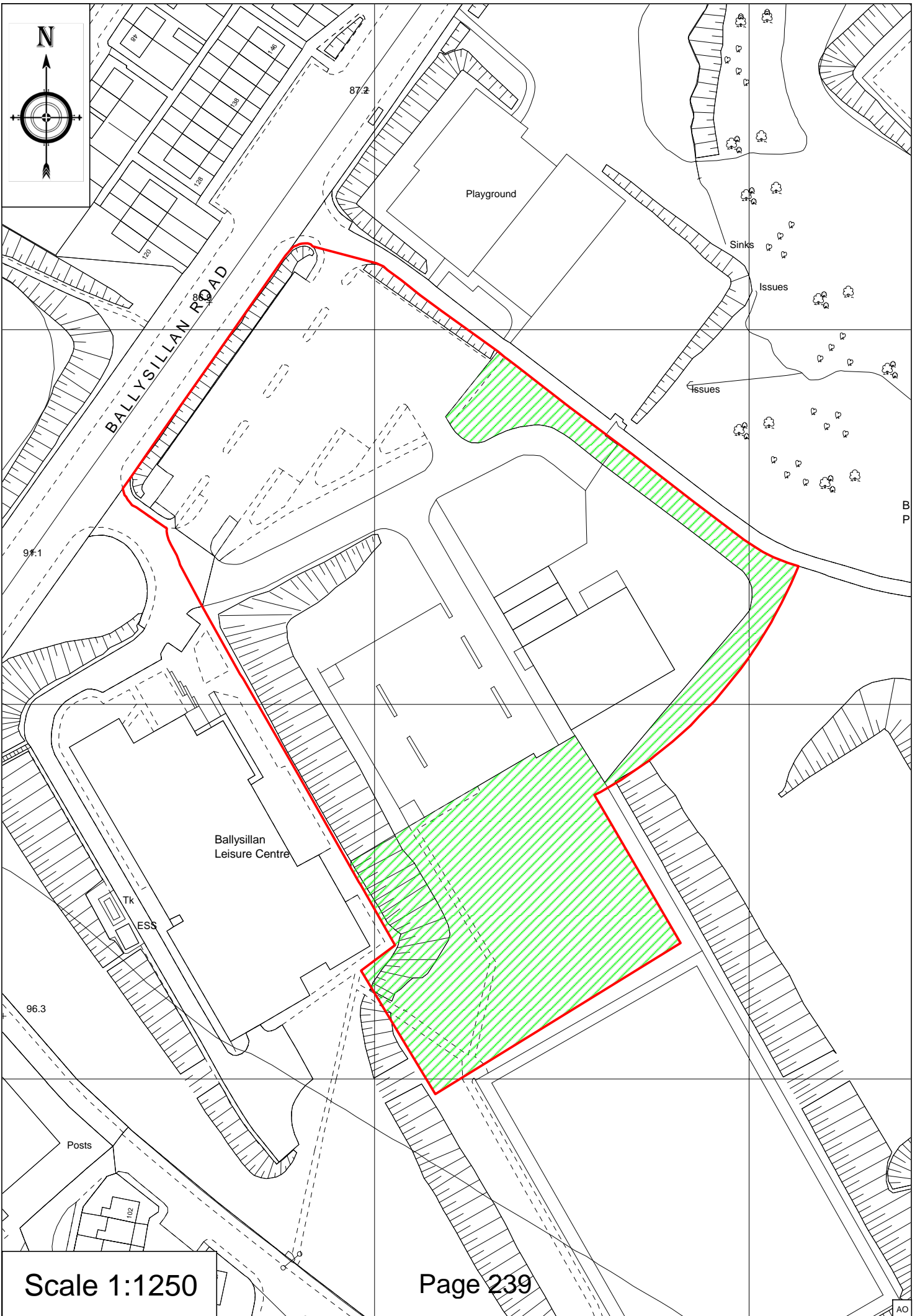
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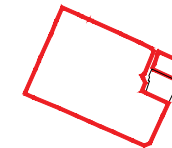
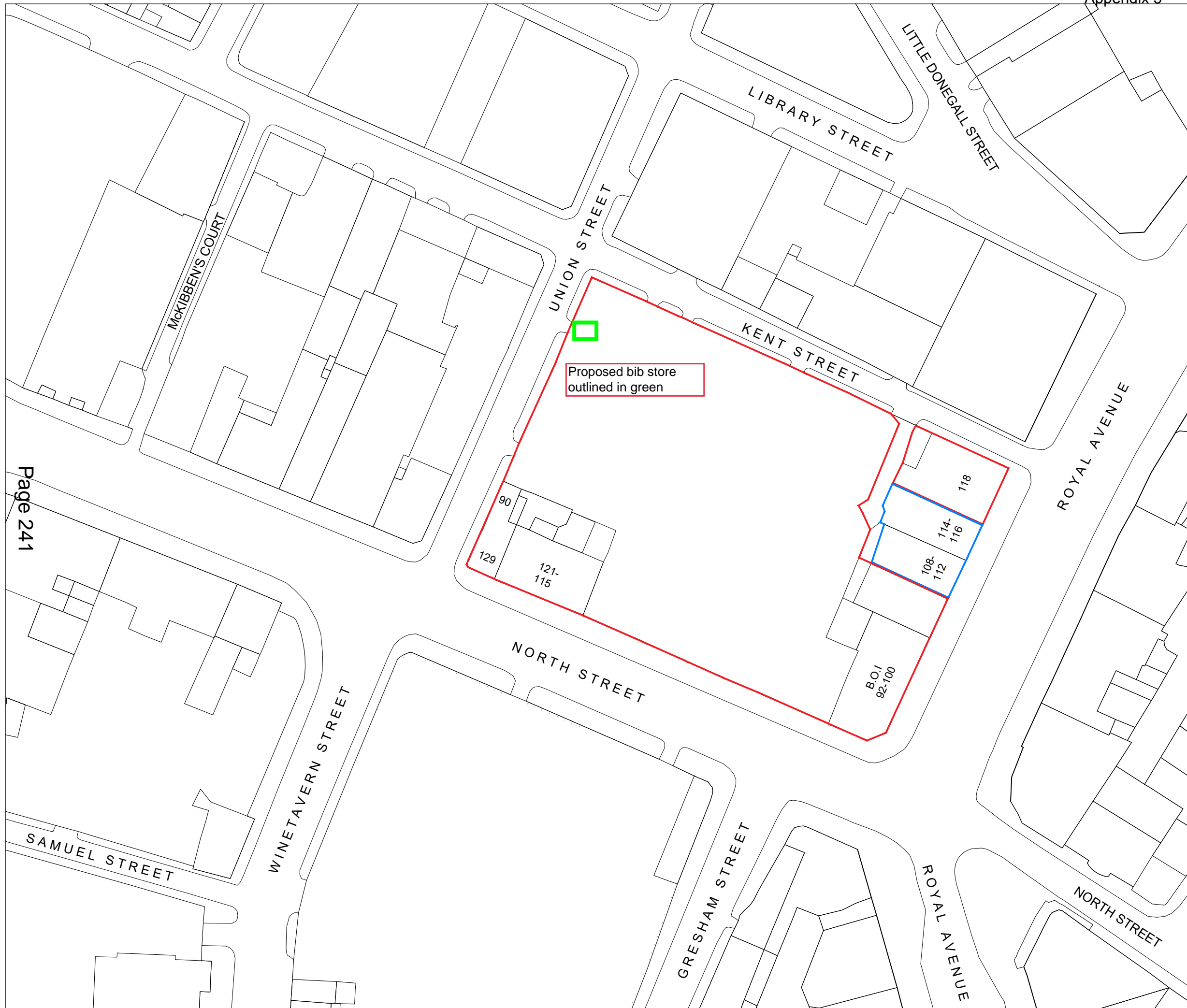
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-  Council Lands
-  DfC Bin Store
-  DfC Electric Cabinet

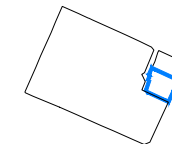
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LAND OWNERSHIP  
BOUNDARY LINE



PROPERTIES NOT  
OWNED

**TOTAL AREA WITHIN LAND  
OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY  
(WITHIN RED LINE)**

- 4,920 sqm
- 52,955 sqft
- 1.216 Acres

**TOTAL BLOCK AREA  
INCLUDING;**

- Land within ownership boundary line (in red)
- Properties not owned (in blue)
- Communal Service Lane

- 5,293 sqm
- 56,970 sqft
- 1.464 Acres

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Area Working Groups</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To seek Members' approval of the minutes of the most recent AWG meeting.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approve and adopt the North Belfast AWG minutes of 30th March, as attached.</li> <li>• Physical Programme – agree the recommendations in respect of BIF projects and reallocations from the North AWG, as laid out in paragraph 3.2 below.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b><u>KEY ISSUES</u></b>
3.1	<b>Area Working Group Minutes</b> Members agreed, in June 2016, that the Area Working Group minutes would be taken into the

	<p>SP and R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups.</p> <p>Members are asked to approve the most recent AWG minutes, as attached.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Project Updates</b></p> <p>North AWG – The Committee is asked to note the following project updates, as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 30th March:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BIF34 Basement/Elim project – agree the new option which involves a scaled back version of the project with a new build on an existing asset owned by Elim Church at Gainsborough Drive, and to note that on this basis, approximately £600,000 out of the approved BIF budget would be available for reallocation leaving a BIF allocation of £900,000</li> <li>- BIF45 Midland Boxing Club – agree an additional £150,000 to the Midland Boxing Club project from the £600,000 reallocation from the Basement/Elim project</li> <li>- BIF20 Malgrove - agree an additional £450,000 to the Malgrove project from the £600,000 reallocation from the Basement/Elim project and to progress a planning application for the wider sporting hub proposal</li> <li>- BIF41 Marrowbone – note the movement to Stage 3 – Committed</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p>
3.3	<p>As above</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p>
3.4	<p>None</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Document Attached</b>
	Minutes of the meeting of the North Belfast Area Working Group

# North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 30th March, 2022

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP  
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McCullough (Chairperson);  
Councillors Bradley, Cobain, Magee, Maskey, McCusker,  
Murphy, O'Hara, and Pankhurst.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Ms. N. Mulrine, Regeneration Project Officer;  
Ms. E. McCullough, Neighbourhood Services Integration  
Manager;  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer.

## **Apologies**

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

## **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd February, 2022 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

## **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

## **Physical Programmes Update**

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

### **"1. Introduction**

**The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, LIF, BIF, SOF, the new Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), and the projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies.**

On 23rd February 2022, Members of North AWG have agreed to hold a special meeting in relation to their BIF projects and potential reallocations.

## 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the updates in respect of each BIF project as outlined in this report. In considering the detail in this report Members may wish to consider if they still wish support the current status of each project.

Members are asked to:

### Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline:

- Note that final accounts have been confirmed, and;
- To consider the reallocation of up to £71,412 under the BIF Programme.

### Basement Youth Club / Elim Church - £1.5m allocation from BIF:

- Confirm their ongoing in principle commitment, and;
- To agree the new option which involves a scaled back version of the project with a new build on an existing asset owned by Elim Church at Gainsborough Drive, and to note that on this basis, approximately £600,000 out of the approved BIF budget would be available for reallocation.

### Midland Boxing Club - £400,000 allocation from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates,
- Note that the procurement of a contractor is underway, and;
- If agreed to endorse officers to continue the discussions with other partners to bridge the shortfall of approximately £150,000

### Malgrove - £500,000 from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates and funding deficit for the changing pavilion of approx. £450,000,
- Agree that planning is submitted for the whole sporting hub proposal
- Note that phasing of the project may be required as budget becomes available, and;
- If commitment is confirmed, then further recommend that officers continue to engage with DfC and other partners to bridge the funding gap

### Marrowbone Millennium Park - £750,000 allocation from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment
- Note that procurement of contractor is underway, and;
- Agree to recommend that the project moves to *BIF- Stage 3 – Committed*.

**Cultural Community Hub - £350,000 allocation from BIF:**

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment, and;
- Note that the due diligence process is underway.

**3. Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline – final accounts**

Members will recall that at their meeting of 25 November 2020, it was recommended that £250,000 of the anticipated underspend under the BIF Programme of £305,183 from Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline be reallocated to the Marrowbone Millennium Park Project. This was agreed at SP&R Committee on 18 December 2020. The final accounts for both Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline have now been processed and the total underspend across both projects is confirmed as £321,412 (£246,707 and £74,705 respectively) an increase of £16,229 on the anticipated underspend amount reported at that time. Of that total, £250,000 was allocated to the Marrowbone Millennium Park project, leaving a balance remaining of £71,412 available for reallocation.

**For Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline, Members are asked to:**

- Note that final accounts have been confirmed, and
- To consider the reallocation of up to £71,412 under the BIF Programme.

**4. Basement Youth Club / Elim Church (Old Grove)**

<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>April 2015</b>	<b>Funding allocation &amp; stage</b>	<b>£1.5 million BIF- Stage 3</b>
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The original proposal for this project was a £2m new build youth centre on the Old Grove Baths site. Following ongoing and in-depth discussions with the project partners for the scheme (Basement Youth Club and Elim Church Ireland) it was noted that this option would not get through the Council's due diligence processes due to ongoing sustainability issues. Given this in Spring 2021 officers presented a new option scaled back project involving the demolition and rebuild of an existing Elim Church asset at Gainsborough Drive. The demolition is required due to issues with asbestos related to the present property.

At present, the Department of Education have indicated support for the scheme with £500,000 of funding initially allocated and subject to ongoing discussions. The overall project costs are estimated at £1.38 million which would require £900,000 from BIF to deliver – based on the DE still contributing £500,000. The project is currently undergoing Due Diligence considerations by the Department of Education and the Departmental Solicitors Office. Council officers will continue to support the group through these processes and keep the Area Working Group updated in relation to progress.

**For Basement Youth Club / Elim Church, Members are asked to:**

- confirm their ongoing in-principle commitment, and;
- to agree the new option which involves a scaled back building with the demolition and rebuild of an existing asset owned by Elim Church at Gainsborough Drive, and to note that on this basis, approximately £600,000 out of the approved BIF budget would be available for reallocation.

**5. Midland Boxing Club**

<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>October 2020</b>	<b>Funding allocation &amp; stage</b>	<b>£400,000 BIF - Stage 2</b>
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The project aims to deliver an extended boxing facility at Cultra Street in the Tigers Bay area of North Belfast. Outside of boxing the Club also supports the delivery of youth outreach programmes in North Belfast as well as a range of programmes for older people. Planning Permission has been obtained in December 2021. The land transfer was approved by Council in February 2022. Officers in Legal Services are liaising with Northern Ireland Housing Executive to complete the acquisition of land for the extension. The pre-tender estimates show the project may require further funding (approx. £150,000) and project officers are working with group to address this, including approaching other funders. Some external funding has been secured for equipment, however a funding deficit remains. The tender package for main contractor was issued in March 2022 however a tender can only awarded if a full funding package is in place. Officers aim to bring back the project to Due Diligence in April 2022.

**For Midland Boxing Club, Members are asked to:**

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates and cost deficit,
- Note that procurement of contractor is underway, and;
- If commitment is confirmed, then further recommend that officers continue discussions with other partners to bridge the shortfall (£150,000)

**6. Malgrove**

<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>April 2015</b>	<b>Funding allocation &amp; stage</b>	<b>£500,000 BIF- Stage 2</b>
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The Malgrove (Malachians and Grove United FCs) BIF project is for a changing pavilion at the Shore Road Playing Fields with the preferred option being for a 4-team combined changing facility. The current approx. cost of the pavilion is £950,000 however like

any construction project this is subject to change. The wider ambition in terms of the overall site is the creation of a sporting hub and with this in mind the business case has been developed on the basis of a 4-team combined changing facility with 3G pitch and associated works for parking spaces. With the current £500,000 BIF funding, a significant funding deficit remains in relation to the changing pavilion. Avenues are being explored including with DfC to bridge the gap as well as looking at options for the wider sporting hub. The positioning of the pavilion and associated parking will be determined by the availability of land to accommodate the buildings access and parking. A positive response has been received from NIE regarding the availability of a portion of their land to accommodate an element of project car parking requirements. Officers are awaiting confirmation of the boundary which will inform the site design layout. The scheme will require a planning application and it is recommended that any planning application submitted should be for the wider sporting hub proposal including the changing facility with 3G pitch and associated works for parking spaces. This could then allow the ability for the project to be delivered in phases subject to funding becoming available. At present, the project cannot progress until there is confirmation of scope, agreement on the land available and the full funding package is secured or committed to the project.

**For Malgrove, Members are asked to:**

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates and funding deficit for the changing pavilion of approx. £450,000,
- Agree that planning is submitted for the whole sporting hub proposal,
- Note that phasing of the project may be required as budget becomes available, and;
- If commitment is confirmed, then further recommend that officers continue to engage with DfC and other partners to bridge the funding gap.

**6. Marrowbone Millennium Park**

<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>June 2018</b>	<b>Funding allocation &amp; stage</b>	<b>£750,000 BIF- Stage 2</b>
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The proposed redevelopment of Marrowbone Millennium Park was approved in June 2018 and project is at BIF Stage 2– Uncommitted. The project involves a range of capital improvement works to the park. This is a partnership project with Urban Villages and DfC. The UV Letter of Offer was agreed in November 2021 and governance structures are in place. The lease agreement between NIHE and the Council is also progressing. Planning permission has been secured. The procurement of main contractor is underway with

appointment anticipated in the coming weeks. An update on the procurement will be brought to the next meeting of the North AWG.

**For Marrowbone Millennium Park, Members are asked to:**

- Note that procurement of contractor is underway, and;
- Agree to move the project to *BIF Stage 3 – Committed*.

**7. Cultural Community Hub**

<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>February 2019</b>	<b>Funding allocation &amp; stage</b>	<b>£350,000 BIF- Stage 2</b>
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The project involves developing a new cultural hub community facility at Crumlin Road. It will comprise of a 130sqm permanent brick facility on derelict Orange Lodge owned site. Project feasibility and business plan had been completed, and initial project cost estimates is within budget. As Upper Crumlin Road Cultural Association is a newly constituted group, it was proposed that the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast will be project guarantor. Legal Services is currently reviewing documents and the aim is to bring project to Due Diligence in April 2022.

**For Cultural Community Hub, Members are asked to:**

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment, and;
- Note that the due diligence process is underway.”

The Members noted the update provided and, in respect of the Basement /Elim project:

- agreed to progress the with the scaled back option as presented.
- agreed , out of the £600,000 approved BIF budget available for reallocation from the scaled back Basement/Elim Church project, £450,000 be allocated to Malgrove and £150,000 be reallocated to Midland Boxing Club to enable both projects to be completed; and
- agreed that the Marrowbone project be moved to Stage 3- Committed and that planning for the wider sporting hub proposal be submitted for Malgrove.

The Working Group thanked the Director of Physical Programmes and her team for the outstanding work they had done for North Belfast through the Area Working Group.

Chairperson



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Contracts</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seek Committee approval for tenders and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000; and</li> <li>• ask the Committee to note retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs)</li> </ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (<b>Table 1</b>)</li> <li>• approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (<b>Table 2</b>)</li> <li>• note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (<b>Table 3</b>)</li> </ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Competitive Tenders</u>
3.1	Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender
3.2	Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
	<u>Single Tender Actions (STAs)</u>
3.4	The following STAs are being submitted for approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract for £50,000 (funded), for up to 6 months, awarded to Hays Recruitment for for 1 x Environmental Health Officer required for 24hr shift rota cover for essential service delivery within the Port Health Service. There is a legal requirement for the Council to fulfil responsibilities under EU and UK food import control legislation in respect of NI Protocol. Staffing costs for this function are currently fully funded by Food Standards Agency. External recruitment has been unsuccessful and the existing agency contractor, Matrix SCM, is unable to fulfil the requirement.</li> </ul>
3.5	The following retrospective STAs were awarded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract for £57,000 (funded), for up to 3 months, awarded to Score Draw Music Ltd for support for trade mission to SXSW for local creative businesses, support for music businesses and place positioning as outlined in the UNESCO City of Music designation. Project was issued as a quotation but with allocation of additional funding from ACNI and Tourism Culture and Arts means spend now exceeds £30k.</li> <li>Contract for £110,000, for up to 7 months, awarded to Community Foundation NI, for the requirement of a supplier to develop and deliver a Queens Jubilee fund to support constituted charitable organisations within the BCC local government boundary. There is currently no capacity within the organisation to deliver an additional funding</li> </ul>

	<p>programme. CMT have agreed to engage with a suitable qualified organisation to deliver this fund on BCCs behalf. Due to the tight turnaround for this programme, CFNI have been identified as the only suitable company who can deliver this work within the short timeframe available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract for £60,000 (funded), for up to 2 months, awarded to Belfast International Arts Festival to deliver a largescale outdoor event at Titanic Slipways called Cristal Palace - 2 Royal Ave. Belfast International Arts Festival are named in the SLA with Tourism NI and the commission will be fully covered by funding.</li> </ul>
	<b>Financial and Resource Implications</b>
3.6	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or Departmental budgets
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.7	None
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Document Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 Table 1 - Competitive Tenders Table 2 - Single Tender Actions Table 3 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

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**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short description of goods / services</b>
Provision of press and media photography services	Up to 3 years	£90,000	J Tully	The council has an ongoing requirement for press and media photography as part of our marcomms delivery on behalf of the Council.
Patching (security installations and updates) of non-Microsoft packages	Up to 3 years	£34,000	R Cregan	To patch/install non-Microsoft packages. This keeps consistent support versions across our environment. DNS reputation checking helps prevent any malware calling back to control sites.
Laptops, docking stations and other peripherals	Up to 1 year	£500,000	R Cregan	New devices to facilitate hybrid working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle.
Purchase of new printers as old printers at various council sites become EOL and associated copy charges	Up to 1 year	£100,000	R Cregan	Approx. 80 printers are approaching end of life 'EOL' stage in 2022. If they break it may not be possible to get parts and they may need to be replaced. Replacement will be done on an ad-hoc basis.
Copy charges for existing multi-function printers	Up to 1 year	£100,000	R Cregan	Payment of copy charges for existing multi-function printers. Printers should be EOL but with limited used over the past 2 years should last longer and so a new contract is not being purchased yet.
Outdoor maintenance services	Up to 5 years	£1,250,000	S Toland	Delivery of de-icing and snow-clearance services during the winter months (Primary service) – includes C&NS sites (Parks, Leisure Centres, Waste sites, depots etc) and car parks (managed by Physical

Appendix 1

				Programmes). Includes other outdoor maintenance activities to support in house operations i.e. power washing and street cleaning services, roof and guttering clearing and cleaning and any other specialist outdoor maintenance services required.
Consultancy Support for permanent recruitment of Business Support Clerks	Up to 1 year	£100,000	J Tully	Due to a recent significant increase in recruitment requirements within the Council. The external support will help clear the backlog of recruitment required.
Integrated Design Team to provide design development services to support the DfC Covid 19 Revitalisation Programme, – Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations	Up to 20 months	£60,000	J Greer	The Integrated Design Team will work with grant recipients to develop concept and technical designs, to provide advice regarding statutory approvals, procurement and delivery.

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Requirement for 1 x temporary Environmental Health Officer required for 24hr shift rota cover for essential service delivery within the Port Health service  (fully funded)	Up to 6 months	£50,000	S Toland/R Crozier	Hays Recruitment

**Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Support for trade mission to SXSW for local creative businesses, support for music businesses and place positioning as outlined in the UNESCO City of Music designation  (fully funded)	Up to 3 months	£57,000	J Greer	Score Draw Music Ltd
Supplier required to develop and deliver a Queens Jubilee fund to support constituted charitable organisations within the BCC local government boundary	Up to 7 months	£110,000	S Toland/R Crozier	Community Foundation NI

Appendix 1

Deliver a largescale outdoor event at Titanic Slipways called Cristal Palace - 2 Royal Ave (fully funded)	Up to 2 months	£60,000	J Greer	Belfast International Arts Festival
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Race Champion and Race Action Plan</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully Director of City and Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Christine Sheridan, Head of HR

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<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/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To update the Committee on proposals to develop a Race Equality and Diversity Action Plan and appoint a Race Champion.
1.2	The Belfast Agenda states that “In 2035, Belfast will be a City that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive.” The Council’s Good Relations Strategy sets out our vision and values for a shared, peaceful and reconciled Belfast. It states that good community and race relations are essential for a healthy and safe City and that it will set the standard for Belfast to aspire to be a place of welcome and diversity. The strategy outlines how we can play our part in building a better city for residents and visitors alike, where different identities can be strength

	and our diverse cultural traditions can all be part of collective cultural wealth; a City where everyone has an equal place and where no-one is left behind.
1.3	A previous request from the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Kate Nicholl for the appointment of a Race Champion and a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Canavan, seconded by Councillor Garrett, calling for the Council area to become a racism free zone, further highlight the importance of addressing race inequalities and racism. Two reports presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June and December 2020, provided updates on existing work in this area. It was agreed that further consideration of how the Council could address the above proposals was required, and that recommendations should be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at a later date.
1.4	In addition, at the Council meeting on 4th April 2022, the following notice of motion was proposed by Cllr Kyle and seconded by Cllr McMullan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the Council supports Belfast City Council becoming a "Council of Sanctuary" and supports the initiative to have Belfast recognised as a "City of Sanctuary", in order to provide a welcome and safe place for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and,</li> <li>• that a Race Action Plan be developed to review how we deliver our services and take action as an employer to create a diverse workforce."</li> </ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. that a Race Champion be appointed from within Corporate Management Team to lead a Race Equality and Diversity Action Group to oversee the development of a Race Action Plan; and</li> <li>ii. that the Council signs up to the Business in the Community initiative "Race at Work Charter" initiative to learn from best practice and for support in developing our approach, agreeing actions and setting achievable goals and targets.</li> </ol>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The Council's approach to promoting good relations and tackling issues such as racism stem from the Good Relations Strategy. The Council's Shared City Partnership (SCP) oversees the work of the Council's District Good Relations Programme and the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. Through these, the Council facilitates a number of projects such as the Migrant Forum, the Diversecity Programme and recently, the Council has signed up to a 3-year Inclusive Cities Programme.

3.2	<p>Consultation with black and ethnic minority groups in the community and a good relations audit have indicated that groups and people from black and ethnic minority groups find it challenging to engage with official structures and difficult to play a full and equal part in civic life and this is reflected in the statistics/data. They report that while positive relationships have been developed at community level with groups and individuals through Council programmes or through relationships with particular officers, black and ethnic communities find it difficult to have their voices represented at decision making level.</p>
3.3	<p>A review of current arrangements and programmes of work is required to identify where improvements can be made to promote the inclusion and visibility of black and ethnic minority groups in our workforce; to improve access to council services and elected members and to encourage the participation of black and ethnic minority groups in civic life.</p>
3.4	<p>It is therefore proposed that Corporate Management Team nominate a chief officer to undertake the role of Race Champion to establish and chair a Race Equality and Diversity Action Group. This group will oversee the development of a Race Action Plan with three distinct strands of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Workforce:</b> attracting more ethnic minority applicants and supporting our existing ethnic minority staff in the workplace</li> <li>○ <b>Accessibility to services:</b> promoting access to council services to ethnic minority customers and citizens and;</li> <li>○ <b>Civic leadership:</b> championing ethnic minority inclusion in decision making, in communities and in public life</li> </ul>
3.5	<p>Subgroups will be established for each strand to develop appropriate action plans which will be incorporated into one Race Action Plan. The subgroups will involve a variety of staff including officers from Corporate HR, the Equality and Diversity Unit, Good Relations, Employability and Skills, departmental policy officers, community safety, the Customer Hub, Marketing and Communications etc. to ensure necessary linkages with existing relevant service delivery, activity, and work plans.</p> <p><u>Business in the Community's Race at Work Charter</u></p>
3.6	<p>The Council has been approached by Business in the Community to sign up to its national Race at Work Charter. This campaign requires employers to commit to the following actions:</p>

<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint an Executive Sponsor for race</li> <li>• Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress</li> <li>• Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying</li> <li>• Make it clear that supporting equality in the workforce is the responsibility of all leaders and managers</li> <li>• Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression</li> <li>• Support race inclusion allies in the workplace</li> <li>• Include BAME and other ethnically diverse led enterprise owners in supply chains.</li> </ul> <p>Already well established with employers in all sectors across the UK, involvement with this campaign will enable us to learn from existing best practice to develop our approach and actions and set achievable goals and targets. Involvement in this initiative is available to the Council through our existing membership of Business in the Community at no additional cost. It is therefore proposed that the Council signs up to the Race at Work Charter as a visible commitment to addressing racial inequalities.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no direct resource implications in terms of costs associated with this report at present. Further resource implications will be identified through the development of a race action plan and costed for future approval.</p> <p>A Chief Officer/Director will be required to champion this work and all chief officers will be asked to nominate officers to the three sub-groups identified at paragraph 3.4 and ensure that officers are released to participate in the groups and deliver the work required.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>Actions, which promote the inclusion of black and other ethnic minority communities in employment and civic life, would have a positive impact on equality and good relations within the city.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Director of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting on 11th April and seek approval of the minutes.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to approve the minutes of 11th April 2022 including the following recommendations:</p> <p><b>PEACE IV</b> <u>Secretariat</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To agree the key elements of the business case, the anticipated level of achievement and the mitigations required across the programme.</li> </ul>

### Children and Young People

To endorse the **Share2BAware campaign** and gives due consideration as to how the campaign could be incorporated in the work of the Members and of the Council.

### Building Positive Relations

To agree the following proposals:

- BPR1 Cross Community Networks -  
Modification as approved by SEUPB to permit a cross border residential to Dublin for the CCAN in East Belfast Network, as part of the place shaping stage.
- BPR5 ROMA - To uplift the contract with FSP by 10%, approximately £16,900, subject to budget agreement with the secretariat and the approved of the SEUPB.

### Shared Space and Services

To agree the following proposal:

- To extend the contracts for volunteer delivery with Sustrans and Volunteer Now and also the narratives project with Mediation NI to September 2022, within the current contract value to enable delivery and the achievement of targets.

### **PEACE PLUS**

- To agree the logistics for running future SCP meetings; and
- That the SEUPB appointed consultants attending the next SCP meeting to provide an overview on the role of the PEACEPLUS Partnership for the oversight of the 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.

### **GOOD RELATIONS**

- That the City Hall be illuminated on 5th July to mark the Memorial Week of the Srebrenica genocide.
- That £8,000 be allocated towards a programme of activities for asylum seekers led by Mears subject to clarification if Mears can access the Mears Foundation to fund

	<p>this work as their staff will be delivering the service, ensure there is no duplication with what Mears have been contracted to currently undertake and that The Executive Office are content to support the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst no formal letter of offer had been received from TEO towards the District Council Good Relations Action Plan, the Departmental Management Team were content to proceed using the Council's 2021/22 allocation figures.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are presented to the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.</p>
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the April meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HSCT Presentation on the Development of the Good Relations Strategy</li> <li>• PEACE IV Update Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV Secretariat</li> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV CYP Theme</li> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV SSS Theme</li> <li>➤ Update on PEACE IV BPR Theme</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Update on PEACE PLUS</li> <li>• Approach to Cultural Expression Programme</li> <li>• Update on Good Relations Action Plan 22/23</li> <li>• Letter of Offer from The Executive Office</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the attached minutes of the meeting.</p>
3.3	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets</p>
3.4	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	Minutes of meeting of 11 <sup>th</sup> April

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## **SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP**

**MONDAY 11th APRIL, 2022**

### **MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Members present: Councillors Kyle, Carson, Lyons and McMullan.

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;  
Superintendent Ford, PSNI;  
Mr. A. Hannaway, NIHE;  
Miss. K. Jardine, Faith Sector;  
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority;  
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector;  
Ms. A. Tohill, Good Relations, TEO; and  
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;  
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE IV Programme Manager; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillor O'Hara and also from Mr. J. Donnelly, Miss. G. Duggan and Mr. I. McLaughlin.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March 2022 were taken as read and signed as correct.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Ms. A. Tohill declared an interest in Peace IV update reports 3(a) to 3 (d) in that she sat on the SEUPB PEACE IV Steering Group Committee and that, as the accountable Department, The Executive Office had committed funding towards the Peace IV Programme.

Mrs. B. Arthurs declared an interest in item 3 (e), namely, Peace IV Updates – update on BPR Theme, in that she was an employee of the Forward South Partnership, which acts as the delivery agent for one of the Peace IV projects and left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

#### **Membership of Partnership**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. A. Hannaway, representing the NIHE, and Superintendent Ford, PSNI, to their first meeting of the Partnership and, on behalf of the Partnership, he thanked Mrs. J. Hawthorne and Superintendent Pollock for the valuable contribution that they had both made to the Partnership.

The Chairperson also advised that Ms. G. Mornhinweg, HSCNI representative, had resigned from the Partnership and again recorded thanks to her. He advised the Members

that Ms. Mornhinweg’s husband had passed away suddenly and asked that a letter of condolence be forwarded on behalf of the Partnership.

Noted.

**Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT ) Presentation  
on the Development of the Good Relations Strategy**

The Chairperson reminded the Partnership that it had agreed to receive a presentation from the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) on the Development of its new Good Relations Strategy.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. Caroline McMenamin, Planning & Equality Manager, HSCT.

Ms. McMenamin thanked the Partnership for the opportunity to present. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, available [here](#), she provided the Members with an update on the progress made with the development of the Trust’s new Good Relations Strategy.

The representative concluded her presentation by emphasising the need for engagement on the new Strategy. She advised that the Trust hoped to involve as many people as possible to obtain their views on the new Strategy including carers, staff and external agencies and she encouraged the Members of the Partnership to share the undernoted information within their individual sectors to encourage engagement:

**We want to Hear from YOU**

**Think about our HSC Regional Good Relations Statement and the 3 main themes:**

**Challenging Racism  
and Sectarianism**

**Respect, Fairness &  
Dignity for all**

**Shared, welcoming and  
safe spaces for service  
users and staff**

**We want to know:**

- What is working well in Belfast Trust?
- What could we do to make things better?
- How will we know we have succeeded and things are better?

To get **involved** or to get **more information** please contact [caroline.mcmenamin@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:caroline.mcmenamin@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

During questions, Ms. McMenamin advised that the following issues continued to be highlighted as challenges faced by both users and staff:

- Language barriers – particularly whilst trying to contact GP surgeries;
- Digital isolation;
- Sharps disposal; and

- Prescription service issues.

The Members highlighted the need for there to be a specific focus on asylum seeker and refugee's health needs to ensure that the correct resourcing reached those in need.

The representative advised that she would be keen to discuss the development of the strategy with the Members individually, this would enable them to raise and highlight specific issues within their sectors, and she encouraged them to make contact with her.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for her informative presentation and wished the Trust well with the development of the new Strategy and she left the meeting.

Noted.

## **Peace IV Update Reports**

### **Secretariat Update**

The PEACE IV Programme Manager provided the Members with an update in respect of the Secretariat activity associated with the implementation of the Peace IV Local Action Plan.

The Members were advised that the project activity and project modifications to enable delivery was continuing to be closely monitored and asked to note the discussions on operational issues that had been progressed with the SEUPB as outlined in the Thematic reports.

The officer continued that, as agreed at the previous meeting, following discussions with the SEUPB on operational matters, a business case, outlining the expected level of achievement of delivery, had been submitted to the SEUPB Steering Group for consideration, using the delegated authority granted at the March meeting.

The officer then drew the Members' attention to the key highlights of the business case. She highlighted the critical need for the Council to have greater flexibility of tolerances to be able to manage the programme effectively. She also referred to the broad scope of projects and the differing stages in delivery which required a range of mitigations specific to each project.

The mitigations requested included:

- extended delivery timeframes to March 2023;
- flexible and condensed delivery approaches, such as residentials to enable the achievement of contact hours;
- increase in OIG tolerances for contact hours as participants did not have the same level of commitment to projects;
- replacement of cross border activity with day activity and/or residentials;
- budget realignment to cover increased costs; and
- reduction in cross border, UK, EU visits, networking events, study trips and residential activity, relevant to BPR3 and BPR4 projects.

The Partnership was advised that the anticipated participant achievement level across the programme varied significantly due to the target groups, nature and stage of delivery of the project. She reported that the CYP3 Personal Change had achieved 100% of targets

whereas BPR2 was estimating a 55% achievement of participant targets with an extended timeframe to September 2022.

The expected level of achievement, subject to mitigations, was then summarised as follows:

- CYP Theme is 72% of the participant target;
- BPR Theme is 66% of the participant target; and
- SSS Theme is 75% of the participant target and full achievement of capital works.

The Partnership noted that, given the challenges faced over the last 2 years and the residual impacts of the pandemic still being experienced, the Council was of the view that the targets and mitigations required were realistic.

The Programme Manager advised that a successful and inspiring Future Peacebuilders Conference had taken place on 8th March and that planning was currently underway for the next event scheduled to be held in April 2022, a workshop, focusing on Life Beyond the Walls, with Mr. J. Byrne in the Spectrum Centre.

The Programme Manager highlighted that resource pressures within the PEACE IV team continued. Recruitment for vacant posts was ongoing with the post of Project Development Officer having recently been recruited, in addition, where possible agency staff had been recruited. She advised that, given the increase in activity work pressures continued, the staff resources remained a significant risk to the delivery of the Programme.

The Members noted that, as previously reported, the total spend of the programme to date up to Period 29 (January 22), was £6.2m. The SEUPB had reimbursed claims up to Period 26 (Apr 21) claims totalling £4.78m. Reimbursement of claims for Periods 27-29 (May 2021 – Jan 2022) remained outstanding with a combined value of £1.4m.

The officer detailed that concern regarding the volume and value of outstanding claims had been raised with the SEUPB and recent correspondence from the Director of the SEUPB's Managing Authority had outlined a timeframe for reimbursement, as follows:

Ref. No.	Total value (€)	No. of claims	Ready for certification*		In progress**		Samples waiting to be drawn***	
			Q/E Mar '22	Q/E June '22	Q/E Mar '22	Q/E June '22	Q/E Mar '22	Q/E June '22
4096	438,453.59	6	3				3	
4097	304,293.38	3	2				1	
4098	939,338.88	6	3				3	

The Members were asked to note that a further Period 29 claim for the submission of SSS capital works, valued at £327K had been prepared for submission on eMs and further guidance on the submission approach had been sought from the SEUPB.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it agree the key elements of the business case, the anticipated level of achievement and mitigations required across the programme.

## **Presentation from CYP4 Young Advocates**

(Ms. Leanne Holmes, CYP Thematic Manager, attended in connection with this item).

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. Anne-Anderson Porter, Director of Operations for Co-Operation Ireland, Mr. Aron Hughes and Mr Pearse Smyth, Peer Mentors of the Project , Miss. Naomi McGrady and Miss. Katie Mullan (Young Advocate Participants) to the meeting.

The CYP Thematic Manager commenced by providing an overview of the context for the presentation to the SCP by the CYP4 Young Advocates delivery partner Co-Operation Ireland, and the Young Advocates participants from Twinbrook, Shankill Road, Turf Lodge, and East Belfast.

She reported that, since 2018, 80 young people (aged 16-24) from across Belfast had taken part in the Young Advocates project, this had focused on personal development and building up the leadership skills of young people across the city. The project had targeted participants from neighbourhood renewal areas and used the citizenship intervention model to enable participants to actively champion issues affecting young people.

As with most of the projects, delivery of the project had been affected by the pandemic and the associated government restrictions, with activity having been paused for a period. Following the relaxation of restrictions, the most recent cohort of participants had progressed with the development of a social media campaign. The young people had designed and launched a campaign entitled Share2BAware.

The officer reported that The Young Advocates project was ending in April 2022, having achieved the required participant targets. A cross border closure conference was planned for 23rd April.

The Members noted that learning from the project and the campaign had helped to built lasting relationships with the young people involved and had equipped them to be advocates for peaceful change and future leaders.

At this stage in proceedings she handed over to representatives who proceeded to present on the details of the new Share2BAware Campaign.

The Members were advised that the campaign had been designed by the Young Advocates to try and raise awareness of sexual harassment. It had been officially launched on 11th March, in Crumlin Road Gaol, with the launch having been attended by the Justice Minister, Mrs. Naomi Long, and Councillor Kyle as Chairperson of the Partnership.

The campaign had been developed in collaboration with the sexual abuse charity NEXUS NI and included an animation film, followed by a social media campaign, which was the first of its kind in Northern Ireland.

The Members then viewed and extract from the animation film available [here](#)

The representatives concluded their presentation by highlighting that statistics showed that sexual offenses were on the rise. The Young Advocates stated that they were keen to play a part in raising awareness of this important issue and in educating young people on sexual harassment, its impact on victims and to highlight how victims could access support.

The Partnership endorsed the Share2BAware Campaign and noted that they would be keen to utilise and promote this important educational tool within the appropriate settings.

Several of the Members thanked the young people for their work in developing the campaign and for attending the Partnership to raise awareness of this important issue.

During discussion it was agreed that the Democratic Services officer would circulate the link for the animation film promoting the Share2BAware campaign to all Members of the Partnership to enable the Members to share it within their sectors. The TEO representative also advised that she would be keen to promote the campaign via the TEO Intranet.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee endorse the Share2BAware campaign and agree, where possible, to circulate and promote the campaign.

### **Children and Young People (CYP) Update**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Children and Young People’s (CYP) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report.**

#### **3.0 Main report**

##### **Project Updates**

#### **3.1 CYP 1 – TECH CONNECTS, GIGA Training (Afterschool’s and Digital Arts Academies) (Tech Camps) (6-11, 12-16 yr. olds)**

**GIGA Training has registered between 80 – 100 young people for participation in Tech Camps over the Easter Holidays, week commencing 18 – 22 April 2022. Venues include City Church, Strand Cinema and Avoneil Leisure Centre. With current performance at 55% (386 of target of 859), the delivery agent is increasing activity and exploring larger venues for summer delivery. Giga anticipate full delivery of targets as long as social distancing measures/wider Covid restrictions are not reintroduced.**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>YTD Date</b>	<b><u>(All contracts end Sept 22)</u></b>
<b>6-11 Year Olds:</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>171 Remaining</b>
<b>12-16 Year Olds:</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>301 Remaining</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>472 Remaining</b>

**CYP 1 – TECH CONNECTS, Belfast Metropolitan College (Digital Insights Programme) (17-24 yr. olds)**

Members are asked to note approval from SEUPB to permit 35% of cross community contact time within a school setting, which will be more attractive to participants as uptake of afterschool activity is lower within this age group as some young people have part time jobs or caring responsibilities. Belfast Metropolitan College are exploring options to condense delivery and to make it more appealing to take part.

Total	66 from a target of 160	94 remaining (contract ends Sept 22)
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**3.2 CYP 2 - Playing our Part in the City**

Active Communities Network completed a celebration / closure event at Shankill Leisure Centre 22 March 2022. With representation from SCP, PSNI and participants who have taken part in the programme to date. The purpose was to acknowledge achievements and celebrate friendships made throughout the different cohorts. Programme will be proceeding to final report stage with submission of some case studies of young people, to evidence the impact made of the Playing our Part.

Total	610 young people from a target of 640 109 Parents from a target of 100	Progressing to Closure
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**3.3 CYP3 – On the Right Track – Sports and Personal Change elements**

Additional resources have been added to the project to aid delivery and recruit sports groups. Sixteen pairs of sports groups have been identified, with 20 young people within each group.

The Lead officer is progressing with confirming schedules of registered groups and confirming approach, whether day activity or residential. The delivery approach is different for each partnership as each group have varying league commitments. Officers are working closely with ACN to achieve condensed delivery across several weekends, rather than on a weekly basis, to complete OCN qualifications. A social media post is also being drafted with links to the programme flyer, for release to highlight the programme across the various online platforms.

However, members are reminded of the high risk associated with this project due to the high targets. Consideration to reduce targets has been included within a business case planned for submission to SEUPB. Lead Officer to review budget to confirm if funds are available to extend to December 2022.

Total	645 from a target of 1800	1155 remaining (contract ends Sept 22)
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### Personal Change

The project status is being finalised as complete, based on 100% completion of outputs and outcomes. The final closure event, in the form of a celebration and closure event, took place on 2 March 2022 in the MAC, St Anne's Square, Belfast.

The short story from *Morrow*, which showcased the highlights and achievements of the project premiered on the evening.

The final reporting, case studies and evaluation are to be submitted to enable final payments to be progressed by the secretariat.

Total	42 from a target of 42	0 remaining
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### 3.4 CYP 4 – Cooperation Ireland (Young Advocates)

Following the successful launch of the social media campaign / animation focused on sexual harassment, members are asked to note the young people have been invited to present to the SCP. Over 90 people including the Minister of Justice attended the launch at Crumlin Road Gael, details were included in the previous month's papers.

The target of 80 participants has been achieved with participants having completed 60 hours cross community contact time. The young people's conference is to take place on 23 April 2022, potentially at the Titanic building. Location will be confirmed and invites to members will be circulated by secretariat. Post conference, end surveys and the final report will be submitted, and this programme will be able to be officially closed.

Total	81 from a target of 80	0 remaining - Due to finish April 22
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### 3.5 CYP 5 – NIHE Local Area Network Partner Delivery

Members are reminded of the high risk and high targets associated with this project.

Members are asked to note whilst there has been limited additional recruitment during this period, the hours of delivery for current participants have been increased.

NIHE have submitted an updated implementation plan with a reduction in outputs identified. This reduction in hours and participants has been included within the business case being drafted to SEUPB by secretariat.

Procurement is ongoing with training on Anti-racism and Peer Mentoring being sourced at present, to offer to participant groups. NIHE have exhausted the salary budget line and are at present reviewing options. One of the options include allocating internal

**NIHE funds towards facilitating the GRO salary, during the potential extension from June 2022 to December 2022.**

<b>Total</b>	<b>143 from a target of 900</b>	<b>757 remaining (Contract ends Sept 22)</b>
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### **3.6 Financial and Resource Implications**

**The financial position for the CYP theme is as previously reported with £1.66m submitted to SEUPB for verification. To date claims up to Period 26, totalling £1.29m has been reimbursed and a further £370K is outstanding and yet to be verified.**

### **3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment**

**The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 Nov 2020.”**

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report.

### **Shared Spaces and Services (SSS) Update**

The Programme Manager provided an update on the progress made to date in respect of the SSS theme, within the Peace IV Local Action Plan. She advised that implementation of the Shared Space and Services theme was progressing and drew the Members’ attention to the risks associated with delivery which had been attached as an appendix.

She then referred specifically to the Capital Works at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

**PEACE IV Network Scheme – Capital Works** - The works at Section 1 had commenced in June 2021 and were ongoing. Surfacing works, although impacted by the weather, had completed at the end of March.

Installation of the information panel signage would progress once the design had been finalised.

Following planning approval for Section 2 (Springvale) in September 2021, the treatment of the invasive species and remediation works for the asbestos had completed.

The officer advised that discussions were ongoing between the Council and the Education Authority to co-ordinate the proposed works at Springfield Primary and the Section 2 works. The hearing for the application for leave to apply for a judicial review had been considered on 10th March, with a substantive application having been listed for a hearing on 14th June. She reported that urgent discussions were required with the different funders around programme as there were budget risks associated with any delay to works at this section.

The work package for section 3 (Whiterock and Falls) had been issued and works had commenced on 28th February, with an estimated completion date of June 2022.

McQuillans had also commenced the initial phase of works in Section 4 (Bog Meadows) with works due to complete in September 2022.

The Members were advised that the scope of works for Section 5 (West Link) had been agreed and that signage locations were to be confirmed ahead of the submission for the planning application.

Following the PQQ stage for Public Artworks, six artists had been invited to submit tenders. Submissions had been received from all six artists and the assessment process was progressing. She advised that it was anticipated that the planning application for the artworks would be submitted by late April 2022, with works commencing on site in September 2022.

The Members were asked to note that the extension of the works into 2023 might be necessary and, if required, a further report would be submitted in due course following the tender assessment process.

**Social Value Clause** – McQuillans had contacted Workforce regarding the employment and apprenticeship opportunities available. Advice had also been provided by Council’s Physical Programmes and Employability and Skills Departments. The Members were advised of the following appointments through the programme:

- ground works contractor Demesne Contracts had employed a general operative who was previously unemployed;
- a Civil Engineer apprentice, completing a Level III apprenticeship, had been given a 13-week placement and had commenced on 31st January;
- the contractor had also employed a Civil Engineering placement student from Queens University, until 31st August 2022; and
- a further placement student would join the project in July 2022 for the remainder of the project.

The Programme Manager advised that, as part of the Considerate Construction Scheme, the contractor had contacted local schools, although proposed presentations were restricted until further notice due to Covid 19.

She advised that the contractor representative also attended weekly meetings with the Falls Community Group to provide updates on the works progress and to update on any other issues, such as anti-social behaviour. These meetings were attended by community and political representatives and community police who offered advice and were pro-active in addressing issues.

The officer advised that the contractor’s Site Agent had attended a sod cutting ceremony with Minister Mallon on 1st March at Falls Park. Also, McQuillans were currently collecting items to donate to local food banks with staff working on the project donating goods.

- **Programming**

Implementation of the programming aspects was progressing.

- **Shared History, Heritage and Identity Content / Narratives for Shared Space**

<b>Deliverable targets</b>	<b>Targets achieved</b>
300 individuals	79 engaged to date

The discussion groups continued to be facilitated through all Sections and following approval from the SEUPB on the participation of local schools, engagement had commenced with three local primary schools, Springhill, Springfield and St Clare's.

The agreed narratives for Section 1 had been edited in line with wordcount and Council's "Plain English" policy and were due to be installed in the coming weeks.

The location of 3 information panels at Section 3 had been agreed and the narratives were due to be finalised and submitted for approval soon. Section 4 and 5 narratives were still to be drafted, in collaboration with local communities.

The Members were asked to note that a reduction in contact hours for participation was required and that this had been included in the business case to the SEUPB.

- **Shared Space Volunteer Training**

<b>Deliverable targets</b>	<b>Targets achieved</b>
<i>Sustrans</i>	
30 volunteers (15 Walk and 15 Cycle Leads)	27 recruited across 3 groups
<i>Volunteer Now Enterprise</i>	
15 volunteers (Local Ambassadors)	14 recruited
<i>The Conservation Volunteers</i>	
15 volunteers (Nature Guides)	Currently recruiting

The first cohort of 10 Walk and Cycle Leads had completed their training and received certificates and Sustrans Volunteer Cards, at an informal event on 16th March 2022. Training of a further cohort of 12 volunteers was progressing and a third group of 5 had been recruited.

Following a recruitment drive, Volunteer Now was progressing registrations of 14 Shared Space Ambassador volunteers, with training to commence in April 2022. The project lead was confident that they would recruit up to 20 volunteers, to allow for attrition. Some of the volunteers had been involved with the Luminare event in Springfield Park on 5th March.

The Members were advised that the Conservation Volunteers had experienced difficulty whilst recruiting volunteer nature guides, however, information, recruitment sessions and walk-about to promote the project were underway. An update meeting was scheduled in early April to monitor progress.

The Programme Manager highlighted that, subsequent to the report having been circulated, there had been a further emerging request for the SSS theme seeking The Members to approve extensions to the contracts for the volunteer delivery with Sustrans and Volunteer Now and also the narratives project with Mediation NI to September 2022, to enable delivery and the achievement of targets. She asked the Members to note that the extension would be within the current contract value.

- **Dialogue and Engagement Project (young people, residents and BME groups)**

The Dialogue and Engagement contract was now complete and a final payment was being processed.

The Members noted that a meeting with North Belfast Youth Area Team and Youth Link NI (Youth Engagement and Civic Education project lead) had been facilitated on 9th March, to discuss the recommendation from the “Waste 2 Waste” and MDL reports and building them into project workshops and activities. The recommendations from the report would be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

- **Governance / Management Model**

Viatac Limited continued to engage with the stakeholders, in relation to their draft governance model/s.

The Members were advised that a site visit had been undertaken to Belfast during March and that a stakeholders meeting had been facilitated at the Innovation Factory on 24th March.

Viatac Limited had also completed a second interim report, which had been submitted for review.

The Members were asked to note that a large discussion workshop had been planned for 27th April 2022, in Belfast City Hall, to further discuss the suggest governance model, and that invites would be issued to all key community stakeholders in due course.

- **Youth Engagement and Civic Education**

<b>Deliverable targets</b>	<b>Targets achieved</b>
400 young people	Commitment from approx. 80 young people.

A commitment to participate in the project of up to 80 young people had been received from the Blackmountain Action Group, the Forthspring Inter Community Youth and the New Life Church. Links were also being progressed with other youth providers through the Springfield Road Cluster and Greater Shankill Partnership. In addition, a link was also being investigated with Charter NI, the Nubia Youth Club and Sandy Row.

Youth Link NI had been involved in discussions to incorporate actions to address the recommendations in the MDL and “Waste 2 Waste” reports.

- **Modular Building**

A meeting to confirm the booking process for the building had been facilitated on 9th March. At this meeting, it had been agreed that booking would be via Outdoor Leisure and that OSS would provide staff cover to open and close the building, in line with the agreed bookings. An article promoting the building was in the latest edition of City Matters which had recently been circulated to households across the City.

- **SSS Activities and Animation Programme**

<b>Deliverable targets</b>	<b>Targets achieved</b>
20 cross community activities/events, (to an audience of a minimum of 1200 attendees)	3 cross community activities / events to an audience of approximately 1000+ people
- 4 Public spectacle events (150 people at each) – 2 in Springfield Park	- “Luminate” event in Springfield Park – approx. 1500 people
- 6 Medium sized creative animation activities / events (50-100 people at each).	- “River Clean event” – approx. 100 people
- 10 small community focused activities / events (30 to 50 people at each)	- “Sunflower Festival” – approx. 50 people

The first event, Luminate, had taken place on 5th March and attracted over 1000 people, from local communities and across Belfast to the Springfield Dam. A small “Sunflower Festival” and medium “River Clean” event had taken place on 12th and 20th March, with approximately 200 people having attended.

The need for further consultation with local community organisations had been highlighted and an engagement session had been facilitated in The Innovation Factory on 21st March. Opportunities for involvement in the large events and suggestions for medium and small events had been discussed.

The Members noted that a briefing paper on the SSS theme was being compiled and would be submitted to both the West and North Area Working Groups.

The Members noted that the SEUPB had reimbursed all Claims up to Period 26 totalling £1,639,342. The reimbursement of claims for Period 27-29 totalling £257K remained outstanding. A supplementary claim for Period 29 valued at £327K for capital works was also being prepared for submission to the SEUPB for reimbursement.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and the SSS Progress Report and agree to the extension of contracts for the volunteer delivery with Sustrans and Volunteer Now and also the narratives project with Mediation NI to September 2022, to enable the delivery and achievement of targets.

### **Building Positive Relations (BPR) Update**

The Partnership considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Building Positive Relations (BPR) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.**

## **2.0 Recommendations**

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report and related appendices and agree:

- **BPR1 Cross Community Networks**  
Modification as approved by SEUPB to permit a cross border residential to Dublin for the CCAN in East Belfast Network, as part of the place shaping stage.
- **BPR5 ROMA**  
To uplift the contract with FSP by 10%, approximately £16,900, subject to budget agreement with the secretariat and approval by SEUPB.

## **3.0 Main report**

### **Key Issues**

Implementation of BPR projects is ongoing and face to face activity is increasing, although members should note that Covid 19 impacts continue to affect delivery and participation due to illness with Covid 19. Progress is outlined in Appendix I Progress report.

### **3.1 BPR1 – Cross Community Area Networks (CCAN)**

Progress of establishing the 6 CCANs is ongoing with the number of registered participants now confirmed at 101.

Members are requested to note and agree a project modification submitted for the East Belfast CCAN to undertake residential activity and increase delivery hours. This request was progressed as a priority to SEUPB and has been approved as it was similar to a previous request for another CCAN.

Members should note that the South Belfast Network intends to bring on board the Donegall Pass Community Forum to their network as a peer group which will add value to the existing group and help build on the participant numbers and engagement hours.

The submitted implementation plan suggests greater numbers will be achieved as the participant pool has been widened and more interest generated across the networks in particular in the South and North.

The current position is 101/900 participants with 50-80 hours engagement from the required 200 hours.

### **3.2 BPR2 – Creative Communities Project**

Delivery with established clusters is progressing.

Discussion to replace St. Malachys with Rosario in the Football Cluster are progressing, and Rosario has expressed interest with potentially 14 participants. This combined with the other partner, Albert Foundry with 15 participants, should provide a strong creative cluster.

Approval for delivery of the East Cluster via a residential approach has been confirmed by SEUPB, based on clear parameters which were outlined to the delivery lead and, Radius, the group coordinating the residential. Officers are pleased to note that the residential took place and went well with 32 people attending.

Staffing resources remain an issue within the project and recruitment is ongoing as such an assurance of delivery from senior management is being progressed

Members should note that to date within BPR2 6 of 8 cluster groups have been achieved, 92/264 participants registered.

### **3.3 BPR3 – Transform for Change Project**

#### **Transformative Leadership Programme**

The PEACE IV team continue to be activity involved in the project with 2 introductions and 2 project development sessions scheduled for April.

The Resource Allocation Agreement for the Project Action Plan with a lead organisation of Cliftonville Parent Teachers Association has been issued for signature. The cluster plan includes actions to; rejuvenate a disused space within the school to bring people together, a story telling bench to be crafted by volunteers from the Men's Shed, and the local PTA will coordinate engagement from other interested parties.

The procurement for delivery of the Project Action Plan at the Black Gates has been issued to suitable artists and art activities have commenced with the associated groups including the lead organisation, Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project.

A further 3 action plans, 2 from West, and a further submission from North have been submitted for assessment.

NICVA's coordinator has since resigned, the Project and Programme Managers are meeting with NICVA to ascertain contingencies to ensure continued delivery.

Members should note that the Project Support Officer post has been filled with an agency staff member due to join the team in mid-April.

Progress within the Transform for Change project shows 5 of 15 clusters June 21-June 22 complete. 5 are currently live and 5 are in the process of being recruited.

Overall figures show 34/45 courses completed with 5 live and 5 planned bringing an anticipated completed figure of 44/45 courses.

Current collective participant numbers show 491 have completed with 100 registered on current courses. Target figure is anticipated to be 634/900 completed by June 2022.

#### **3.4 BPR4 – Belfast and the World (BATW)**

Delivery of activity with 4 groups is continuing, although project staff have been impacted by Covid 19, which has resulted in some sessions being rescheduled.

Planning for delivery of Study visits to Cork and Dublin is ongoing.

Progress for Belfast and The World shows 178/200 participants realised with the delivery lead confident that engagement hours will be achieved – or exceeded.

#### **3.5 BPR5 – Supporting Connected Communities - LINCS Project**

The delivery of project activity is continuing, with participant numbers having increased slightly to 102 people actively engaged. The leadership programme has delivered 3 sessions to date with between 7-11 participants attending, further sessions are scheduled for April 2022.

Across the neighbourhood participant forums, 67 participants have completed the required contact hours and it is anticipated another 29 will complete. It is envisaged that a total of 96 core participants will complete by September 2022.

Equality analysis of the project shows representation and breakdown of participants across all of Belfast as follows: PUL 32%, CNR 28% and BAME 39% with 1% not declared. Gender representation remains more female with 61% of participants who completed surveys identifying as female and 37% male.

The symposium shared learning event has been rescheduled for early May 2022.

#### **3.6 BPR5 – Traveller Project - Supporting Connected Communities**

The Genealogy exhibition is to be showcased on the 12th April at the Maureen Sheehan Centre. The exhibition will mark the completion of the workshop and will celebrate the participants involvement and is open to friends and family and the wider public. The exhibition is mobile and will be hosted in local libraries and community centres over the coming months to highlight the work achieved and to promote inclusion of the Traveller community.

The Empowering Young Women workshop programme and exhibition has been awarded to the Falls Women Centre and plans are progressing to commence activity early May with participants from both the traveller and settled communities ready to engage.

A quotation for a further workshop programme focusing on Produce Garden is due to be released on the 4th April and the final Health & Wellbeing workshop scoping exercise is underway with draft quotation document being finalised.

Networking is improving with linkages with Fall's Women Centre, the Heart Project and associated SureStart groups, having proved a positive pathway for engaging traveller women and their families, as well as including families from the local communities.

A community event is planned for late April and approximately 20 traveller women and children have agreed to attend.

Members should note that some cost savings from the Traveller Support Hub are to be reassigned to the BPR5 Roma project, as outlined in the business case to SEUPB.

The Traveller Project objective of holding 4 workshops, each with 10 participants, achieving 26 hours of engagement is progressing, with one currently complete with 10 participants reaching target engagement hours.

As referenced above, the Empowering Young Women workshop is due to commence in May 2022.

### **3.7 BPR5 – Roma Project - Supporting Connected Communities**

The delivery partner continues to offer capacity building sessions through the Roma Support Hub and updated attendance details and Advice Pro data has been submitted.

Delivery of the English Language classes started in February in East Belfast, and classes also commenced in South Belfast in March 2022, currently there are 12 participants attending regularly across the 2 classes.

A breakdown of the Intercultural Advocacy Training has also been provided and Advice classes have also been identified.

A new case officer has also been recruited.

An implementation plan has been submitted by the delivery partner and a signed letter of assurance confirms the delivery partner's commitment to delivery of contract.

As previously reported the delivery partner has requested an extension to September 2022 to fully achieve all training elements and to continue the capacity sessions within the Hub. The

delivery partner has identified increased costs in associated with the extended delivery of the Support Hub, members are requested to agree in principle to uplift the contract by 10%, approximately £16,900, subject to budget agreement with the secretariat and approval by SEUPB. This uplift in the budget will be met through the £66K savings associated with the Traveller Support Hub.

Targets met to date include 5 participants registered for Advice Level 3 Training classes – 12 participants from both the current Hub attendees and a mixture of new participants will achieve the 28hrs of engagement and complete the English classes.

### **3.8 BPR6 – St. Comgalls**

Workshops, seminars and networking events for youth and adult cohorts continue, and the delivery partner has advised the adult component is now fully recruited.

The project provided an implementation plan covering the remainder of their contract (finishing May 22) and members should note that no extension or major revisions have been requested.

The project has a number of elements to deliver during April including further thematic networking events and seminars (codesigned by workshop participants) and study trips for participants (NI/ROI-based) and a best practice trip within NI (Seamus Heaney Homeplace) to inform development of resources. The citywide engagement programme will also complete sessions.

The building completion is scheduled for April with BCC Physical Programmes facilitating a launch event.

Members are reminded that delegated authority has been assigned to the Programme Board to review the full suite of educational and exhibition material content, which will also be reviewed and agreed by SEUPB with a further report to SCP in May.

### **3.9 Cinematography Project**

Filming of project activity as opportunities arise is continuing with Morrow Communications.

Short 'celebration' films for CYP2 and CYP3 Extern have been screened at project closure events and shared online. CYP4 and BPR4 are in production and will be showcased at project closure events in April.

Projects that have yet to identify film opportunities, CYP5 and BPR5 Roma, are to be progressed. The contract manager continues to work to coordinate this with delivery partners. All other projects have captured a range of activity providing good coverage.

The PIV team is aiming to secure further additional filming coverage via BCC Corporate Comms of BPR5 Traveller project and CYP3 OTRT due to limitations within the scope of the Morrow contract.

### **3.10 Financial and Resource Implications**

To date spend on the BPR Theme is approximately £2.6m. Claims totalling £1.8m has been fully reimbursed by SEUPB. Payment of Claims for Period 27-29 with a combined valued of £796K is outstanding.

### **3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment**

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020.”

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note and agree the following modifications:

- BPR1 Cross Community Networks – as approved by the SEUPB, to permit a cross border residential to Dublin for the CCAN in East Belfast Network, as part of the place shaping stage; and
- BPR5 ROMA - to uplift the contract with FSP by 10%, approximately £16,900, subject to budget agreement with the secretariat and the approval of the SEUPB.

### **Peace Plus Update**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the PEACEPLUS Partnership for 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

That Members note the contents of this report and

- Note the recommendation made at the recent SP&R meeting on the governance arrangements for 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.
- Agree in principle to logistics for running future SCP meetings.
- Agree to SEUPB appointed consultants attending the next SCP meeting to provide an overview on the role of the

**PEACEPLUS Partnership for the oversight of the 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Background**

As reported at the March SCP meeting SEUPB is currently seeking approval from the European Commission for the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme, a €1 billion investment to progress towards a peaceful and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. It comprises of six themes, which encompass 22 individual investment areas for possible submissions for investment.

**3.5 Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans (priority 1.1)**

As with previous PEACE Programmes, one of the key investment areas for Council is the development of a Local Community Peace Action Plan for the city. This programme is under theme 1 Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities, Investment area total funding (€110 Million). There is an expectation that Belfast may receive funding of at least £15 million (with a possible increase of up to £17 million or more).

**3.3 PEACEPLUS Partnership**

It is a requirement that each Action Plan should comprise of a PEACE PLUS local authority partnership which will oversee the co-design and implementation of a process in their local authority area which will be used to inform the development and delivery of an overarching PEACE Action Plan(s) ensuring alignment with the local Community Plan for the area.

Following officer engagement with SEUPB, officers made a recommendation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at their March committee meeting that, the current Shared City Partnership (SCP) will take on the responsibilities associated with the PEACEPLUS Partnership and development of the Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.

The key reasons that officers engaged with SEUPB on this model included:

- There was a significant refresh of the SCP recently, which included recruitment of new members from the Community and Voluntary Sector.
- The SCP is a formal working group of the Council that oversees the Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan and PEACE IV Plan via SP&R.
- SCP will continue post PEACEPLUS completion and will have sustainability with capacity to continue to work on Peace and Reconciliation post PEACE funding.

- SCP has representation from across Political parties.
- SCP has a good mixture of elected members, statutory agencies, interested groups and community partners across the four pillars outlined above.
- SCP membership currently has clear alignment with community planning partnership members.

SEUPB have advised that they are content that the preferred option above is an acceptable model for overseeing the future PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

#### 3.4 Logistics for meetings of the SCP (incorporating oversight of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan)

The PEACE IV Local Action Plan is continuing to be delivered, with the current Letter of Offer for funding extended to December 2022. As the SCP has oversight of the Peace IV Programme and the Good Relations Action Plan and to ensure clear delineation between programmes, it is proposed that the business of the SCP would be divided into two distinct parts as follows.

- Part 1 - continued oversight of Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan as well as the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.
- Part 2 - oversight on the co-design process required to make a submission for the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan.

#### 3.5 SEUPB appointed Consultants

To assist in the development of the PEACEPLUS Action Plans, SEUPB has contracted a consultants consortium, including Blu Zebra and Locus Management to work in supporting each Council. They are currently working on the development of the methodology for emerging PEACEPLUS partnerships and their future role in overseeing the Co-Designed process to develop local action plans. We are proposing that they attend the next SCP meeting to provide an overview of their work to date with regards to PEACEPLUS partnerships. If members are in agreement, officers will invite them to the next meeting.

#### 3.6 External Support

At the March SCP meeting, officers also advised that SEUPB have also given approval to councils to use a maximum of €100,000 on resourcing the development of the local action plan. This expenditure is not additional to any final award that the Council receives, it will be included in the PEACE PLUS Action Plan application and when successful, will form part of the letter of award for reimbursement.

Members were advised that we were going to the market for consultancy support with a budget of £28,500 for the development, facilitation, and submission of the

**Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community PEACE Action Plan under investment area 1.1 of the PEACEPLUS Programme. Following this recent procurement exercise, we did not receive any submissions from the five companies invited to quote.**

**Based on feedback following this exercise and current market conditions, we are now proposing to go back to the market, by way of full public tender exercise, with a refreshed specification and increased budget totalling £48,000 (subject to SEUPB approval) to seek this support to help us develop our local action plan.**

**It is important that we get the right consultancy support for this work as it will help develop the systems and processes including the design and facilitation of a consultation and engagement framework and associated local area informal governance to enable Council to submit their Local Community PEACE Action Plan. The successful applicants will be expected to undertake a co-designed approach with members, the local community and stakeholders to develop a prioritisation list for possible projects, develop and draft the action plan for consideration by Council and write the detailed plan and engage with SEUPB on any changes required post submission.**

**3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

**N/A**

**3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

**The Plan, once produced, will need to be screened for equality and good relations implications along with completion of a rural needs assessment.”**

Following discussion, the Partnership:

- noted the decision made at the recent meeting Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in regard to the governance arrangements for 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast and agreed, in principle, the logistics for running future SCP meetings;
- agreed that the SEUPB appointed consultants would attend the May SCP meeting to provide an overview on the role of the PEACEPLUS Partnership for the oversight of the 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast; and
- noted that further training and clarification regarding the remit of the Partnership relating to PEACE PLUS would take place to ensure the Members were fully cognisant of their roles and responsibilities.

## **Approach to Cultural Expression Programme 2022**

The Partnership considered a report which detailed the Council's overall approach to the Bonfires and Cultural Expression Programme as agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its March Meeting.

Noted.

## **Good Relations Action Plan Update 2022/2023**

The Partnership considered the following report:

### **1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

To update the Partnership on delivery of the District Council Good Relations Plan (DCGRP).

### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that the City Hall be lit up on 5th July to mark the Memorial Week of the Srebrenica genocide.

2.2 Members are asked to note the remaining contents of the report, particularly projects within the previously agreed Action Plan that are underway. Members should also note that update reports will be provided quarterly to the Partnership, in line with our reporting pattern with The Executive Office.

### **3.0 Main report**

Delivery of the DCGRP Action Plan for the current year 2022/23 has commenced with Officers planning a number of activities, events, grant assessments and projects.

### **3.2 BCC1 – Good Relations Grants Programme**

Application for Good Relations grants opened on 28th February and closed on the 4th April. Applications will be assessed against the pre-agreed scoring criteria and letters of offer will be issued in the first week of June. It is envisaged that 80% of the budget of £120,000 will be allocated at this stage, with the remaining 20% allocated on completion of projects.

### **3.3 BCC3 – Cultural Expression Programme (Beacons)**

An assessment of the current stock of Beacons along with an assessment of potential requests for Beacons in July is currently underway. A more detailed report regarding the Council's agreed approach to the Bonfire & Cultural Expression Programme is outlined in a separate paper.

### **3.4 BCC4 – Shared Community (Events and Research)**

Planning is underway for a number of events to take place over the coming months; in particular:

- Day of Reflection; agreed at April Council, to take place on June 21st in City Hall
- Remembering Srebrenica; The screening of the film Quo Vadis Aida, will take place in The Queen’s Film Theatre on 5th July at 6.00pm. Council will support this event through publicity and provision of hospitality. In addition, Members are asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that the Council be lit up on 5th July to mark the Memorial Week of the Srebrenica genocide.
- The research project on the links between Climate Change and Segregation will commence in the coming quarter.
- Events will be organised to mark Refugee week, to take place in June.
- Planning is underway to procure the leadership programme to grow young Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders in the City as part of wider leadership and volunteer development.

**3.5 BCC5 – Shared Community (Migrant Forum)**

- The quarterly meeting of the Migrant Forum will take place in June.
- Support for advice and outreach to the Roma Community through the Roma Hub will also commence.

**3.6 BCC6 – Safe Community (Men’s Sheds project)**

- Support for the delivery of the Men’s Sheds Project will be scoped and procured
- Continuation of the orientation and cultural competence of new and host communities delivered by the Red Cross.

**3.7 BCC7 – Safe Community (Interface Engagement)**

An event for stakeholders will be delivered in early May to develop projects with community and statutory partners which will be rolled out throughout the lifetime of the 2022/23 Action Plan.

**3.8 BCC8 – Children and Young People (Schools Shared Education Programme)**

This project continues for the remainder of the Academic Year, with pupil-to-pupil contact having recommenced following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. This project will then recommence in September and run until the end of the Action Plan period.

**3.9 BCC9 – All Themes (Strategic Intervention Programme)**

**The development of potential projects has commenced and it is hoped to have projects delivered from the summer time onwards.**

**3.10 BCC10 – Shared Community (Shared City Projects)**

**The specification for the Good Relations Audit project has commenced.**

**3.11 Financial and Resource Implications**

**All costs are covered through the District Council Good Relations Action Plan budget for 2022/23 as agreed by Members in February 2022.**

**3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

**All the projects/programmes have been approved as per the DCGRP 2022/23.”**

The Good Relations Manager further advised that, due to the unprecedented increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Belfast and the challenging accommodation circumstances which they are encountering, the Council would work with Mears and community partners to develop a yearlong programme of activities to try and alleviate the isolation that young people, in particular, were encountering. Activities would include events to mark the end of Ramadan, social and cultural activities, play development and learning activities during the summer and an allocation of £8,000 would be provided, to include programmes run by Mears and Community Partners.

During discussion a Member raised concern regarding funding being directed to a commercial organisation. The Good Relations Manager advised that this was a new and emerging need and therefore it was felt that this organisation was best placed to implement the programme immediately, she confirmed that it would be working with community partners.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it adopt the recommendations as outlined at section 2.0 of the report and that £8000 be allocated towards a programme of activities for asylum seekers led by Mears, subject to clarification if Mears could access the Mears Foundation to fund this work as their staff would be delivering the service, to ensure there was no duplication with what Mears had been contracted to currently undertake and that The Executive Office were content to support the project.

**Letter of offer from The Executive Office (TEO)**

The Good Relations Manager referred the Members to a report which provided specific detail regarding the intention to proceed with the activity that had been set out in aforementioned minute (Quarter 1 activity).

The Members were reminded that the Council received 75% of the costs for the delivery of it's Good Relations Action Plan from The Executive Office (TEO). She advised that, whilst it was likely to receive the same allocation as it had in 2021/22, to date, no formal letter of offer had been received.

The Members noted that the Council currently contributed £328,263 towards the overall delivery of the Action Plan, as well as £59,500 towards the bonfire programme for beacon related costs and clear-ups. The total Council contribution to staffing and programmes in the Good Relations Action Plan was £387,763.

The Good Relations Manager advised that, if the delivery of the Action Plan was to proceed as originally planned, several projects would need to commence in Quarter 1 (April – June 2022). If all desired projects were to commence, this would necessitate a commitment of £380,896.10 to cover staffing and programmes for Quarter 1.

The Members noted that this figure included a full commitment at 100% to any project allocated funding

The Partnership noted that, whilst no formal letter of offer had been received from TEO, the Departmental Management Team were content to proceed using the Council's 2021/22 allocation figures.

Chairperson

## Minutes of Meeting of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

8<sup>th</sup> April 2022

### Attendance

#### Members:

Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Councillor Cllr Emmet McDonagh-Brown (*for Councillor Nuala McAlister*)

Alderman Brian Kingston

Councillor Ryan Murphy (*for Councillor Ciaran Beattie*)

Alderman Jim Rodgers (*for Alderman Sonia Copeland*)

Councillor Áine Groogan

Councillor Mal O'Hara

Councillor Brian Heading (*for Councillor Donal Lyons*)

**Apologies:** Councillor Ciaran Beattie, Councillor Nuala McAlister, Councillor Donal Lyons, Councillor Fiona Ferguson and Alderman Sonia Copeland.

#### Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive

Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

Christine Sheridan, Head of Human Resources (for Item 1)

Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

### 1. Covid Update

The Head of HR provided an update on the number of staff who are reporting as Covid positive and unable to work and advised that services continue to monitor impacts on service delivery reallocating staff where required. She advised that this has resulted in minimal impact on delivery of critical services. Members noted that the Workforce Testing programme, through which council access supplies of Lateral Flow Tests will cease with effect from 22 April 2022, following this staff with symptoms will need to request home tests in order to end self-isolation.

The Head of HR also provided an update on the approach for organisational recovery and outlined the proposals for a phased return to the office for those staff still working from home. She stressed that social distancing requirements and other mitigations are still impacting full recovery of front-line service delivery. Regular meetings continue with the management and trade union working group and the recovery of customer related services will be prioritised in

the first instance. A report will be presented to April SP&R Committee with further detail on the approach outlined.

## **2. Audit and Risk Panel Attendance**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources highlighted to Members that, at its meeting in March, the Audit and Risk Panel (A&RP) approved the statement of purpose and terms of reference of the A&RP and the Audit Assurance Board along with the indicative programme of business for 2022. He advised that as part of this item, the Panel discussed attendance of Members at the meetings, and it was agreed to highlight to Party Group Leaders the importance for each Party's representative to attend these on a consistent basis. In relation to some queries raised by Members, the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance and Resources advised that whilst nominees can attend, members of the A&RP require specific training. Members to follow up with their Party representatives in advance of the next meeting in June.

## **3. Ukraine Evacuee Support Scheme**

The Chief Executive provided an update for Members on the Ukraine evacuee support scheme in Northern Ireland. He advised that work is ongoing with the Executive Office who are leading on the planning and preparation with Local Government. The Chief Executive outlined for Members the proposed approach for community advice centres and detailed the plans for the Belfast Community Advice Centre including the location, proposed opening date, and the support services that will be represented at the centre. In relation to some queries raised by Members in relation to translation services and a designated council point of contact for Members it was agreed that a point of contact would be circulated imminently. Members will be kept informed as the plans progress.

## **4. Planning Update**

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in April. In relation to the Local Development Plan, he advised that officers continue to engage with DfI and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) in order to address ongoing concerns.

Members noted that the NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published a report and recommendations in relation to Planning in Northern Ireland in March 2022. An overview of this report and the recommended response from Council will be presented to April SP&R Committee.

## **5. AOB**

### **Official visit of Martin Walsh, Secretary of Labour for the US Administration**

The Chief Executive highlighted an upcoming official visit of Martin Walsh, Secretary of Labour for the US Administration in May. He outlined the requests sought from the Council including a request to address a full Council meeting. It was noted that a report outlining the specific requests sought would be submitted to April SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

### **Levelling up Fund Round 2**

The Chief Executive outlined the timeframes for Round 2 of the UK Levelling Up Fund, a capital fund announced as part of the UK Government's agenda to invest in local infrastructure and uplift communities and local areas that have fallen behind. He briefed Members on potential bids for Round 2 and it was noted that a further update would be brought to the next Party Leaders Forum meeting.

### **arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Plant**

The Chief Executive provided an update for Members following the recent planning permission decision made by the Infrastructure Minister. He advised that legal opinion is being sought and Party Group Leaders will be briefed once this process is complete.

### **Industrial Action**

The Head of Human Resources provided an update on the recent industrial action by members of Unite trade union which took place week commencing Monday 21st March. Members noted that should further industrial action take place the processes followed during this action would be reinstated. Some Members advised that if any further action was to be taken that any Council meetings during that period be rescheduled. A report will be presented to SP&R committee in April to include a full update should the industrial action materialise.

### **Belfast Multi Cultural Association Building**

The Chief Executive referred to a fire at the Belfast Multi Cultural Association Building which had occurred earlier that morning, the second in the space of 14 months. Whilst there were few details available at this stage, he advised that officers in City and Neighbourhood Services were working to provide support where possible.

**Recruitment of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty**

The Head of HR raised an issue in relation to the constitution for the selection panel for the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty. The details of the recruitment process to be circulated for Members to further consider.



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Requests for use of the City Hall Grounds</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider two requests for the use of the City Hall grounds during the month of July.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. approve the use of the City Hall grounds on the dates outlined below; and</li> <li>2. authorise the events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events.</li> </ol>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1.1	Members will be aware that requests for the use of City Hall are normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using

criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally however, it is necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the requests set out below falls into this category.

#### Key Issues

- 3.2 Several requests have been received for events over the summer period and this report seeks to update Members on the recovery of functions using the grounds, increasing demand for this venue space. Also due to the larger scale of activities involved it is deemed necessary to seek Committee approval.

#### The Proposed Events

- 3.3 The two proposed events would take place on the front lawns only. Areas such as the Titanic Garden and Cenotaph will remain open to the public and access to the City Hall itself will not be affected.

- 3.3.1 Each event would be free to enter. In each case, the organisers would be providing all stewarding/marshalling staff and first aiders and would of course have to comply with the usual conditions including indemnities for damage and submission of a formal event-management plan.

#### **22nd July, 2022 - Belfast Pride Family Fun Day**

- 3.4 This event would take place on the front lawns would include a radio roadshow, various performers on a stage, food stalls and children's attractions. The event would last from 12 noon to 5.00 pm, although access would be required earlier and later in the day for set ups and strip downs. The event would be free and the organisers estimate that up to 5,000 people would be in attendance.

#### **30th July, 2022 Féile Rock's Pride Concert**

- 3.5 A request has been received from Feile and Phobail to use the front lawns for the 'City Hall Rocks Back' event, featuring local young and emerging bands from all sections of the community and the type of music played includes Rock, Blues, Heavy Metal, Rap Ska and Reggae. The organisers require use of the grounds between 8 am and 7.30 pm for stage and sound set ups and strip downs. The event itself takes place between 1 pm and 5 pm.

3.6	<p>Depending on the weather the event could attract up 2,000 people. The profile of those attending includes family and followers of the bands, plus local and overseas visitors in the city for the day. plan etc. Previous events have taken place in the grounds without incident.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There would be no costs for the Council as the various organisers would bear any/all stewarding and equipment costs etc themselves. The utilities costs on the day are of a very minor nature and the normal event support in the form of electrical and water provision in the grounds will be provided.</p> <p>There are no concerns from an asset management point of view, although the organisers would be required to provide the usual insurances, indemnities and obligations.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>3.7 There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.</p>
4.0	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality</b>
<b>Date:</b>	8th April, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Walsh, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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	This report, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function rooms received up to 1st April 2022 which appear to the Function Management Unit to comply with the criteria previously established by the Committee and are recommended for approval.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approve the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 1 April 2022 as set out in the attached appendix; and</li> <li>• review options for the future delivery of hospitality for functions and approve one recommendation.</li> </ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	Members will be aware that the Committee, at its meeting on 6th January 2017, agreed to modify the criteria governing access to the City Hall function rooms for external organisations.
3.2	The Committee also agreed to the implementation of room-hire charges for some categories of function, and also revised the approach to the provision of civic hospitality for functions on foot of the agreed efficiency programme. Some further modifications to this approach were agreed by the Committee on 24th March and 23rd June 2017 and 23rd June and 25th October 2019.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.3	The existing revised criteria and scale of charges have been applied to the various requests received and the recommendations herein are offered to the Committee on this basis for approval.
3.4	The schedule attached covers 3 applications for functions, scheduled for 2022.
	<u>COVID implications</u>
3.5	In managing and delivering future functions, liaison with and guidance for organisers will be provided by officers to ensure compliance with any relevant social distancing guidelines at the time of their function. Committee approval for their function to take place in City Hall is recommended on the basis of their compliance to this caveat and what is permissible and feasible in City Hall function rooms.
	<u>Hospitality for Functions</u>
3.6	For many years, the Council has offered hospitality for certain functions as a welcome to the City Hall. In October 2019, the Committee agreed in lieu of hospitality to offer complimentary room hire and waive any room charges to all conference organisers supported by Visit Belfast wishing to host a dinner or reception in the City Hall. This policy has provided very successful and greatly assisted function organisers.
3.7	In recent years hospitality for functions has been discretionary and recommendation is sought from the Committee for future plans. Complimentary hospitality currently offers £500 towards delivery of tea/coffee/biscuits reception or wine/ soft drinks reception. This can cause a number of operational challenges:

<p>3.8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for larger functions, the £500 contribution does not cover the catering for all guests at the drinks reception, meaning that organisers need to supplement this hospitality which causes confusion for the client and catering team.</li> <li>• changes in resourcing in recent years means that staff who provided these receptions are no longer in the Council and the functions team has been honouring approved receptions using external catering companies.</li> </ul> <p>Options for the future functions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to continue to offer hospitality/support for organisations celebrating a significant anniversary – 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. This support would be a monetary contribution of £500 (<i>guests up to 250</i>) or £750 (<i>guests 250 up to 500</i>) provided to the organiser to assist in the delivery of their celebratory function in City Hall. This financial support would be acknowledged on function promotional material – menus, invitations. OR</li> <li>2. to honour existing hospitality approved and cease offering hospitality at future functions; however, the City Hall continue to offer complimentary room hire to charities, community and voluntary groups to welcome and support their function at City Hall.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p>
<p>3.9</p>	<p>The implementation of charging for external functions has commenced, in line with the Committee’s decisions in the matter. Hospitality for functions will be funded out of the existing civic events budget.</p>
<p>3.10</p>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Document Attached</b></p>
	<p>Schedule of function requests received up to 1st April, 2022</p>

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## APRIL 2022 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
<b>2022 EVENTS</b>						
Law Society of Northern Ireland	18 May 2022	<b>Conference Welcome Reception</b> for guests attending their 2-day conference taking place in ICC Belfast.  Numbers attending - 100	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Building Limes Forum	3 September 2022	<b>Annual Conference Reception and Dinner</b> for delegates attending a 3-day conference taking place in QUB.  Numbers attending - 100	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
The Pony Club	2 November 2022	<b>Annual Conference Reception and Dinner</b> for delegates attending a 3-day conference taking place in ICC Belfast.  Numbers attending - 100	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

*\*For all events noted above numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of each event.*

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## ACTIVE BELFAST LIMITED BOARD

Monday, 11th April, 2022

### MEETING OF ACTIVE BELFAST LIMITED BOARD

(Held remotely via Microsoft Teams)

#### Attendees

- Directors:** Mr. J. McGuigan (Chairperson)  
Councillor Corr  
Councillor McCann  
Councillor Newton and  
Mr. K. Ellison.
- Officers:** Mr. N. Munnis, Partnership Manager; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.
- GLL:** Mr. J. Michael, Business Manager; and  
Mr. A. Walker, Partnership Manager.

#### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor McLaughlin, Mrs. K. McCullough and Mr. C. Morrison.

#### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March were approved. It was reported that those minutes had been noted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 28th March.

#### Matters Arising

The Board noted that, following consultation with the Council's Head of Human Resources, the Partnership Manager would shortly be forwarding to Mr. Ellison a response to the issues which he had raised around BCC/GLL HR policy alignment.

It noted also that a process to appoint an external contractor to remove extensive graffiti from the façade of Loughside Recreation Centre had now been initiated.

#### Director Attendance Statement

The Board noted that there were no issues to report in terms of non-attendance of Directors at meetings.

## Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

The Partnership Manager informed the Board that it had been the intention to present at this meeting reports for 2022/23 on strategic planning and Directors' declarations of interest. However, in light of the decision which had been taken by the Council around future governance arrangements, details of which would be provided later in the meeting, these would not now be presented.

Noted.

(Mr. Michael and Mr. Walker were admitted to the meeting at this point.)

### Six-Monthly Update on GLL Community Engagement

The Board considered the following report which had been prepared by GLL:

**“1.0     Purpose of Report**

**1.1     To present the Board with a six-monthly community engagement update report for the period October 2021 – March 2022**

**2.0     Recommendation**

**2.1     The Board is requested to note the report.**

**3.0     Main Report**

**3.1     GLL is a leading social enterprise. One of the core priorities of GLL is to ensure full access for all members of the community and to encourage more people to be more active, more often.**

**3.2     GLL's Regional Business Manager has a key focus to drive participation and usage, ensuring more people from every background are regularly and meaningfully engaged and taking part in sport and physical activity. To continue on progress made, GLL has a team of three that focus on participation and another staff member with a focus on group exercise.**

**3.3     The easing of Covid-19 restrictions has resulted in a wide range of groups and activities returning to centres. Programme opportunities have increased and GLL are now delivering in a more normal operating environment.**

**3.4     GLL is committed to support community access offering varied opportunities delivered in centres that are accessible, affordable and not inhibiting.**

**3.5     GLL re-invests through the GLL Foundations (Sport and Communities) that provide and sustain support for community cohesion and talented individuals.**

**3.6** 53% of Belfast GLL members benefit from concessionary charges thereby helping to remove affordability as a barrier to participation.

**3.7** **Sports Programmes**

**3.7.1** Between October and March 2022, GLL has supported a number of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in the delivery of their holiday programmes, grassroots events and performance programmes.

**3.7.2** In the past six months, centres have supported a number of regional and national sporting events. Brook has support Country Antrim Boxing tournaments in November and February. Ballysillan have hosted the all-Ireland Powerchair Championships along with the Antrim 6's boxing competition. Lisnasharragh continues to host the all-Ireland Water Polo championships with regular competition on Saturday evenings. Lisnasharragh has also supports the Irish under 17 Water Polo Cup, Ju-Jitsu National Grading, relay change over point for the Belfast Marathon and extended opening hours for Short Course Swimming Galas.

**3.7.3** In partnership with Irish FA, GLL provides female only football sessions at four centres across the city through the Shooting Stars Programme. These are delivered at Brook, Girdwood, Lisnasharragh and Shankill to girls aged 4 to 11 years.

**3.7.4** Holiday camps have been secured with the Irish FA, NI Netball and Badminton over the Easter period.

**3.7.5** GLL has introduced Pickleball in two centres over the past three months. Over 60s sessions have been provided in Olympia and Lisnasharragh on Tuesday and Thursday mornings respectively. A family session is also on offer at Lisnasharragh on Wednesday evenings. Currently over 45 people are participating each week in Pickleball, which can be played by all ages and abilities. GLL plans to expand the programme in the coming months.

**3.7.6** GLL supports over 200 sports clubs and performance squads weekly across leisure facilities in Belfast. Leisure centres in Belfast are utilised for club and performance training and service a variety of sports. The centres currently cater for football, Gaelic games, swimming, water polo, sub aqua, kayaking, martial arts, boxing, basketball, netball, badminton, cricket, tennis, climbing, gymnastics and disability sports such as boccia and power chair football.

- 3.7.7** GLL centres are also supporting local sports clubs by offering strength and conditioning sessions to supplement team training sessions.
- 3.7.8** Brook Leisure Centre has a swimming pool specifically designed to cater for those with sensory needs and those with wide range of disabilities. The centre works in partnership with Swimming Buddies, an organisation that specialises in Autism friendly swimming lessons. A number of sessions are being offered throughout the week delivered by this specialist partner. In addition to this, the centre offers pool sensory sessions to the general public within the weekly timetable.
- 3.7.9** Swim School continues to grow in Belfast, with over 4,200 children enrolled on the programme. Lisnasharragh has recently surpasses 1,000 pupils and plans are in place for further expansion across the city in 2022 with a collective target of 5,000 to be achieved by the end of the year.
- 3.7.10** Centres also provide crash course swimming programmes to further assist pupils in their water confidence and swimming development. These have been delivered during the Christmas period and with Easter programmes planned for Olympia and Lisnasharragh.
- 3.7.11** Brook and Olympia continue to support the Football Management Company in the delivery of their football and education programme. Avoniel have also hosted sessions from Playing for the Future as well as the Asmir Begovic academy. The centre is also in discussions with Glasgow Rangers about providing facilities for their academy programme on Sunday afternoons.
- 3.8** **Family Programming**
- 3.8.1** GLL has created a balanced programme of activities across all centres allowing families to participate. 367 classes are offered each week which also include a blend of basic and junior group exercise classes that can be enjoyed by those wanting to work at a lower intensity.
- 3.8.2** Centres have increased the number of junior gym sessions offered throughout the week and during holiday periods. In addition, adult and child gym sessions have been included across the city which permit children from the age of 9 to workout under their parent's supervision.
- 3.8.3** A new kids fitness programme in partnership with the Brand X Method has been piloted in March and will officially launch in April. This programme will engage children aged between 4 and 17 to focus on their fitness and athletic performance.

- 3.8.4** Youth and family products such as water slides, Surf Belfast and the Aqua Play at Andersonstown, Air Venture at Brook and Aqua Splash at Lisnasharragh were extremely popular with young people and families over the Christmas and half term period. GLL have also utilised these products to engage a number youth and community groups to access the centres as part of their own holiday intervention programmes.
- 3.8.5** Pool parties continue to be delivered at Brook Leisure Centre on Friday evenings and a new family friendly aqua aerobic session is currently being piloted and performing well.
- 3.8.6** Pool programming has been reviewed to include more Swim for All sessions across the city including family fun and float-based sessions. Teaching pools and confidence water have opened for peak sessions to provide a greater service to families, particularly at the weekends.
- 3.8.7** Mother and toddler and baby sensory pool sessions have also been added to the product, offering in the likes of Andersonstown, Brook and Grove. These programmes will be expanded to include Olympia and Lisnasharragh later in the year to offer more families an early opportunity for their child to develop water confidence.
- 3.8.8** Birthday parties have returned and we are beginning to see a return towards pre-pandemic booking levels. GLL offers a wide range of provision for birthday parties including bouncy castles, climbing wall, sports (indoor and outdoor) along with the new products mentioned in this report. GLL offer a menu of prices to ensure that barriers to access are limited and that all communities can be accommodated.
- 3.8.9** The soft play facility at Grove has reopened and now provides drop-in sessions throughout the week as well as a birthday party option for children of pre school and primary age.
- 3.9** **School and Youth Programmes**
- 3.9.1** School swimming continues to increase each month. Currently, 76 Primary and Post Primary schools attend weekly sessions with 183 lessons delivered across 9 pools.
- 3.9.2** NGBs deliver weekly programmes in Avoniel, Brook, Falls, Olympia, Lisnasharragh and Shankill to encourage local children to access sport. These are currently delivered by Netball NI, Irish FA, Ulster Badminton and Ulster Boxing.
- 3.9.3** Centres host a variety of after schools' programmes delivered by supporting partners. Examples include football and boxing sessions at Avoniel, school's basketball at

Brook, multi sports coaching and sensory swimming sessions at Brook for special schools. Grove hosts a Swim Ulster after school water polo programme every Thursday and the programme will run until the end of May.

- 3.9.4 Since opening in November 2021, Avoniel has engaged with a variety of partners to ensure both the pitches and community spaces are utilised at non-peak times. The centre has linked with Sport Changes Lives in the provision of an intervention programme focusing on at risk teenagers, a digital arts academy through GIGA and a variety of Education Authority evening youth programmes.
- 3.9.5 Sure Start mother and toddler pool sessions are delivered at Falls and aqua aerobics at Olympia. Female only group exercise classes are also delivered at Andersonstown, Avoniel and Olympia.
- 3.9.6 Falls Leisure Centre is currently supporting Comfort NI which provide a diversionary football programme for young people from ethnic minority groups.
- 3.10 **Community Outreach**
- 3.10.1 Andersonstown, Better Gym Belfast, Lisnasharragh and Olympia all supported the Belfast fitness challenge in which over 400 people were provided with a one-month free membership and advice and assistance to achieve their fitness goals.
- 3.10.2 Girdwood Community Hub currently facilitates a Community Food Bank which is in operation Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 to 13:00.
- 3.10.3 A number of facilities supported Christmas food collections for a variety of local charities.
- 3.10.4 GLL continues to partner with 'Menshed' by offering Girdwood Community Hub, Brook and Whiterock where the focus is on improving mental health for men.
- 3.10.5 GLL facilitates the Colin Autism Support Group for parents of children with autism and other learning disabilities.
- 3.10.6 GLL has funded a number NPLQ courses over the past six months to provide opportunities for local people to gain a pool lifeguard qualification and open up employment opportunities.
- 3.10.7 Falls Leisure Centre supports the work of the Maureen Sheehan Centre in the delivery of water polo and danderball mornings for senior participants. The centre also works with the NOW group in the delivery of a group exercise programme for NOW group service users.

- 3.10.8 Brook Leisure Centre has delivered a number of community initiatives over the past six months. These include a 6-week men's health and fitness programme for Sure Start dads, creativity month in March, a Chest, Heart and Stroke charity football tournament and the West Belfast Sports and Wellbeing Forum fundraising day.**
- 3.10.9 Avoniel supports East Belfast Community Development Association in providing meeting space to deliver programmes and will be rolling out partnership programmes later in 2022. The centre also supports a local church group with their weekly meetings with over 100 attendees.**
- 3.10.10 Whiterock Leisure Centre is delivering weekly disability sports sessions to the Upper Springfield Development Trust and Focus Group. The centre also supports Newhill Community Centre in the delivery of health and fitness advice to various groups and users from the local community.**
- 3.10.11 Ballysillan Leisure Centre is currently working with Peace Players to offer a weekly cross community sports programme. The centre has also been utilised as a vaccination centre for local schools.**
- 3.10.12 Grove Wellbeing Centre has supported Mountcollyer Youth Club whilst their centre is closed for repairs. This involved facilitating evening sessions over a six-month period. The centre has also been utilised in November and January to deliver Covid vaccination clinics.**
- 3.11 Older Participant Programmes**
- 3.11.1 Over 16% of all current Belfast members are aged 60+**
- 3.11.2 Free access for over 60's before 11 am Monday to Friday.**
- 3.11.3 GLL has a daily programme of activities targeted at and suitable for older people and continue to open up further opportunities as Covid restrictions ease.**
- 3.11.4 GLL delivers chronic disease (Cancer and Cardiac) rehabilitation programmes, whilst also supporting and hosting Diabetes and Strength & Balance programmes. Many of the referrals for these interventions are older people.**
- 3.11.5 A 'Falls Prevention' programme is delivered across the city by the Belfast Trust and supported by the GLL Healthwise team.**
- 3.11.6 GLL continues to deliver a 'basic' physical activity programming designed to target referrals coming off the**

rehabilitation programmes and is also suitable for members looking for a lower level/low impact workout. In addition to this, walking groups have become part of the mainstream group exercise offering so can be accessed by the wider membership and not just those on PARS.

- 3.11.7 Senior activity mornings are being delivered across the city with activities ranging from danderball, table tennis, badminton, pickleball, boccia, yoga, aqua aerobics, legs, bums and tums and indoor bowls.”

After discussion, the Board noted the contents of the report.

(Mr. Michael and Mr. Walker left the meeting at this point.)

### **Six-Monthly Update on Facility Management and Centre Inspections**

The Partnership Manager submitted for the Board’s consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Board on the condition of the leisure facilities and the ongoing contract governance inspection programme.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Board is requested to note the report.

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Since early 2016, leisure centres have been subject to a programme of routine inspections. Each centre is inspected twice in every quarter. Inspections visits are always carried out by the Partnership Manager. Visits are unannounced and the Partnership Manager is accompanied by a member of the centre management team, normally the General Manager or the Duty Manager on shift.
- 3.2 The visits are designed to focus on building maintenance, cleaning and Health and Safety.

Observations are scored against a check sheet of 355 items with a clear definition of the expected standard for each. Each measure is scored out of 5 with a score of 4 demonstrating full compliance with the criteria set. Score definitions are as follows:

SCORING LEVELS		Red Rating Category 4	20% - 59.99% (average score of 2.99 or below per measure)
All measures scored from 1 - 5		Amber Rating Category 3	60% - 74.99% (average score between 3.00 - 3.74 per measure)
1 = Substantially below target standard. Significant and urgent improvement required.		Green Rating Category 2	75% - 84.99% (average score between 3.75 - 4.24 per measure)
2 = Below target standard. Improvements required.		Gold Rating Category 1	85%+ (average score of 4.25 or above per measure)
3 = Slightly below target standard. Minor improvements required.			
4 = Meeting target standard. Some improvements required to achieve 5* facility			
5 = Exceeding target standards. 5* facility			

**3.3 The GLL Regional Management Team (RLT) and each centre's General Manager receives a detailed report of all scores, with an explanation for any scores of 3 or below, along with a summary report including an overall centre score. The RLT also receives a centre comparison table which includes an overall service score.**

**3.4 In the last six months of the current financial year (October 2021 – March 2022), four inspections were carried out at each centre. The following overall service scores were recorded demonstrating the very high standards maintained across the estate:**

**1st half year (April – September 2021)**

Q1 V1	79.03%
Q1 V2	80.77%
Q2 V1	80.79%
Q2 V2	80.76%

**2nd half year (October 2021 – March 2022)**

Q3 V1	81.02%
Q3 V2	81.41%
Q4 V1	81.50%
Q4 V2	81.49%

**3.5 Movement from 79.03% in Q1 V1 to 81.49% in Q4 V2 should be accepted as evidence of a significant improvement in facility management related operating procedures. When formal inspections commenced in 2016/17, initial average service scores recorded were as low as 72.75% using the same**

inspection protocols and scoring mechanism as used today. Rapid improvements were made resulting in scores of circa 78% being achieved by early 2017/18.

- 3.6 The positive direction of travel is, undoubtedly, due in part to the opening of four new centres. This naturally lifts the overall service average. This should not detract from the general improvements observed at each individual centre.
- 3.7 In the four inspection visits completed in Q3 and Q4, all centres scored 'green' (75.00-84.99%) in their overall centre assessment. The lowest scoring centres are now all consistently achieving scores in excess of 78.5%. Eight out of fifteen centres scored over 80% in Q4 V2. This should be regarded as an excellent result as full compliance with all listed criteria would result in a score of 80%. The top five scoring centres consistently score above 83%.
- 3.8 The following outcomes are particularly encouraging:
- a) The high standards being delivered by the management and teams at the new LTP centres;
  - b) The significant improvements evidenced over the last six months (and indeed the full year) at Grove, Falls and Ballysillan where standards had previously been challenging;
  - c) The general uplift in care/cleaning of wet areas (changing, showers and toilets);
  - d) Facility maintenance reaction times; and
  - e) Improvements at the older centres and their contribution to the overall service average scores.
- 3.9 Areas requiring ongoing attention and focus:
- a) Synthetic pitch surface maintenance and litter picking (BCC/GLL);
  - b) Lighting - Bulb replacement (GLL);
  - c) General grounds maintenance (planted areas) (BCC).
- 3.10 While there is still work to be done in certain areas at specific centres, general facility management is robust and working relationships between the responsible departments and GLL remain strong.
- 3.11 Monitoring is designed to ensure that contract standards are maintained and specifically that customer service, in relation to the centre environments, is in line with expectations for a premier leisure service.

- 3.12 Scores primarily reflect the quality of GLL management systems and normal operating procedures alongside the day-to-day performance of the management and staff at each centre.
- 3.13 Maintaining the centres to the required standards is a joint responsibility shared by BCC and GLL. Many elements of the centre maintenance programme and all of the maintenance of our car parks, paths and planted areas, including the synthetic pitches, sits with BCC facility maintenance and BCC Parks sections respectively. Scoring reflects observations in these areas even though responsibility for delivery does not sit with GLL.
- 3.14 Overall, GLL's management systems, BCC routine maintenance regimes and the contract governance/monitoring programme combine to provide a robust partnership that consistently provides early identification of issues and timely resolutions.
- 3.15 All centres are measured against the same standards. However, it should be noted that the estate includes centres of very different ages with expected variations in the fabric of the buildings. Naturally the most recently opened LTP centres are in the very best condition and are expected to score higher. Buildings fall into the following age categories:

a) New (opening since 2016)

Girdwood CH  
Olympia LC  
Better Gym Belfast City Council (GLL)  
Better Gym Connswater (GLL)  
Lisnasharragh LC Brook LC  
Andersonstown LC  
Avoniel LC

*Note – BGB and BGC are owned and managed directly by GLL within/alongside the contract*

b) Mid range (opened 2000 – 2010)

Grove LC  
Falls LC

c) Older (opened pre-1990)

Ballysillan LC  
Belvoir RC  
Loughside RC (currently closed)  
Shankill LC  
Ozone/Indoor Tennis Centre  
Whiterock LC

*Note - Ozone was extended in the mid 90's to include indoor tennis and climbing*

- 3.16 The inspection programme serves to identify common themes evidenced at multiple sites. Themes such as light bulb replacement (indoor and out), contractor sign in protocols, grounds maintenance and wet area cleaning have been identified and resolved as a direct result of the monitoring programme.
- 3.17 Inspection reports feature prominently in ongoing fortnightly BCC/GLL operational meetings. These meetings are scheduled every second Friday and provide a valuable opportunity to explore any issues highlighted through the inspections and to discuss actions/options for continuous improvement.”

In response to an issue which had been raised by a Director, the Partnership Manager confirmed that he would, later in the month, be attending a meeting involving GLL representatives and Council facility maintenance managers to review the existing split responsibilities matrix and examine ways in which the current process for raising works orders could be streamlined.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

**Policy and Procedure Alignment –  
Equality and Diversity/Health and Safety**

The Partnership Manager submitted for the Board's consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an annual confirmation statement in relation to both Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety policy and procedure alignments.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Board is requested to record receipt of this report and note the statements of policy alignment as presented at 3.7 and 3.11 below.

**Main Report**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 16th January 2017, the Board approved a programme to evaluate key policy alignments to demonstrate that GLL policies and operating procedures reflect those of Belfast City Council. This requirement is set out in the partnership specification and tri-partite contract documentation.

- 3.2 Within the current annual board report schedule, the relevant report on both Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety is due in Quarter 1 (April 2022).

#### Equality and Diversity

- 3.3 On 8th April 2019, the Board approved the third annual report in relation to Equality and Diversity alignment.
- 3.4 Policy alignment in relation to Equality and Diversity was not reported in 2020 or 2021 due to Covid related lockdowns and operating restrictions.
- 3.5 At the time of the original assessment, the relevant policy and procedure alignment was very positive. Following discussions between GLL and BCC it was agreed that existing policies, operational practices and activity programming were substantially aligned and an alignment assurance statement was agreed.
- 3.6 By its nature, equality and diversity is subject to ongoing changes in legislation and best practice guidance. BCC policy and leisure centre operating procedures are continually under review. Consequently, agreement is in place to ensure that when policy decisions emerge, GLL operating procedures are updated to reflect the relevant policy changes.
- 3.7 A review of the previous analysis alongside current policies and procedures concludes that GLL and BCC equality and diversity positions remain substantially aligned. Consequently, we are satisfied that the current arrangements and outputs support the following statement:

*'At 11th April 2022, BCC and GLL policies and operational procedures in relation to Equality and Diversity are closely aligned with no significant variances or areas of concern to address.'*

#### Health and Safety

- 3.8 Health and Safety is categorised as a 'corporate risk' for BCC. The consequences of non-compliance with legislation and industry best practice are grave in relation to potential financial loss, reputational damage and legal action.
- 3.9 Assessment of the relevant policy and procedure alignments, comparing BCC and GLL, has been very positive. Information gathered through a number of approaches clearly indicates that existing policies, written 'normal operating procedures (NOPs)' and observed operational practices are substantially aligned and an alignment assurance statement was agreed.
- 3.10 Assessment of GLL's Health and Safety procedures has included the following four elements:

- a) **BCC Monitoring Visits** – BCC conducts two centre inspection visits per quarter in every centre. The visits focus on cleaning, maintenance and health and safety. In relation to health and safety, visual inspections/observations include room security, equipment and material storage, lifeguarding, overall staffing levels and risk assessment files. Observations are scored and reports sent to each centre manager and the GLL Regional Management Team. Throughout 2021/22, a total of 115 centre inspections raised no serious H&S concerns and resulted in no formal rectification notices being issued to GLL.
- b) **Findings within the 2017 Independent Review of Leisure** – Board members will be familiar with the independent review of leisure commissioned by BCC in 2017. The final report was presented to BCC in February 2018 and discussed further at a workshop on 16th May 2018. The report concluded that: ‘no evidence was found to suggest that they are operating the service outside of health and safety legislation and relevant guidance.’
- c) **BCC Desktop Review of GLL Written Policies and Procedures** – BCC corporate H&S section conducted a desktop exercise to compare GLL H&S policies and written procedures with those currently in place within BCC. The findings indicated that GLL H&S paperwork and related files are up to date and in line with H&S legislation. This exercise did not assess the practical application of GLL policies and concluded that a more thorough independent audit of operational practices and culture would be the best way to complete the overall review. As a result, BCC commissioned an independent audit.
- d) **Independent Health and Safety Audit** – In March 2019 BCC appointed Quadra Consulting Ltd to conduct H&S compliance audits in every centre. Following Covid pandemic related delays the review was finally completed in March 2022. All visits were unannounced. The audit sought to establish an overall level of assurance for each centre with ratings being low, moderate, high or excellent. The final report will be presented to BCC in the coming weeks. Initial review of the executive summary has been very encouraging with (of the sixteen centres audited) 4 achieved a ‘moderate’ assurance rating, 9 were rated as ‘high’ and 3 as ‘excellent’. None were rated as ‘low’.

This was a substantial commitment and reflects the serious nature of H&S management in the leisure management environment.

- 3.11 The review/monitoring actions as detailed above in 3.10 (a - c) alongside the independent audit described in 3.10 (d) demonstrates that GLL and BCC Health and Safety positions are substantially aligned. Consequently, we are satisfied that the current position supports the following statement:

*'At 11th April 2022, BCC and GLL policies and operational procedures in relation to Health and Safety are closely aligned with no significant variances or areas of concern to address.'*

After discussion, the Board recorded receipt of the report and noted the statements of policy alignment for (i) Equality and Diversity and (ii) Health and Safety.

### **Update on Review of Leisure Operating Model Governance Arrangements**

The Partnership Manager submitted for the Board's consideration the following report:

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Board on the final report arising from the review of the leisure service governance arrangements and the resulting Council decision.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Board is requested to note the information provided and in particular the options and recommendations presented at 3.3 and 3.7 respectively.
- 2.2 The Board is requested to formally consider the approach from BCC to approve a voluntary and solvent winding up of the company as set out below at 3.11.
- 2.3 The Board is requested to agree, in principle, that a special board meeting be convened before June, as set out at 3.13 below to consider next steps.

#### **3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Members are reminded that in November 2020, the SP and R Committee agreed to review the tri-partite leisure model and the ABL Board, including its membership and governance arrangements. Terms of reference were approved in June 2021 and First Point Management and Consultancy Limited was appointed to conduct the review.

The review entailed an extensive desktop review together with a programme of stakeholder consultations and was concluded with submission of the draft report on 2nd February 2022. The final report was scheduled to be presented to the SP&R Committee on 28th March.

This report sets out the main elements of the review findings, proposals and recommendations.

- 3.2 The report has concluded that the tri-partite arrangement in general and ABL in particular made a positive contribution in the early years to the Leisure contract 'settling in' and the establishment of stable contract compliance assurance protocols. The report states that over time as the contract matured ABL's position and influence has diminished, stating:

*'To some extent ABL has become embroiled in operational detail from the outset which has effectively set in motion a circular process of contract monitoring with little space for anything else, and limited opportunity to genuinely add value to the partnership.'*

*'The majority of consultees felt that the Council through SP&R and ultimately Full Council realistically held the power and control. It should be noted that GLL have a direct relationship with the Council that often-bypasses ABL.'*

*'There is no sense of empowerment within ABL; a significant number of consultees described ABL as 'toothless'.'*

Critical questions for consideration are posed and answered within the report including:

*'The key question is:*

*Now that the contract is into its 7th year and has matured considerably, is the current arrangement still fit for purpose?*

*The simple answer to this question is no. This review is timely as the leisure management contract is now well established, the transitional issues have progressed considerably, the service is moving into a post pandemic recovery period and the independent directors are approaching the end of their term of office.*

*Contract compliance, performance management and holding the operator to account could be undertaken directly by the Council. However, full consideration should be given into increasing the resources available to undertake this function given the leisure estate has expanded from 10 to 16 facilities through the LTP with the potential for further expansion.*

*This then questions the future of ABL in its current composition, if its core activity over the past seven years is undertaken directly by the Council in the future, then the continuance of ABL does not fulfil any meaningful purpose.'*

3.3 The following three options were presented:

**Option 1** – Do nothing;

**Option 2** - Bring Contract Compliance and Performance Monitoring of GLL back into the Council and retain ABL in a different form to focus on its broader objectives;

**Option 3** - Bring Contract Compliance and Performance Monitoring of GLL back into the Council and commence the winding up of ABL.

3.4 Option 1 was not recommended. Options 2 and 3 were recommended for further consideration.

3.5 Option 3 was proposed as the preferred way forward, based on the following assessment of the report findings:

a) There is little evidence to suggest that Council would be minded to devolve the required level of responsibility and autonomy to ABL to allow it to fulfill a substantially different function and focus on its broader objectives as proposed in Option 2.

b) Contract compliance and performance monitoring is already substantially managed through the City and Neighbourhood Services Department (CNS). Broader contract management functions could be easily transferred to Council and legal/contractual amendments put in place via provisions within the existing contract documentation.

c) There are currently only three of nine independent director positions filled on the ABL board. The reduction has been through natural wastage but has been exacerbated with recruitment being postponed during the pandemic and more recently pending the outcome of this review. All three sitting independent volunteer directors (including the chair) will reach the end of their tenure on the board by December 2022.

3.6 Conclusions set out in the report are clear and unambiguous. Specifically stating:

*'ABL has undoubtedly provided a useful vehicle to navigate through the formative years of the contract with GLL'*

*'However, despite the intention for ABL to have a much wider influence on community and health outcomes as expressed in its 'objects' it has, almost by default done little more than fulfil a contract compliance and performance monitoring role for the Council.'*

*'With limited exceptions ABL adds little value to leisure per se and has limited powers; it is in effect a 'toothless client'.'*

*'There is no genuine justification for the continuance of ABL in its current form, as the contract management function can be managed directly by the Council through the Partnership Manager.'*

- 3.7** The report included the following recommendations:
- a) Consider the Options as set out in this report;
  - b) Take further legal advice on any potential implications and necessary steps to be taken to implement the preferred option;
  - c) Consult the parties to the current Leisure Management Arrangements on the options as set out in the report;
  - d) Approach Active Belfast Limited to approve a voluntary and solvent winding up of the company;
  - e) Transfer the contract monitoring function of GLL directly to the Council;
  - f) Establishing an additional contract monitoring post to support this function in consideration of the expansion of the leisure estate and to support succession planning;
  - g) Formally acknowledge the commitment and contribution of all current and former Directors of Active Belfast Limited.
- 3.8** The final review report was presented to the SP&R Committee on 25th March 2022. After consideration, the Committee approved Option 3 as the preferred way forward. Namely, to bring Contract Compliance and Performance Monitoring of GLL back into the Council and commence the winding up of ABL.
- 3.9** At the time of writing, the SP&R Committee decision is pending ratification by full Council on 4th April. The Council's decision will be confirmed verbally at the meeting.
- 3.10** Having sought legal advice, there will be a number of actions required as a result of Council's decision including:
- a) Establishment of a time frame for winding up ABL, moving contract compliance and performance monitoring to Council control and the revision of contract documentation;
  - b) Review of contractual arrangements to move from a tri-partite to a bi-partite model; and

**c) The formal winding up of ABL, along with all associated Companies House administration.**

- 3.11 In relation to recommendation (d) in 3.7 above, the Council is now formally approaching Active Belfast Limited to approve a voluntary and solvent winding up of the company**
- 3.12 Subject to Board approval of a voluntary winding up of the company, Council officers will move to establish the process and time frame required to finalise arrangements.**
- 3.13 The next ABL Board meeting is scheduled to take place on 6th June. Given the Council's decision, Board approval is requested to convene a special meeting, before June, specifically to consider details of the winding up process and implications for the conclusion of company business. It is proposed that a meeting date be agreed as soon possible after all essential information/detail is available."**

The Partnership Manager provided a brief overview of the report and confirmed that the Council, on 4th April, had ratified the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th March to adopt Option 3, as recommended within the consultant's report. As a result, contract compliance and performance monitoring of GLL would return to the Council and the process leading to the winding up of Active Belfast Limited would commence.

During a lengthy discussion, the Chairperson, in raising a number of issues around the Council's decision, highlighted the need for those Directors who had yet to view the consultant's report to be provided with a copy in full, in advance of the special meeting being recommended to consider the next steps.

Mr. Ellison pointed out that the Active Belfast Limited Board provided Trades Unions with a valuable opportunity to engage, on behalf of their members, with GLL on leisure-related issues. In the absence of any meaningful alternative being proposed, he confirmed that he was opposed to the Council's decision.

After further discussion, the Board agreed, with four Directors voting for and one against, to adopt the recommendations contained within the report and noted that the special meeting would be convened before the end of May.

The Board noted also that the Partnership Manager would investigate the potential for Directors to be provided with a copy of the consultant's report in full at the earliest opportunity and would discuss with Mr. Colin Campbell, Divisional Solicitor and with Advance Accounting, their respective roles at the special meeting.

**Other Business**

No additional items of business were raised.

Chairperson

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