

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



**Belfast
City Council**

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will be a hybrid meeting (both remote and in person) in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Wednesday, 8th March, 2023 at 5.15 pm, 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
- (d) Schedule of Meetings Update (Pages 1 - 2)

2. Presentation

- (a) Visit Belfast Business Plan 23-24 (Pages 3 - 34)

3. Restricted Items

- (a) Financial Reporting - Quarter 3 2022/23 (Pages 35 - 42)
- (b) Future City Centre - Vacant to Vibrant (Pages 43 - 50)
- (c) Belfast Zoo - Fees and Charges (Pages 51 - 52)

4. **Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Responses from the Department for Infrastructure (Pages 53 - 62)
- (b) Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker (Pages 63 - 66)
- (c) Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 Update (Pages 67 - 72)
- (d) Update on DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund (Pages 73 - 80)
- (e) Lobbying/Advocacy Paper and Regeneration Framework (Pages 81 - 84)

5. **Growing Business & the Economy**

- (a) Work Plan - 23-24 Enterprise & Business Growth (Pages 85 - 94)
- (b) Work Plan - 23-24 Employability & Skills (Pages 95 - 106)

6. **Positioning the City to Compete**

- (a) Christmas Evaluation 2022 (Pages 107 - 120)

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

- (a) Lifelong Learning Alliance (Cllr Spratt to raise)



Subject:	Schedule of Meetings Update 2023
Date:	8th March, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer
Contact Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To advise the Committee of a change to the dates of the June meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to approve the following changes to the dates of the Committee Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly meeting from Wednesday, 7th June to Wednesday, 14th June: and Special meeting from Wednesday, 21st June to Wednesday, 28th June.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>It had previously been agreed that the June monthly meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 7th June, and the Special meeting would be held on Wednesday, 21st June. However, due to a change in the date of the Local Government Elections it has been necessary to move the meetings to later in the month.</p>
3.2	<p>Accordingly, the meetings will now be held on Wednesday, 14th June and Wednesday, 28th June (Special) at 5.15 p.m.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>



Subject:	Visit Belfast Business Plan 2023-24
Date:	8 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry McMullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to present the request for funding from Visit Belfast for the 2023/24 financial year and to set out the organisation's strategic development and operational delivery, focused on supporting tourism recovery. Members should note that Visit Belfast will be in attendance at the Committee to present the detail of its 2023/24 plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the draft Visit Belfast business plan 2023/24. The overall funding requirement for Visit Belfast in the coming financial year has been taken account of in the revenue estimates that have already been approved by the Council. - Approve funding agreement for 2023-24 and agree a funding allocation of £2,035,710 for 2023/24, subject to the development of a funding agreement confirming priority areas of activity as outlined in the presentation and agreed targets.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that Visit Belfast is the principal Destination Management and Marketing Organisation for the city of Belfast. Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities in Belfast and targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It is a membership organisation with more than 500 member businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works, on behalf of its members, with a range of public and private partners including Tourism NI, Belfast Chamber and the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.
3.2	Visit Belfast is a public/private partnership. Its current Chairperson is Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive of the National Museums of Northern Ireland. Belfast City Council has four Councillor representatives on the Board: Councillor Fred Cobain, Councillor Eric Hanvey, Councillor Paul McCusker and Councillor Séanna Walsh. Also represented on the board are members from the private, public and community sectors.
3.3	The tourism and hospitality industry in Belfast had been going from strength to strength as Belfast continued to drive the regional tourism economy; in 2019 (last published Local Government District tourism statistics by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency NISRA), Belfast hosted 1.9m trips accounting for one third of all tourism trips to Northern Ireland and tourism spend amounted to £417m, 40% of Northern Ireland tourism spend.
3.4	In advance of COVID-19 the trajectory had been positive with forecasts suggesting that the sector would account for around 15% of new jobs in the decade. This was further reinforced by the inclusion of tourism as a key growth sector in the City Deal. This acknowledged the fact that the sector was already a significant economic generator but recognised the need for significant additional investment in order to sustain growth. The council's Cultural Strategy "A City Imagining" also identified the importance of growing the city's sustainable cultural tourism offer through a creative approach that respects the city's heritage and communities.

3.5	Belfast City Council has also developed a 10-year vision and plan for tourism in the city; “Make Yourself at Home”. This committee approved the tourism plan which sets out a vision for the future of tourism in the city that is centred on a people-based and sustainable model of development with a focus on: increasing the coherency of the Belfast experience; supporting quality authentic products; developing skills; and strengthening the city’s position through marketing and communications.
3.6	It is in this context that Visit Belfast has set out their business plan to support the rebuilding of city tourism. Further details of activities that will be undertaken as part of this plan with associated targets will be set out in the presentation to the Committee and are included at Appendix A.
3.7	<p>Rebuilding City Tourism</p> <p>The new tourism plan for Belfast, <i>Make Yourself at Home</i>, recognises both the challenges to tourism recovery as well as the opportunities to rebuild tourism in such a way as to maximise the positive impact that it can have on the city. As the Destination Management (and marketing) Organisation (DMO) for Belfast, Visit Belfast has an important role to play in realising a new vision for tourism. They have responded to this by setting out a new approach:</p> <p><i>“To create and service visitors for Belfast and Northern Ireland in order to generate economic benefit and inclusive growth, creating jobs and prosperity for the city region, enabling Belfast to become a more sustainable place to visit, meet and live in.”</i></p>
3.8	This will require the ongoing adaptation and updating of their strategic planning and delivery recognising that the DMO must respond to the changing environment with a sensitivity to both economic and social context within which they work. This is evident in an increased focus on supporting local tourism and on sustainability.
3.9	Generating £417m tourism spend and supporting 10% of city jobs in 2019, Belfast’s tourism growth and development have seen the city’s tourism industry crucially emerge both as a key pillar of the city economy, and also of strategic importance to the wider visitor economy of Northern Ireland. As the regional driver for the Northern Ireland visitor economy, the Belfast City Region is playing a significant and important part in regional recovery plans.
3.10	Tourism Outlook and indications of Recovery

	<p>Despite the outlook being far from certain, tourism can contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the city with high potential to create jobs quickly and provide the economic impetus for a wider economic recovery.</p>
3.11	<p>According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), international tourism saw stronger than expected results in 2022, backed principally by pent-up demand and the lifting or relaxation of travel restrictions in a large number of countries. More than 900 million tourists travelled internationally in 2022, double the number recorded in 2021. Every global region recorded notable increases in international tourist numbers, with Europe reaching nearly 80% of pre-pandemic levels as it welcomed 585 million arrivals.</p>
3.12	<p>Inbound visitors to United Kingdom and Ireland is recovering strongly - pent up demand and the desire to travel saw inbound visitor recovery rates to both the UK and Ireland exceed the global level of 63% of pre pandemic levels. Visit Britain expects year end figure for visitors and spend in 2022 to reach 73% and 91% of record 2019 levels respectively, whilst Tourism Ireland estimated 2022 tourism spend to the island of Ireland to be at 75% of pre-pandemic levels</p>
3.13	<p>The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local level continues to be impacted by the effects of the pandemic. While tourism related surveys including passenger and household travel surveys have resumed, it remains unclear when we will see a full return of annual government tourism statistics particularly at a local level. Full year statistics for 2022 – 23 are not yet confirmed, however, a range of data analytics from a number of sources have provided valuable metrics illustrating recovery has been stronger than expected including for example - 1.3m hotel rooms sold: 93% of 2019 levels and hotel revenue 19% above 2019 levels; 141 cruise ships welcoming 250,000 cruise visitors came to Belfast: 91% of 2019 levels; 95 conferences attracting 30,711 delegates generating over 103,000 bed nights; 2.3m web visits: 26% above 2019 levels; 551,059 visitor enquiries: 61% of 2019 levels.</p>
3.14	<p>Visit Belfast's business plan mirrors the Council's long term tourism plan to develop a regenerative model and to place tourism at the heart of recovery working with the tourism sector, businesses, organisations and policy makers. In tandem with city tourism development plans, Visit Belfast is proposing to implement new and innovative approaches to its destination sales, marketing and communications and visitor servicing. This will be achieved by utilising the City's core values and place branding to reposition itself, promoting</p>

	authentic Belfast experiences to enhance competitiveness in order to deliver growth that will benefit residents, businesses and visitors equally.						
3.15	<p>Visit Belfast has considered their own strategic and operation plans in the context of the Council's tourism priorities as set out in the 10 year tourism plan: <i>Make Yourself at Home</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grow Belfast: The role of tourism is critical to city recovery. For Belfast this will mean the stabilisation of the tourism industry and the requirement for further growth. - Positioning Belfast: strengthening Belfast's positioning in domestic and international tourism markets - business and leisure - and as a gateway to the region. - Experience Belfast: increasing connectivity between existing and planned for tourism assets will improve the overall Belfast Experience, inspiring the visitor to stay longer, return and to recommend the city to others. - Sustain Belfast: The sustainable development of cities is not just a local imperative it is also a key motivation for the visitor. 						
3.16	<p>Priorities for Visit Belfast's business plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly deliver on the ambitions and priorities set out in <i>Make Yourself at Home</i> tourism plan for Belfast - Utilise the strength of the city brand and its equity to position Belfast to compete on a national and international platform through the promotion of unique Belfast experiences - Support tourism businesses, protect jobs and contribute to economic recovery - Achieve tourism growth from high value markets in a sustainable and inclusive way - Promote and stimulate stronger, fairer and more sustainable eco practices - Engage with local communities and amplify local experiences & stories - Utilise and invest in digital technology and communications to increase competitiveness - Commit to longer term initiatives including signature events, 2024 International Year of Culture and UNESCO City of Music 						
3.17	<p>Operational Targets for 2023-24</p> <p>Based on projected levels of recovery in 2023/24, Visit Belfast is proposing the following targets for 2023/24 as agreed by their board:</p> <table> <tr> <th>Total Output</th><th>Target</th></tr> <tr> <td>Leisure Tourism Bed nights</td><td>200,000 bed nights</td></tr> <tr> <td>Leisure Tourism Day trips</td><td>150,000 day trips</td></tr> </table>	Total Output	Target	Leisure Tourism Bed nights	200,000 bed nights	Leisure Tourism Day trips	150,000 day trips
Total Output	Target						
Leisure Tourism Bed nights	200,000 bed nights						
Leisure Tourism Day trips	150,000 day trips						

	<div> <div>Business Tourism Bed nights</div> <div>86,000 bed nights</div> </div> <div> <div>Cruise Visitors</div> <div>375,000 pax & crew</div> </div> <div> <div>Visitor Enquiries</div> <div>735,000 enquiries</div> </div> <div> <div>Economic Impact</div> <div>2023-24 Target</div> </div> <div> <div>Leisure Tourism</div> <div>£45m</div> </div> <div> <div>Business Tourism</div> <div>£42m</div> </div> <div> <div>Leisure Trade</div> <div>£2m</div> </div> <div> <div>Cruise Tourism</div> <div>£22m</div> </div> <div> <div>Visitor Servicing</div> <div>£16m</div> </div> <div> <div>Visit Belfast Economic Impact</div> <div>£125m</div> </div> <div> <div>Budget</div> <div>£4.5m</div> </div> <div> <div>ROI</div> <div>£1:28</div> </div>
3.18	<p>A detailed business plan has been submitted and reviewed by officers. The targets outlined will form the basis of key performance indicators for Council's 2023/24 funding agreement with Visit Belfast. Regular monitoring against targets will be included and these key performance indicators will relate to the trajectory for recovery and align with the implementation phases for Council's new tourism plan. This provides a basis for more effective monitoring of performance and will be subject to annual review and renewal with necessary break clauses included.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>In the current financial year, Belfast City Council's funding arrangement with Visit Belfast is £1,997,465. An allocation of £2,035,710 has been set aside within the Departmental estimates for the financial year 2023/24.</p>
3.20	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications. Visit Belfast also works with councils outside of Belfast, as part of the Regional Tourism Partnership.</p>
4.0	Appendices
4.1	Appendix A: Visit Belfast Presentation of Business Plan 2023/24

An aerial photograph of Belfast, Northern Ireland, showing the city's urban landscape. The River Liffey flows through the center, with a bridge crossing it. The city is densely packed with buildings, including a prominent glass-domed structure. The sky is overcast.

visit Belfast

REBUILDING CITY TOURISM

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Presentation to City Growth & Regeneration Committee
8 March 2023

Belfast Tourism: a Success story

Page 10

● **£417m**

Tourism Spend in 2019

● **1.4m**

Hotel room sales in 2019

● **275k**

Cruise Visitors in 2019

● **21,863**

Tourism related jobs



+50%

Biggest increase in visitor economy in NI (2015-19)

52%

NI hotel sales are in Belfast

96%

of cruise visitors to NI arrive into Belfast

90%

Business events in NI are in Belfast

1/3rd

NI tourism jobs are in Belfast

Tourism now a key contributor to Belfast & NI economy

Visit Belfast Board

Reflecting city tourism - bringing insight, foresight and oversight

Kathryn Thomson	National Museums NI
Julia Corkey	ICC Belfast Ulster Hall
Judith Owens	TBL International
Rajesh Rana	Andras House Ltd
Caroline Young	Queen's University Belfast
Kevin Gamble	Féile an Phobail
Caroline Wilson	Taste & Tour NI
Uel Hoey	Belfast International Airport
Raymond Robinson	Presbyterian Church of Ireland
Petra Wolsey	The Beannchor Group

Peter Harbinson	Invest NI
Michael Robinson	Belfast Harbour
David Cowan	Translink
Chris Armstrong	Community Partnership
Marie-Thérèse McGivern	Maritime Belfast

Cllr Fred Cobain	Cllr Eric Hanvey
Cllr Paul McCusker	Cllr Séanna Walsh

Observers:

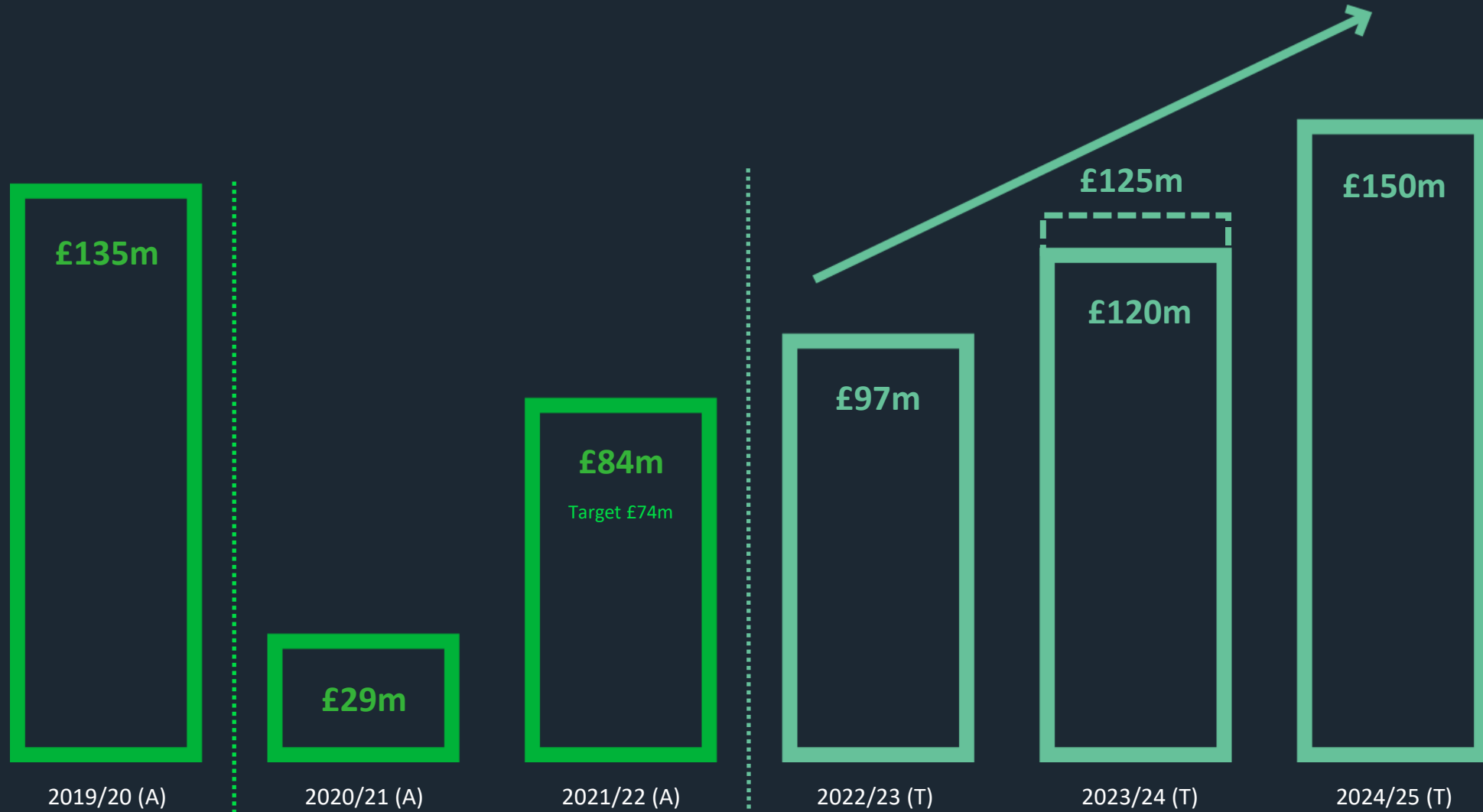
John Greer, Belfast City Council
Kerry McMullan, Belfast City Council
John McGrillen, Tourism NI

Rethinking Tourism. DMO to DMMO



Visit Belfast: Rebuilding City Tourism

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2022-23 Targets & Performance

Performance Targets

	2022-23 Target	Expected Outcome	Percentage Difference
Leisure Bed nights	150,000	342,375	228%
Leisure Day trips	100,000	245,127	245%
Conference Bed nights	82,000	68,000	82%
Cruise pax/crew	345,000	375,000	108%
Enquiries	516,000	570,000	110%

Visit Belfast Economic Impact Targets

	2022-23 Target	Expected Outcome	Percentage Difference
Leisure Tourism*	£30m	£50.22m*	167%
Business/Conference Tourism	£40m	£31m	78%
Cruise Tourism	£16m	£22m	138%
Visitor Servicing	£11m	£13m	118%
Visit Belfast's contribution to City Tourism Economy	£97m	£106.22m	110%
Budget	£3.6m	£3.7m	-
ROI	£1:27	£1:29	-

* Value includes day trip spend and bed night spend

Progress to Date

DMO to DMMO

Tourism is not the end goal it is a means to the end
Sustainability at the heart of everything we do

Top 10

sustainable destination

- 69% of city hotels Green Tourism certified

3rd

Highest performing DMO

Visitor management and welcome

100%

of our clients say they would
recommend holding an
event here

- Responsible messaging
- Conference content as important as heads-in-beds
- Changing the Menu. For Good launched

77%

were influenced to go on and visit
somewhere they hadn't planned to as a
result of their visit to the VIC



Progress to Date

Demand Generation

2m

hotel rooms sold
YTD



140m impacts

from tactical and responsive
campaigns (x10)



4.2m

web visits to
visitbelfast.com



52m

social media
impressions



113 conferences

welcoming 33,276 delegates
and generating £39.9m



98

conferences booked between
2023-29



£1m

enhanced conference support
scheme launched



737,000

enquiries handled



213

cruise calls



330,000

cruise visitors, generating £30m



Launched

NI Ambassador Circle
and
Integrated Business
Events Strategy for NI



£181m

economic impact



2023 Outlook

57 conferences

26,141 delegates
82,322 bed nights
£35.8m spend

170 cruise calls

362,000 pax & crew
£22m spend

Access

Increased access from
GB, Europe and North
America

STR hotel forecast

79.2% room occ
1.4m room sales

Market Share

VFR & Staycation market strong
Reconnecting & rediscovering:
increasing ROI and GB market share

Reasons to come

Strong programme of events &
Festivals inc. Maritime Festival,
One Young World, UNESCO City
of Music

Policy Framework



Challenges

From Covid... to a Cost of Living Crisis... reductions in disposable income



Global Economic Crisis



Rising
Consumer costs



Staffing and
Recruitment



Political
Uncertainty



Brexit
Implementation
ETA



Access and
Connectivity



Strikes and
Travel Disruption



Public Sector Finances



Tourism Not a
Priority sector



Hotel Capacity
at Peak Times



Rising Costs
of Doing Business



Cleanliness/
Anti-social Behaviour

Opportunities

25th anniversary of the
Good Friday Agreement



Screen tourism



Legacy - One Young World,
Cyber UK, UK Space -
Positioning Belfast



Titanic Belfast refresh



Ulster University relocation



Building on BRCD projects:
Belfast Stories, Royal
Hillsborough etc



UNESCO City of Music



Building to Belfast 2024



Maximise cruise performance
– increased capacity / repeat
business



New Frankfurt service



Key Market Opportunities

North America

NI

RoI

GB

Europe

Competitive VFM proposition in key city break markets of GB/RoI

Favourable exchange rates adds to value proposition in Europe & North America

Increasing air capacity: GB / Europe / North America

Reduction of APD (GB)

Visit Belfast Strategy 2023/24

Paradigm shift

Tourism is not the end goal, it is a means to a better city

Belfast uniquely placed

VFM proposition, access, growing markets & segments

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VB Direction of travel

DMO to DMMO

Transition to selling and managing the destination for the benefit of its citizens

Sustain

Accelerate progress toward a regenerative tourism model

Grow

£150m annual economic impact by 2024

Position

Belfast brand, business and leisure website, gateway role

Enhance

Visitor servicing, hero local and community tourism initiatives, bleisure campaigns

Visitor Servicing Targets & Outputs



735,000 visitor enquiries



£16.5m visitor servicing
economic benefit

£22m cruise spend

- Enhancing the Visitor experience
- Destination management: stewardship visitor experience
- Gateway: delivering visitors across the region
- Drive spend into local business & communities
- Driving commercial revenue



Benefits:

- 77% do something additional
- 76% spend more
- 89% repeat or referral
- 86% very satisfied
- 32% Gateway enquiries



Driven by:

- Increased air & sea access
- 170 cruise calls
- 57 conferences/ 26k delegates
- Events
- Campaigns

Forward Booked Conferences

Year	Conferences	Delegates	Bed nights	Economic Impact
2023	57	26,141	82,322	£35,856,868.28
2024	26	15,008	40,839	£19,071,735.86
2025	8	4,105	13,166	£6,025,864.04
2026	5	4,661	15,198	£7,091,406.00
2028	1	800	3,000	£1,466,820
2029	1	1,300	5,200	£2,542,488
Total	98	52,015	159,725	£72,055,182.18

Business Tourism Targets & Impact

Sales & Marketing

£42m

Economic
Impact

86,000

Bednights

31,000

Delegates

£175m

Leads generated
10X & Key Sectors

£125m

Bids & Proposals

+35%

YoY Growth

New Website
Brand refresh
Content &
Positioning

Destination Management

150+ events

Supported with destination management
& marketing
Upsell, partner opportunities, bleisure &
re-marketing

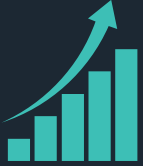
+90%

Recommend Belfast as an events
destination

2023 Strategic Events - Impact & Legacy



Opportunities, Issues & Interventions



Huge Demand But different...

- More events
- Less attendance
- Shorter-lead times



Rising event costs Challenge + Opty

- Soaring travel & event costs
- Cost per attendee +32%
- Currency, inflation, risk



Sustainability no longer nice to do

- 89% say its a priority
- Carbon cost & perception
- DEI, Social, CSR issues



Meeting with Purpose

- Strategic decision
- Greater focus on ROI
- Key sectors & impact

23-24 Strategic Interventions

1

Extreme collaboration & strategic research and bidding with key partners

2

Double-down on best prospect segments & markets - Top 50 / 200 prospects in each sector, market, segment

3

Diversify GB reliance. Ramp up activity in ROI, Europe, US in 22-23. Leverage VFM position

4

Ambassador Cicle Phase 2 - Diaspora, International, NI wide, sector review & recruitment

5

Brand refresh, new website, content development. Sustainability proposition

6

Tier 1 event - legacy and impact plans
Launch generic legacy programme (Sydney model)

Travel Trade Targets & Approach

Travel Trade - Demand Generation

£2m*	20,000	8,000	53% / 47%	200	10 key tradeshows / Buyer events
Leads	Bednights	Day trip visitors	Belfast / NI wide	buyer	Destination & partner promotion
Value			Lead generation	engagements	Key Account Management
					Enquiry handling / referrals

Tiered Account Management

Gold	61
Silver	120
Bronze	657

Source Markets

- 1.GB 2. ROI 3. North America
- 4. Germany 5. Netherlands
- 6. Rest of Europe 7. Rest of World

2023 Highlights



Sustainability Impact & Interventions

Top 10

Sustainable
Destinations
Globally

90%

Hotel
Bedrooms
certified

85%

GDS Score
Top 5 DMO

Carbon
Impacted

Funds
Raised

Legacy
Impact

Industry
Clients
Visitors
Community
Impact &
Measurement

Strategic Interventions 2023-24

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Carbon

- Visit Belfast - Carbon Measurement & Reduction Plan
- Baseline Belfast's carbon impact - tourism segment
- Business events - launch carbon measurement & reduction tool
- Delegates - launch online carbon reduction tool

Social Impact

- Changing the Menu for Good - Review, expand, promote and scale
- Fundraising
- Volunteering
- Dashboard & monitoring of impacts - clients, industry, VB, stakeholders & community
- DEI plan & diversity mark

Legacy

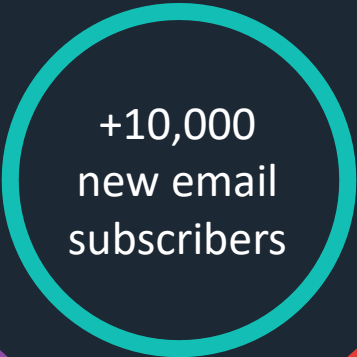
- Launch Visit Belfast legacy and impact programme - 5 key themes
- Tier 1 Business events - bespoke plans to be developed
- Monitoring, reporting and storytelling

Marketing & Communications Targets & Outputs

200,000 bed nights
150,000 day trips

£45m leisure tourism spend

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Marketing & Communications Strategy 2023-24

Restore city tourism to pre-pandemic levels

POSITION | GROW | SUSTAIN | EXPERIENCE

RESTORE

RECOVER

REIMAGINE

BRAND

Champion City Brand and EAGS, building brand equity, positioning Belfast as a cultural and business tourism destination.

A city that confounds expectations and rewards curiosity

CAMPAIGNS

Integrated, coordinated, seasonal and themed marketing, targeting best prospect markets.

UNESCO City of Music
Maritime, Food & Drink,
Festivals & Events, City Plus
& gateway.

WEB & DIGITAL

'Always-on' digital communications that engages audiences, accesses complex online journeys, motivating visits and fulfilment.

New websites, blog & podcasts, social media & email marketing.

PR & COMMS

Local, authentic content that inspires and promotes new experiences and distinguishes Belfast.

Engage with communities to amplify local experiences/stories.

Relationship building with target media and influencer activity.

Delivering integrated and timely city marketing

PRIORITY SEGMENTS

NI: Aspiring Families, Social Instagrammers & Natural Quality Seekers | ROI: Active Maximisers, Open Minded Explorers, Indulgent Relaxers | GB/International: Culturally Curious, Social Energisers

Destination Marketing Focus

Integrated marketing and communications activity, optimising consideration and destination making

Target Markets & Sectors

City Calendar
Stretch the season and fill in the gaps

Best prospect markets

European direct access (Paris, Milan & Frankfurt)

Staycations, VFR and Business+

New and repeat visits

City break and day trips

Key Touch Points & Themes

Tap into passion points and hidden gems

All new experiences

Say no – to normal

TV & Film set-jettlers

VFM / affordability

Iconic attractions

Become a cultural capital

Belfast 2024

Ultimate staycation

Content & Messages

Try something new

Urban adventure

City faces, City places

The beat of the city

Small city – Big heart

Homespun heroes

Love local

Imagine Belfast

Gateway and City Plus

Digital Upscaling

Transform digital marketing and social engagement strategy

Focus on user-generated content, social conversations and content partnerships

Support visitor services by streamlining and enhancing visitor information

Visual content development to support storytelling

Communications

Supporting sales, marketing & visitor servicing

Create standout and differentiation

Authentic travel, family and lifestyle influencers

Local heroes delivering key narratives and stories

Inclusive, sustainable & welcoming city

Stakeholder mapping and corporate positioning

Key Messages

- £125m Economic Impact
- Return on Investment 27:1

30% increase in output/impact

Increasing cost pressures met by commercialisation

- Belfast City Council leverages 1:0.88
- Return on Investment 1:62.5

- Bednights 286,000
- Daytrips 150,000

- Cruise Passengers 375,000
- Visitor Enquiries 735,000

Visit Belfast driving greater value for money and efficiency for Belfast City Council

Visit Belfast accelerating regenerative tourism model

**visit
Belfast**

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	Correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure
Date:	8th March, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
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"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure Roads, in response to the queries raised at its presentation to the Committee on 9th November, and the response from the Permanent Secretary regarding the budget allocation for the delivery of the Belfast Cycle Network.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the correspondence as set out in the report and to consider if any further action is necessary.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><i>Response from DfI Roads – Autumn Report</i></p>
3.2	<p>The Committee, at its meeting in November, received a presentation for the Department for Infrastructure Roads in relation to its Autumn Report 2022. During the meeting, Members had requested information on a number of additional matters, which DfI advised would be investigated and a further update submitted to the Committee in due course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to the Temporary Bollards on the Donegall Road – Safety Concerns for residents regarding access - update on when this would be addressed; • An update on the residents parking scheme review and what, if any, have/ would be delivered across the City; • The need for residents parking scheme's along the proposed new Glider Route; • The need to review College Park Residents Parking Scheme; • Lack of communication and the need for Members to have up to date, direct contact details for the DfI Roads Team so that issues could be resolved in a timely manner; • An update on the delivery of Orpen Park / Porter Park Traffic Calming Scheme – was there a plan in place for what this would be and a timeline for implementation; • Update on resurfacing of Roads and Pathways in Belvoir – Grays Park Avenue, Grays Park Gardens and Grays Park Drive; • Cycle Network Development Plan - Resources and Budget Update and data on what had been implemented in the last two years; • Learnings from Limestone/Cavehill proposed cycle lane consultation process; • Potholes and resurfacing in Lagmore Glen/Twinbrook area; • Update on Hill Street Pedestrianisation; and • Update on the expected delivery of 38 disabled Parking Bays which had been approved.
3.3	<p>Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to Mr. D. McFarlane, Eastern Divisional Roads Manager, requesting an update on the matters raised at the Committee.</p>
3.4	<p>A response was received for consideration (Appendix 1) which included the following website links:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to the DfI Website DfI Roads Eastern Division - Divisional Manager Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) • Link to the Autumn Council Report Annual Report to Belfast City Council 2022 Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) • Link to NI Direct site Public Information Portal https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets
3.5	<p><i>Response from the Permanent Secretary – Belfast Cycle Network</i></p> <p>At its meeting in December, the Committee agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure to request confirmation of the budget allocation for the delivery of the Belfast Cycle Network in the financial year 2022/23.</p>
3.6	<p>Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to the Permanent Secretary to request an update on the matter and the response was received at Appendix 2 for consideration.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – DfI Roads Response to meeting of 9 November</p> <p>Appendix 2 – DfI Perm Sec – Belfast Cycle Network Allocation</p>

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**DFI Roads
Eastern Division**

Mr John Walsh
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council

Annexe 7
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ
Telephone: 0300 200 7899
Email: Eastern.Secretariat@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference:
Our reference:

Date 10 February 2023

Dear John

QUESTIONS ASKED BY ALDERMEN AND COUNCILLORS, FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF THE EASTERN DIVISION AUTUMN 2022 REPORT

When I presented the Eastern Division Report to Council on 9 November 2022, I agreed to consider a number of matters. Firstly I would apologise for the delay in responding.

My responses to the outstanding matters received on the evening are as follows:-

The need for residents parking scheme's along proposed new Glider Route Park Scheme.

The Department has recently completed a review of residents' parking schemes and the draft review report will be made public once it is finalised by a Minister. The review report will set out the lessons learnt from the Rugby Road scheme in Belfast, and the other schemes that did not make it to implementation and will be used to establish the policy for such schemes going forward.

The need to review College Park Parking Scheme.

The Department has recently completed a review of residents' parking schemes and the draft review report will be made public once it is finalised by a Minister. The review report will set out the lessons learnt from the Rugby Road scheme in Belfast, and the other schemes that did not make it to implementation, and will be used to establish the policy for such schemes going forward.

Lack of communication and the need for Members to have up to date, direct contact details for the DfI Roads Team so that issues could be resolved in a timely manner.

Contact details for the DFI Roads Team can be found on the Department's website, please follow this link:-

[DfI Roads Eastern Division - Divisional Manager | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](http://infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

In addition, I have included a link to the Autumn Council report which contains a list of names and contacts within the Division, including areas of responsibility:-

[Annual Report to Belfast City Council 2022 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets)

It should also be noted that elected representatives can report problems with roads and streets using NIDirect Public Information Portal

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets>

Councillor Tracy Kelly asked in relation to the Temporary Bollards on the Donegall Road following safety concerns raised by residents regarding access. Could you provide an update on when they would be removed.

The Department has reviewed the pop up cycle lanes installed during the pandemic and will be reviewing the current arrangements with an aim to providing permanent infrastructure. The pop up cycle lane on the Donegall Road will be included within this review.

Counillor Bunting asked for an update on the delivery of Orpen Park / Porter Park Traffic Calming Scheme. Is there a plan in place for what this will be and a timeline for implementation.

Following on from the formal consultation, it has been necessary to carry out a review of the design. This matter is still receiving attention and I am unable to give a timeline for implementation at this stage.

Councillor Bunting asked for an update on resurfacing of Roads and Pathways in Belvoir – Grays Park Avenue, Grays Park Gardens and Grays Park Drive.

The footways and carriageway in the Grays Park area remain on a 3 year priority resurfacing programme. Whilst no contract has been in place for a number of months, I understand that the new term asphalt resurfacing contract will be in operation for the beginning of the next financial year. The schemes in the Grays Park area will be implemented on a scheme priority basis from 2023 onwards, subject to the availability of the necessary resources and utility clearance.

Cycle Network Development Plan - Resources and Budget Update and data on what has been implemented in the last two years.

Implemented in the last two years – Dublin Road two-way cycle lane (2-way 0.48km), Donegall Road one-way cycle lane (0.8km), Grosvenor Road two-way cycle lane (0.53km), Crumlin Road country-bound cycle lane (1km), Castle Street cycle lane High St toucan crossing at Skipper St (£50k) Comber Greenway location signage.

Learnings from Limestone/Cavehill proposed cycle lane consultation process

Following on from the initial commencement works that were undertaken on Limestone Road and the decision for another consultation to be undertaken, my staff will be contacting individuals / groups who provided comments on the pop up cycle lane design. Once this information has been gathered and considered, my staff will commence the formal consultation.

Councillor Duffy asked for an update on repairs to potholes and resurfacing in Lagmore/Twinbrook.

A staff member from Belfast North Maintenance Section Office met with Councillor Duffy on 10 November 2022 and explained that any actionable defects / potholes in Lagmore Glen had been identified for repair and work instructions subsequently issued to the appointed contractor to programme the work. A temporary repair was carried out on 15 November 2022 followed by a permanent repair on 25 November 2022.

It should be noted that members of the public and elected representatives can report problems with roads and streets using NIDirect Public Information Portal

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets>

It was also confirmed that DfI Roads had identified Lagmore Dale and Lagmore Avenue for future resurfacing but that final design associated with Blue/Green initiatives are still to be concluded. Councillor Duffy agreed that he would follow up on current position regarding Blue/Green schemes for these streets with the relevant section.

Councillor Whyte asked for an update on Hill Street Pedestrianisation – Blue Green Division?

The Department will shortly be carrying out a consultation to gauge public opinion on the pedestrianisation of Hill Street. The outcome of this consultation will be used to shape any further programme of works in this area.

Update on the expected delivery of 38 disabled Parking Bays which had been approved.

I can advise that the Notice of Intention for these bays was advertised in the local press on the 25 January 2023. This allows a 22-day period for objections or representations. If none are received the bays will go forward for the 'Order' to be made and the bays are marked on the ground. Unfortunately, we cannot give a date at present as to when this legislative process will be completed.

I hope this information is helpful



DES MCFARLANE
Divisional Roads Manager

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**From the Permanent Secretary
Dr Julie Harrison**

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council

mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk

Room 701
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB
Telephone: (028) 9054 1175
Email: Julie.Harrison@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference: EMcG. CGR.12.12.2022
Our reference: SCORR-0025-2023
15 February 2023

Dear Ms McGoldrick,

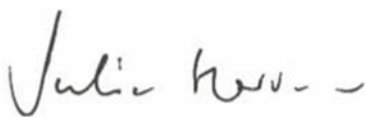
BELFAST CYCLE NETWORK – BUDGET ALLOCATION

Thank you for your letter of 18 January 2023 on behalf of Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee enquiring how much funding has been allocated for delivery of the Belfast Cycle Network this financial year. Apologies for my slow reply.

While the initial allocation for schemes identified in the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan was £700k, actual spend is likely to be in the region of £490k as unfortunately progress on the delivery of a number of schemes has been slower than originally anticipated for a variety of reasons. The Department has had helpful discussions in recent months with Council colleagues on Transport Strategy and Active Travel in the context of the Climate Act and current operating environment. I am due to meet John Kyle and Sammy Douglas soon to discuss how we can work more effectively together on these issues.

I trust you will find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely



JULIE HARRISON

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Subject:	Belfast City Regeneration Tracker
Date:	8 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development Jessica Way, Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>									
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Some time in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Call-in									
Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>									
1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues								
1.1	To provide Members with an update on the Belfast City Regeneration Tracker which captures regeneration and development activity which took place in the City during 2022, as aligned to the Belfast Agenda and the eight core policies of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS). The detail of this report will be provided by way of a presentation at Committee.								
2.0	Recommendations								
2.1	Members are asked to note that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of regeneration and development activity which took place across the city during 2022, as aligned to the Belfast Agenda and the eight core principles set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, will be provided by way of a presentation to be made to this Committee on 8th March 2023. 								

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The Belfast Agenda sets out the growth aspirations for the city, including increasing the city population, supporting inclusive economic growth, improving health and well-being for all our citizens and addressing the Climate Emergency. This is further reflected in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out our collective ambition for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas to 2030. It contains a road map of policies to guide city centre decision-making and key projects that translate those policies into action, aligned to our overarching ambitions outlined within the Belfast Agenda. BCCRIS seeks to address the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast and is underpinned by the following eight core principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the Employment Population; 2. Increase the Residential Population; 3. Manage the Retail Offer; 4. Maximise the Tourism Opportunity; 5. Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres; 6. Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre; 7. Connect to the City Around, and 8. Shared space and social impact.
3.2	<p>To facilitate the implementation of the eight policies for the city centre, BCCRIS identified a series of projects aimed at creating a liveable and economically thriving city, alongside, identifying the following five Special Action Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner North • Inner West • North East Quarter • Transport Hub and South Centre • Oxford Street and the Eastern Bank
3.3	<p>Members will be aware that various workstreams and programmes of work are underway to support the implementation of BCCRIS including the Future City Centre Programme, A Bolder Vision, the Vacant to Vibrant Programme, Clean, Green, Safe & Inclusive along with a programme environmental improvement schemes across the city aimed at improving sustainable and active travel, improving safety and cleanliness, addressing dereliction and informing the emerging major public schemes coming forward within the</p>

	city. These interventions also form a critical role in setting the future aspirations of the city as well as informing design and place-making objectives within developments as they come forward through design and delivery.
3.4	The purpose of the Regeneration Tracker is to provide Members with an overview of major regeneration and development activity which has taken place across Belfast during 2022 (1st January – 31st December).
3.5	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	<u>Appendices – Documents attached</u> None associated with this report.

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Subject:	Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) update
Date:	8 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Callie Persic, Development Manager, City Regeneration & Development Richard McLernon, Climate Programme Manager (City)

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on Belfast City Council's involvement in the UP2030 funding application, which is funded through Horizon Europe.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that Belfast, represented by Belfast City Council, is a pilot city within the Horizon Europe UP2030 project which will focus on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework and toolkit and the use of climate tools to support analysis, mapping and engagement in city neighbourhoods. The project will entail

	<p>the exchange of knowledge between cities, including site visits and meetings with partner cities and potentially hosting a visit to Belfast within the project lifetime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note that following the report to City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 9 November 2022 an update was brought to the Climate and City Resilience Committee on 9 February that outlined progress, including the project start meeting on 1 and 2 February 2023 and noted the update to CG&R in November, including the queries raised in relation to the location of the project and proposed that the UP2030 includes the Linen Quarter BID district and surrounding city centre neighbourhoods of Sandy Row, Markets and Donegall Pass. • To agree that the geographical location of the UP2030 pilot which will align with A Bolder Vision, Net Zero Roadmap, and provides a holistic mix of local communities, city centre living, commercial and tourism and hospitality.
3.0	Main report
3.1	As reported in November 2022, the Belfast City Council Climate Unit and City Regeneration and Development Division are working together to ensure an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience such as supporting play and environmental sustainability through engagement with key stakeholders such as young people, families, and businesses.
3.2	As reported in November 2022, Council was invited at short notice to participate in a Horizon Europe funding application from the UP2030 (Urban Planning 2030) fund. Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion, which looks to tackle climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth and is focused on supporting cities achieve net zero. The approach uses urban planning and design as a vehicle to create better connected, more compact, net-zero neighbourhoods that promote liveability and, through designing with intent, promote mitigation actions. Belfast was selected as one of the pilot cities and have received a Letter of Intent from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to participate as an associate member of the project. This letter provides €204,250 of revenue funding to support research, training and policy development and Officers are working with UKRI to finalise the funding agreement.
3.3	Through the UP2030 funding, we will seek to create a scalable framework that will be applied to cross-cutting projects that integrates tree planting, green infrastructure, play and co-design with young people and supports the integration of play and environmental sustainability into city design. Strategically, this connects A Bolder Vision and the Net Zero Roadmap and will

	<p>test adaptation and mitigation measures to support the emerging Climate Plan. At the CG&R Committee in November the Linen Quarter District was proposed a pilot area given the alignment with the emerging project plans with the 'Creating a Civic Spine' Key Move within A Bolder Vision, and the holistic mixed uses within the area that could lead to the development of a holistic framework that could be easily transferred to any area of a city. Members sought further clarification as to the rationale for choosing the proposed area, and whether it was something that could be further applied to other areas. Following further engagement and participation in the project launch event, this paper will seek for approval to enable the project work to commence in the proposed pilot area. While this work will be undertaken within a defined boundary, the purpose is to produce a framework that can be adapted and used within all communities and districts to set forward net zero approaches, attract funding and deliver climate adaption plans tailored for the issues of that specific district.</p>
3.4	<p>To maintain alignment with A Bolder Vision, the Resilience Strategy and following dialogue with the project organiser, UP2030, the optimal location is one that combines a mix of core city functions and uses. It is proposed to locate the project in a mixed-use environment that contains residential, hospitality, tourism, commercial, public transport corridors and large transport hubs to ensure adequate capture of a holistic concentration of issues to form a framework that can be easily adapted into any area within the city.</p>
3.5	<p>The proposed pilot area includes mixed functions and land uses, including residential and commercial areas with a focus on those communities that bound the city centre. This area encapsulates an area bounded by May Street & Shaftesbury Square, and the Gasworks and Great Victoria Street, and adjacent city centre communities in the Market, Donegall Pass and Sandy Row, providing a total approx. base of 9,000 residents. This would enable us to consider inter-related issues such as the severance and climate issues created by the road infrastructure and other factors such as poor public realm / open space / play provision, air quality and connectivity and specifically the impacts and mitigation measures on existing local communities, newer city centre residents, and mixed commercial uses including offices, hospitality and tourism.</p>
3.6	<p>The intention is to work across Council departments and with city stakeholders to elevate and embed the learning and approaches from this pilot and identify opportunities in other neighbourhoods to bring forward the concept of net-zero districts across the city.</p>

3.7	Members will be aware that given that the UK is no longer within the EU, the status of Council was changed from to being a Partner to that of an Associate which means that funding will be underwritten by the UK government (UK Research & Innovation, UKRI) fund rather than the EU. The funding is for revenue and does not include any capital costs. Council is currently finalising the funding agreement with the UKRI, and project delivery will take place over a three-year period following the kick off meeting in February. Belfast has been assigned a liaison partner, an organisation called Mapping for Change, who will support Belfast throughout the project life span. Further reports will be brought to this Committee and the City and the Climate and City Resilience Committees as the project progresses.																												
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Horizon Europe UP2030 Project is 100% funded. No additional funding is required from Council however a small team drawn from the Climate Unit and City Regeneration and Development will work together to oversee development and support implementation. The funding is for revenue and does not include any capital costs. However, Officers will continue to work with partners to identify potential capital or revenue funding in the future that could support the transition to net zero.</p>																												
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Officers are currently developing the Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Screening and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.</p>																												
4.0	Appendix 1 – see below																												
	<p>Horizon Europe UP2030 project consortium partners:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Participating Organisation</th><th>Country</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>FRAUNHOFER GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FORDERUNG DER ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG EV</td><td>Germany</td></tr> <tr> <td>Belfast City Council</td><td>UK</td></tr> <tr> <td>ADELPHI RESEARCH GEMEINNUTZIGE GMBH</td><td>Germany</td></tr> <tr> <td>Buro Happold GmbH</td><td>Germany</td></tr> <tr> <td>Design Clips P.C.</td><td>Greece</td></tr> <tr> <td>GreenAdapt Gesellschaft für Klimaanpassung mbH</td><td>Germany</td></tr> <tr> <td>I-CATALIST SL</td><td>Spain</td></tr> <tr> <td>STICHTING ISOCARP INSTITUTE CENTER OF URBAN EXCELLENCE</td><td>Netherlands</td></tr> <tr> <td>Thomas Stellmach Planning & Architecture</td><td>Germany</td></tr> <tr> <td>TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT</td><td>Netherlands</td></tr> <tr> <td>UNIVERSITAT INTERNACIONAL DE CATALUNYA</td><td>Spain</td></tr> <tr> <td>Global Green Growth Institute</td><td>Hungary</td></tr> <tr> <td>ICLEI EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT GMBH (ICLEI</td><td>Germany</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Participating Organisation	Country	FRAUNHOFER GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FORDERUNG DER ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG EV	Germany	Belfast City Council	UK	ADELPHI RESEARCH GEMEINNUTZIGE GMBH	Germany	Buro Happold GmbH	Germany	Design Clips P.C.	Greece	GreenAdapt Gesellschaft für Klimaanpassung mbH	Germany	I-CATALIST SL	Spain	STICHTING ISOCARP INSTITUTE CENTER OF URBAN EXCELLENCE	Netherlands	Thomas Stellmach Planning & Architecture	Germany	TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT	Netherlands	UNIVERSITAT INTERNACIONAL DE CATALUNYA	Spain	Global Green Growth Institute	Hungary	ICLEI EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT GMBH (ICLEI	Germany
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ICLEI EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT GMBH (ICLEI	Germany																												

EUROPASEKRETARIAT GMBH)	
STICHTING GLOBAL RESILIENT CITIES NETWORK	Netherlands
Urban Climate Change Research Network – European Hub	Italy
AQUATEC PROYECTOS PARA EL SECTOR DEL AGUA SA	Spain
CETAQUA, CENTRO TECNOLÓGICO DEL AGUA, FUNDACION PRIVADA	Spain
PRAVO I INTERNET FOUNDATION	Bulgaria
LABORATORIO NACIONAL DE ENGENHARIA CIVIL	Portugal
ANAPTYXIAKI MEIZONOS ASTIKIS THESSALONIKIS AE - ANAPTYXIAKOS ORGANISMOS TOPIKIS AUTODIOIKISIS	Greece
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY	Turkey
MAPPING FOR CHANGE CIC	UK
THE CHANCELLOR MASTERS AND SCHOLARS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE	UK
UNIVERSITY OF STUTTGART	Germany
VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL	Belgium
ETHNIKO KENTRO EREVNAS KAI TECHNOLOGIKIS ANAPTYXIS	Greece
FUNDACION CIRCE CENTRO DE INVESTIGACION DE RECURSOS Y CONSUMOS ENERGETICOS	Spain
STICHTING DELTARES	Netherlands
DRAXIS ENVIRONMENTAL SA	Greece
ODTU Gunes Enerjisi Uygulama ve Arastirma Merkezi	Turkey
K3Y	Bulgaria
FONDAZIONE LINKS - LEADING INNOVATION & KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIETY	Italy
MAGGIOLI SPA	Italy
UNIVERSITAT POLITECNICA DE VALENCIA	Spain
Vesela Motika d.o.o.	Croatia
BUDAPEST FOVAROS ONKORMANYZATA	Hungary
AJUNTAMENT DE GRANOLLERS	Spain
Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality	Turkey
CAMARA MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA	Portugal
LISBOA E-NOVA - AGENCIA DE ENERGIA E AMBIENTE DE LISBOA	Portugal
COMUNE DI MILANO	Italy
STADT MUNSTER	Germany
GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM	Netherlands
DIMOS THESSALONIKIS	Greece

	GRAD ZAGREB	Croatia	
	EIDGENOESSISCHE TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE ZUERICH	Switzerland	



Subject:	Update on DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund
Date:	8 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on elements of the Council's capital funding applications via the DfI Green & Blue Infrastructure Fund and DfC Revitalisation Scheme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the response from the DfI Permanent Secretary in relation to the Green & Blue Infrastructure Fund and longer-term strategic funding Note the update on the DfI 2022/23 Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund, DfC Revitalisation Fund and the South-West Quarter / Shaftsbury Square project.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>In June 2022, Council submitted proposals to the DfI for greenway and active travel projects that could potentially receive capital grant funding this financial year under the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund 2022/23 and Active Travel Projects. Subsequent to this a Letter of Intent to fund was received from the DfI Minister in September 2022 and the CG&R Committee provided approval for the business case applications to the 2022/23 DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund (BGIF), and the DfC Revitalisation fund. The projects approved at the October CG&R Committee included Active Travel Enablers, Grey to Green and the South-West Quarter/Shafsbury Square projects under the DfI BGIF, and the South-West Qtr / Shafsbury Square project under the DfC Revitalisation Fund.</p>
3.2	<p>At the October meeting the Committee agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure to outline concerns in relation to the short timeframe for the delivery of the greenway and active travel projects under the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund 2022/23 and suggest the potential for multi - year funding in the future, so that opportunities for strategic alignment of such projects could be achieved. A copy of the letter issued to DfI is attached in Appendix A of this report, and the subsequent response from DfI Permanent secretary attached in Appendix B of this report. The response outlines the intention to issue Letters of Offer shortly subject to final approval of business cases, and a willingness to further discuss potential longer term funding opportunities subject to compliance with the parameters of public expenditure.</p> <p>Capital Funding Application Updates</p>
3.3	<p>Further to this Officers have had ongoing engagement with DfI officials to proceed with these applications, and while a Letter of Offer is still pending it is expected to close these out prior to the middle of March. DfI officials have also conveyed that the funding will be required to be committed by the end of March 2023, however, spend will be carried over until March 2024. These Letters of Offer will be subject to review on receipt and subsequent SP&R approval. As outlined to the CG&R Committee in October 2022 Expressions of Interest for the Active Travel Enablers and Grey to Green projects were completed to establish deliver partners in advance of the Letter of Offer, however given the time lapse between that exercise and potential Letter of Offer it is intended to recommence these Expressions of Interest following approval of the Letters of Offer. A summary of these projects as below;</p>

3.4	<p>Active Travel Enablers;</p> <p>It is understood that a Letter of Offer from the BGIF will be issued shortly for this element of the application. This element will include covered cycle stands and secure cycle units as reported to the CG&R meeting in October 2022</p>
3.5	<p>Grey to Green;</p> <p>It is understood that a Letter of Offer from the BGIF will be issued shortly for this element of the application.</p>
3.6	<p>Great Victoria St / Shaftsbury Sq;</p> <p>This project was to bring together a number of funding opportunities to deliver on wider benefits in terms of addressing dereliction along this key connectivity and economic corridor. To this end a summary update on the various funding streams is included below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Letter of Offer (£250k) has been received from DfC for the Revitalisation fund for this project and subject to final approval works will commence shortly. • Under the Belfast City Council Business Cluster & Community Grant Programme three grant applications have been approved to undertake localised environmental improvement works and shop frontage improvements and work will commence shortly. • Developer Contributions secured in the area were approved at the SP&R Committee in January 2023 to bring forward Public Realm Improvement Works and are currently under procurement. • A number of land and building owners have reacted positively to the funding coming forward and have commenced, or committed to undertaking works to address issues within their frontages. This includes power washing, graffiti removal, and repairs to hoarding. In addition to this NIHE have commenced a project to replace the existing chain link boundary fence to the Hope St Car Park with a planted hedge to improve the visual impact of this key gateway site in the immediate term. • The Linen Quarter have successfully completed their ballot for a second 5-year term and have gained support to increase their district area to include up to and including Shaftsbury Sq. Within their 5-year manifesto the BID have committed to undertaking enhanced cleansing and community safety within the area, and to work with BCC and other agencies to bring forward environmental improvement and public realm capital projects.

3.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers have also brought forward proposals for the DfI BGIF element of the Victoria St / Shaftsbury Sq however it has become evident that this work will require a substantial level of design and statutory approval work that will substantially increase the risk of delivery of the project within the permitted timeframes. In addition to this the works will require an increased level of liability for the Council to undertake on the public highway that outweighs the benefit that the scheme would bring forward. This liability would include an undertaking by Council to sign a License from DfI undertaking all liability for the areas involved until the subsequent removal and reinstatement of the pavements to the original surface treatment. To this end Officers are recommending to withdraw from this element of the 2022/23 BGIF fund application and to focus instead on the deliverable works and funding coming forward from other sources. <p>Further updates on the delivery of these proposals will be brought to this Committee as works progress.</p>
4.0	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
4.1	All costs associated with this paper are covered from within external funding applications or previously agreed and committed BCC programmes.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	Officers are currently developing the Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Screening and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.
6.0	Appendices
6.1	Appendix A – DfI BGIF Update – Committee letter to DfI
	Appendix B – DfI BGIF Update – DfI Response to Committee

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Ms Eilish McGoldrick

Our reference EMcG. CGR.12.10.2022

Email democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date 22nd November, 2022

Julie Harrison
Permanent Secretary
Corporate Policy Unit
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast, BT2 8GB

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund 2022/23

At its meeting in October, Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed that the Council would write to you to outline, that whilst the Committee welcomed the opportunity to avail of in-year funding under the Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund, Council wished to highlight its concerns in relation to the short timeframe available for the delivery of the greenway and active travel projects under the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund 2022/23 and requested a quick finalisation to the funding allocation to enable delivery of the projects outlined within the application.

The Committee also requested the Department consider the potential for a more flexible approach to in-year funding and to explore with Council any potential mechanisms to carry over funding, including consideration of innovative joint investment or funding models so that opportunities for strategic alignment of joint priorities and projects could be achieved.

I look forward to receiving your comments on the issues I have raised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eilish McGoldrick'.

Eilish McGoldrick

Democratic Services Officer

Belfast City Council, Legal and Civic Services Department

City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS

Tel: 028 9032 0202 Textphone: 028 9027 0405

Dx No.: 383 NR Belfast

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**From the Permanent Secretary
Dr Julie Harrison**

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Room 701
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10-18 Adelaide Street
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Telephone: (028) 9054 1175
Email: Julie.Harrison@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Via email: McGoldrickE@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Your reference:
Our reference: SCORR-0157-2022
23 December 2022

Dear Eilish

BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FUND 2022/23

Thank you for your letter of 22 November regarding the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund 2022/23.

I understand your frustration with the tight deadlines for delivery of projects this financial year but we cannot finalise the allocation of funding under the Blue / Green Infrastructure Fund until business cases submitted by the Council are approved by the Department. We hope to issue Letters of Offer shortly.

In line with public expenditure requirements, Departments cannot carry forward unspent budget into a new financial year, and therefore progressing any alternative funding models or joint investment initiatives would still be limited by this requirement where funding is from central government. The Department would however be willing to work with you on this, within the parameters of public expenditure, should you have identified any possible funding options.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

JULIE HARRISON

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Subject:	Lobbying/Advocacy Paper and Regeneration Framework
Date:	8 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Adrian Ferguson, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration and Development

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on work underway in relation to a Funding Lobby & Advocacy Paper and a Regeneration Framework.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. To note the work underway in relation to the commissioning of a Lobby & Advocacy Paper for Place Based Regeneration Funding and the development of a Regeneration Framework and Project Prioritisation Process II. To note the scheduled engagement with Party Group Leaders and Permanent Secretaries as part of a wider engagement plan. III. To note alignment with ongoing work via City & Organisational Services to develop a project pipeline for Council aligned to funding opportunities and city priorities.

3.0	Main report
3.1	It is recognised that NI/Belfast does not benefit from the same regeneration and place based funding abilities as other UK Cities, e.g. Stronger Towns Fund; Future High Streets Fund; Homes England funding etc. which arguably places Belfast at a disadvantage from a regeneration and economic growth perspective. Work is currently underway with Avison Young (strategic regeneration, finance and business consultancy) to consider this in more detail and explore the case for advocating that Belfast receives the equivalent investment and funding powers available elsewhere.
3.2	In addition, in order to help bring forward regeneration schemes at scale and given the number of potential opportunities across the city it was agreed that there was a need to develop a Regeneration Framework and Prioritisation Process aligned to regeneration, economic, social and environmental outcomes. Other UK cities deploy similar Regeneration Frameworks to help inform city priorities aligned to growth propositions and to prioritise funding bids.
3.3	Members will recall the following Committee report in relation to this work: CG&R Committee May 22: <i>Develop a Regeneration Programme Framework for key regeneration projects including partnership projects at a citywide level; to include preparation of feasibility studies and business cases as appropriate. To include regeneration projects to support development and investment for Bolder Vision and housing / mixed uses and wider city regeneration projects.</i>
3.4	SP&R 17 June '23: <i>As part of the agreed non recurrent proposals, agreed to allocation of funding to: Develop a Regeneration Framework; Regeneration Process & Regeneration Programme.</i>
3.5	Party Group Leaders Forum 23 February 2023: <i>Update on work underway in relation to the Lobby Paper and Regeneration Framework as set out in this report.</i>
3.6	Avison Young (AY) have been commissioned to develop both areas of work, high level details of which are provided below.

3.7	<p>Lobby & Advocacy Paper:</p> <p>This centres around the case for devolving aspects of place based regeneration and funding to Belfast City Council. To include exploring the case for ensuring Belfast receives the equivalent investment, funding powers and freedoms that are available in England. The focus should be on place based regeneration and include measures that may promote housing led regeneration (inc city centre living), city centre and wider city regeneration & development and alignment with other strategic priorities. To include the socio and economic impact /outputs from such investment and regeneration aligned to our growth ambitions.</p>
3.8	<p>Subject to further engagement with officers, Members and other stakeholders it is envisaged the work will have three main outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An outward facing proposition for the NI executive focusing on the strategic, economic and financial case for amended place-based and regeneration funding abilities for Belfast 2. An inward facing brief for Belfast stakeholders focusing on the specific benefits to wider communities and geographies derived from programmes and structures designed to regenerate the city. 3. A wider public facing document providing the case for Place Based Regeneration in Belfast and the economic impact and social value of potential initiatives.
3.9	<p>Regeneration Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a 'Regeneration Framework' – A decision-making framework designed to be used in the prioritisation of place-based regeneration initiatives across Belfast. The framework should also allow the Council to identify and develop regeneration schemes into fundable propositions. • A 'Regeneration Scheme Prioritisation and Audit Exercise' – The exercise will consider the potential pipeline of regeneration schemes across the city and assess them against the Regeneration Framework. This exercise will provide a clear, objective assessment of various proposals and enable consideration of a sequencing of activities. • A 'Regeneration Scheme / Programme Level Business Case' – A business case will be prepared for a Regeneration Programme to establish the overarching context for intervention and the programme level governance and assurance processes underpinning the intervention. This will also include a number of individual project schemes /site assessments (to be agreed in due course).

3.10	Part of the Lobby & Advocacy work involves strategic consultation and engagement with relevant public and private sector stakeholders. A programme of engagement is to be progressed, with initial engagement to include the following, but noting that there will be further engagement with a number of other stakeholders:
3.11	<p>21st March – Meeting Permanent Secretaries of DfI, DoF, DfC, DfE</p> <p>Proposed that Avison Young attend a pre-scheduled meeting that the Chief Executive had arranged with Permanent Secretaries in relation to city strategic priorities. Avison Young are being invited to join part of this meeting and use as an opportunity to commence senior level engagement.</p>
3.12	<p>30th March – Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum</p> <p>It is proposed that political representatives are engaged in the upcoming Party Group Consultative Forum. The consultation will discuss the draft proposition paper and potential for a proposed improved approach to delivering funding aligned to the city's strategic priorities.</p>
3.13	<p>Project Pipeline & Funding Opportunities</p> <p>Work is underway via the City & Organisational Services Dept to collate a Project Pipeline and Funding Opportunities across Council for Members consideration and it will be important to consider how this will align to the Regeneration Framework and Project Prioritisation Process.</p>
3.14	<p>Future Reports</p> <p>Future reports will be brought back to both CGR and SP&R Committees as this work progresses.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Appendices – Documents attached</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>



Subject:	Supporting Business Start Up and Growth – update and workplan
Date:	8 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Cathy Keenan, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Some time in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on activity undertaken by the Enterprise and Business Growth team in 2022/2023 to support the development of new and existing businesses across the city. The report sets out key priority areas of work for the 2023/24 financial year, seeking approval areas of activity to support the delivery of the targets under the “Our Economy” pillar of the Belfast Agenda.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the priority work areas presented for the 2023/24 financial year and approve the allocations from the existing 2023/2024 Enterprise and Business Growth budget as set out in section 3.8 • Note and agree a financial commitment of £140,000 to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) towards the Go for It programme • Note and endorse the proposal to invest in the Way to Scale programme and extended support to innovation-focused businesses up to a maximum of £90,000 (work to be coordinated through Catalyst) • Note and endorse the contribution to support the ongoing development of the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (work to be coordinated through Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) up to a maximum of £35,000 • Note and agree a financial contribution of £5,000 towards the New York, New Belfast event and agree the attendance of Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Economic Development Director or their nominees at the event (budget set aside within existing International Relations budget).
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that within the 2022/23 period, the Enterprise and Business Growth team has been working to develop and deliver a range of activity to support the growth and development of new and existing businesses across the city, aligned with the “Our Economy” pillar of the Belfast Agenda. This range of activity was approved at the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on the 6 April 2022.
3.2	As well as aligning with the Belfast Agenda, the actions also support and add value to work underway through the Belfast Region City Deal, Innovation City Belfast, Smart Belfast and the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission as well as the draft Economic Strategy for Belfast. The consultation on the draft Economic Strategy closed at the end of January 2023. Officers are currently analysing the responses in order to ensure that the revised version reflects key elements of commentary. This will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for endorsement. In the interim, the work plan will take account of the likely priority action areas within the strategy.
3.3	Officers have been engaging with councils across the region to progress the enhanced approach to business start-up and growth support set out to this Committee in October 2022. Since the last update, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has made a commitment to support an 11-council Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS),

	<p>valued at up to £17million over 2 years from April 2023. This represents a significant scaling up in ambition of the councils' statutory remit around business start-up and targeted entrepreneurship support. At the 17 February meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, members agreed that Belfast City Council will play the role of lead council on behalf of each of the 11 councils across the region. The new service will mobilise in September 2023 and, until such time, the Enterprise and Business Growth team will continue the delivery of existing services to support new and existing businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives across the city.</p>
3.4	<p>Since April 2022, the team has been working with partners to develop and deliver interventions that address the City's challenges in relation to low levels of business start-up, innovation, competitiveness and productivity. Some of the key achievements in 2022/23 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise awareness activity: engaged 755 individuals, supporting them to progress to start a business. We continue to extend our reach to engage those individuals who are under-represented. This includes an increased focus on support for people with disabilities, individuals who are economically inactive, females and young people providing them with tools to overcome barriers to take positive steps to starting a business. 40 students and graduates also accessed support, 12 of whom are currently accessing salary support through Invest NI's Student to First Sale intervention. We also enabled test trading opportunities for 31 new businesses through our dedicated start up space at St George's Market and many of those are seeking to trade at the market on a more regular basis or are exploring alternative retail outlets for their products • Start a business activity: 503 individuals engaged in business start-up activity, 476 of those individuals developed a business plan through the Go For It programme supporting the creation of 299 jobs. We provided additional support to 70 individuals through 1-1 mentoring and access to financial support of up to £1,500 to help kick start their business • Support for Social Enterprises and Co-operatives: 60 organisations were supported with one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance. Four of these organisations were new co-operatives. Overall the Social Enterprise and Co-operative Support programme has facilitated 25 events/workshops with over 300 attendees including regional networking event, virtual global best practice visit and workshops. Our focused engagement with co-operative organisations has continued, and we organised 10 events, attracting 42 attendees. The Social Economy Incentive Fund

launched in September 2022, with an available pot of almost £50,000 to support social economy businesses to bring forward their business growth plans. 46 applications for support were received, 17 of which were shortlisted to pitch and we chose 8 winners. We have been developing our outreach and engagement to increase awareness of the sector, including targeted engagement activity with more than 50 young people in community settings. In recognition of these efforts, Belfast City Council won 'Council of the Year' at the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland Awards in October 2022. In order to move forward on our plans for next year, we have recently completed a mapping piece of the sector to use as a baseline for current position and to explore key development needs. As part of this work, we undertook a benchmarking analysis with two well-performing social economy cities in the UK, Edinburgh and Plymouth

- Business growth support: through our business growth support, we have assigned mentors to over 246 businesses and delivered 20 workshops with over 265 attendees. Through one-to-one engagement we have helped them to implement growth strategies, become more resilient, enhance their digital and online presence, improve tendering skills and access specialist support for businesses with high growth potential. We delivered a large-scale Opportunity Export event for businesses on 28 February with over 70 attendees and speakers from Invest NI, DIT and Intertrade Ireland. We also launched the Digital Surge programme in partnership with the 10 other councils. This supports businesses by helping them develop an innovation and digital transformation plan covering areas such as artificial intelligence, data analytics and immersive technology in order to drive business growth and productivity. 22 Belfast-based companies have benefitted from this support
- City vibrancy: in January 2022, we launched the Vibrant Business Destinations programme in partnership with DfC. This aims to support local business associations to develop and deliver interventions that will drive footfall and create vibrancy in areas outside of the city centre. Four associations have now been supported to develop area-based action plans, 2 of which have accessed funding through the scheme to deliver local marketing activity, events and small-scale environmental improvements. The Enterprise and Business Growth team have also worked with colleagues in the City Regeneration and Development Team to put in place support for local businesses to access the Vacant to Vibrant Scheme

3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation Factory: the centre is now at 77% occupancy (yearly average) and the operator has ambitious plans to increase those numbers in 2023/2024. It has seen a high level of interest from new firms in sectors including TV/film, digital, engineering and green tech. Over the year, 78 businesses engaged in masterclasses and events at the centre. As part of their social and economic regeneration activity, 38 work placements have been facilitated by IF customers, and a series of school engagement activities took place involving 223 young people • Scaling and growth: in partnership with Catalyst and Invest NI, the Way to Scale programme supported 40 individuals to participate on a series of bootcamps to transform their businesses and support them to scale and grow to turnover of more than £3million. 10 were supported to participate in a one week residential at MIT and access a peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst. We also put in place support for businesses in creative and digital industries and financial services sectors to build capacity and access opportunities for finance to support the growth and development of their businesses. 90 new companies will be supported through these services • Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor work: as previously reported to this Committee, the strategy and action plan to support this work have recently been finalised. The partnership members have agreed to jointly fund two staff resources to drive delivery against priority actions in 2023. €150,000 funding was secured from the Shared Island Fund to conduct a feasibility study on regional Innovation Hubs. This was complemented by a successful joint application with Dublin City Council to the Shared Island Fund for a €250,000 award to conduct a feasibility study on circular economy facilities in both cities. <p>Building on these achievements, the proposed work programme for the next financial year will include a number of new work areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting a Business: One of the most significant areas of work in this coming year will be the establishment of the Entrepreneurship Support Service, with the associated transition into a delivery model that is more flexible and focused on client needs. This service aims to attract more people into the “pipeline” and to help more growth-focused start-ups to get the help they need to grow and scale. The ability to attract more people into the “pipeline” will require innovative approaches, particularly where there is a need for cultural change amongst under-represented groups. The planned go live date for the new service is September 2023. In the interim, the Go for It contract will remain in place, with a target of engaging 658 individuals in the first six months of the year. It is expected that this will support the creation of 163 new jobs.
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Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) will remain the lead council for the duration of this programme. In order to support delivery of the numbers highlighted above, Belfast City Council will make a payment of £140,000 to LCCC.

- **Social Enterprise and Cooperative Development:** In the next financial year, we will finalise the refresh of our social economy action plan based on research and engagement with sector partners such as SENI, Cooperative Alternatives and Trademark. One new area of activity will be the development of a new financial incentive working alongside Community Finance Ireland (CFI). This will be a hybrid funding model (part loan; part grant funding) in order to improve the financial management skills of new and growing social enterprises. Belfast City Council will make an allocation of up to £60,000 towards the grant element (likely to be up to 25% of overall financial awards to social enterprises) while the remaining element 75% will come from CFI in the form of a loan. In addition to the new financial mechanism, a budget of £120,000 has been set aside for dedicated social enterprise and co-operative support. This will cover a range of support interventions including mentoring, workshops and events
- **Growing a Business:** the new Entrepreneurship Support Service will include growth support for existing businesses. As with the start-up support, this will be more flexible and in keeping with business needs. Pending the introduction of the new service, we will continue to provide mentoring and guidance support to around 160 Belfast based businesses in the period to September 2023. We will also work to deliver a series of workshops and events on issues such as Website and SEO basics, E-commerce essentials, Sales and Marketing, Investment Readiness, Writing a Winning bid, Strategy and Business Planning and Introduction to Innovation. We will also have a range of support services to advice small businesses on critical issues such as environmental sustainability and cyber awareness. A key development area for us this year will be a commitment to increase the number of businesses engaging in export activity. We have set a target of achieving a 10% increase in the value of exports by Belfast-based businesses, bringing them up to the regional average. Through this work, we will engage with our partners such as InterTradeIreland and Invest NI
- **Scaling Support and Innovation:** The Economic Strategy identifies the need to focus on key technologies and priority sectors. These include Fintech and Financial Services, Creative and Digital, Life and Health Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing, as well as identifying opportunities as part of the green transition and

a drive for more sustainable investment. Working with the City Innovation Team, we are delivering a new intervention to build capacity among local businesses, with a particular focus on helping them to access challenge funds and alternative funding sources, including those coming from the Belfast Region City Deal. We will also continue to work with key partners including Digital Catapult, Ulster University, Queen's University, Catalyst and Invest NI to increase the number of innovation driven enterprises and scaling businesses. This will include support for investment in the Way to Scale Programme. This is an MIT-based intervention that has been successful in significantly enhancing the growth and innovation ambitions of local businesses. It is reaping rewards in terms of fast-tracking growth and job creation plans for participating companies. Based on learning from the initial cohorts, we want to increase the number of businesses engaging in this programme and to offer extended support from specialist mentors once they complete the programme. We are working with Catalyst and Invest NI to create a collective funding allocation to support delivery – with the expectation that participating businesses will also contribute towards programme costs. Final details of the overall programme are currently being worked through but it is expected that the Belfast City Council contribution will not exceed £90,000. Catalyst will act as the contract lead for this intervention and all expenditure will be managed through them

- Investing in Belfast: We will continue to build on our partnerships in London and Dublin to develop co-operation and investment promotion opportunities for mutual benefit. Following development of the strategy and action plan, the work on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor will focus on delivery of key interventions within the plan, supported by the recruitment of dedicated support staff. Belfast City Council will contribute £35,000 towards the work, which is being led by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council who are acting as the chair and secretariat to the partnership. The partnership will also work to complete the feasibility studies on innovation and circular economy that have been funded through the Shared Island Unit
- Supporting events: The Enterprise and Business Growth Team is regularly asked to sponsor/financially support events and conferences in areas that – to a greater or lesser extent – are associated with the unit's priorities, as set out above. While these events can often act as a useful promotional vehicle for Council interventions and can help secure referrals to programme activity, many of these tend to be last-minute requests for relatively small amounts of money and provide little measurable return. In order to assess the impact of the requests, officers have developed a process to measure and score these requests based on their alignment to the "Our Economy"

	<p>pillar of the Belfast Agenda, the contribution to the work of the team as set out in this report and the potential to profile the Council activities and generate interest and demand for the services. The total budget to support contributions to events and conferences in this financial year is £62,000 and it is proposed that each application for support will be capped at a maximum of £10,000. Objectives and outputs will be agreed through a funding agreement with the event organisers. This approach has been effective in the past and has helped ensure that our resources are focused on areas of maximum return. Any events that will have wider corporate impact will be brought back to the relevant Committee for consideration and endorsement.</p>
3.6	<p><u>New York New Belfast (NYNB) 2023– request for financial support</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that NYNB has been running for more than a decade. The event, which takes place in New York, brings together leaders from both cities to build business, community and cultural linkages. The 2023 event will take place on 22 June 2023. It will focus on innovation and key growth sectors, in particular financial technology. This is one of the priority technologies set out in the 10X Economic Vision and it is also reflected in the draft Belfast Economic Strategy.</p>
3.7	<p>The event will bring together a targeted audience of 180 of the top business leaders, investors, banks, Government and academia along the US East Coast. A number of key local partners will attend the event including Belfast Harbour; some of the major construction and consultancy businesses and a number of the major FDI businesses that have located and expanded in Belfast. Several partners have already committed sponsorship, including Invest NI, Tourism Ireland, KPMG and NI Bureau. Belfast City Council has been asked to participate in the event and provide a financial contribution of £5,000 towards the overall programme. Both the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive have been invited to have speaking roles as part of the programme. In addition to the event itself, officers have been working collaboratively with Invest NI New York’s office to set up a series of follow-up meetings and new contacts within the Fintech and Net Zero sectors. Funding for attendance at the event has been set aside within the International Relations budget.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The activities outlined within this report will be resourced through the existing Enterprise and Business Growth budget for 2023/24.</p>

	Work area	Amount
	Starting a Business (Including Social Enterprise and Co-operatives)	£621,823
	Growing a Business, Scaling and Innovation	£438,230
	Investing in Belfast (including DBEC and City of London engagement)	£78,300
	Contribution to events and conferences	£62,000
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The unit is currently undertaking an equality screening on the overall work programme. This will ensure that due consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of the collective workplan.	
4.0	Appendices	
	N/A.	

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Subject:	Employability and Skills – update and workplan
Date:	8 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Sinéad O'Regan, Employability & Skills Manager

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise members of a range of activity undertaken in 2022/23 to support skills development, economic engagement and job outcomes for key target groups and to set out the proposed workplan for the 2023/24 financial year.
1.2	The work programme supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council by targeting interventions on key cohorts, including:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents out of work and experiencing barriers to employment/self-employment, including those who are long-term unemployed and economically inactive Residents with low skills levels Young people who do not have a baseline Level 2 equivalent qualification and/or at risk of dropping out of (or not in) education, employment or training. In work, low earning residents. Those living in areas of highest multiple deprivation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the work undertaken in the financial year to date and the positive employability and jobs outcomes associated with this work Approve the priority interventions for the 2023/2024 financial year.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Labour market context</u></p> <p>Having emerged from a period of significant volatility within the labour market due to the pandemic, ongoing challenges remain as a result of macroeconomic incidents and the associated cost of living crisis. Demand is hugely outstripping supply across a range of sectors such as tech and digital, logistics, business services as well as health and social care. On a more positive note, employers are now demonstrating a willingness to consider innovative and inclusive pathways to employment, particularly in strong growth sectors.</p>
3.2	<p>In terms of the wider employability and skills ecosystem in the city, Council interventions – particularly Employment Academies – are largely reliant on localised provision that can engage, support and prepare people to become ready for the final step into work that an Employment Academy can offer. The impending withdrawal of ESF funds will have a significant impact on the provision in this space, potentially reducing the “pipeline” of candidates coming through.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Employment Academies</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that Employment Academies are one of the key instruments that the Council’s Employability and Skills team utilises to support residents to secure a better job or a better job. While the content of Employment Academies varies from programme to programme, there are a number of consistent components, namely:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-academy matching and selection to ensure all individuals who participate have a meaningful chance of securing employment after successful completion • Employer-led vocational skills, qualifications, licences and training related to the specific job role • In-situ work sampling/work placements • Provision of additional supports to undergo and complete the academy, from equipment and clothing through to childcare, travel and subsistence • Employability support particularly focused on the final employment interview (all candidates are guaranteed a job interview).
3.4	<p>Given the volatility in the labour market – and the limited financial resources available to undertake the work – our recommendations around the priority work plan have been driven by a number of factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity presented by a number of growth sectors (particularly tech and fibre) to support participants into roles with higher earning potential. In recognition of the additional skills support work required, these interventions tend to have a higher per capita cost for participants but offer a positive return on investment in terms of salary levels for those successful in finding work following programme completion • Ongoing need to work with employers to convince them of the value of alternative approaches to finding talent other than pre-existing qualifications and/or experience. This is particularly the case for our work in new sectors – specifically those that have tended to think “degree first” and have not considered alternative routes • Employers with entry level and lower paid jobs – particularly in sectors such as hospitality and social care – continue to experience significant challenges in finding workers. Officers are working with these employers to consider issues such as terms and conditions and payment of the real living wage in order to attract and retain talent, aligned with the implementation of the Belfast Business Promise • Opportunities to support existing employees who are in low-paid work and/or underemployed through upskilling interventions – supporting individuals to improve salary levels by progressing to a better job and thereby embedding a skills-escalator by creating additional entry-level roles.
3.5	<p><u>Stakeholder and partner engagement</u></p> <p>A vital element of our work is our engagement with employability and skills providers across the city. This underpins the ability of Employment Academies to successfully match people to the opportunities on offer. Officers have engaged with organisations such as EBM, GEMS,</p>

	<p>USDT, Shankill JAC, Ashton Centre, Women's TEC, Action Mental Health, JBOs, GLOW, NOW Group, Community Sports Network, Harmoni Homeless Hostel, Shankill Women's Centre, Walkways, City Life Projects, Revolution Youth, African Caribbean Society, Start 360, Orchardville, NIACRO, Disability Action etc. We have also engaged with and worked through existing networks such as Migrants' Forum and NIUSE.</p>										
3.6	<p>In addition to this, officers have continued to expand and consolidate the Employability and Skills Provider Network, with 209 members from all across the city covering key target groups (disability, women, young people, justice leavers, care leavers etc.). The team has regular engagement and provides updates on future plans for Employment Academies, setting out details of employers, jobs, eligibility, pre-requisites, programme content, duration, additional support offered (childcare, sign-language interpreters, travel, subsistence etc.). We are also working closely with the Institute of Employability Professionals (IEP), facilitating continuous improvement and raising standards within the ecosystem in the city. We have provided access to IEP membership, shared learning and benchmarking, and the delivery of vocationally specific employability training for those working in the sector.</p>										
3.7	<p><u>Participant engagement across the city</u></p> <p>In addition to engaging directly with provision in local communities across the city, officers normally hold roadshows in a variety of venues to optimise engagement in every part of Belfast. Participation rates are tracked to ensure that they reflect geospatial disparities in relation to deprivation, unemployment and economic inactivity. Taking all of this into account, a working assumption would be that we would have one third of participants from North, one third from West and one third from South and East combined. While the geospatial balance is on track overall, the balance between East and South needs attention. This will be reflected in our engagement strategy for the coming year and, as a result, we expect to be able to see a correction of this over the course of the year.</p> <p>Belfast City Council Employment Academies: % breakdown of participants</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Belfast City Council Employment Academies: % breakdown of participants</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Region</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>West</td> <td>35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>North</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>East</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Region	Percentage	West	35%	North	33%	East	21%	South	11%
Region	Percentage										
West	35%										
North	33%										
East	21%										
South	11%										

3.8

As an illustration of our commitment to ongoing evaluation of our work, officers have recently (since end 2022) taken a more nuanced engagement strategy to focus on targeting areas in South Belfast instead of traditional roadshows across the city. This has included building links with organisations working within Taughmonagh, Donegall Pass, Ormeau, the Markets etc. to ensure that residents here are aware of and prepared for the opportunities on offer, and to build stronger links with support organisations in those areas. Officers have also been undertaking more localised outreach in shopping centres in conjunction with JBOs, as well as collaborating on more localised jobfairs and roadshows.

3.9

Employment Academy 2022/23 Performance

Since April 2023, we have been able to make investments in over 700 places on Employment Academies, utilising our own resources and attracting additional resources through the Labour Market Partnership, Learning & Work Institute’s New Futures programme and the Community Renewal Fund. The availability of these additional resources as well as having a flexible, responsive commissioning model, means that we have been able to respond to opportunities, meeting employer demand and bringing forward solutions that benefit local businesses and residents.

3.10

Due to the pre-academy matching, screening and selection, attrition rates tend to be low with an average of 93% of those who start an Employment Academy successfully completing and with an average into-work rate of 75% for those who complete. The level of demand – both from employers as well as those looking for a job or a better job – remains high.

Employment Academy	BCC resources	Other: LMP, LWI & CRF	Total
Logistics & Bus Driving	54	100	154
Retrofit Academy*		97	
Construction & General Operatives	7	65	72
Fibre		30	30
Tech		17	17
Business Services	16	39	55
Classroom Assistant	52		52
Social Care and Childcare	29		29
Childcare/HSC Upskilling: Level 3-5	68		68
Health & Social Care Upskilling: Level 3-5	65		65
Classroom Assistant Upskilling: Level 3	37		37
Customer Services: Leisure and Hospitality		40	40
TOTALS	328	388	716

*The purpose of this Academy is to create the skills infrastructure needed – numbers reflect training places.

3.11	<p>In terms of volume, the most popular Employment Academies are within logistics, education, construction as well as upskilling academies in traditionally low-paid sectors such as social care, childcare and education for those wanting a better job. Sectors that we struggle to recruit for include hospitality and social care, where pay and conditions play a large factor in sector attractiveness.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Employment Academy 2023/24 Workplan</u></p> <p>While LMP resources provided capacity to almost double Employment Academy participant numbers in 2022/23, this will reduce to 100 additional places in 2023/24 as the LMP begins to implement other interventions outlined in this report such as the Gateway Service and Bridges to Progression for Young People.</p>
3.13	<p>Across 2023/24, we expect that the Employment Academies – resourced through Council revenue as well as other sources – will engage around 500 participants with at least 70% expected to gain employment/self-employment in sectors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical sectors such as logistics, construction, utilities, fibre etc. • Professional services such as administration, business and tech etc. • Care and education sectors including classroom assistants, health and social care, childcare and playwork, with a focus on including recognised vocational qualifications between Level 2 and Level 5 to enable people to not only gain employment but also progress to a better job within these occupations • Customer service sectors such as leisure and tourism.
3.14	<p>We will also continue to work with public sector bodies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual schools and Education Authority to meet the increasing job demand for classroom assistants and, crucially, build in the Level 3 qualification required to secure permanent and better paid roles • Queen's University, where planning is underway to deliver a bespoke Employment Academies for hard-to-fill posts within administration, with an in-built Level 2 qualification when people are in work that will lead to job progression within QUB • Belfast HSC Trust, where planning is underway to deliver bespoke Employment Academies for nursing assistants and within health and social care roles • Belfast City Council, where planning is underway to deliver Employment Academies for hard-to-fill vacancies within community services as well as driver posts and, potentially, Digital Services.

3.15	<p>One growing area of work is our new pathways into the tech, digital and professional service sectors. While this sector has remained largely resilient throughout the pandemic, our research shows that there are limited pathways into the sector for those that do not have a degree. This challenge, identified through the work of the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission, has led to a pilot programme with 17 starters, two leaving early as they found employment and 11 of the 14 completers gaining a software development role with a starting salary range between £23,000-£28,000 per annum. We are now working intensively with these employers as well as across the tech sector to expand this in the coming year, bringing on additional employers and expanding the job roles. In expanding this activity, we propose to continue to work with the Learning and Work Institute through their New Futures programme. In recognition of the significant budget challenges, we are working with DfC to utilise Advisor Discretionary Fund (ADF) resources that blend with Employment Academy delivery – thereby making our resources go further and engaging more people.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Improving employability outcomes for young people</u></p> <p>While a significant proportion of activity has focused on those already in the labour market or trying to find a job or move to a better job, we have delivered a number of smaller interventions for young people, both in the formal education setting and outside of the school environment. Our focus has been on improving educational attainment and helping young people at risk to find positive employment and training outcomes.</p>
3.17	<p>Our GCSE support programme’s delivery within the current academic year has been back to pre-Covid engagement and participation rates, with learning workshops/classes and revision support being delivered in both school-based and community-based settings. Since September 2022, 281 young people have been engaged on the programme. These young people have been identified as being unlikely to achieve at least Grade C in GCSE English and Maths, without the additional support of the programme. In the 2022/23 academic year, this programme is expected to support 365 young people, providing access to the learning and revision support on offer.</p>
3.18	<p>We are also supporting 170 young people through our Youth Support Programme. These participants either already have or are at risk of dropping out of the education system, employment or training. Of those young people currently participating, 87 have completed accredited training and 65 are undertaking essential skills qualifications. This programme is due to complete in summer 2024 with an expected 55% achieving a positive destination, either into training, education or employment.</p>

3.19	A Summer Work Experience Programme was piloted in summer 2022 for young people aged 14-16 years at highest risk or who had already disengaged from the formal education system with 30 completing the programme and 28 moving into positive outcomes (14 continued in formal education at year 13 and the remainder moved into vocational training).
3.20	<p>A review of our delivery within this workstream is currently concluding, and while the outcomes from our interventions in this space have been positive, there are a number of factors at play in recommending a reduced level of activity going forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dynamic policy environment in this space: the Fair Start and Reducing Education Disadvantage (RED) policy initiatives led by Department for Education are progressing, with new interventions currently being developed. We are working closely with both EA and DE to share the learning from our successful pilot activity with the expectation that Council delivery can be 'lifted and shifted' within the context of these new initiatives • The reduced financial capacity within the team means that difficult decisions need to be made, with officers recommending that Belfast Employment Academies – as the flagship Council intervention in the employability space – are protected as far as possible.
3.21	<p>Taking account of these factors, it is proposed that our work on "Improving employability outcomes for young people" is prioritised on two key areas, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued support for the GCSE Support Programme for a final interim year, using this time to work with the Partnership Boards (who currently deliver this programme) as well as the Education Inequalities sub-group under the Jobs, Skills & Education Board to secure a longer-term future within the context of Community Planning and Fair Start/Reducing Educational Disadvantage policy initiatives • Working with the Education Inequalities sub-group to consider alternative provision for those young people at risk of disengaging from formal education once the Youth Support Programme comes to an end.
3.22	<p><u>Labour Market Partnership</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnership is an intervention supported by DfC within all 11 council areas. Each LMP is required to submit an annual action plan for agreement. The Belfast Labour Market Partnership has met on a number of occasions recently to finalise the plan for 2023/24. Priority work areas are:</p>

3.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly back to work: Ensuring a co-ordinated response to the substantial number of people in the city who have been or are risk of being made unemployed, especially as a consequence of the economic shocks • Increasing Opportunities: Empowering those furthest from the labour market to succeed through quality support, especially those who will be considered long-term unemployed as well as the economically inactive • No-one Left Behind: Targeting of those disadvantaged groups through the delivery of an integrated, comprehensive, inclusive, holistic and local employability approach • Catching Up: Supporting access to careers pathways, re-skilling and upskilling for those unemployed as well as those on low incomes. <p>Resources from the Labour Market Partnership enable the Council to increase the range and scope of employability and skills activity. The Partnership also provides a platform for engagement with government departments, community partners and business organisations as a means of refocusing regional programmes more effectively within the Belfast area. The LMP action plan recognises that, while there are gaps that have been identified that will necessitate the creation of new interventions, not all activity need be new ‘provision’ or ‘programmes’; sometimes it is equally important to profile and/or promote existing interventions. In addition to the extra support for Employment Academy places, the headline programme of work within the action plan includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway to Choices Service: a key issue that emerged in our engagement with the LMP partners was the need for independent advice and guidance outside of mainstream JBO support for those who are out of work and non-job ready such as long-term unemployed and the economically inactive. In our engagement with LMP members, they considered that these groups required enhanced support to navigate the existing provision and identify the right support, at the right time, to help move them towards positive job, skills and qualification outcomes. It is proposed that the Gateway will support up to 1200 people in the coming year. Participants will engage on a voluntary basis and the delivery model is being co-designed with key stakeholders such as the JBO Network, Careers Service, VCSE sector etc. Delivery will commence in April 2023 • Labour Market Observatory: officers have completed scoping and preparatory work and secured additional resources from DfC to establish a Labour Market Observatory. When fully operational, this will provide the intelligence, data and evidence-base needed to underpin decision-making in through the prism of demand, supply,
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provision and policy. DfC resources will ensure that the insights are available for all council areas

- RSA Cities of Learning: the number of people in Belfast with no or low formally-recognised skills is significantly above the NI and UK average. Officers have been working with the RSA to explore how a Digital Badges scheme could help recognise the non-accredited skills of these individuals. All Employment Academies are now digitally badged as an alternative validation of achievement, with 779 badges issued to participants. In addition to this, the Council has offered 22 organisations in the city access to Digital Badging for their own participants/employees. During 2023/24 officers will continue to work with RSA Cities of Learning, including their partners Badge Nation and Navigatr to expand Digital Badging to an additional 20 organisations/employers, including employability and skills providers – and support them in creating their own Digital Badges
- Bridges to Progression targets young people 16-17 years who are at risk of disengaging from Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work due to their personal circumstances. Through this intervention, participants can access intensive personal support to help them progress in and complete their formal training, with the ambition of improving the levels of progression into employment or further training. At the December 2022 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it was agreed that officers would seek expressions of interest from organisations delivering these programmes, outlining how they would use resources to add value to the core activity with the objective of improving outcomes for participants. It was also agreed that officers would “undertake assessment of the applications for funding in line with the approach detailed in this report....” and that “A report will be presented at a future meeting of this committee outlining the outcomes and learning from this approach.” Delivery partners were invited to submit applications outlining how they would use the resources. Following the application process, indicative funding awards have been issued to providers as detailed below. Officers will work with the organisations in the coming months to pick up on the learning from this pilot activity and to understand how the varying approaches across providers is making an impact on the young people. A more detailed report on findings will be shared with the Committee towards the end of the year.
 - Workforce Training Services - £20,000
 - Bryson - £18,750
 - Impact Training - £15,000
 - People 1st - £14,808

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Springboard Opportunities - £12,317 ○ Rutledge - £9,125. <p>3.24 The LMP action plans are submitted on an annual basis at this point (due to the annual budget settlements in the government departments). However, as part of the strategic assessment that underpins the plan, officers have identified a number of developmental areas where we consider that there is a need to undertake additional scoping work in order to understand the issues at play and consider whether the council might play an active delivery role in the future, or lobby government partners to do more in this space in order to improve outcomes for Belfast residents. Two of these areas relate to place-based and people-based targeted interventions. The strategic assessment identified a number of key groups that were under-represented in the labour market or that faced significant barriers to finding work. These groups include (among others) those with a disability and migrants. Likewise, the research identified that there are specific parts of the city where levels of LTU and economic inactivity are more than twice the city average. Government programmes over many years have tried different approaches to support these groups. We propose to explore some new models that are either target group-based and/or location-based in order to support incremental improvements in employment outcomes among the target populations.</p> <p>3.25 <u>Partnership, policy influence and guidance</u></p> <p>In addition to direct delivery, officers will also continue to work with internal and external partners to use all tools at our disposal to address the key employability and skills challenges and to lever resources to support additional delivery, focusing on the council's inclusive growth ambitions. There are a number of key mechanisms through which this can be achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer Contributions: on a practical level, officers are supporting the Planning team in the development of the Developer Contributions Framework and are actively engaged with a number of emerging development schemes to ensure that relevant employability and skills interventions are incorporated and that compliance is ensured • Social Value Procurement Policy: officers are working closely with Corporate Procurement Services to support the implementation of the policy, focusing on the employability and skills measures. This includes working with Council contracts – as well as contractors across the city where Social Value applies – to achieve their Social Value requirements in a meaningful way.
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3.26	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> <p>The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2023/24 budget for the Employability & Skills section of the Place and Economy departmental budget that was included as part of the 2023/24 estimates.</p>
3.27	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> <p>Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and a rural needs assessment completed. Considerations given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development. Officers will work closely with the Equality and Good Relations Team on this activity. A new CRM system has been established to enable officers to regularly review participant engagement and address any equality or good relations issues arising.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	None



Subject:	Christmas Programme 2022 Evaluation
Date:	8 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Kerry Mc Mullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of activity delivered as part of a Christmas programme in November - December 2022.</p> <p>The report will also give consideration to options for the 2023 Christmas Programme.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of this report and provide a direction on the approach to be adopted for the Christmas 2023 programme and beyond.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>On an annual basis, the Council's Culture and Events Units delivers a series of large-scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. This is further supported by the activity of other teams who support a number of annual programmes and activities and the Markets Unit who manage the delivery of the Christmas Market at City Hall in addition to year-round activity at St George's and Smithfield markets.</p>
3.2	<p>Members will recall that in 2021, officers adopted a different approach to the Christmas 2021 programme which replaced the traditional switch - on ceremony. In the context of Covid, the challenge for officers was to design a programme that continued to be cognisant of safety considerations and have the ability to respond to a changing environment whilst meeting the needs of city stakeholders including those businesses impacted by the pandemic. Feedback from city centre traders on the traditional light switch was not entirely positive, with many highlighting traffic, parking congestion and the event itself acting as a barrier to normal trading at a crucial time of year.</p>
3.3	<p>As well as responding to the pandemic the Christmas programme also aimed to meet the development objectives set out in the ten-year Cultural Strategy, including long-term recommendations for events in the city including better strategic alignment across the Council in the design and, delivery of these event-based programmes and above all ensuring the activities were authentic and utilising our local supply chain.</p>
3.4	<p>Cultural animation and creative interventions were identified as fundamental in welcoming people back into the city and played a significant role in creating an authentic and open environment at Christmas.</p>
3.5	<p>As a consequence, in 2021, the Christmas programme consisted of a combination of creative initiatives such as street performance, projections, music, window dressing and lighting installations all inspired by the theme <i>'Once Upon a Time in Belfast'</i>, utilising local</p>

	<p>artists, creatives and designers to create an authentic and engaging experience for all throughout the festive season.</p>
3.6	<p>In 2022, the 2021 model of Christmas animation and event delivery was further consolidated through a programme of seasonal animation in the city centre, which supported economic recovery in the city post pandemic and uplifted the city and visitors in the context of the current economic climate.</p>
3.7	<p>Benefits of the new approach included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving the cultural vibrancy of the city - Fostering civic pride - Positioning the Belfast brand - Supporting the local culture, arts and events sectors - Delivering direct economic benefits - Supporting businesses
3.8	<p>Christmas Programme 19th November 2022</p> <p>Belfast's Christmas celebrations officially began on Saturday 19th November with the '<i>Christmas in Belfast</i>' opening day event, which took place from 6pm to 9pm.</p>
3.9	<p>In 2022, the opening weekend activity was reduced from two nights to one and focused on Saturday night only. This decision was taken based on the findings of the independent evaluation and feedback from 2021, which evidenced that the opening evening (Saturday) was much better attended than the Sunday. By reprofiling the event and animation budget into the Saturday activity only, the programme was uplifted to enhance the visitor experience and increase impact. The event schedule consisted of a range of elements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christmas lighting scheme - Lighting projections - Music programme - Procession

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Window animation - Street animation - 2 Royal Avenue - Christmas Market - Lord Mayor Role - Marketing and Communications Activity
3.10	<p>Christmas Lighting Scheme</p> <p>2022 was year 3 of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme which began on the 19th November and ran until the 4th January. The scheme was identical to the 2021 programme, with the addition of icicles on Ann Street and the positioning and lighting on 12 additional trees on Donegall place.</p>
3.11	<p>Feedback on the scheme was positive, however there continues to be requests for an extension of the scheme including arterial routes. This currently cannot be facilitated within existing contracts or budgets, however consideration should be given as part of a review exercise in advance of any new scheme from 2023 onwards. This should also consider the strategic context and recommendations of the lighting strategy as well as trends from elsewhere that increasingly targets investment at schemes that can provide year-round animation and lighting.</p>
3.12	<p>Christmas lights are an essential part of dressing the city, in 2019 Council secured a new lighting scheme which featured more energy - efficient lights. In addition, the lighting scheme was turned on each evening between 3pm / 4pm and was turned off at 1am. The pole mounted features operated by DFI operated from dusk to dawn.</p>
3.13	<p>Lighting Projections</p> <p>City Hall was illuminated from 18th November to 7th January inclusive. A temporary lighting scheme was also devised for 2 Royal Avenue at the former Tesco site. This included mapped projections which operated from 19th November to 1st January. Additional illuminations</p>

3.14	<p>across the city on the 19th of November also included Fountain House above Primark on Donegall Place and the Mayfair building in Cornmarket.</p> <p>Music Programme</p> <p>On the evening of the 19th, a music and animation programme took place across the city across a number of zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone 1 - Donegall Place (From Carroll's to McDonald's (both sides of street) and Fountain Lane) • Zone 2 - Waterstones, Fountain Street, College St, Fountain Mezzanine, St Mary's Church, Queen's St and Castle Street • Zone 3 - Berry Street, Rosemary St, Tesco Metro, Castlecourt Front, Lower Garfield Street, BOI Building (All Royal Avenue) • Zone 4 - Lombard St, Castle Place / Kiosk and front of Bank buildings • Zone 5 - Cornmarket - Dunnes Stores, Ann St, Arthur St, Castle Arcade, Castle Lane and Calendar Street
3.15	<p>A raised platform was in situ on the evening of the 19th (in front of 2 Royal Avenue) with a three-hour set from 6pm to 9pm showcasing local musicians. In addition, a music programme was curated across the Christmas period including several music elements for the opening night including performances at Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church and music on Berry Street and Lower Garfield Street.</p>
3.16	<p>A 4 - week 'weekend programme' of Christmas Animation was also delivered - this activity primarily took place in locations throughout the city centre from 1pm-5pm each Saturday and Sunday in the build- up to Christmas. The music programme celebrated the diversity of the city's cultural, and music offer presenting opportunities to showcase a range of artists. Programmed by the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival and Zeppo Arts Management, the programme featured 21 high-quality acts ranging from singer songwriters to popular local bands across a range of genres including soul, country, jazz and rock. Audiences numbers and feedback for this programme was very positive, resulting in increased footfall</p>

	<p>within the city centre during this time period and an opportunity to provide a platform for a diverse range of artists whilst celebrating our UNESCO City of Music status.</p>
3.17	<p>Procession</p> <p>An external provider (Luxe) was engaged to create an interactive ‘White and Bright’ cavalcade of props and performers which passed through Royal Avenue / Donegall Place on the evening of the event. This was complemented by a community engagement programme of choreographed costumed performances, creating a real festive spectacle with up to 150 participants and 7,000 visitors across the evening.</p>
3.18	<p>Window Animation</p> <p>US Folk were engaged to produce winter-themed window vinyl’s to create a more aesthetically pleasing city centre offering over the festive period. These vinyl’s will remain in situ throughout the winter. In addition, the programme also included ‘live’ window animation on the opening night (19th November) in two of the main retail stores on Donegall Place.</p>
3.19	<p>Street Animation</p> <p>A range of 50+ Belfast - based organisations from the cultural, arts and theatre / performance sectors were engaged to take part in this event and provide the animation over the opening night. The entertainment onsite included a mix of music, dance, street performance, comedy and theatrical performance under the overall creative banner of <i>Christmas in Belfast</i>.</p>
3.20	<p>2 Royal Avenue</p> <p>Maywe, the council-appointed provider in 2 Royal Avenue operated an uplifted events programme over the festive period. This included a Winter’s Den in 2 Royal Avenue commencing on 19th November. This created a welcoming hub for all to enjoy. Visitors were also able to experience a range of sustainable events including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-cycling Christmas decoration programme • Up-cycling Christmas jumper workshops • Creating own advent calendars • Sustainable Christmas decorations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Swap - shop' • Santa's Post Box (open Thursday-Sunday weekly, with late night opening Thursday and Friday evenings) • Advent Calendars • Alpine Lodge • Teddy Bear Hospital and Toy repair café • Sustainable Wrapping service (cash for Kids drop-off point)
3.21	<p>In addition, a wide range of free events were on offer from 19th November in 2 Royal Avenue including twilight pottery and art markets, fashion swap nights, Christmas carolling events, storytelling, music, festive jazz for seniors, family silent discos, sustainable arts and craft and workshops and a Crufty Christmas Fashion Show in aid of Guide Dogs NI. Throughout the festive period the venue welcomed a range of community-based choirs, musical events and musicians both inside and outside the venue.</p>
3.22	<p>The following statistics were recorded against 2 Royal Avenue Christmas Programming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall - 48,639 between 19th November 2022 to 31st December 2022 (an average of 1,131 per day) • No of Events/Workshops/Markets - 30 • Letters Posted to Santa with Belfast One's Post Office -3,707 • No of community, charities or cultural groups engaged - 25 community groups • No of school visits - 4 including 1 special school who used sensory area for school trip • No of Artists/facilitators/makers engaged (so every class, market stall, performance etc) - 93 Artists/ Makers, 14 Facilitators, 355 performers (Large numbers came from St Johns PS Choir 50 and Conversatoire Choir 120, Rock Choir Flash Mob 40, Quire 30 and also include external performers facilitated by Zeppo) • Markets - included in performers figures above but for breakdown - Twilight Markets had 22 and 32 totalling 54 makers/ artists and Potters Market had 22 makers/ artists. Queer Arts Market had 5 artists/ makers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of presents collected for Cash for Kids – 1,456 Amount raised for local charities £845 Shelter NI (busking event), £200 The Trussel Trust (Audience donations from Carols and Craic night), £220.81 Guide Dogs NI (Audience donations at Crufty Christmas Event) and St Joseph's Primary School raised £500 carolling in front of venue.
3.23	<p>Council also commissioned US Folk, a Belfast-based agency representing some of NI's top illustrative and design talent. They created an overall look and feel for 2 Royal Avenue's Christmas programme - The Winter's Den – this included a suite of characters and folk illustrations which came to life via a bespoke AR App made especially for Christmas. This ran throughout the Christmas period from 19th November into January.</p>
3.24	<p>Christmas Market</p> <p>The Christmas Market ran this year from Saturday 19th November to Thursday 22nd December. Market Place Europe Limited (MPEL) has held the Continental Markets contract for the past 17 years and were awarded the contract for the next 3+2 years. Changes to the contract this year include a larger seating area, an enhanced Christmas experience with themed and animated walkways. There was over 100 stalls and the new contract also set out the requirement for 40% local traders and 60% continental traders. There was a Santa's Grotto supporting the Lord Mayors Charity and a return of free school educational tours, which was extended this year to out of school hours childcare and youth service providers. MPEL also ran the Jolly Big Business Boost offering a free chalet to a young business. When the Continental Market trades at the front of the city hall the footfall increases into St Georges Market and throughout the city Centre. The Christmas Market and the local Christmas offer in St George's trade side by side very successfully. MPEL offered a free pitch to St Georges Market traders this year and in previous years to further enhance trade for the local traders.</p>
3.25	<p>Key findings from the Economic Impact Report and Visitor Survey from the Christmas Market 2022 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total attendees remained below the 1 million mark at 1,015,565

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors - Out of State - 225, 963 • Gross Economic impact - 92,304,565 • 85% of visitors felt the market 'met or exceeded' their expectations (top 5 influencing factors included variety, food and drink, festive atmosphere, consistently good and appearance / decorations) • Just over a third (33%) of people visited the city specifically to visit the market • 98% of people strongly agreed or agreed that the market has a positive impact on encouraging people to come to Belfast.
3.26	<p>Role of Lord Mayor</p> <p>The Lord Mayor played a key role in leading the Christmas procession, as well as the official opening of the 2 Royal Avenue Christmas programme on 19th November</p>
3.27	<p>A video message from the Lord Mayor to citizens and visitors to the city was issued online on Monday 19th November to coincide with the opening of the Christmas programme (this was pre-recorded on the evening of the 18th in front of City Hall) with the following statistics recorded against the videography.</p> <p>Twitter: 2,334 impressions, 99 engagements – likes, comments and shares, 713 views</p> <p>Facebook: 6,344 impressions, 124 engagements – likes, comments and shares, 2,230 views</p>
3.28	<p>Marketing and Communications Activity</p> <p>Council operated a digital campaign with pulse screens and online advertising to promote the event taking place on 19th November, as well as weekend entertainment thereafter and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. Council directed people to www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL, where the 19th November event information was displayed prominently on the page.</p>
3.29	<p>Promotion took place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before event details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight 19th November and 2 Royal Avenue in edition to be circulated to just under 160k homes w/c 7th November. A press release was also issued w/c 7th November to promote the finer details of the event schedule.</p>

3.30	<p>Economic Context:</p> <p>Following Covid and within the context of a cost-of-living crisis, Council were cognisant of providing support to city traders, with a focus on hope and optimism at Christmas.</p> <p>Council's Christmas campaign had the following principles at it's core:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustainability ○ Giving back ○ Sense of Home
3.31	<p>Post Event Evaluation:</p> <p>Belfast City Council commissioned an independent socio-economic survey for the <i>Christmas in Belfast</i> themed - event. Results included the following feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 55% of visitors were from the Belfast City Council area and a further 45% from elsewhere - 77% of visitors have previously attended the event with 23% attending for the first time. - 69% of visitors agreed that it was a good event for the city to host with 19% views that it is one of the best events to take place in Belfast. 0% rated the event as a poor event - 81% of visitors preferred the current event format to the traditional switch on event. - 53% of visitors said that the event improved their view of the city
3.32	<p>Local Supply Chain</p> <p>The 'City Imagining Strategy' approved by council seen a focus on supporting developing local arts and cultural organisations, through funding, commissioning and capacity building. The traditional light switch on's that took place up until 2019 typically engaged less local suppliers, for example in 2019 21 local suppliers were engaged as opposed to more than 40 local suppliers being engaged in 2022.</p>
3.33	<p>Stakeholder Feedback: Current Programme v more traditional Christmas Lights Switch on Event</p>

	<p>Following discussion at a recent committee meeting around the nature of the opening Christmas event, Council Officers have sought feedback from a variety of stakeholders on the future approach:</p>
3.34	<p>Translink are clear that the recent version of the Christmas event (2021 & 2022) is their preference. They stated the older format caused major disruption, particularly to the Glider services, and had health & safety concerns around pedestrian footfall, particularly after the event.</p>
3.35	<p>The Council contracted Production Management Company and external Health & Safety Advisor have very similar opinions when comparing the two formats - they cite a number of difficulties with delivering the old-style event; the open space itself is not conducive to the delivery of a public event. It is a busy City centre with live traffic and heavy pedestrian footfall. This provides not only a challenging environment in which to operate but significantly increases the safety risk for staff and pedestrians, and significant resources to manage. This risk is exacerbated by public non-compliance, particularly during the de-rig. Their preference is for the new style event, also highlighting that for the old style to be delivered safely, (which they acknowledge it can) it would require significant stakeholder buy-in, and it would require a longer build/de-rig (out of hours) which would have significant resource implications. Both also noted how the Market opening adds further complexities.</p>
3.36	<p>An Eventsec manager with several years' experience of the event stated a preference for the new format, with the parade route amended.</p>
3.37	<p>City Events Unit officers commented that the former 'traditional' lights switch on format held prior to the pandemic, was undoubtedly the most challenging event to deliver annually. The city centre space on Donegall Square North is not suitable to host the build and de-rigging of a public event with live or partially live traffic. There are significant risks when live traffic mixes with staff building the event, and particularly with the heavy public pedestrian footfall in the area. Given the inconvenience of the structure build required, the public have been</p>

	<p>seen to take unnecessary risks in crossing the four lanes of traffic. This takes place even with a considerable stewarding presence. This is also a challenge with the de-rig.</p>
3.38	<p>There is also pressure to re-open the roads within an hour of the event ending, a period where many contractors are removing structures and equipment, yet the Donegall Square North is bustling with pedestrians. These issues have been consistent for more than a decade of delivering this format.</p>
3.39	<p>Officer feedback has also indicated that the 2021/2022 event provides a much safer space within which to operate, and with less disruption of traffic and transport services within Donegall Place and Castle Junction, and less event equipment on site, the de-rig is more easily managed. The latter format has entertainment which is more varied in nature and caters for a wider audience than the previous format. There is more scope for using other spaces and buildings within the wider City Centre.</p>
3.40	<p>Feedback from Belfast Chamber (circa 20 businesses) has indicated that retail do not necessarily view the switch on event as boosting trade, while the hospitality sector within the city have a converse opinion. Some businesses have expressed surprise that there was not a return to a normal 'switch on' in 2022. Feedback has also demonstrated a desire for an increased investment in Christmas lighting, strong Christmas marketing brand and drawing on best-practice examples from elsewhere. A meeting with the Belfast Chamber has been scheduled for February to further discuss this feedback in detail.</p>
3.41	<p>Linen Quarter Bid Board feedback has indicated that organisations welcomed a diffuse approach to Christmas lighting with animation across the city centre. Linen Quarter BID welcome a high profile family event to switch on the Christmas lights, as this will help kick-start the season and provide positive marketing for the city centre. However, the event will not necessarily deliver an immediate benefit, as many participants come for the switch-on and then depart again. Maintaining diverse areas of interest and activities across the city centre is therefore deemed important, as this encourages greater dwell time throughout the day.'</p>

3.42	<p>Officers have also conducted research into what format was deployed across other Local Authorities from a benchmarking perspective. Official Christmas Lights Switch On events varied from live performances in a dedicated public space (Newry, Lisburn, Bangor, Antrim, Ballyclare, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Glasgow and Liverpool) supplemented by family friendly activities. Other formats included processional parades taking place in Derry City and Strabane and across Causeway Coast and Glens Local Authorities.</p>
3.43	<p>Further afield, Councils that decided to not have official Christmas Lights Switch-on events included Manchester, which was due to major construction works across the city; Brighton, Leeds and Inverness who cited budget pressures, and York who cited Covid concerns. Alternative approaches include Edinburgh Winter Festival and Cardiff, whose Christmas activity comprises markets, funfairs, ice rinks, and light installations and did not host a standalone lights switch-on event, but rather promoted when the lights would first be switched on, signalling the opening of Christmas markets and related activity.</p>
3.44	<p><u>Proposed solution</u></p> <p>A solution could be found in taking some attributes of the old format, and hosting within the 2021/2022 event space. A ‘switch on’ element, would take place on a small stage at Castle Junction/Donegall Place, allowing the audience within Donegall Place to view the lighting of the Tree and Festive Lighting within the immediate City Centre, without the requirement to close Donegall Square North. The entertainment throughout the City Centre could then be programmed. However it is important to consider that the costs for a traditional light switch on was £96,300 in 2019. Within departmental estimates we currently have secured £122,864 for Christmas activities.</p>
3.45	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications to this report. All expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals.</p> <p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None.