

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



**Belfast
City Council**

1 November 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet, both online via Microsoft Teams and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Wednesday, 6th November, 2024 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 2025 (Pages 1 - 4)

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Vacant to Vibrant Scheme Update (Pages 5 - 20)
- (b) Zoo Quarter 2 Update (Pages 21 - 26)
- (c) Belfast Bikes Quarter 2 Update (Pages 27 - 34)

3. Positioning Belfast to Compete

- (a) Major Events Update (Pages 35 - 40)

(b) Belfast 2024 (Pages 41 - 64)

4. **Growing Business and the Economy**

(a) Response to Invest NI Business Strategy (Pages 65 - 120)

5. **Strategic and Operational Issues**

(a) Committee Plan 2024-25 - Six Monthly Update (Pages 121 - 142)



Subject:	Schedule of Meetings 2025
Date:	6th November, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer
Contact Officer:	Craig Mealey, Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

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1. Information relating to any individual
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7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	To advise the Committee of the dates and times of the meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee between January and December, 2025.
2.0	Recommendations
	The Committee is requested to approve the schedule of meetings for the Committee as outlined.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The monthly meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee is normally held at 5.15 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.
3.2	However, due to holiday periods and the timing of the monthly Council meetings and, in order to assist with the decision-making process, it has been necessary on occasions to move some of the meetings to earlier or later in the month.
3.3	Please note that as previously agreed, special meetings of the Committee have also been scheduled in respect of Presentations.
3.4	Accordingly, the following dates have been identified for meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for the period from January to December 2025: • Wednesday 15th January at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 29th January at 5.15 pm (Special); • Wednesday 5th February at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 12th March at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 26th March at 5.15 pm (Special); • Wednesday 9th April at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 7th May at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 28th May at 5.15 pm (Special); • Wednesday 4th June at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 6th August at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 27th August at 5.15 pm (Special); • Wednesday 10th September at 5.15 pm;

	• Wednesday 8th October at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 29th October at 5.15 pm (Special); • Wednesday 5th November at 5.15 pm; • Wednesday 26th November at 5.15 pm (Special); and • Wednesday 3rd December at 5.15 pm.
3.5	<u>Financial and 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	Appendices – None associated with this report.

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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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Subject:	Update on Tourism Events
Date:	6 th November 2024
Reporting Officer:	Lesley-Ann O'Donnell, Senior manager Culture, Tourism & Events
Contact Officer:	Kerry McMullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on a number of major events.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Committee is asked to: • Note the contents of this paper. • Agree support for enhanced St Patricks day activity to be funded through Shared Prosperity funding. • Approve officers to enter into license or Service Level Agreements required for the successful delivery of the Maritime Festival.
3.0	Main Report:
3.1	Christmas Christmas preparation continues for the switch on event on the 16th November 2024 as per update report to last month's committee.
3.2	Fleadh Cheoil A detailed update was provided to the Committee in October and as outlined, work is intensifying to secure the Fleadh for Belfast in partnership with Ards CCE in 2026, including through continuing participation in Comhaltas meetings and events, hosting visits by senior representatives and starting to put in place the necessary resources, plans and governance arrangements.
3.3	Oireachtas 2025 Members of the events unit and key delivery partners attended the event this year from the 30th October to 2nd November in advance of delivery planning and preparation for Belfast to host in 2025. Working groups will continue to integrate with event organisers and update reports will be provided to members in due course.
3.4	Lord Mayors Day Lord Mayors Day will be held on a Saturday in mid April 2025. The final date will be agreed with the Lord Mayor's Office and City Hall management team. Officers will meet with Lord Mayor's team on programming in November.

3.5	The aim is to create an event that is inclusive, celebrates all that is good, creative and fun about Belfast and offers something for all ages to enjoy at a neutral, easy to access venue in the city. The approved budget for 2024 was £42,000, and draft estimates are similar for 2025. St Patrick's Day 2025: Members will be aware that Council delivered a significant programme of events in 2024 with a number of partners and delivery input from the Council events team. In preparation for 2025, as presented to CG&R in May 2024, a small number of tenders have been issued to encourage creative sector interventions. A tender for a City Centre Music Programme has been awarded to Tradfest, and contract management has commenced. In a similar manner, a tender for Parade content was issued for float provision, community participation and professional performers. It is anticipated that one successful contractor will provide a suite of floats consisting of 34 processional pieces and 21 professional performers, their animated production will include 68 dancers sourced via local community and amateur arts groups. It is also envisaged that two further contractors will facilitate community circus workshops; one will work with 40 children and 8 adult emerging artists and will showcase various circus skills developed at the St Patrick's Day Parade. A second will facilitate, co-ordinate and deliver a stilt walking workshop for 20 children to showcase in the parade. A further contractor will facilitate coordinate and deliver multiple cross- community arts workshops and aim to recruit 300 plus participants from North, South, East and West Belfast to create props and work on costumes to showcase and deliver within the St Patrick's Day parade. Feile an Phobail have been awarded year 2 of their previous tender for their Trad Trail project. The Council team will provide wrap-around logistical support for the parade in particular. Additionally,
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	Members will also be aware that an element of the St Patricks day programme is delivered by Seachtain na Gaeilge which runs from the 1st – 17th March. As part of additional monies made available through the shared prosperity funds officers are recommending an additional £20,000 for enhanced activity to support a headline event on Saturday 8th of March, this would be a family celebration event to take place at Custom House Square and 2 Royal Avenue and would support Belfast City Council’s delivery and engagement in the run into the Oireachtas festival at the end of October. As in previous years, Council Corporate Communications will provide a MARCOMM’s package to promote the entire programme. Maritime Festival 2025: 3.6 Members will be aware that the event is now on a biennial basis and budget allocations reflect this. The Belfast Maritime Festival will take place on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th September 2025. There are ongoing discussions with Maritime Belfast Trust on programming, which is well advanced. The festival footprint is currently under review, but is planned for almost the entire Maritime Mile, with the new City Quay’s Gardens coming on line for the first time. Research continues on the availability and costs for visiting Tall Ships supplemented by ongoing discussions with the Royal Navy and Commissioners for Irish Lights. There are several procurement processes in respect of the creative sector participation, and Legal / Land Agreements being considered. Committee is also asked to approve officers to enter into any license agreements or Service Level Agreements required for the successful delivery of these events. For example, use of TQ, DFI and Odyssey Trust land, and partnership programming with Maritime Belfast Trust. Legal Services require Council minutes giving this authority prior to entering into these agreements. The Open Championship 3.7 Officers are currently exploring opportunities with Tourism NI on the role that Belfast could play during the event week. Given the significant number of visitors that will be in the city during that time and the potential to provide additional animation and activation.
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4.0	Financial and Resource Implications:
	Major events are being progressed within previously agreed budgets and the budget of £20,000 for additional St Patrick's day event will be funded from Shared Prosperity funding.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment:
	There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.
6.0	Appendices: N/A

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	<u>Belfast 2024 – Programme Update</u>
Date:	6 November 2024
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Erika Clark, Belfast 2024 Programme Manager

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1	To provide a detailed update to the Committee on the Belfast 2024 programme so far, through the Belfast 2024 Interim Report November 2024 as attached at Appendix 1.
2.0	Recommendation
2.	Note the progress of the programme to date.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Programme Update: Belfast 2024 launched officially on 29th February 2024, and we've achieved significant successes across the programme so far. There have been a wide range of events, performances, and engagement throughout the city to create an extensive range of artistic and creative work, while supporting the sector to build skills and capacity as well as showcasing Belfast as a cultural destination. • £2.7m directly invested into creative and cultural sector commissioning locally • £960k to Direct Commissions and partnerships including Little Amal, Eden Project, BBC concert, International Artist Project • £0.9m towards strategic and music-based events to celebrate and embrace UNESCO City of Music designation and our music strategy • 800+ contracts have been created for B24 delivery within the creative sector including artists, production staff, facilitators and designers • 500+ workshops and events have taken place across the city with more to come by December • 16 artists supported on Creative Bursary programme • 6 International Artists working in residence with communities for 2 years with British Council partnership funding • 35,000 attendees & participants to date
3.2	Evaluation Framework- Interim Feedback The report gives an overview of the events completed so far and outlines important feedback we've received as part of our Evaluation Framework evidencing the impact this ambitious programme is having for citizens, communities, the creative and cultural sector and city partners. The report covers the period up to end of August 2024. The report (Appendix I) provides an information on; • Background & Strategic Context of Belfast 2024 • Belfast 2024 Programme Structure • Belfast 2024 Programme

- Programme Delivery to End September
- Marketing and Communications Update
- Partnership Development & Delivery
- Evaluation, impact & Feedback so far
- Lessons Learned & Legacy Planning

It is important to note that the evaluation findings are at an interim stage, including the statistics outlined below, and the positive analysis and feedback received to date will both be updated and importantly supplemented by work on the lessons learned, recognising some of the significant challenges in delivering a creative programme across our City and our plans as we implement the next stage of our Cultural Strategy, including the delivery of Belfast Stories.

Belfast 2024 programme statistics summary to date:

Events	549
Participants/attendees	35,000
Artists & Contractors involved	811
Programme Partners	203

Feedback so far based on 600 audience/contractor surveys:

- **99 % of attendees agreed they had a good time**
- **97 % agreed the activity was absorbing and held their attention**
- **98 % agreed they would come to something like this again**

Attendees also report:

- **98 % of attendees agreed they felt welcome and included**
- **95 % agreed they felt connected to others**
- **97 % agreed that they felt proud that it was happening in Belfast**

Lessons learned and Legacy

3.3

Belfast 2024 was at its core an 'accelerator' project for our Cultural Strategy 2020-30, create the conditions to support capacity building, test new ways of working, strengthen existing and forge new connection between cultural delivery within the council and the wider city. The legacy of this significant project is critical to show the return on investment, to ensure lessons learnt are captured, and to embed critical elements of the programme into 'business as usual'.

Work is ongoing to capture and learn lessons both positive and negative in relation to the planning and delivery of Belfast 2024 and to consider how these can be applied to future programmes and plans, including through application of co-design models for delivery of City events and Tourism

	and to ensure that there is an effective legacy from the programme. Emerging Themes for legacy development include: • Informing Implementation Plan for Second Phase of Cultural Strategy A City Imagining 2025-2030 • Supporting the delivery of Belfast Stories, including through Our Stories Festival • Supporting legacy of the projects and artists /creators Still to come in Belfast 2024
3.4	As we head into Autumn, the programme continues to deliver a broad range of events, activities, workshops and participative opportunities across the city appealing to a range of audiences from communities to visitors and international tourists. We will have the City Hall Immersive Experience, <i>Are You On The Bus, Touch, Hear, Feel</i> premiere – an inclusive performance engaging all senses and <i>Hearth</i> our film of Belfast by Belfast with Mark Cousins and Belfast Film Festival and the Our Stories Festival In partnership with Belfast Stories.
3.5	Belfast Stories Partnership – Our Stories Festival 20th – 24th November The Belfast 2024 and Belfast Stories partnership for this programme will culminate with Our Stories Festival in November, designed in partnership with Oliver Jeffers/Jeffers Studios, Nerve Centre, and NI Science Festival as well as Ulster University, who are celebrating their 175th year. This exciting programme will see our city centre come to life with a combination of talks, workshops, art installations, comedy, music and food and engagement with local communities on the future of our city – housed at City Hall, 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast Stories site and Ulster University's new campus. Guests include Oliver Jeffers, Tim Smit – founder of Eden Project, Martin Green CBE, Hannah Peel, Ruth McCarthy, Stacey Gregg with further names to be confirmed including Chris Packham and local artists who will lead on a series of engagements, as well as integration with a number of our Bank of Ideas projects who have come through our participatory budgeting programme.
4.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
4.1	The programme as outlined above will be delivered within existing budgets.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	The Cultural Strategy - <i>A City Imagining</i> - carried out an extensive EQIA covering the duration of the strategy 2020-2030. Belfast 2024 is one of the major outputs of the Cultural Strategy with wide and varied ambition. Promotion of opportunity for all Section 75 groups to be celebrated within the overall Belfast 24 cultural programme is important to it's success. The Council's Culture team have a dedicated, full time and permanent Engagement Officer focussed on accessing a wide range of marginalised groups to co-design an extensive Engagement Programme which has fed directly into the development and delivery of the Belfast 2024 programme.
6.0	<u>Appendices - Documents Attached</u>
6.1	Appendix 1 Belfast 2024 Interim Report



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BACKGROUND & STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Belfast 2024 is our year-long celebration of home-grown culture and creativity featuring new and exciting events, theatre, music, and art developed through innovative co-design and partnership models with the city stakeholders, the creative sector, and the citizens of Belfast. The objective is to deliver on the aims of the City Council's Cultural and Tourism strategies, UNESCO City of Music status, Belfast Agenda, Bolder Vision and Belfast Stories development – all founded in a belief and a commitment from Council that culture, sustainability, collaboration, partnership and people should be at the heart of the city's development.

As outlined below, delivering on our own major cultural celebration this year has already delivered a range of impacts which we believe will be felt across the cultural, tourism and hospitality sectors over the coming months/year as well as at a wider civic and international level and will bring about legacy for the city as a place and for its people.

The Belfast Agenda provides a long-term framework for how community planning partners *will* work collaboratively to deliver an ambitious and inclusive vision that will create a better quality of life for all citizens in Belfast. Catalysed by the European Capital of Culture Bid development in 2017, which involved the largest and most significant public engagement programme Belfast City Council had undertaken, Council underwent significant strategic development in Culture & Tourism from 2018 onwards. The results of which are 3 new strategies for the city – *A City Imagining* Cultural Strategy, *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan and *Music Matters* Roadmap - putting creativity, and the people of this city, at the heart of Belfast's development and growth opportunities.

A City Imagining launched in April 2020, was developed with the people of Belfast and places culture and creativity at the heart of civic development. Belfast 2024 was a key commitment in *A City Imagining* and directly delivers on the strategic priorities within this plan with objectives such as:

- **Supporting the cultural life of the city by enabling our people to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change**
- **Investing in our cultural and creative sectors to develop the skills and capacity for production and innovation**
- **Positioning Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking**
- **Establishing Belfast as a cultural destination**
- **Working towards Belfast becoming a more ‘attractive’ place to live and work**
- **Addressing city dereliction, by increasing vibrancy and civic pride**
- **Recognising the climate crisis, develop awareness & change cultural behaviours**
- **Re-activating Belfast’s Tourism Sector and develop our Cultural Tourism offer**
- **Delivering a distinct portfolio of city events connected to citizens and attracting international visitors promoting Belfast as a world-class cultural destination**

Delivery of our ambitious year of cultural celebration in 2024 is needed more than ever as our city is still recovering from the effects of the covid crisis, whilst also facing unprecedented economic pressures in the current financial climate. We recognise the profound socio-economic impacts of these crises across the city, especially for the culture and arts sector. Belfast 2024 will address several sectoral issues such as:

- **Improving well-being of artists and cultural organisations with increased opportunities for long-term contracts and larger-scale opportunities from 2022-2024**
- **Putting Belfast’s creative talent on the map nationally and globally, raising our reputation as a world-class cultural destination and advocating for further cultural investment**
- **Seeking to avoid the creative talent exodus – people are leaving the sector or choosing to join other sectors due to funding challenges, better terms and conditions and greater job-security**
- **Improving European partnership opportunities for cultural exchange.**

Council’s Culture Team have also been pivoting their programmes and to help recover and build the capacity of our cultural sector whilst maintaining our commitment to a year of cultural celebration in our city, originally planned for 2023 it was decided due to the negative effects of the pandemic we would move our plans for this ambitious programme to 2024.

In continuing to deliver our home-grown year of cultural celebration in 2024 we’ve built much needed capacity and ambition in our creative sector whilst delivering on our strategic priorities for civic participation in cultural development as well as placing Belfast on the map internationally as a culturally vibrant destination.

BELFAST 2024 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Belfast 2024 Guiding Principles - our people, our place, our planet

People & Place are at the heart of our cultural strategy *A City Imagining* and our tourism plan *Make Yourself at Home*. Placemaking is a people-centred approach to delivering a local and shared vision. People shape places. Culturally vibrant cities are places where people negotiate their sense of belonging and where the

private sphere connects to the public. Local government is ideally positioned when it comes to placemaking, with an ability to connect with and bring together a diverse range of people and sectors across the city. *Belfast 2024* is a manifestation of this vision for putting people and place at the heart of what we do. It also recognised the need to focus on our role as facilitators, strengthening collaborations between sectors in this city, using creativity and the ambitions of 2024 as our vehicle. Our planet, how we care for it and creatively address the climate crisis through cultural intervention and behaviour change is also a core principle of Belfast 2024's programme.

Timeline for Belfast 2024

Date	Milestone
April 2020	Signed off as a core strategic goal of cultural strategy
June 2021	Decision to delay Belfast 2023 to 2024
November 2022	Launch of Open Call to city – ongoing Direct Commission Development
March 2023	Open Call Stage 1 closes – 194 ideas received
March 2023	Open Call Stage 2 opens – 55 shortlisted
May 2023	Open Call Stage 2 closes – 17 commissions selected on scoring
June 2023	First Programme plan presented to CGR & SPR
July 2023	16 Creative Bursary artists funded
August 2023	Detailed Programme Plan presented to SPR
September 2023	Belfast 2024 Programme Board established
October 2023	Marcomms Officers recruited dedicated to Belfast 2024
November 2023	Final Programme Plan presented and approved by SPR
November 2023	17 Open Call commissions contracted for delivery from February 24 onwards
January 2024	Marketing and Comms – Belfast 2024 website & social media launched
February 2024	Full Belfast 2024 Programme Public Launched
May 2024	Belfast 2024 Main Programme begins with Little Amal Weekend
May 2024 – Dec 2024	Programme delivery

Our Open Call to the city

- Core programme needed to come from the people of Belfast
- All ideas had to have creatives working with citizens and city partners to co-design the project
- All ideas had to prove they delivered on the principles of – co-design, new ideas, public space, sustainability and shared planet
- New procurement model via design contest – open to all, staged and paid for time for R&D
- 178 one to one advice sessions where conducted for Stage 1-2 across the city and sectors
- 291 new registrations on Council's eSourcing procurement system for the design contest
- 194 submissions from across Belfast/NI for Belfast 2024 - £28million overall ask
- 55 Shortlisted ideas brought to final stage - £7.8million overall ask - £2k each for full project planning and R&D
- 17 commissions recommended for contract following scoring
- Each commission partnered with Council Officer in Belfast 2024 team as a co-producer to support delivery and guide the developmental process including creative development, resourcing, H&S, event planning, engagement
- Range of scale and ambition of commissions from £30k to £250k
- 17 commissions contracted in October/November 2023 for delivery between January – December 2024

8 MONTH
PROCESS
LAUNCHED
DECEMBER 2022

291 NEW
REGISTRATIONS
COUNCIL
ESOURCING

233 ONE-TO-ONE
ADVICE SESSIONS
WITH BIDDERS

194 SUBMISSIONS
£28 MILLION
OVERALL ASK

55 SHORTLISTED IDEAS
£7.8 MILLION
OVERALL ASK

£110,000 INVESTMENT IN
R+D FOR
SHORTLISTED
55 PROPOSALS

17 RECOMMENDED FOR
CONTRACT
TOTAL £2.7 MILLION
COMMISSIONS



Final Open Call Selection - Artist / Statagic Partner Collaborations



Stage 1 - Open Call Bids

76% Funded / Established Organisations

24% Individual Artists / Non Funded Collectives

Stage 3 - Final Open Call Selection

59% Funded / Established Organisations

41% Individual Artists / Non Funded Collectives

Direct Commissions

Successful cities of culture have shown that investment in homegrown talent has long-term and measurable impacts. It is also recognised that to develop local talent, and importantly raise their ambition, our creative sector needs to be inspired by and work in collaboration with international creative and cultural partners on a long-term and meaningful basis to raise the bar locally, as well as garnering Belfast's reputation as a cultural and global destination.

Belfast 2024 has established two **key international partnerships, Little Amal and Eden Project**. Eden Project have been working with the team since 2022 to develop sustainable and climate-conscious practice

within the delivery of the Belfast 2024 programme Their team of experts have directly mentored 6 of our commissions who have a focus on climate and green consciousness. We have and continue to encourage all commissioned programmes, projects and events via our Open Call to connect nationally and internationally and have international partners. This emphasis on working beyond ourselves is helping to support a legacy of the programme and developing long-term relationships with globally recognised creative and cultural brands. Our 3rd International partnership has been delivered with **British Council NI** whereby they've **funded 6 international artists to work with communities across Belfast** over a 2yr period to produce their co-designed showcase Red Sky at Night in November.

Belfast Stories Partnership

Belfast 2024 is also partnering with Belfast Stories on their engagement from October to December by working with them to enhance and expand a number of our commissions that strategically link to target demographics for Belfast Stories such as Solab's North Star, and Nerve Centre's work the Our Stories Festival itself. Belfast 2024 and Belfast Stories are inter-related strategic projects identified in both *A City Imagining*, Cultural Strategy for Belfast and *Make Yourself at Home*, A Vision for the future of tourism. These projects have been designed to ensure that opportunities are maximised to support long-term sustainable change in the city. A collaborative programme of work has been developed to include:

- **Stories based programming to showcase cultural heritage and identity**
- **Activations at Belfast Stories site - engagement with local communities and businesses**
- **Strategic partnerships between Belfast Stories and specific**
- **Launch of citywide and diaspora Story Gathering Programme supported by public engagement campaign**
- **Skills based legacy programme of creative ambassadors, facilitators, participants and volunteers**

Civic Engagement & Co-design

A new approach to civic cultural engagement was developed for Belfast 2024. By putting civic participation at the heart of Belfast 2024, citizens see themselves and their creativity reflected in this programme, supporting active citizenship and participation. To achieve this, we developed new processes in areas such as procurement, communications, governance and working cross-departmentally and cross-sectoral, showing our dedication to Belfast 2024 being an accelerator for new approaches to feed into the delivery of the Culture Strategy. The civic engagement elements of Belfast 2024 have used several methodologies including participatory budgeting and community-driven creative initiatives. In so doing we are encouraging people to reach their full potential and have a say in the cultural life of their city.



Orangefield Park Mural Project with Belfast Alternatives

The Bank of Ideas funded 29 projects, delivering 73 workshops and events throughout the city with 1,735 participant and over 2,000 attendees for activities to date. Additionally, 2,253 people cast votes in the process. The average award under the scheme was £2,000.

BELFAST 2024 PROGRAMME:

- £2.7m directly to creative and cultural sector commissioning
- £960k to Direct Commissions including Little Amal, Eden Project, BBC concert, International Artist Project
- £0.9m towards strategic and music-based events to celebrate and embrace UNESCO City of Music designation
- 600+ contracts have been created for B24 delivery in the creative and cultural sector – including production staff and artists, designers, facilitators.
- 500+ workshops and events have taken place across the city with more to come by December
- 16 artists supported on Creative Bursary programme
- 6 International Artists working in residence with communities for 2 years with British Council partnership funding
- 35,000 participants and attendees to end of September.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY TO END SEPTEMBER:

Belfast 2024 Commissions ¹	Emerging Outcomes / Legacy
An Droichead – Nobodaddy Contract £175K Partnership commission for largescale Irish-language based dance and performance touring show with international cast between Belfast, Dublin and London premiering in Belfast with a lead in engagement programme focussed on storytelling, Irish language and cultural heritage in Belfast that inspired the final show's content with nearly 200 participants. Nearly 250 people attended the engagement programme and the 2 large-scale dance and theatre performances in the Waterfront Hall with 440 attendees.	Legacy of Irish Language engagement approaches and model leading into Belfast Stories development First time Belfast dancer in international high-profile cast with Teac Damsa. First time Teac Damsa has premiered work in North of Ireland/Belfast International reputation builder with shows in Dublin/London

Another World Belfast – Greenhouse Contract £99K New creative community venue in Belfast led by local charity that supports people living in hardship across Belfast providing creative workshops, skills in upskilling in textiles, recycling and media. Open 10am to 6pm every day. In addition to the shoppers there have been 31 events involving almost 1,500 attendees.	New and affordable creative workspace scheme for membership to support skills and career pathway development. Refugee/Asylum seeker weekly support group Monthly fashion skills workshops BBC Sunday Show coverage Support schemes for disadvantaged communities
ArtseKta/The Walk - Little Amal Contract £469K Largescale international commission to open Belfast 2024 programme designed in partnership with local communities and migrant/new communities in Belfast culminating in 14 major events across a weekend in May with over 8,000 attendees.	One of the largest collaborative cultural events delivered in Belfast – with over 174 creatives involved over 14 events. Largest welcome event Little Amal has ever had across 160 cities worldwide with over local 200 performers Engagement with refugee/asylum organisations Cross-border/Ni wide partnership with Dublin CC, Louth, Causeway Coast/ Derry/Strabane and Newry, Mourne and Down
Bank of Ideas £50K Cultural Participatory Budgeting programme for Belfast 2024 funded involving 76 work shops and events with almost 3,000 attendees. Neighbourhoods, communities and civic groups were invited to submit creative project ideas which were voted on by the local communities.	125 submissions, local citizens vote on what they want in their area. 9 projects funded to take place across North, South, East, West and City Centre. Legacy of future participative funding approaches
BBC Concert Contract £80K Legacy partnership with BBC from Freedom of the City concert in 2022 to deliver a broadcast concert with approximately 1,700 attendees celebrating BBC Centenary in NI. BCC B24/Belfast City of Music commissioned local artists to create new work as part of this concert performance with Ulster Orchestra	4 new commissioned pieces with local musicians and Ulster Orchestra as part of UNESCO City of Music development. Broadcast on BBC1 – 80,000 viewers Legacy opportunity with BCC/BBC

Boom Clap Play - Wiggle Room Contract £215K Digital interactive playroom based at the MAC for 10 weeks designed by children with local media companies Big Motive and Boom Clap Play exploring the future of museum and gallery exhibitions and play. Open daily 11am to 6pm, no booking required Tues- Sun. It is anticipated that by the end of its run Wiggle Room more than 750 will have attended or participated in the interactive play experience.	First of its kind in Belfast Embracing new technology for museums/galleries to learn and adopt Request for touring options to British Museum, showcase with UK delegates Long-term legacy for permanent exhibition in Belfast Legacy of good-practice in co-designing art and exhibitions with young people and children
Eurocities Cultural Forum £15K A three-day event welcoming cultural policy makers from cities across Europe and UK, visiting a selection of 16 Belfast 2024 projects and artists across the city and to learn about Belfast's approach to cultural strategic development and delivery through <i>A City Imagining 2020-30</i>	130 delegates attended, including Senior Politicians, working in Cultural Policy across Europe Positive Feedback – one of the best conferences so far for the network Showcasing local work – touring opportunities for Drift/Shadowdock UNESCO Creative Cities partnership development
Feile - Conflicting Narratives Contract £50K International project in partnership with Kabosh and Belfast International Arts Festival and Palestinian artists exploring how culture and creativity can help with resolution in communities affected by conflict. Project involved specialist training workshops, talks and learning sessions for performers, community workers and theatre makers and 4 public performances with a total of almost 900 attendees	International artist programme at Black Mountain Shared Space with creatives from Palestine and Rwanda Legacy project for BIAF/ Feile partnership in 2025 and beyond Career development workshops and opportunities for local theatre makers and community workers on-going
Lyric - Midsummer at the Lyric Contract £250K Outdoor multi-cultural and inclusive largescale theatre performance led by Lyric with a professional and community cast of young performers with learning disabilities. Involved community engagement programme of events with local people as well as 7 performance with overall attendees of more than 2,600	First inclusive professional production for Lyric with disabled artists and communities First outdoor show for Lyric New attendees to theatre Legacy opportunities for outdoor/ accessible events

Nerve Centre - Oliver Jeffers Exhibition Seen Contract £20K Public exhibition at Waterfront showcasing Oliver Jeffer's portraits of refugee and asylum seekers in Belfast and Northern Ireland as part of Little Amal's welcoming weekend programme.	Showcasing refugee/ asylum seeker work in public Legacy programme – exhibition now housed in hospitals across BHSCT
Off the Rails – Roots Contract £175K ROOTS is an immersive performance blending dance, poetry, and captivating sound design. Wearing individual headphones, audiences are invited to move through the garden to watch, listen, and connect in a sensory journey, sparking fresh conversations about past traditions, our relationship to nature, and dreams of a collective future. Choreography and content is based on engagement and storytelling from local community incorporated into the launch of a dedicated community garden, designed with Eden Project, at new Black Mountain Shared space. ROOTS involved 10 engagement workshops and 12 performance events with more than 700 attendees	Opening event for Black Mountain Shared Space Centre Long-term legacy of community garden for locals Local engagement and co-design in the content development and delivery of performance Legacy of audio trail, and stories from local communities feeding into Belfast Stories Pitching at the Culture Ireland Showcasing event November 2024
OGU - Drift New public space on the River Lagan to engage people with the River Lagan in new ways - a floating pavilion hosting a variety of events including film screenings, art workshops, yoga, star gazing and music - situated at Stranmillis then down into the more urban setting beside the Waterfront Hall. 22 events including workshops, working with 'moving on Music' artists to provide unique performance space. Over both venues 1,769 people attended the installation.	First water-based events platform for Belfast/Lagan Flexible, adjustable, and multi-functional design Legacy with Waterfront animation – Maritime Mile, Maritime Festival Touring opportunities to EU cities

Ps2 – Waterworks Contract £186K Largescale-city wide engagement programme involving over 100 events with more than 7000 attendees encouraging our communities to re-engage with our maritime heritage culminating in a large scale creative boat-building programme and river-celebration event in partnership with LORAG.	Over 100 workshops and events in lead up to celebration event 6000+ boats created 2 Bespoke largescale commissioned boats Curragh donated to LORAG Community for use at the Lagan Maritime Festival and Maritime Mile. Legacy programming and content development for authentic, bespoke-co-designed animation
Studio Idir - 9ft in Common Contract £170K City-wide programme of 16 events with over 750 attendees exploring the potential of our alleyways as public and community shared spaces to host gardens, events, music and art co-designed and led by local neighbourhoods. End product will be a Manifesto for the Alleyways - following an extensive mapping exercise of all 202KM of Belfast's alleyways, online video resources to show 'how to' transform your alleyway. Participatory budgeting provided funding for 45 participants, working across 7 Alleyways N/S/E and W Belfast. Project extensively documented and filmed by Simon Mills, including a screening at Strand Cinema of the film 'Breaks and Join's'.	Partnership working with Council's CNS and Resilience Team Long-term change and intervention for local communities to create new public spaces across the city National collaboration and learning with Manchester City Council Policy recommendations emerging Some elements still to be delivered- detail will be available for final report.
Sykes Studio – ShadowDock Contract £190K Ambitious and largescale immersive light and music spectacle housed at Thompson Dry Dock, the birthplace of the Titanic with Below and above Deck viewed by nearly 3000 people. Bringing life and cultural animation to this underused but vital piece of Belfast's built heritage.	World-class showcasing of Titanic's birthplace and our built heritage Immersive experience at the Dock – prove of concept for future events use Legacy potential with Maritime Mile and Maritime Festival animation and events Tourism legacy – work with TNI/TI to explore.

Ulster Orchestra – Soundlinks Contract £145K Multifaceted engagement programme with local residents, 305 participants took part in 10 workshops based in Townsend Street exploring the areas' heritage and history and potential for its future culminating in a full-day street party with music and food and a bespoke commissions inspired by this engagement performed by Ulster Orchestra and musicians with approximately 3000 people attending on International Peace Day in September.	Legacy of Ulster Orchestra having authentic and long-term relationship building with local community Legacy of future cross-community cultural events for Townsend St Legacy of UO working with other musicians and community-led design BBC broadcast opportunities UNESCO City of Music delivery
Wild Belfast - Safari in the City Contract £70K Programme of 19 events and workshops attended by 900 and creation of living murals exploring, celebrating and supporting our city's hidden biodiversity. Utilising art to promote wildlife issues - this project has produced living murals throughout the city (1 complete with 3 to go), it has enabled artists to respond to the 'beer mat' competition to get artworks into common areas, engaged writers in 'Making Space for Nature' Creative writing events and provided talks, walks and tours informing the urban plant, bird, animal and bug life living with us in Belfast.	Collaboration between sciences and arts Cultural output for climate/ecological data and engagement with communities Discovery of Belfast's own native Weevil Living Murals across city – giving space and habitat for endangered species in our city through street art Showcasing new and up and coming artists Inspiring content for other projects – Eco Arcade
Zeppo Arts - An Irish Goodbye Mural and Screening Contract £18K Mural commissioned to celebrate the Oscar winning artists behind An Irish Goodbye.	Celebration of Oscar-winning talent from Belfast Showcasing diversity and inclusivity in creative industries Inspiring next generation Significant media coverage

MAIN EVENTS : POST SEPTEMBER

October

Bounce Culture - North Star

Programme inspired by anti-slavery abolitionist Frederick Douglas's time in Belfast looking at contemporary Black Culture in Belfast and what it means to belong in Belfast culminating in a music performance spectacle with leading artists in Belfast.

November

Culture Ireland International Delegate Showcase

31st October – 2nd November

In partnership with Belfast International Festival and Theatre & Dance NI Belfast 2024 hosted over 35 international cultural producers and programmers from Europe, South America, Canada to showcase our projects across Belfast 31st October – 2nd November to seek out international touring opportunities from 2025 onwards.

DaisyChain - Nothing

On-going workshops – conference on 4th November

Small-scale programme of engagement with estimated 750 attendees across 4 events exploring opportunities for people to take time out for their mental health, to network and make connections with people and community beyond work life.

BIAF - Hear/Touch/Feel

1-4th November

Dance performance led by visually impaired artist and communities exploring how people with visual disabilities can take part in and witness performance-based work through other senses commissioned with Belfast International Arts Festival.

Household Belfast - Red Sky at Night

1st – 4th November

Residency programme with 6 international artists who have worked with communities in Belfast over 2 years to co-design art installations and public realm works in neighbourhoods across the city, supported by British Council. Artworks will be available to view at Carlisle Memorial Church (Benign Land by Leandros Nicolas), The Palm House (Possession by Kanick Khajohnsri), Waterworks Park (Stargazing by Aisling O'Brien), Bank of Ireland Building (Lament by Zuza Golinska), Riddels Warehouse (the Sound we Longed for by Dina Mimi) and 2 Royal Ave (Common Point Exercises by Irmina Rusicka and Kasper Lecnim).

Outburst - Are you on the Bus?

16th Nov – 1st December

Multi-faceted arts programme exploring our city's LGBTQIA+ heritage and stories with audio trails, performances on a bus, a bookshop in the city centre and publications

Nerve Centre/NISF - Our Stories Festival

21st – 24th November

Belfast 2024 and Belfast Stories has partnered with the Nerve Centre and NI Science Festival to explore the themes of Our People, Our Place, Our Planet and reflect on our year of creativity while looking forward to Belfast Stories. Our Stories Festival will bring together artists, thinkers, designers, and musicians for a series of talks, workshops, creative events, conversations and interventions across Belfast's City Centre in the last weekend of November.

Household Belfast - Right to the Night

Monthly

Project encouraging communities to engage with night-sky and dark sky initiatives celebrating night-based biodiversity and nature such as Bat Watching and Star Gazing events in local parks.

December

Belfast Film Fest – Hearth

12th Dec

A film of Belfast, for Belfast made by the people of Belfast. Led by international film Director Mark Cousins (Belfast-born) the city has been working with Belfast Film Festival over this year to gather and create footage telling a portrait of our city in 2024.

Eco Arcade**Opening early December til January 2025**

Opening in December our outdoor largescale arcade game projected by laser onto the façade of Ulster Museum and The MAC inviting people to play in real-time at large scale. Games will also be available via app download to play on users phones. Designed in partnership with National Trust and children exploring our local bio-diversity.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

To raise awareness and engage with audiences, a fully integrated marketing and communication plan is being implemented by the Belfast City Council team alongside Belfast 2024 programme roll out. To date, there have been three campaigns delivered and there is one more campaign due to go live w/c 7 October.

Delivered: Teaser campaign 26 February - 24 March: The role of this campaign was to build anticipation and excitement for Belfast 2024 and a mix of media was used including outdoor advertising, radio and social media.

Delivered: Little Amal Campaign 6 May- 19 May: This was an awareness campaign for Little Amal's visit to Belfast. High impact creative was developed, and an integrated media plan was rolled out including outdoor advertising, radio and social media. Post campaign research highlighted the success of the campaign with a **high 62%** of the public in Belfast recalling communication related to Little Amal.

Delivered: Summer 2024 campaign 29 July- 11 August: This was an integrated marketing campaign, with creative featuring 3 of the Belfast 2024 projects: Shadowdock, ROOTS and Wiggle Room. Media included outdoor, radio, digital and social media.

In progress: Autumn 2024 campaign- due to go live w/c 7 October: This campaign will go live on 7 October and will last for 2 weeks, and it will focus on the October and November programme activity, featuring projects across outdoor, radio, social media and press. The projects that will feature include: North Star, Are you on the bus? and Touch, Hear, Feel.

Alongside all campaign activity to ensure there is a consistent flow of promotion for the programme, there have been Belfast City Council media releases wrapping up all the activity coming up within the programme at key points, an always on approach to the Belfast 2024 social media channels, features on Belfast City Council social media platforms, city dressing and marketing collateral produced, email marketing, Internal communication and work with the destination agencies to feature and promote Belfast 2024 to destination audiences.

Media: Each Belfast 2024 project is responsible for delivering their own PR plan for their project – this is part of their T&Cs. Belfast City Council media output is high level to complement projects media activity - 'rounding up' events, highlighting key milestones and focusing on specific themes. The output so far has been 20 media releases linked with Belfast 2024 plus there are features and input from the team on project media releases. The collective effort has result in over 400 online pieces, TV and radio features and over 150 media pieces. Further media activity is planned until programme end.

Social media: Belfast 2024 channels: These channels are always on, with content being generated to promote the overall programme and to tell the story of the many artists, producers, organisations, projects and partners involved.

Facebook- 1.3k followers, highly engaged users with a rate of engagement at 1.47% (Facebook's average engagement is 0.04%)

Instagram- 3.1k followers, highly engaged audience and growing.

BCC (corporate) social media channels: Belfast 2024 milestones and events are also amplified on the corporate social media channels. This allows for an extending reach for the programme given the corporate channels following, while signposting people to the main Belfast 2024 platforms for more project-specific info: Twitter/X – 120.5K followers, Facebook – 89K followers, Linked In – 25K followers and Instagram – 25.1K followers.

Brand activation/City Dressing/ Marketing collateral: Brand guidelines and a brand toolkit were shared with all Belfast 2024 projects and stakeholders to encourage them to embrace the brand across all their channels. The Belfast 2024 brand has been rolled out with city dressing activity- some examples include: George Best Belfast City Airport, flags across key sites in the city, Belfast sign at the front of City Hall (Belfast 2024 brand colours and design), 2 Royal Avenue brand fit out and dressing, street art jam features, Belfast 2024 impact wrap bus stop and more. Various marketing collateral materials were created and are used in programme promotion including brochures, branded tote bags and lanyards given away at key engagements.

Digital- website and email marketing: The Belfast 2024 website launched in December 2023. All campaign activity and communication provide a call to action for people to visit the website for further information and reading on the programme. There have been approx. 50k views and there are over 11k unique users on the website from the launch in December 2023 until the beginning of September 2024. There are over 600 subscriptions on the email database for Belfast 2024. So far three email newsletters have been issued as part of the wider campaign activity: Little Amal/ Bank of Ideas, Belfast 2024 Summer Season, Belfast 2024 Autumn season and there are further email campaigns planned in for key programme updates in October and November.

Internal communication: Belfast 2024 programme key activity regularly features through all internal communication channels. These channels tell the story of co-creation and collaboration between departments as part of the programme. These channels also extend the reach for programme awareness and engagement and projects have offered discounted ticket rates for Belfast City Council Staff. Activity so far has included: Over 10 features and stories on Interlink, Internal screen features across sites, CX weekly update email features and further activity is planned until programme end.

Destination agencies/ partners: Visit Belfast have worked with the team and have delivered an integrated marketing plan during summer 2024 to promote the Belfast 2024 programme to the destination audience. The campaign was rolled out across NI/ROI/GB, celebrating Belfast's vibrant arts, culture, and heritage, with creative featuring Belfast 2024 branding. Visit Belfast have embraced the 2024 branding and programme information across all their channels including in visitor guides, e-zines, website, Visit Belfast events and media days and branding within the visitor centre. These relationships have provided the opportunity to profile the Belfast 2024 programme to destination audiences and these agencies have supported with media features, newsletters, social media and web.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & DELIVERY

Strategic Context for Partnership in Cultural Strategy/Belfast 2024

Belfast's ten-year Cultural Strategy *A City Imagining* encourages us to 'imagine a collaborative city with a shared vision for culture' and within the strategy, we commit to taking forward a City Compact and to working with partners to deliver on strategic priorities.

This commitment was emphasised through Belfast 2024's vision and mission, of encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership in creating new cultural work. All Belfast 2024 commissions have

had to incorporate an element of partnership, civic engagement and co-design in their approach to ensure relevance and authenticity in the stories they tell, and also enhance opportunities for project legacy.

Belfast 2024 Partnership approach in procurement

‘Collaboration, partnership and co-design’ were key criteria for the Belfast 2024 Open Call process. Bidders to the Open Call were asked to detail what partners, outside of the traditional cultural sector, they would be working with on the creative, developmental and delivery stages of their commissions. Diverse partnerships were encouraged during project development discussions to ensure breakdown of silos and a more collaborative approach to cultural delivery.

This criteria and approach was supported by networking meet ups, bidding assessment processes and has been an important part of project development plans. The Belfast 2024 team have guided bidders in terms of suggesting and identifying suitable partners as required as well as engaging with Arts & Business NI to connect partners.

Within the final Belfast 2024 programme there are over 200 named and actively collaborative partners from across sectors in the city delivering on the commissions with the creatives and communities including universities, mental health charities, wildlife trusts, health trusts, engineering and law.

Key partners and stakeholders of Belfast 2024 represent several complementary categories:

FUNDING PARTNERS

- These partners are the investors in Belfast 2024 and support specific areas of the programme and include the National Lottery Heritage Fund; British Council Northern Ireland; Dublin City Council; Newry Mourne and Down District Council; Causeway Coast & Glens Council.
- We are in ongoing dialogue with each of the top three funding partners in terms of outputs, outcomes and legacy of their investment. Some concrete examples include Belfast Stories’ future work with The National Lottery Heritage Fund; British Council MoU refresh and future artist exchange programme.

PROGRAMME PARTNERS

- These partners were those organisations and bodies that we worked with closely to deliver certain programme elements, including access and inclusion training, sustainability, specific and targeted marketing, wayfinding and communication.
- These partners’ in-kind support and / or services provided, borne of existing or newly established communication supported by MoU’s or partnership agreements, was invaluable in increasing the quality of the audience and participant experience.
- This collaborative, mutually beneficial work also greatly increase the opportunities for legacy projects and strands of ongoing partnership, which we can capture in our City Compact development and in the context of future large scale cultural projects.
- Belfast 2024 have been working closely with Belfast Stories team to develop and deliver engagement focussed on storytelling through our commissioned programme including North Star and Nerve Centre.
- These partners include for example, the Eden Project, Belfast Stories, University of Atypical. Belfast Health Trust, Maritime Belfast Trust, 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast Stories, ArtsEkta, Queens University Belfast, Belfast Harbour, Eurocities

MEDIA AND MARKETING PARTNERS

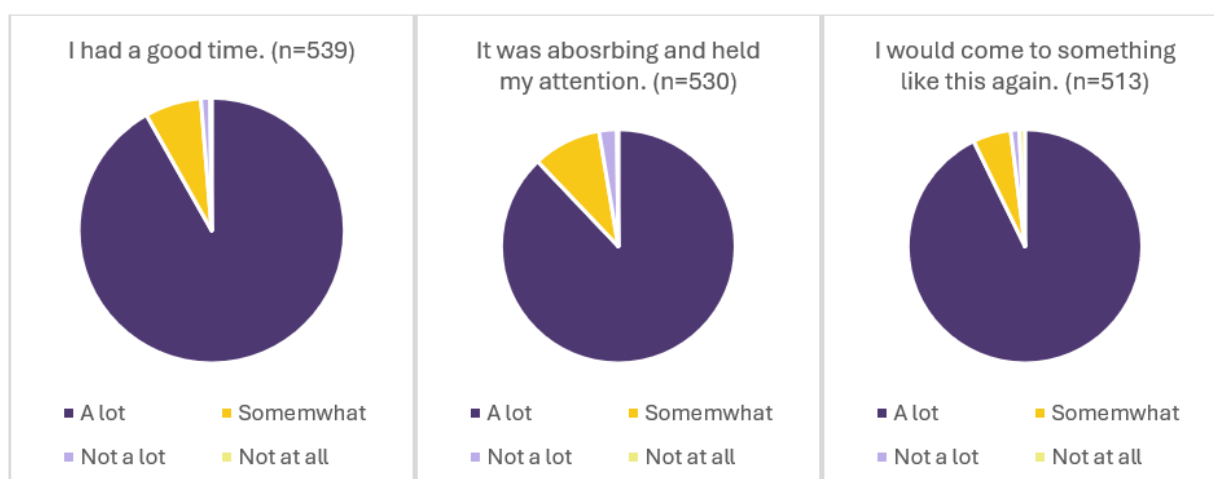
- These partners have worked with Belfast 2024 and BCC’s communication team to ensure that the audience reach for Belfast 2024 was maximised and include Visit Belfast, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland.

COMMISSION PARTNERS

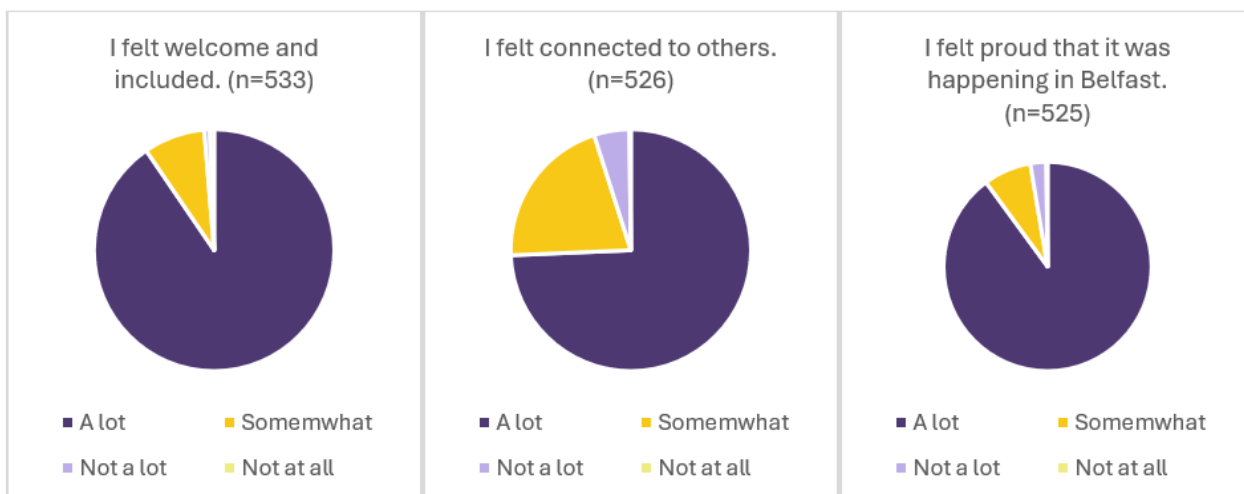
- These partners were instigated by the commissions and are numerous, with on average four collaborative partners per commission. They may have been new or established partners of the lead organisations or artists. From the outset they have been essential to the successful delivery of all stages of the projects.
- Each Commission has had a number of partners who they have worked with from an early stage, who have enabled them to deliver the project, and some contributed in kind support and / or contracted service provision. In many cases these partners have consolidated longer term relationships with the commissions that will contribute to the legacy impact of Belfast 2024.

EVALUATION, IMPACT & FEEDBACK SO FAR

The Evaluation of the programme is ongoing, below is some important feedback received as part of our Evaluation Framework for events up until end of August 2024 - this evidences the impact this ambitious programme is having for citizens, communities, the creative and cultural sector and city partners so far and looking ahead to the expectations of the legacy. Key findings based on 600 audience/contractor surveys analysed to end of August.;



- **99 % of attendees agreed they had a good time**
- **97 % agreed the activity was absorbing and held their attention**
- **98 % agreed they would come to something like this again**



- 98 % of attendees agreed they felt welcome and included
- 95 % agreed they felt connected to others
- 97 % agreed that they felt proud that it was happening in Belfast
-

Impacts for Commissioned Organisations & Artists

“Building key relationships has been a huge impact on us. We have extended our partnerships beyond the arts ecology of Belfast and seen this cross into education, heritage and community sector.”

“we’ve got to meet and collaborate with many organisations and individuals that we would’ve otherwise not approached or known how to approach.”

“Working with international artists and learning from them and how they see our city.... it has been both fascinating and exciting.”

“They [the Belfast 2024 team] have been an excellent support to us – through the good times and the harder times – they are on top of everything and have been a great sounding board and advice hub over the course of the project.”

“it’s wonderful to have a contract for a full 12 months in a v precarious sector”.

Impacts for audiences:

“I’ve lived my whole life in Belfast, and never seen an outside performance. It was lovely to see people from all demographics, all having a great time together. Pleasure from start to finish. Hope there’ll be more in the future!”

‘I shall remember those moments for rest of my life’.

‘I learned so much about the culture of our city and felt connected to the people around me’

‘will help my children to grow up to be more accepting, tolerant and empathetic.’

‘It was lovely to see people from all demographics, all having a great time together.’

‘Totally relatable and fun.’

‘that Belfast is transforming its pain from the past into love and compassion.’

‘Truly a world class event of excellence.’

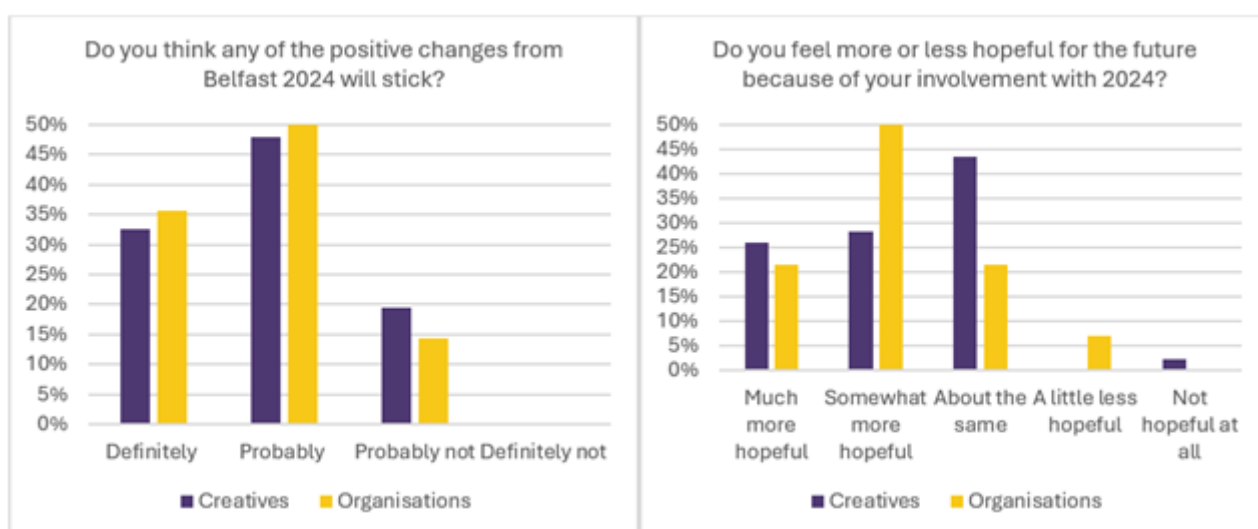
‘Discovered a brand-new venue in a part of Belfast I really don’t know.’

‘It happened to the backdrop of racists rioting a few streets away and seeing people of Belfast from all different backgrounds sharing a wonderful joyous day reminded me that Belfast has grown so much and will not let hate take over again’

‘It made me think that we need to be better at using our river, it is an asset, and more events should focus on it.’

‘Art brings people together. It’s a crucial part of our society and should be better valued’

Change created by Belfast 2024 programme



Comments related to change:

‘It’s the right path forward and exciting.’

‘I want my city run with creative thinking at its’ heart. This programme feels like the beginning of that of that way of thinking.’

“You cut cloth to what you have. This bumped us up a level, helped us experiment and highlight our work – but we’re not sure how take that forward if it’s only a one-off.”

“2024 funding has been ring fenced for number of years for a ‘special year’ of added arts and culture. When the money is spent, is it back to ‘normal’? [...] I look forward to seeing how the rest of the events pan out over the remainder of the year, and hearing how BCC plan to learn from this process and how it will inform the funding and curation of arts events in the future.

LESSONS LEARNED & LEGACY PLANNING

The vision for the year of cultural celebration in 2024 was to bring about transformational change for Belfast and to facilitate the city to build its creative capacity to better understand our identity, our relationships with each other, and our place in the world through creativity and culture.

Belfast 2024 was at its core an 'accelerator' project for our Cultural Strategy 2020-30, create the conditions to support capacity building, test new ways of working, strengthen existing and forge new connection between cultural delivery within the council and the wider city. The legacy of this significant project is critical to show the return on investment, to ensure lessons learnt are captured, and to embed critical elements of the programme into 'business as usual'

Work is ongoing to capture and learn lessons both positive and negative in relation to the planning and delivery of Belfast 2024 and to consider how these can be applied to future programmes and plans, including through application of co-design models for delivery of City events and Tourism and to ensure that there is an effective legacy from the programme. Emerging Themes for legacy development include:

- Informing Implementation Plan for Second Phase of Cultural Strategy A City Imagining 2025-2030
- Supporting the delivery of Belfast Stories, including through Our Stories Festival
- Supporting legacy of the projects and artists /creators

Further detail on lessons learned and legacy will be included in the final evaluation report.

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Subject:	Draft response to Invest NI Business Strategy and update on DfE sub-regional economic plan
Date:	6 November 2024
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director, Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager, Economy

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	The purpose of this report is to present a draft response from Belfast City Council to Invest NI's business strategy 2024-2027 and to update members on the Department for the Economy's recently published sub-regional economic plan.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Note the draft response to Invest NI's draft business strategy and agree that this is submitted to Invest NI following the committee meeting in order to meet the 14 November deadline – with the caveat that the response is subject to formal council ratification • Note that the Department for Economy has recently produced a “sub-regional economic plan” and agree to receive a further update at the next committee meeting as to how some of the key proposals in this plan might be taken forward in Belfast.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Invest NI recently launched their new business strategy “Our Future in Focus” in mid-October 2024. The strategy covers the period 2024-2027. All councils were invited to attend briefings on the draft strategy and these took place across the region over the last number of weeks. The deadline for written responses is 14 November 2024.
3.2	The draft strategy is attached as Appendix 1. The consultation survey on the strategy is structured around a series of questions, namely: • Does our Vision set a suitable level of ambition and successfully frame our shared destination for the Northern Ireland economy? • As an entrepreneur, business leader, partner or stakeholder, does our Mission Statement appeal to you and does it convey what you need from Invest Northern Ireland? • Does the overall strategy feel right? Are there any major omissions/areas of focus to be added/areas that should be removed • Are the draft targets the correct ones to deliver maximum impact? • Is a Client model approach, that enables us to prioritise resources and intensify support with those businesses with the greatest growth potential, the correct approach? • Is the definition and engagement model sufficiently broad to enable us to deliver for all businesses strategically? • Do you agree that the priority sectors identified are the correct ones to focus on?

	• Which market opportunities or technologies do you believe present the greatest challenge for you over the long term? • Do you agree with the strategic priorities (Boosting business investment; Accelerating innovation and skills; Driving global ambition; Developing and achieving sustainability; Maximising City and Growth Deals and Promoting places and partnerships).
3.3	The draft strategy aims to support an economy characterised by high productivity, good jobs, regional balance and decarbonisation. It therefore reflects the Minister for the Economy's vision, set out in February this year, which focused on driving regional balance; improving productivity; reducing carbon emissions and delivering more "good jobs".
3.4	The draft Belfast City Council response to the consultation is attached as Appendix 2. One of the key points in the draft strategy is the commitment to "build capacity outside of the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA)". By that, they mean Belfast as well as the three adjacent council areas of Lisburn and Castlereagh; Ards and North Down and Antrim and Newtownabbey. There is a specific objective of making 65% of investments "outside of the BMA" by 2026/27 – representing an increase of 6%. It is understood that this target relates to the number of investments rather than the value of the investments. In reality, it is unclear how this will impact in practice in Belfast. However we know from Invest NI's own data that investments in Belfast-based business generate greater return than investments in other locations (second to Antrim and Newtownabbey) so it is unclear how this can square with the focus on driving productivity.
3.5	The draft strategy notes that the commitment to build capacity outside the BMA will be done by "incentivising and supporting greater levels of investment" in non-BMA areas. It does not detail what these incentives and supports might look like – and whether it will mean that some incentives are not available at all in the BMA or whether it is simply an enhanced level of investment in areas outside of the metropolitan area – but that all parts of the region can access the same menu of support.
3.6	To counter concerns, the strategy notes that "building foundational capacity outside the BMA will not come at the expense of the BMA". It recognises that Belfast and the adjacent areas remain the economic engine for the wider region. It also acknowledges that – while the BMA may be more productive than other parts of the region – the area is not without its challenges. To that end, the draft strategy notes that "we will be acutely responsive to the need to address inequalities and disadvantage present within the wider BMA through investments we support in the area" and that "a collaborative partnership approach will be key to achieve this".

3.7	The draft strategy contains six strategic priorities, one of which is Maximising City and Growth Deals. Commitments within this priority focus on using the investments to build strong, globally competitive clusters and generate “enhanced skills progression pathways”. Given that the Belfast deal is further progressed than the others, there is an opportunity to pilot new approaches, focusing on maximising the benefits from the capital investment projects. At present, officers are exploring how this can be done for those projects that are more advanced as well as considering how we can build the learning into future schemes. This approach is essential in order to ensure that our residents and businesses benefit from these centres of excellence. We are particularly interested in exploring inclusive skills pathways, building on the learning from our previous Academy approaches.
3.8	Another strategic priority is “Promoting Places and Partnerships”. Under this priority, Invest NI plans to deliver on its commitment to increase investment outside of the BMA and notes its proposals to “factor regional balance into all investment decisions”. The methodology for doing this is not clear at present and we have included a question on this as part of our response. Invest NI also commits to expanding from four regional offices to five, but there is no clarification on what the area breakdown will be. There is also a commitment to increase the number of staff in the regional offices by 40%. In reality, this is a bigger issue for areas outside Belfast than for the city, given that a lot of Belfast-based companies are supported by staff based in the Bedford Street HQ – although it may be helpful in ensuring an enhanced focus on our indigenous businesses. The final proposal under this priority is to develop a new Regional Property Programme. Invest NI has very limited space in Belfast: it owns two business parks, one at Forthriver (location of the council’s Innovation Factory) and one in the Whiterock area. A number of years ago, the organisation did bring forward a programme to support proposals for new business sites focused on small businesses but this did not progress. As part of the engagement work, Invest NI has been clear that they do not yet have the resources that may be required to support this work and that it may take some time to build the necessary funding.
3.9	<u>Department for the Economy’s Sub-Regional Economic Plan</u> Just ahead of the publication of the Invest NI business strategy, the Department for the Economy issued its Sub-Regional Economic Plan. The Ministerial ambition behind this plan is “through local partnerships, central government, Invest NI, Councils and our network of education providers and civic society, we will work together to identify the main barriers to economic development, and the interventions that will unlock the area’s potential”.
3.10	The plan focuses on recognising and tackling regional imbalance across each of the council areas. It sets out a series of indicators and ranks each council area from 1 to 11 in terms of

	how they sit against each of these. Metrics include labour productivity; median wages, greenhouse emissions and sub-regional employment rate. While Belfast ranks top in the first three, it ranks 10 out of 11 for greenhouse gas emissions.
3.11	At a recent meeting with the Minister for the Economy, members took the opportunity to outline the anomalies in some of this data and to point out that, while jobs and wages in Belfast are generally better than other council areas, almost half of those that work in Belfast do not live in Belfast – so this skews the figures significantly. They also noted that those living outside of Belfast but working in the city earn on average £3,474 a year more than Belfast residents and that, while Belfast supports proportionately more higher-level jobs than other areas, it also has a disproportionate level of deprivation in many neighbourhoods: 6 of the top 10 most deprived wards in NI are in Belfast while the top 15 most deprived wards for the Education, Skills and Training domain are all in Belfast. Therefore there is an inherent risk in assessing sub-regional performance purely by looking at council-level data without understanding the nuances of these insights.
3.12	Another point that members made to the Minister for the Economy was that, while productivity levels in Belfast are higher than other parts of the region, Belfast still lags behind most UK cities – and significant behind RoI cities. Instead, they argued, future policy should aim to help places achieve their productivity potential, which will differ from area to area, rather than trying to get every council area to achieve the same level of productivity. Investment decisions are taken on a global level: so Belfast is not competing with its neighbouring towns and cities for FDI investment in particular – we are competing against other global cities.
3.13	As a means of tackling imbalance, the Minister proposes to support the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) in each council area. These partnerships will be able to access funding from the Department – an indicative three-year budget of £45million has been identified but it is understood that this funding has not yet been secured. Officials are currently working on guidance and a funding formula around the partnerships and these are likely to be forthcoming in the next few weeks. The partnerships are to focus on improving productivity, raising median wages, increasing the employment rate, lowering economic inactivity and taking steps towards delivering net zero and industrial decarbonisation.
3.14	The indicative timelines in the plan are that the LEPs should be formed by the end of the calendar year and that projects to be funded should be finalised by end March 2025 with a view to delivery starting from April 2025.

3.15	Early indications from engagement across council areas is that most intend to use existing partnerships as a structure around which they will base their LEP. In reality, this means using either Labour Market Partnership (LMP) or Community Planning structures or, alternatively, establishing a new structure to take forward this work. Officers are currently working on options and will bring forward proposals to the December committee in order to seek member endorsement for the Belfast approach. Following that, work will begin on identifying priority projects for investment although, in reality, it is likely that these will have been identified through our previous engagement work with partners.
3.16	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> No specific financial implications at this point. The LEPs are likely to have access to a budget of £45million over three years although DfE has not yet finalised the funding allocation model.
3.17	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> All activities to be undertaken will be subject to equality screening. This funding formula will be determined by the Department for the Economy.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Our Future in Focus: Invest NI Business Strategy 2024-2027 Appendix 2: Draft Belfast City Council response to the Invest NI Business Strategy.

Our Future

IN FOCUS

Delivering a regionally balanced, productive,
sustainable, and prosperous economy

2024/25 – 26/27 Business Strategy

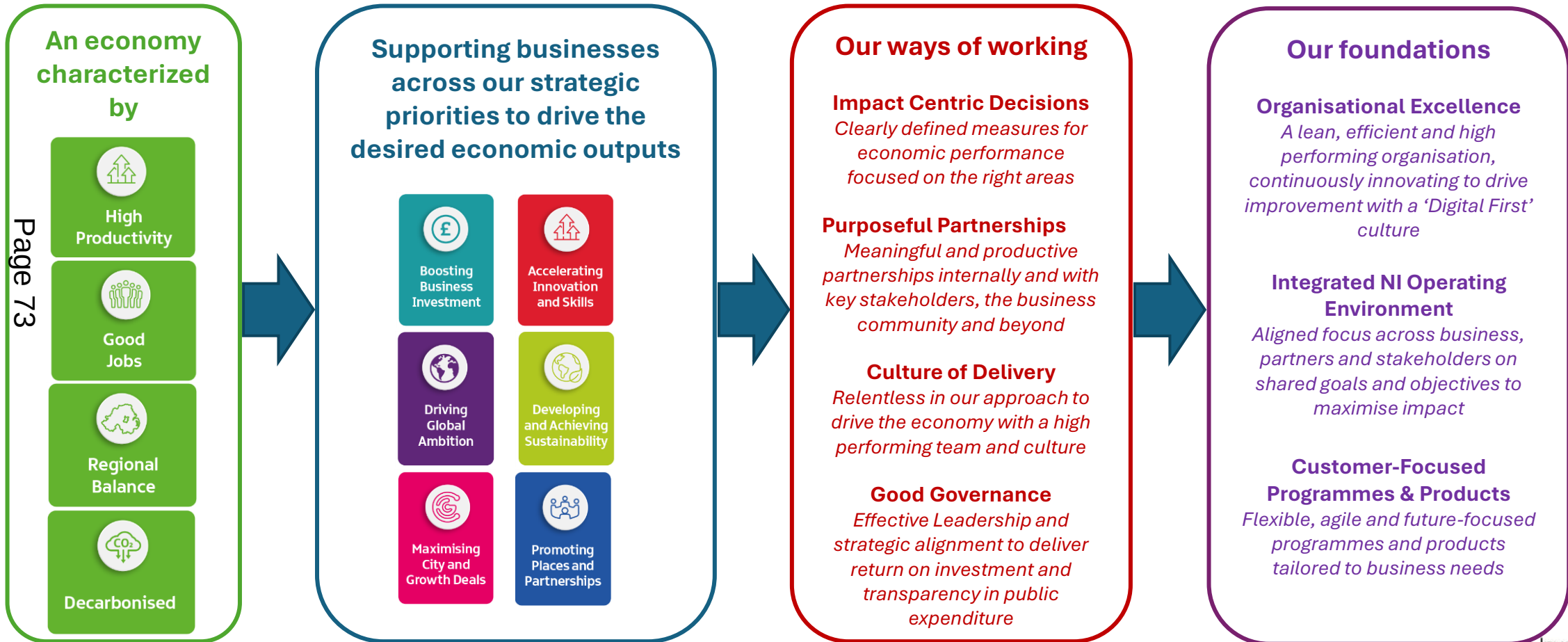
Our Vision

Invest NI is recognised as a leading economic development agency, instrumental in driving a balanced, sustainable, productive, and prosperous Northern Ireland economy through unlocking the potential of businesses across the region.

Our Mission

To work with businesses to accelerate their growth by increasing external sales and innovation, creating good quality jobs, boosting productivity and skills, growing inward investment and reducing carbon emissions.

Our Strategy on a Slide...



Our Strategic Priorities



Boosting Business Investment



Developing and Achieving Sustainability



Accelerating Innovation and Skills



Maximising City and Growth Deals



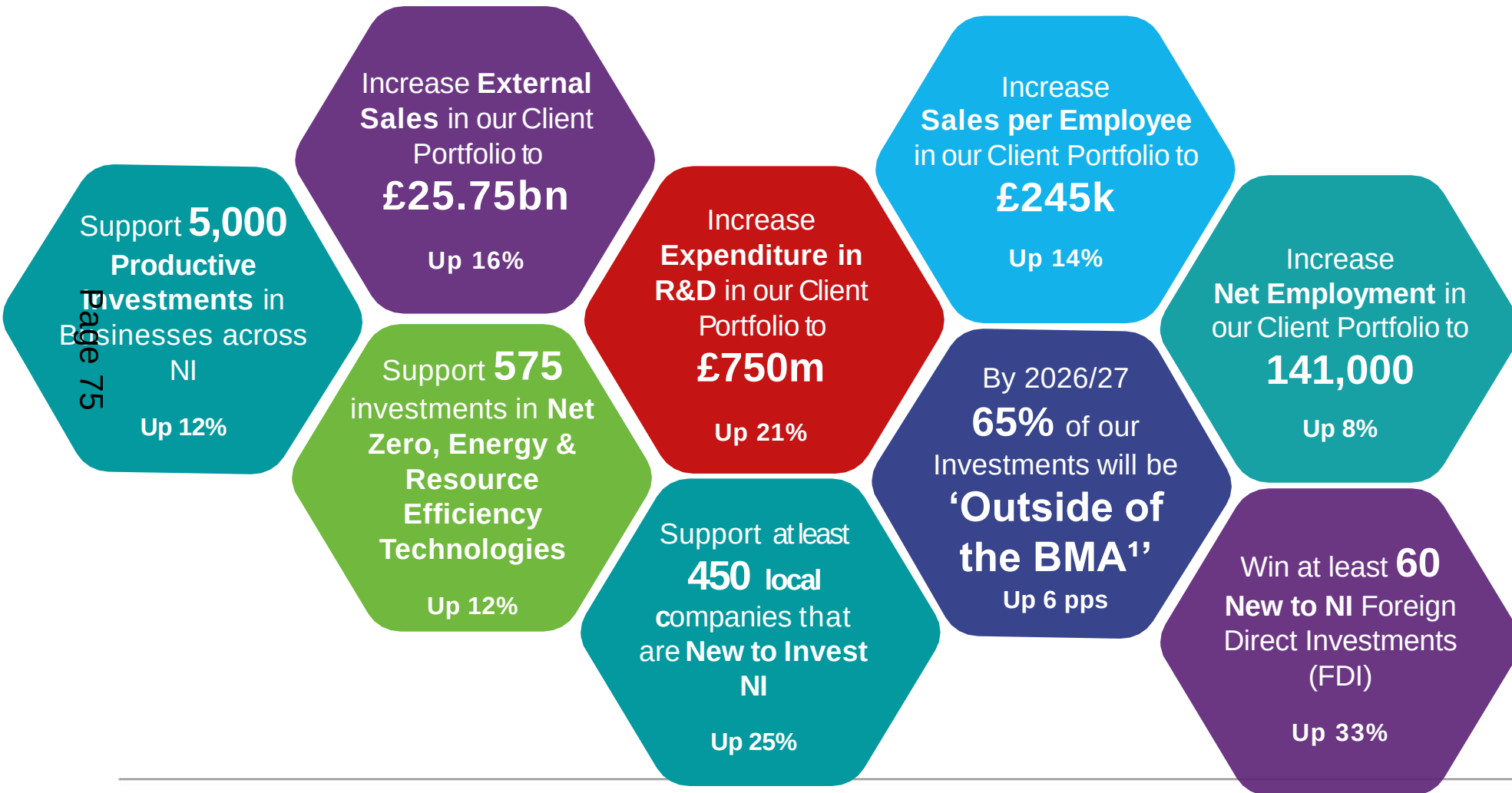
Driving Global Ambition



Promoting Places and Partnerships

✿ To achieve the Economy Minister's Economic Vision, we will focus on **six strategic priorities**. These will guide and determine our activity **across all our interactions** with business.

Our Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?



Areas of Focus

Productivity

Regional Balance

FDI

Sustainability

Investment

Innovation

Working with more businesses

External Sales

Employment

Our Transformation Journey

We have already begun
our **transformation**
journey...

...and will complete it
through our **Business**
Strategy.



A new Client Definition

✿ A new Client definition and approach to allow us to engage with businesses in a strategic and structured way.

Foundational financial support is targeted at the following strategic priority areas for all businesses:

Growth Finance – Access to Finance

Innovation – Innovation Vouchers & Business Innovation Grant

Sustainability – Energy & Resource Efficiency Capital Grant

Digitalisation – Digital Transformation Flexible Fund

We will review and strengthen in this area over the next 3 years.

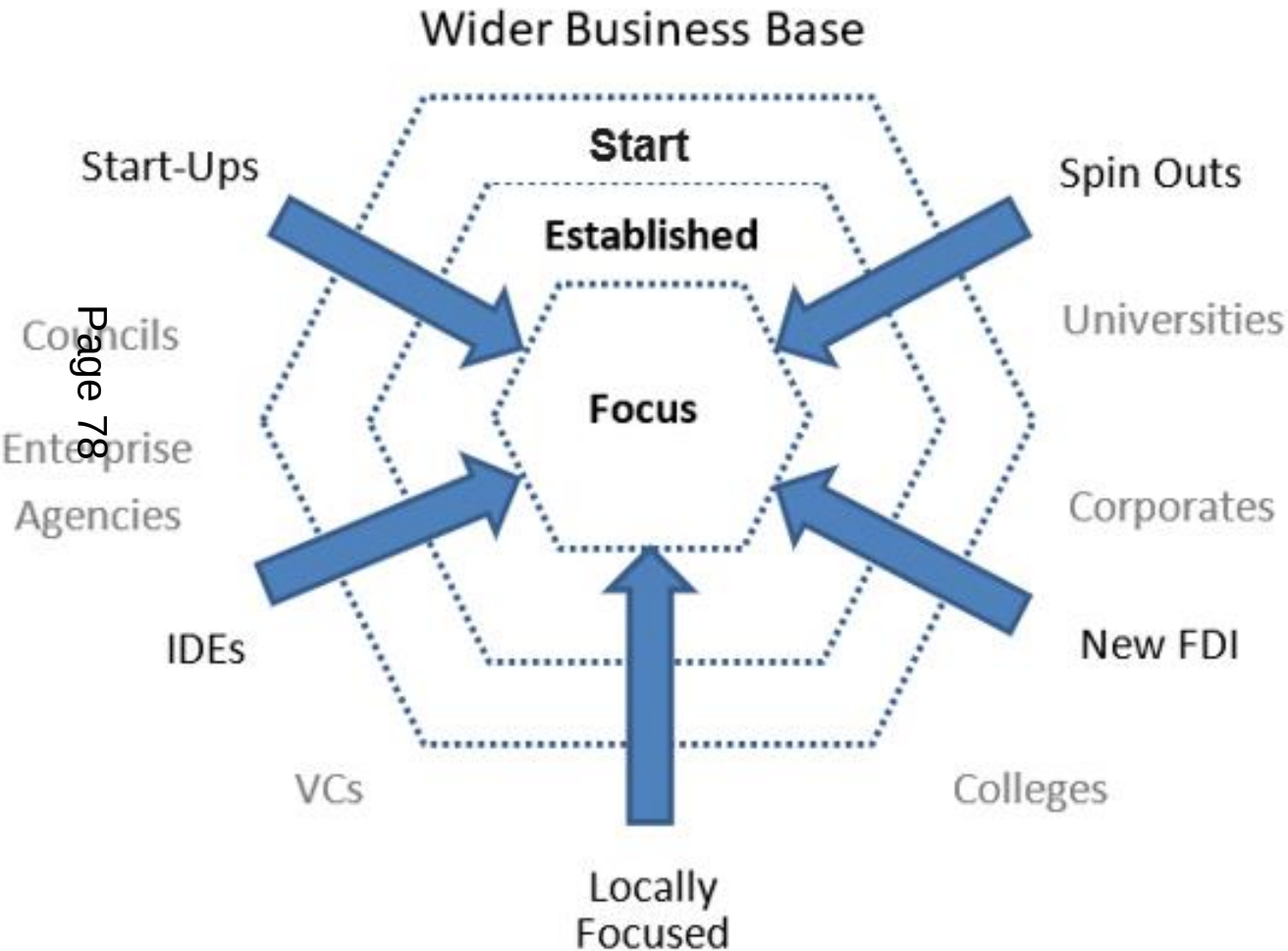
An Invest NI Client

'A Manufacturing and / or Tradeable Services business with the potential to achieve at least 25% of sales external to Northern Ireland (or at least £250,000 external sales, whichever is lower), and the potential to employ at least 10 staff, within 5 years'.

Our job is to help you achieve this potential.



A new Client Engagement Approach



- ✿ Open for Business
- ✿ More Simple
- ✿ More transparent
- ✿ Broader engagement
- ✿ Spark Ambition
- ✿ Cater for different business needs

Focusing on Sectors of Strength and Opportunity

- Building on DfE Priority Sectors work, we will **develop strategies** to drive growth in each of our core sectors for the next decade.
- We will align sectoral and market opportunities with **strategic assets, technology, cluster and business strengths**.
- Using **research, trend analysis, future skills pipelines, and wider capabilities**, we will identify and target areas offering the **greatest growth potential** for NI.
- Our teams will also work with **partners** to ensure a future **UK Industrial Strategy** reflects the **sectoral and regional strengths**, as well as the needs of **our business base**.



A new Regional Model and Approach



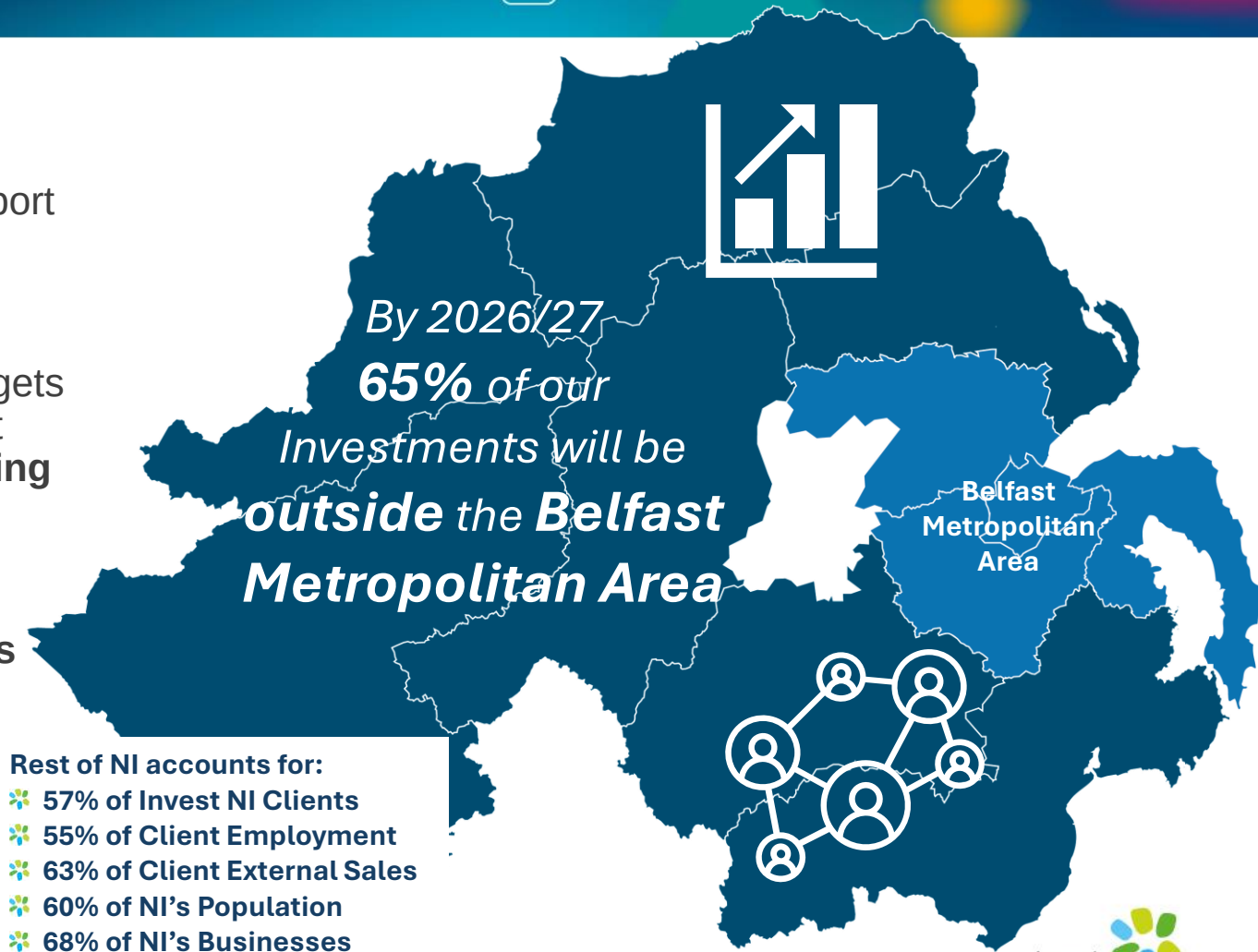
- * In line with the **Minister's Regional Economic Plan**, we will increase our **capacity, capability** and **functionality** across Northern Ireland to enhance economic development and realise the Minister's objective of regional balance.
- * We will build our regional model from a 4 office model to a **5 office model**, to deliver services tailored to the needs of each region.
- * This will include **increasing our staff resources** deployed in the regions by **40%**, to seek out and work with new businesses to help them to grow through innovation and exports.
- * We recognise that we will only achieve true regional balance, through renewed and refreshed **purposeful partnerships** with business, stakeholders and partners across the North.

Regional Targets – Building Capacity outside of BMA

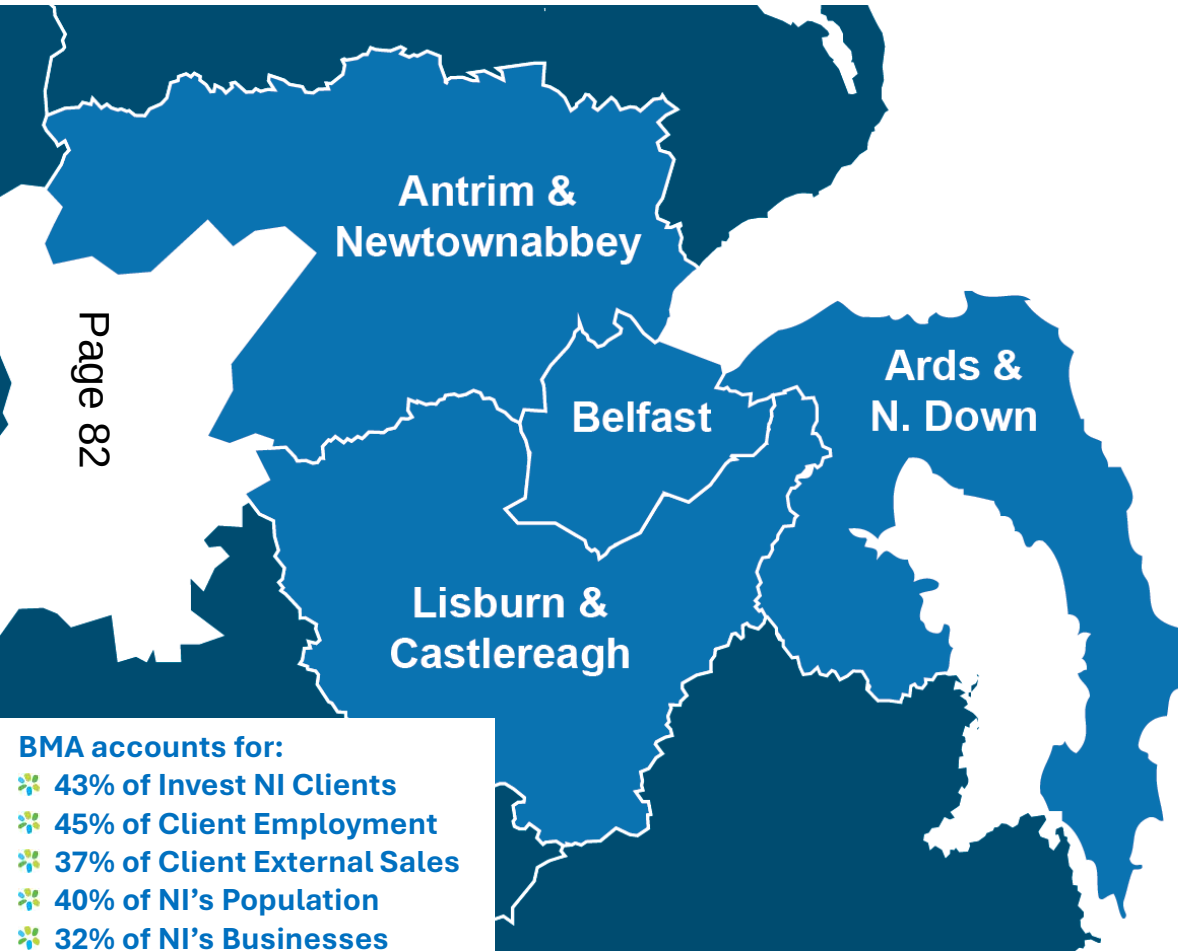
✿ We will target increased activity outside the **Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA)** to help stimulate and support growth across our regions.

✿ Whilst we will seek to **boost business investment** across all areas, through our published corporate targets we will seek to increase our activity outside of Belfast Metropolitan area faster, **incentivising and supporting greater levels of investment**.

✿ This is the start of a **long-term commitment** to improving and enhancing economic outcomes **across Northern Ireland** working in **partnership and collaborating** with business and our partners to maximise impact.

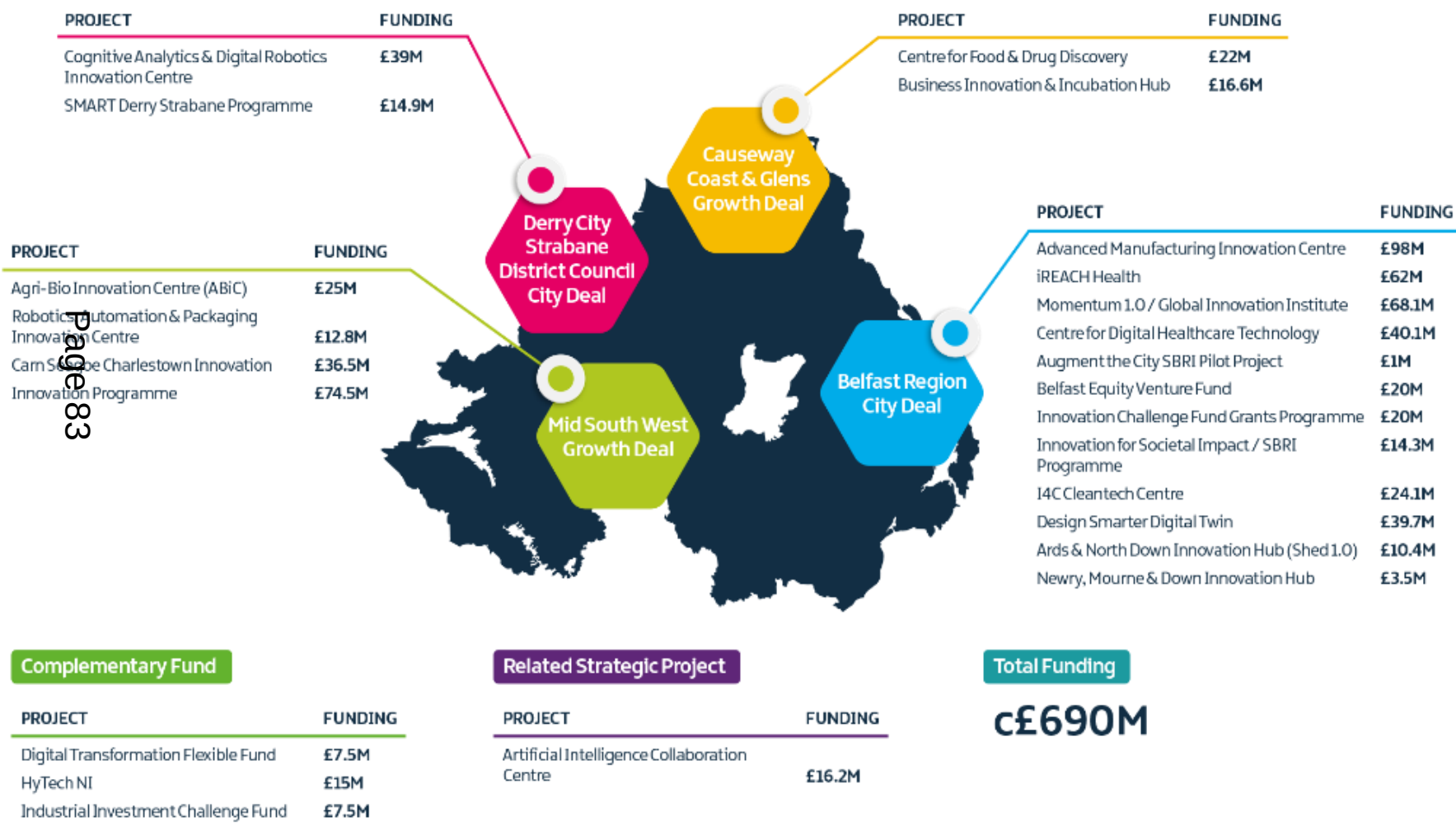


Whilst retaining the Importance of BMA



- ✿ Building foundational capacity outside of the BMA **will not come at the expense** of the BMA.
- ✿ As our capital city **Belfast**, and its **adjacent areas**, remain the **economic engine** for the wider **Northern Ireland** region. Our targets **recognise this**, **retaining capacity** to assist and grow businesses located in the area.
- ✿ Many of our **largest employers**, **strategic assets**, **partners** and **universities** are based in the BMA. These will be **key** to facilitating wider future growth, and will attract **strategic investments**, in terms of numbers, value and jobs.
- ✿ We will be **acutely responsive** to the need to address **inequalities and disadvantage** present within the wider BMA through the investments we support in the area.
- ✿ A **collaborative partnership approach** will be key to achieve this.

Maximising City and Growth Deals



*‘We will work with **project promoters, business, partners and stakeholders** to implement **City and Growth Deal projects** and utilise them as strategic vehicles to drive **sectoral and regional development** for the next decade’.*



Our Strategic Priorities



Boosting Business Investment



Developing and Achieving Sustainability



Accelerating Innovation and Skills



Maximising City and Growth Deals



Driving Global Ambition



Promoting Places and Partnerships

Boosting Business Investment

Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?

-  *Support a minimum of **5,000 Productive Investments** in businesses totalling **£1.75bn** across NI (12% Uplift on 2023/24 Baseline).*
-  *Increase **Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Employment** in Invest NI's Client Portfolio to **141,000** (8% Uplift on 2023 Baseline).*
-  *Increase **Sales per Employee** in Invest NI's Client Portfolio to **£245,000** (14% Uplift on 2023 Baseline – Productivity Proxy).*

Boosting Business Investment

Productive Investment and Good Jobs

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

-  Launch bespoke **productivity** support to help businesses adopt new plant, equipment, technology and robotic and automated processes in the **Agri-Food & Drink processing** and **Manufacturing** and **Tradable services** sectors.
-  Help businesses **challenge and streamline processes** to cut costs, boost efficiency and **drive productivity uplift**.
-  Boost private sector investment by supplementing existing **Access to Finance** support for businesses.
-  Grow employment in **Priority Sectors** with the greatest potential for Growth in **Good Jobs**.

Boosting Business Investment

Entrepreneurship and Enterprise

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

- ✿ Implement the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme** recommendations and enhance delivery through a new **Entrepreneurship Team**.
- ✿ Work with Councils and Regional Partners to create a '**New to Invest NI**' pipeline of **Innovative Start-Ups and Established Businesses** with external growth potential.
- ✿ Invest in **Founder Labs** to boost the number of **Innovation Driven Start-Ups** providing our future **Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs)**.

Boosting Business Investment

Supporting Metrics – Key outputs to support the achievement of our objectives.

- ✿ Support at least **30** investments in businesses' **productivity capacity**, totalling **£250m** (new **Agri-Food Investment Initiative**).
- ✿ Support a minimum of **£50m productivity uplift** through **operational processes & supply chains enhancements**.
- ✿ Support at least **450 locally-owned companies** that are '**new to Invest NI**'.
- ✿ Support **60 Innovation Driven Start-Ups** (External and Local IDSUs).

Business Investment – Targeted at Productivity Drivers

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Prioritisation of Productivity

What?

We will put productivity at the centre of everything we do, with investments in the right areas, at the right time, in the right ways to maximise impact.

How?

Invest NI will continually assess our programmes and projects to make sure they contribute to recognised drivers of productivity. Our team will align our resources and functionality to help make this possible, developing targets and an approach to increase levels of 'Value Added per Full Time Employee (FTE)' in supported companies.

Why?

Closing the productivity gap between NI and the UK average has the potential to add around £7bn to our economy. We want to help all businesses become more productive through investing in efficient, automated and digitally-enhanced products, systems and processes.

Accelerating Innovation and Skills



Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?

-  *Increase annual **R&D expenditure** within **Invest NI's Client Portfolio** to **£750m** (21% Uplift on 2023 Baseline).*
-  *Increase the percentage of **Invest NI's Client Portfolio** that are **Innovation Active** to **80%** (5.5 percentage points increase on 2023 Baseline).*
-  *Develop, baseline and target **Value Added per FTE** in **Invest NI's Client Portfolio**.*

Accelerating Innovation and Skills

Innovation Research and Development

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

- ✿ Use **Innovate NI** to drive **First Time Innovation** and help businesses become **innovation active**.
- ✿ Enhance and align our resources and functions to accelerate **digitalisation** with a focus on automation, digitisation, AI, and technology.
- ✿ Through purposeful partnership, establish **clear and streamlined pathways for all businesses** to progress innovation projects.
- ✿ Support **sustained, comprehensive innovation** to drive competitiveness, growth, and sustainability, emphasising non-financial support.
- ✿ Increase the number of **new businesses investing in R&D**.
- ✿ Enhance **R&D intensity**, commercialisation, collaboration, technology transfer and spillovers.
- ✿ Increase collaboration to maximise **commercialisation of innovation for businesses**.

Accelerating Innovation and Skills

Leadership, Training and Skills

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

-  Place **leadership, management, and skills development** at the centre of business growth plans.
-  Drive a new approach to **leadership and management development**.
-  Revamp our primary **Skills Development Programme** to increase its impact.
-  Collaborate with partners to align **strategic talent pipelines** and address **current and future Skills needs**, such as through **Assured Skills Academies**.
-  Enhance our strategic **collaborative growth programme** to support **collaboration**, establish **5 critical super-clusters**, and address regional challenges.

Accelerating Innovation and Skills



Supporting Metrics – Key outputs to support the achievement of our objectives.

-  Support a minimum of **1,200 businesses** to become **innovation recognised**.
-  Support at least **100 businesses** that are **new to R&D**.
-  Support a minimum of **1,650 investments** and **£435m** of investment in **research & development, innovation and digitalisation**.
-  Support at least **475 investments** and **£95m** of investment in **leadership, training and skills development**.

Driving Global Ambition

Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?

- 🌸 *Increase **External Sales** in **Invest NI's Client Portfolio** to **£25.75bn** per annum (16% Uplift on 2023 Baseline).*
- 🌸 *Secure a minimum of **60 Externally-Owned expansion** investments for NI, and **60 investments** from **businesses 'new to NI'** (25% and 33% respectively Uplift on 2023/24 Baseline).*
- 🌸 *Baseline then target **Expenditure in the Local Economy** through **Externally Owned Clients**.*

Driving Global Ambition

External Sales

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

-  Prioritise **external sales** across Invest NI's activity and corporate performance framework.
-  Simplify and clarify the **external sales support landscape** and **establish Invest NI's central role** as a single portal for end-to-end business support.
-  Establish a clear '**pull-through model**' of **potential exporters** from partners and align our support network to accelerate their growth.
-  Develop a new promotional campaign around **Dual Market Access** to encourage all businesses to sell into external markets.
-  Drive an **all-island approach to trade development** with clear mutual benefits including through **joint trade and sales missions**.

Driving Global Ambition

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

-  Build on **Priority Sector** and **DMA research** to identify and win **high value, innovative FDI**.
-  Exploit NI's **Dual Market Access** FDI potential.
-  Target **financial support** at **strategic FDI Sectors** while promoting NI internationally through **non-financial support**.
-  Develop a strategic **multi-site approach** to developing **Inward Investment** to maximise regional impact across NI.
-  Work with **UK and Irish partners** to identify **collaborative ways to attract FDI** to address long-term structural economic challenges.
-  Harness the global goodwill for NI through our **diaspora networks** to boost FDI and trade.

Driving Global Ambition

Supporting Metrics – Key outputs to support the achievement of our objectives.

-  *Support a minimum of **675** Investments and **£6m** of Investment in **Developing Businesses' Overseas Sales Capability**.*
-  *Support a minimum of **1,000** Businesses to sell into '**New Markets**'.*
-  *Support a minimum of **450** Businesses to sell '**Outside NI for the First Time**' (Sub-set of Companies New to Market).*

Developing and Achieving Sustainability

Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?

- ✿ *Support **575** investments in **Net Zero, Energy and Resource Efficiency Technologies (ERET)** (Sub-set of overall investments target – 12% uplift on Baseline).*
- ✿ *Establish a process to capture, baseline and then target the reduction of **Client Carbon Emissions** in our **Client Portfolio**.*
- ✿ *Establish a process to capture, baseline and then target the **Energy Intensity** in our **Client Portfolio**.*

Developing and Achieving Sustainability

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

- ✿ Place **Net Zero at the centre of decision making.**
- ✿ Increase our **Net Zero and Green Economy** resources, capacity and capability.
- ✿ Accelerate the delivery of our **new Energy Efficiency Scheme** to enhance efforts to reduce business energy demand and carbon emissions.
- ✿ Maximise **Green Economy opportunities** by aligning provision, raising awareness, supporting market exploitation, and capitalising on additional green funding.
- ✿ Through our **Programme Evaluation and Appraisal** process, enhance our ability to meet **Net Zero** objectives.

Developing and Achieving Sustainability

Supporting Metrics – Key outputs to support the achievement of our objectives.

-  Support **£26m** investment in **Net Zero, Energy and Resource Efficiency Technologies (ERET)**.
-  Develop **200 Sustainable Development Plans** with companies.
-  Support at least **150** Investments by businesses to diversify into the **‘Low Carbon and Green Economy’**, totalling **£100m** (Green Investments).

Maximising City and Growth Deals

Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?

- 🌸 *Oversee and support the successful delivery of the **City & Growth Deal (C&GD)** and **Complementary Fund (CF) Innovation & Digital projects**, representing around **£700m** of additional government supported investment for priority clusters.*
- 🌸 *As **Investment Decision Maker (IDM)**, help ensure strategic investments remain **commercially focused, industry relevant, and future-proofed** throughout their lifetime, **maximising wider benefits, spillovers and long-term outcomes**.*

Maximising City and Growth Deals

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

-  *Oversee the delivery of **C&GD** and **CF Innovation & Digital projects** to support growth in priority clusters across NI.*
-  *Help ensure **C&GD** and **CF Investments** remain **commercially focused, industry relevant** and **future-proofed**.*
-  *Create **compelling sector and cluster propositions** that support positive engagement across all investments.*
-  *Promote investments in **C&GD** and **CF projects** to **maximise regional impact**.*
-  ***Focus our mainstream interventions** to help businesses deliver **commercial benefits**, generate **enhanced skills progression pathways**, and drive value-added economic growth.*

Maximising City and Growth Deals

Supporting Metrics – Key outputs to support the achievement of our objectives.

- ✿ *Support a minimum of **8 strategic Invest NI interventions** with C&GD or CF Projects.*
- ✿ *Leverage at least **£245m of investment** from C&GD or CF Projects.*
- ✿ *Support a minimum of **500 businesses** (including Prospective Clients and other businesses) **to engage with C&GD or CF Projects.***
- ✿ *Hold at least **25 events**, locally and internationally, to promote C&GD or CF Projects.*

Promoting Places and Partnerships

Strategic Objectives – What outcomes are we targeting?

-  *By 2026/27, **65%** of Invest NI's Investments will be to businesses located **Outside of the Belfast Metropolitan Area** (2019/20 to 2023/24 5 Year average = 56%).*
-  *Develop and implement a new **Invest NI Regional Approach**.*
-  *Baseline and then target **Expenditure in the Local Economy** through **Locally-Owned clients**.*

Promoting Places and Partnerships

Strategic Initiatives – How we will improve and enhance our delivery.

- ✿ Factor **regional balance** into all investment decisions.
- ✿ Collaborate with DfE to develop and introduce an **NI Regional Economic Plan**.
- ✿ Develop an **Invest NI-specific regional plan** to enhance **capacity, capability, and functionality**.
- ✿ Promote **incentives** to encourage balanced regional activity and realise benefits.
- ✿ Develop a **new Regional Property Programme** to provide physical assets to support balanced economic development across NI.

Our People and Culture

- ✿ Develop our **People and Culture** to enable a relentless focus on **organisational excellence**.
- ✿ Conduct a **Cultural Assessment** including:
 - ✿ Survey
 - ✿ Focus groups
 - ✿ Consultation
- ✿ **Internal alignment** of strategic objectives and priorities with divisional and personal objectives.
- ✿ Commitment to **develop a Human Resources and Organisational Development Strategy**.
- ✿ Develop **new Corporate Values** to guide our **behaviours** for the next decade.

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Share your feedback – Inform the Draft

- ✿ Complete our feedback survey available at the following link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/BusinessStrategyFeedback/>

- ✿ Or email Invest NI's Strategy Team: strategyteam@investni.com

Thank you.

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1. Draft consultation feedback

Does our Vision set a suitable level of ambition and successfully frame our shared destination for the Northern Ireland economy?

Invest NI Vision: Invest NI is recognised as a leading economic development agency, instrumental in driving a balanced, sustainable, productive, and prosperous Northern Ireland economy through unlocking the potential of businesses across the region.

We agree with the ambition and the sentiment set out in the vision. The only suggestion that we had was to consider whether it adequately covers the work around attracting businesses – both large FDI and potential new global start-ups (in line with the Driving Global Ambition strategic priority).

As an entrepreneur, business leader, partner or stakeholder, does our Mission Statement appeal to you and does it convey what you need from Invest Northern Ireland?

Invest NI Mission: To work with businesses to accelerate their growth by increasing external sales and innovation, creating good quality jobs, boosting productivity and skills, growing inward investment and reducing carbon emissions.

The mission statement may benefit from a reference to partner organisation as referenced in its strategic priorities, eg. “To work with businesses and partner organisations...”

In addition, while a lot of the work is done directly with the businesses, Invest NI also has a role to play (along with others) in helping to create the conditions for growth. By that, we mean investing in the infrastructure and supporting collaborations to enable businesses to reach their full potential.

It would also be beneficial in light of the Economy Minister’s consultation on The ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill to explicitly define what it meant by good quality jobs.

2. Does the overall strategy feel right? Are there any major omissions?

The strategy appears to reflect an overall uplift in performance and activity, with a focus on key sectors and driven by the commitment to support regional balance in line with the Minister’s statement. At a high level, we are supportive of the more ambitious approach and understand the drivers for regional balance.

With regard to the commitment to prioritise an increased share of investment in council areas outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area, an analysis of Invest NI’s Key Performance Indicators for 2023 shows that Invest NI made financial assistance of £166million to businesses in Belfast. This leveraged additional company investment of £883million, meaning for every £1 invested by Invest NI, it leveraged an additional £5.33, second only behind Antrim and Newtownabbey (£8.42). In addition, Invest NI’s 2,900 offers created 9,298 new jobs – 49% of all new jobs as a result of Invest NI financial assistance in 2023. This investment realised over 56 jobs per £million, more than any other area of Northern Ireland.

Therefore the issue is not just about the level of investment – it is also important to factor in the return on investment. This performance information clearly shows that investment in the Belfast City Council area delivers a positive return on investment and value for money. It also suggests that the city and the wider region possess many of the assets that direct Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) decisions including its skilled workforce, universities and researchers, vibrant cultural scene, industry clusters and transport infrastructure. It is difficult to recreate these factors elsewhere therefore, while Invest NI may propose to increase their “productive investments” outside the BMA, it is unclear what impact measurements might be used for these.

In addition, research by OCO Global suggests that cities are magnets for FDI as they are home to 3 in 4 of all highly skilled jobs. This availability of talent, coupled with the city’s infrastructure and population base (Belfast has a population of 348,005, and the Belfast region, based on the TTW area, is home to a population of over 1.13 million people - around 60% of the total regional population) are critical in positioning the city as a base for fast-growing, globally focused businesses.

There is a lack of emphasis on how people will benefit from the prosperous Northern Ireland economy outlined in the vision with no reference to an inclusive growth agenda or utilising the strategy to tackle socio-economic challenges and structural inequality in the labour market, e.g. by enhancing productivity through inclusive pathways to good jobs. Given the current challenges in the labour market, this is likely to be an area requiring increased focus but it is not clear whether Invest NI will reframe its interventions to take account of these issues.

Belfast City Council has significant experience of delivery inclusive pathways into growth sectors – akin to the Assured Skills models but without the barriers to entry of a graduate qualification. We are working with DfE on how this approach can be used alongside the apprenticeship model and we consider that, subject to a successful pilot, there are opportunities to look at how this could be used to support Invest NI client businesses.

Are there areas of focus that need to be added?

Across several strategic objectives, we note references to Net-Zero and regional balance influencing investment decision making; however, the region’s urban centres of Belfast and Derry City are acutely aware that the benefits of growth and investment do not always reach all communities and neighbourhoods, with the 10 most deprived Super Output Areas in the region all located in the Belfast and Derry City & Strabane Council areas (NIMDM 2017).

For the benefits of economic growth to be felt by all citizens and for economic opportunities to be fully realised, it is necessary to go further and embed social value or inclusive growth, into the decision-making processes.

Decision-making processes need to proactively consider who benefits and how more people can benefit from economic success, therefore taking account of wider impacts to maximise not only economic factors, but also the potential to encourage social mobility and opportunity as well as environmental impacts of growth. Belfast City Council has some experience of how this works through or social value procurement approach and we consider that some of the same principles could be apply to business support or investment decisions. In addition, there are some positive solutions that can help support inclusive growth such as our Employment Academy model and our upskilling support and these could support the delivery of any commitments on new or growing businesses.

While we agree the priority to grow jobs in the priority sectors where there is greater potential for good jobs, there is value in adopting support for good jobs in all programmes of work. The proposed commitment in the Programme for Government to develop a Good Work Charter, similar to the Belfast Business Promise, would encourage all clients to commit to good work and jobs as well as more inclusive practices. We would welcome the opportunity to continue conversations with Invest NI on the Belfast Business Promise and our ongoing work with the Labour Relations Agency to inform the development of a regional charter. In addition, we would highlight the importance of influencing and strengthening the supply chain as a key enabler in supporting good jobs to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth. This would add value to places as well as Invest NI's local and external client companies, strengthening connections and impact within communities.

Are there areas that should be removed or are no longer relevant?

No major changes required

3. Targets (Slide 5)

Are the draft targets the correct ones to deliver maximum impact?

We would suggest that the target relating to jobs created/ net employment is clarified to explicitly focus on 'good jobs' (subject to the agreed definition), in line with the Mission. Furthermore, in 2023, Belfast represented 34% of employment within Invest NI's client portfolio. Any decision to disinvest in Belfast may have a detrimental impact on achieving this target.

As a community planning partner, Invest NI will be aware of the ambition set out in the Belfast Agenda to create 46,000 additional jobs. The council is concerned that re-targeting resources away from an area (Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan) will have a negative impact on the city and partners' ability to deliver this primary target.

With specific regard to the target, "By 2026/27 65% of our investments will be 'outside of the BMA', has there been any assessment undertaken as to the impact this target could have on the delivery of the other targets?

It is difficult to comment on the aspiration included within the targets without an established baseline or an accompanying technical annex. We are working on the assumption that these are derived from current Invest NI baselines and internal performance metrics.

With regard to supporting "at least 450 local companies that are new to Invest NI", we would hope that Go Succeed could make a significant contribution to those targets and would be keen to work with Invest NI to see how that might happen.

Whilst we acknowledge that it's important to address carbon and energy intensity, we would have expected to see more emphasis on innovation and green growth opportunities and the use of innovative financing models (green finance etc) to increase investment in the green economy.

On the FDI targets, Belfast has obviously been the focal point for many of the FDI investments to date. The city has the assets in the shape of the universities and research centres as well as the office space and wider cultural and leisure assets that are important to potential investors. We would be concerned that the policy to drive investments outside the BMA could undermine the

agglomeration effect that these investments require and which are part of the success story of successful investment locations.

Are there gaps that you feel should be directly addressed?

No specific gaps

5. Client Definition and engagement model (Slide 7 and 8)

Is a Client model approach, that enables us to prioritise resources and intensify support with those businesses with the greatest growth potential, the correct approach?

We understand the client model approach and the need for market segmentation in order to ensure that resources are focused on those businesses with most significant potential for return – either by creating jobs; investing in R&D or accessing strategic support as outlined on slide 7. At a high level, we agree with this approach.

With regard to the 64,000 “actively trading local businesses”, we assume that this is the majority of trading companies in Northern Ireland. We would note that, through the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service, we may be engaging with a significant proportion of these businesses. We feel that there is an opportunity to think more proactively about how we manage this engagement and what the respective support offer to businesses is.

With regard to the 10,000 “externally focused businesses” – as above, we may be supporting many of these through the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service. We would be keen to establish a more formal referral mechanism for businesses in receipt of NIESS or successor support – in order to ensure a seamless pathway for businesses to access the right support at the right time – regardless of how the support is provided or who it is provided by.

Is the definition and engagement model sufficiently broad to enable us to deliver for all businesses strategically?

While IDEs are identified on the engagement model, it is not clear what definition they will fall into. Similarly it is unclear how FDIs will be treated – maybe the definition approach only refers to local businesses?

There is a question as to whether Invest NI will seek to deliver for all businesses or whether – as part of its “focus” – it will work in partnership with other businesses to pick up the wider business base. At present, it appears that there will be an offer for any business (ranging from digital to targeted support) – is that the proposal? We are not clear from the current presentation.

6. Priority sectors (Slide 9)

Do you agree that the priority sectors identified are the correct ones to focus on?

Belfast City Council agrees that the priority sectors identified are the correct ones to focus and these are identified. We have reflected these sectors within our Belfast Region Investment Guide and they also align to many of the investment included within the Belfast Region City Deal.

Which market opportunities or technologies do you believe present the greatest challenge for you over the long term?

7. Strategic Priorities - Boosting Business Investment



Do you agree with the strategic objective?

Yes, we agree that this should be a fundamental strategic objective for the organisation – although we are somewhat unclear as to what the “productive investments” might involve.

We are particularly supportive of the proposal to “work with councils and regional partners to create a “new to Invest NI” pipeline of innovative start-ups and established businesses with external growth potential”.

We are unclear as to whether “growing employment in priority sectors with the greatest potential for growth in good jobs” will always be the same as “growing employment in priority sectors for growth”.

Are there any specific areas of focus that you think Invest Northern Ireland should prioritise under this Priority?

We obviously welcome the commitment to work with councils around an enhanced pipeline approach. We also welcome the support for IDEs and the Founder Lab pilots and would be keen to work alongside Invest NI on the outworkings of these interventions.

8. Strategic Priorities - Accelerating Innovation & Skills

Do you agree with the strategic objective?

We support the reference to increased expenditure on R&D. It would be helpful to specify whether this relates to BERD or GERD or a combination of both and how this could be used to leverage additional investment, particularly as it aligns to the City Deal investments.

We welcome the commitment to support at least 475 investments and £95 million of investment in leadership, training and skills development. The importance of focusing on skills to build innovation cannot be underestimated. However, there is no indication of how this will be

targeted, no reference to inclusive growth or utilising this to tackle socio-economic challenges and structural inequality in the labour market.

We would also encourage the adoption of ‘Inclusive innovation’ as an area of focus, in order to enhance the benefits and success of innovation while also managing any unintended consequences that innovation can have in fuelling inequalities. This may be through partnership models such as the Innovation City Belfast or strengthening the City & Growth Deals.

Research jointly commissioned by the UK Innovation Districts Group and Connected Places Catapult (2022) on the case for inclusive innovation reports that “inclusive innovation offers the prospect of creating broad based economic prosperity within places, drawing wider sections of society into productive and valuable work and ensuring they benefit, both directly and by helping to direct innovation activity to our shared challenges” as well as ensuring a greater likelihood of successful innovations. Broadening participation and reach of innovation provides an opportunity to improve productivity of places, fuel regional performance, and help to address regional disparities. Embedding this approach requires a collaborative approach and for all actors in the innovation field, such as government, businesses, research institutions, education institutions to proactively involve more people, particularly from underrepresented groups, in the design, delivery, and diffusion of innovation activity. There is scope to consider the development of a shared narrative on inclusive innovation and the opportunities it presents, drawing on the existing regional and sub-regional partnership structures.

The council notes reference to Assured Skills Academies, however this is a narrow focus on one solution and no indication of:

- Utilisation of other solutions such as Apprenticeships
- How this can be a lever for Inclusive Growth – enhancing productivity through of inclusive pathways to good jobs, i.e. people who otherwise not be able to access the programmes mentioned and therefore the jobs but have the aptitude.

Are there any specific areas of focus that you think Invest Northern Ireland should prioritise under this Priority?

We consider that an enhanced focus on management and leadership skills has the potential to unlock significant increases in productivity – and has long been identified as a gap in the current offer.

9. Strategic Priorities - Driving Global Ambition

Do you agree with the strategic objective?

We agree with this objective – and with the collaborative approach to achieving the targets. The Council is supportive of efforts to measure and track progress in investment in the local economy and recognises the value of adopting a standard collaborative approach to understand the depth and breadth of the local economic impact. We would therefore welcome the opportunity for further discussion on the approach to measure the outcome to ‘*Baseline and target Expenditure in the Local Economy through Externally Owned Clients*’.

ICC Belfast is a significant conference and exhibition facility, capable of attracting international association conferences and events. We would be keen to enhance the collaborative working

relationships between Invest NI and ICC Belfast in order to effectively target major global events in the key business sectors that are being targeted by Invest NI and referenced as part of this strategy.

Are there any specific areas of focus that you think Invest Northern Ireland should prioritise under this Priority?

While we understand that it has taken time to clarify trading arrangements, the unique selling point for NI of the dual market access should not be articulated more clearly, with an enhanced focus on targeted investments to maximise the unique trading arrangements.

10. Strategic Priorities - Developing and Achieving Sustainability

Do you agree with the strategic objective?

Whilst we welcome the inclusion of sustainability as a strategic priority, we are not clear what the “solutions” are likely to be – we assume these will be detailed in due course. Although we agreed that it is important to address carbon and energy intensity, we would expect to see more emphasis on innovation and green growth opportunities and the use of innovative financing models (green finance etc) to increase investment in the green economy.

Are there any specific areas of focus that you think Invest Northern Ireland should prioritise under this Priority?

We consider that the emphasis should be on innovation and green growth opportunities as well as developing innovative finance mechanisms to stimulate these investments.

11. Strategic Priorities - Maximising City and Growth Deals

Do you agree with the strategic objective?

We agree that this is a critical objective given the generational investment in the range of capital projects included within the Belfast Region City Deal. Furthermore, we welcome the commitment to assisting with the implementation of the growth deals, recognising that Invest NI has a key role to play, not just as an investment decision maker but also in leveraging significant further funding. The council understand that Invest NI are no longer the IDM for the BRCD digital pillar and therefore this reference may need re-worded.

We note that the list of projects on slide 13 is missing reference to the Infrastructure Fund and Studio Ulster.

The council would welcome clarity on the commitment to hold 25 events (which equates to almost an event every month) and would welcome a commitment to work in partnership with all City Deal areas to deliver these events.

Are there any specific areas of focus that you think Invest Northern Ireland should prioritise under this Priority?

The council would suggest that resources, sectoral expertise and additional funding should all be directed towards supporting these centres (which align with the key sectors), building clusters and maximising their huge potential to benefit business and the wider public in terms of providing good jobs and supporting a growing economy. In addition to supporting the centres with central Government funding – a pro-active, co-design approach should be adopted by Invest NI to supporting the accelerated delivery of BRCD proposals which are designed to support the centres.

In addition, the City & Growth Deals can be used to support inclusive innovation and the tackling of societal and industry challenges – with local government having a key role through innovative funding models such as SBRI. This place-based approach should also be encouraged and supported by Invest NI in addition to the focus on centres of excellence outlined above.

12. Strategic Priorities – Promoting Places and Partnerships

Do you agree with the strategic objective?

We are pleased at the emphasis on a collaborative approach and welcome the ongoing engagement from Invest NI towards community planning, and the Belfast Agenda, to continue to drive progress with a place-specific focus in a way that supports and drives regional success.

We would be keen to understand more about how regional balance will be factored into investment decisions and what the Invest NI regional plan will look like – and how it will sit across planned activities.

We welcome the proposals to explore a regional property programme and would welcome this focusing not only on developing land assets but also supporting innovative new space solutions, as a means of growing more innovation-driven businesses.

Are there any specific areas of focus that you think Invest Northern Ireland should prioritise under this Priority?

13. Additional Comments

Do you have any other comments that you wish to make?

In responding to the NI Executive's consultation on their Programme for Government, Belfast City Council welcomed the priority to 'grow a globally competitive and sustainable economy'. In doing so, we sought to highlight and re-emphasise the city's role as the regional economic driver, recognising that continued growth for Belfast and the wider city region has broader benefits for the entire region.

The PfG recognises that our economy continues to grow and we now boast a growing reputation on the world's economic stage. The Belfast economy has performed well over the last two decades, in particular:

- 30,000 net additional jobs since 2012 (BRES, NISRA) - almost 1 in 4 of all jobs created over that period
- Average annual economic growth rate of 5% between 2012 and 2022
- The Belfast economy has grown by £6.4 billion or 58% over the last decade (Regional GDP by all ITL regions, ONS 2024)
- Unemployment sitting at a low of 2.4% (Labour Force Survey, NISRA 2023)
- £16.1bn of GVA in 2022, 1/3 of the Northern Ireland economy (Regional gross domestic product all ITL regions, ONS)- £32.6 bn for the Belfast region, 2/3 of the NI economy
- 236,476 jobs in the city and 504,692 in the wider region, representing 30% and 64% of all NI jobs respectively
- Business base – there are 11,300 active enterprises in the city and 40,015 enterprises in the Belfast region; 1 in every 7 NI businesses are based in Belfast and 1 in 2 in the Belfast region (Inter Departmental Business Register, NISRA 2023)
- Globally-competitive location with well-established strengths in key growth sectors:
 - Number 1 inward investment globally location for US FDI cyber security projects (FDI Markets 2020)
 - Number 1 location globally for FinTech inward investment (FDI Markets 2023)
 - Number 1 location in Europe for new software development projects (FDI Markets 2023).

The council wishes to further emphasise that this strong economic performance drives growth across the whole region.

- Belfast is the region's key population centre: it has a population of 348,005, and the Belfast region (based on the TTW area) is home to a population of over 1.13 million people (around 60% of the total regional population).
- Belfast is a new job creator for all adjacent areas – particular those around the city. Almost half of those that work in Belfast do not live in the city and Belfast City Council residents account for only 53% of total workplace employment in the city. This is indicative of the City's role as an employment hub for NI, attracting a high proportion of in-commuters.
- Incomes in neighbouring council areas (Lisburn & Castlereagh, Ards & North Down, Antrim & Newtownabbey) are on average higher than for Belfast residents. Average earnings for residents in Lisburn & Castlereagh are 6% higher than Belfast citizens; Antrim & Newtownabbey residents have earnings 3.4% greater than Belfast (ASHE, NISRA 2023).

However, as the PfG identifies, not everyone is feeling the benefit of this growth and there is still a long way to go. This is particularly the case within the Belfast city council area, as evidenced by:

- Average earnings of Belfast residents lag behind that of its workforce: those living outside of Belfast but working in the city earn on average £3,474 a year more than Belfast residents.
- While Belfast supports proportionately more higher-level jobs than other areas, it also has a disproportionate level of deprivation in many neighbourhoods: 6 of the top 10 most deprived wards in NI are in Belfast while the top 15 most deprived wards for the Education, Skills and Training domain are all in Belfast.
- The employment rate in Belfast varies greatly by local area – and is significantly lower in areas of deprivation. The employment rate of those living in the most deprived areas of Belfast is 22 percentage points less than those living in the least deprived areas (55% v 77%)
- There is a significant gap in life expectancy between most and least deprived areas – this equates to 11 years for males and 8 years for females.
- A significant proportion (43%) of all Belfast residents have skills levels not higher than level 2 (5 GCSEs equivalent) – with 16.5% (1 in 6) of all residents having no formal qualifications (Qualification level by Local Government District, TblLFS2338, Labour Force Survey 2022). By contrast, the skills demand for the coming period shows that fewer than 1 in 10 jobs will require skills levels below level 2. This suggests that future growth in Belfast will continue to be serviced by those living outside the city.

We welcome the Executive's plans to work with councils and local partners to deliver the Sub-Regional Economic Action Plan. While we understand the objective of regional balance this should not be at the cost of further developing the Belfast economy, which represents ⅓ of the Northern Ireland economy. Research also shows that cities drive productivity:

- In OECD countries, cities (which are home to 50% of total population) have contributed 60% of total employment creation and GDP growth in the past 15 years.
- OCO Global suggests that cities are magnets for FDI as they are home to 3 in 4 of all highly skilled jobs.
- Belfast and the wider region possess many of the assets that direct FDI decisions (The Productivity Institute) including its skilled workforce, universities and researchers, vibrant cultural scene, industry clusters and transport infrastructure.

- These assets are also critical in positioning the city as a base for fast-growing, globally focused businesses. We need to grow more innovation-focused businesses to drive our competitiveness. This also helps address a reliance on FDI – with local businesses more likely to “stick” to their home location – even when they ‘go global’.
- Regional productivity performance has been linked to investment in research and development (R&D) and other innovation activities (Cozza et al., 2012; Vieira et al., 2011). The Belfast Region City Deal presents a unique opportunity to develop clusters of high-growth industries and innovative businesses, providing agglomeration benefits, symbiotic growth and ‘knowledge spillover’ effects. Concentrating economic activity in a small city such as Belfast increases the productivity of that activity.
- Belfast came 5th overall in the FDI Intelligence Magazine’s Top 10 mid-sized European Cities of the Future 2024
- The battle for investment is a global not a regional one: comparing ourselves only against adjacent districts is a zero sum game. Whilst there has been much progress there continues to be significant areas for improvement in our productivity performance.

The challenge in Belfast is that we need to maintain focus on continued improvement rather than taking our eye off the ball and ensure more of our citizens benefit from good jobs.

- We haven’t yet reached our potential – and the competition is strong. More than 41% of the working age population on the NI side of Dublin-Belfast economic corridor are skilled at level 2 and below: in ROI, this is 28%. (Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Skills Research Project, UUEPC 2024)
- Belfast needs more new businesses – there were 29.7 business start-ups per 10,000 population in 2022 – the worst performance of all 63 urban areas in the UK (Core Cities)
- We accept the argument around the need for targeted investment – we have that at a micro level within our city. We need to maintain a focus on a growth agenda – while putting in place targeted activities to support inclusive and more sustainable growth.
- We have taken the lead on developing solutions that can drive productivity and support local economic growth across the wider region and city region e.g. BRCD and NIESS.
- In order to raise productivity, future policy should aim to help places achieve their productivity potential, which will differ from area to area, rather than trying to get every council area to achieve the same level of productivity.
- Investment decisions are taken on a global level: so Belfast is not competing with its neighbouring towns and cities for FDI investment in particular – we are competing against other global cities. They are all continuing to invest – we can’t take our foot off the pedal.

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Subject:	City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan 2024/25 (6-Month Update)
Date:	6 November 2024
Reporting Officer:	Damien Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

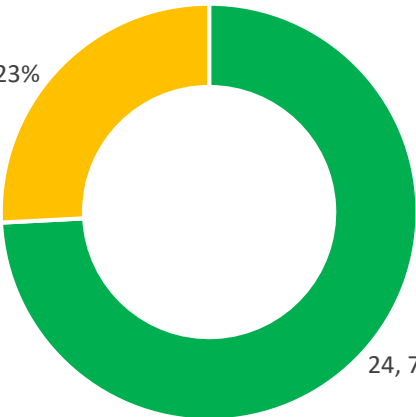
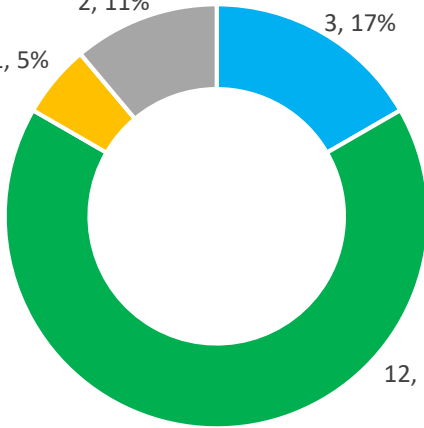
Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues										
1.1	This paper provides a six-month progress update on the key actions contained in the 2024-25 City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee Plan, as agreed by this Committee at its special meeting on the 29 th September 2024.										
2.0	Recommendations										
	The Committee is asked to: note the content of the mid-year report and progress against the agreed actions within the 2024-25 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan.										
3.0	Main Report										
3.1	The 2024-25 Committee Plan was developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-25 and the refreshed Belfast Agenda 2024-28. The Committee will recall that the 2024-25 Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan, which fall under the remit of the Committee, plus additional deliverables that have been agreed by the CG&R Committee. It sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee is overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to primarily the 'Our Economy' and 'Our Place' themes of the Belfast Agenda.										
3.2	While the Committee receives regular updates on progress with the delivery of specific programmes and initiatives this report provides a composite overview. Appendix 1 outlines progress with the main commitments in the Committee Plan for the six month period, April-September 2024. It should be noted that many of the commitments will continue to be delivered over the course of the year and the Committee will be kept informed of progress.										
3.3	In total the CG&R Committee Plan contains a total of 105 deliverables across 16 Strategic Priorities. In addition the Plan include a total of 18 Key Performance Indicators. Based on the progress in the six months to date, each strategic priority and KPI has been assigned a status rating using the following trend key: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>R</td><td>Behind and requires intervention</td></tr> <tr> <td>A</td><td>On track but with some delay / At risk and change required</td></tr> <tr> <td>G</td><td>On track</td></tr> <tr> <td>?</td><td>Data not available or no target data set</td></tr> <tr> <td>B</td><td>Complete, target met and delivered</td></tr> </table> The charts below highlight a summary of the progress to date, where the progress of almost three-quarters of strategic priorities and two-thirds of KPIs are on track:	R	Behind and requires intervention	A	On track but with some delay / At risk and change required	G	On track	?	Data not available or no target data set	B	Complete, target met and delivered
R	Behind and requires intervention										
A	On track but with some delay / At risk and change required										
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B	Complete, target met and delivered										

	Strategic Priority Progress at end of Q2 <table><caption>Strategic Priority Progress at end of Q2</caption><tr><th>Category</th><th>Count</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>Completed (Green)</td><td>24</td><td>77%</td></tr><tr><td>Remaining (Yellow)</td><td>7</td><td>23%</td></tr></table> KPI Progress at end of Q2 <table><caption>KPI Progress at end of Q2</caption><tr><th>Category</th><th>Count</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>Completed (Green)</td><td>12</td><td>67%</td></tr><tr><td>In Progress (Blue)</td><td>3</td><td>17%</td></tr><tr><td>Not Started (Grey)</td><td>2</td><td>11%</td></tr><tr><td>Overdue (Yellow)</td><td>1</td><td>5%</td></tr></table>	Category	Count	Percentage	Completed (Green)	24	77%	Remaining (Yellow)	7	23%	Category	Count	Percentage	Completed (Green)	12	67%	In Progress (Blue)	3	17%	Not Started (Grey)	2	11%	Overdue (Yellow)	1	5%
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Overdue (Yellow)	1	5%																							
3.4	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> Progress is in line with the agreed Committee Plan, annual work plans and associated Departmental budgets.																								
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u> Strategies, programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Unit and are subject to appropriate equality screening and rural needs assessment.																								
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached																								
	Appendix 1 - CGR Committee Plan 2024-25 – 6 month progress report																								

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City Growth and Regeneration

Committee Plan 2024- 2025
Quarter 2 update



Belfast
City Council

Key Programmes of work

Our Economy

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups	- Deliver employment and upskilling academies in priority sectors in line with industry demand, focusing on inclusive growth target areas. - Extend the Digital Badging scheme to enhance employer engagement and provide opportunities for people to build their skills portfolio. - Support management of Labour Market Partnership including delivery of key projects (Gateways to Choices, Bridges to Progression, Multiply) and working with LMP partners to identify opportunities for new interventions that deliver city priorities. - Engage with relevant statutory and VCSE partners to create greater cohesiveness across the E&S ecosystem and to shape future economic inactivity support (from April 2025). - Explore opportunities to use social value and developer contributions to support skills development and employment activities. - Support delivery of the benefits of first phase of BRCD delivery by integration and alignment with economic development and skills programmes. - Develop an updated economic proposition demonstrating the critical role of Belfast and the Belfast Region in creating good jobs, supporting innovation and driving productivity.	- Employment Academies - 480 places currently allocated across 24/25 - opened for first intake in September. - Upskilling Academies - 240 places currently allocated across 24/25 - currently has 193 people participating with the remaining 47 people to begin before end Q3. - Digital Badging: to date we have created 217 digital badges across all of our Employment Academies and have issued 2,721 badges to 685 people completing with an acceptance rate of 87%. Encouraging other organisations to adopt Digital Badging has meant that a further 73 badges have been created and 3,601 issued to 1,084 people, acting as micro-credentials for people's skill levels. We are also working with Corporate, HR DfC, CCEA and OCN to expand the use of digital badging. - LMP: EPIC Futures is currently undertaking an external evaluation of LMP, with SIB having completed a positive interim evaluation. Gateway to Choices is supporting 1,381 people, including 222 people with a disability. - Social value requirements: We continue to provide support to a various stakeholders, including Translink and wider Council.	G On Track
Support business start-up and growth	- Deliver Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) to increase the number of new business-starts and to support business growth. - Undertake the 'Lead Council' role on NIESS, in line with funder MoU obligations.	- NIESS has been operational since Nov 2023 – led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils. Since launch, for Belfast: 1984 individuals 'reached' through community outreach activities. 693 entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring) and 519 accessing masterclass activity.	G On Track

	▪ Secure financial support for NIESS extension beyond March 2025. ▪ Support the operation of the Innovation Factory, in line with agreed Annual Service Plan obligations. ▪ Support the delivery of the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) with at least 114 businesses accessing support over two financial years. ▪ Support the development and integration of BRCD digital and challenge fund programmes with business support programmes. ▪ Develop a targeted approach to social enterprise support in order to meet the target of 10% social enterprises engaging on NIESS. ▪ Continue to work with Community Finance Ireland CFI to improve the financial management skills of new and growing social enterprises.	- 555 businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring) and 849 Belfast businesses accessing masterclasses. - 110 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024. ▪ On behalf of each of the 11 councils Belfast City Council has been working closely with MHCLG to secure funding for delivery post March 2025. This position will be confirmed following the budget on 30 Oct. Engagement is also ongoing with DfE to secure funding transfer aligned with councils' statutory remit. ▪ Occupancy at the Innovation Factory is now at 83%, we are working closely with the operator to achieve their annual service plan obligations. This includes support around the development of a 3-year strategic plan and a review of reporting and governance. ▪ 20 businesses are successfully receiving specific funding through the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) for this period. 84 businesses have engaged in DTFF workshops and submitted Expression of Interests. 35 Belfast businesses will submit applications for Call 3 of the DTFF, with assessment panels schedule for Oct 24. We setup a peer support network to help organisations starting digital transformation. ▪ Engaged with various City deal projects to shape benefits realisation plans to support SMEs. We established the Advanced Media Production (AMP) capacity programme to address key barriers to growth for creative digital SMEs to engage with facilities including Studio Ulster as well as the Fintech support programme, to help support the growth of local businesses through supply chain, export and networking opportunities. ▪ Working with the Innovation Belfast team to support local businesses participate in the Augment the City and 5G Innovation challenges. 6 local business have been involved in Phase 1 of Augment the City and received funding with phase 2 launched Sep 2024. The 5G Innovation fund has been promoted extensively to local businesses with applications closing Sep 2024. ▪ Through our Go Social programme, we target those thinking of starting up a new business as a social enterprise or co-operative. To date we have 25 participants engaging in 1-2-1 mentoring support. We are also continuing to work with Community Finance Ireland (CFI) in supporting our Social Economy Incentive Fund. This will provide grants of up to £10,000 to new	
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		or developing social economy businesses in early growth stages, or in need of support to begin trading in the next six months. Our Go Social support will also provide wraparound mentoring and guidance to those businesses availing of the fund.	
Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor	Review the corridor strategy to agree priority areas of focus and support the delivery of targeted economic development interventions.	- The Economic conference planned for 22 Oct has been rescheduled to Q1 2025, due to potential elections in the ROI impacting participation. - Belfast City Council hosted a visit by officials from Dublin City Council on the 16th & 17th Sept in order to build and maintain city relations. - DBEC, supported by Belfast City Council, has submitted a proposal to the Dep. of Environment, Climate and Communications in ROI to develop recommendations from the Connected Circular Economy work. - DBEC is developing further funding applications against other project areas, and members will continue to be updated on progress.	A On Track with some delay
Support city markets	- Ensure delivery of the annual business plan for St George's Market. - Support the delivery of the Christmas Continental Market. - Review the markets rights policy in order to ensure that it supports the operation of independent markets across the city, to enhance animation and vibrancy. - Ensure effective management of Smithfield Market.	- The annual business plan is under delivery and continues to progress. - The 2024 Christmas Continental Market is in its 20th year and is now booked to run from 16 Nov to 22 Dec 2024. - A review of the Markets Rights and the Storage policies are currently underway. - Smithfield continues to be managed by the Markets unit, it is old building and part of the BCC Masterplan for the area, so some areas require constant maintenance.	G On Track
Belfast Business Promise	- Extend business engagement in Belfast Business Promise, supporting 50 companies to engage in the programme. - Undertake interim evaluation to identify optimal approach to future resourcing and delivery.	52 companies are currently signed up to BBP, with further technical panels planned for Oct to approve the membership status of applicants. - An interim evaluation has been commissioned to identify the optimal approach to future delivery.	G On Track

Our Place

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Housing-Led Regeneration - Support and work with partners to address housing challenges	Competitive Dialogue Process to attract private sector partner / investor to take forward Housing Led Regeneration mixed use development opportunities: Appointment of Private Sector Development /Investor Partner (on completion of the current Competitive Dialogue Exercise) in respect of a number of BCC strategic sites that will act as a master developer to deliver residential-led, mixed-use developments in support of the city's growth targets, delivering on key regeneration objectives, social value and economic impact.	The public procurement exercise to appoint a Private Sector Partner (PSP) has successfully been concluded and a report is scheduled to go to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee prior to finalising the process.	G On Track
	Strategic Site Assessments Phase 2 - Complete planning, site appraisals and feasibility studies for BCC lands identified within the city-wide Strategic Site Assessments. Progress site development and/or disposal options as appropriate following Member engagement and approvals and embedding social value and maximising the economic impact of such development. - Continue to work through the Community Planning Partnership Housing-Led Regeneration Group to complete collation of all public sector land data and analysis of housing led opportunities utilising the LDP Urban Capacity Study and Housing Monitor. Progress, as appropriate, with other public sector partners opportunities for placemaking pilots and housing-led regeneration on wider public sector lands. - Continue working with relevant public and private sector bodies to identify wider potential housing development opportunities and bring forward proposals that may unblock challenges to delivery.	- Ongoing process with Strategic Site Assessments to review sites for their availability for development together with planning assessments that provide high-level indicative housing led development proposals. - Updates on sites identified through the Strategic Site Assessments process have been presented to the Area Working Groups earlier this year (May/June). Members were advised that assessments were being undertaken independently on those sites, identified as feasible, in order to assess respective land values. Crucially that informs viability to deliver development with or without some form of intervention. Members are asked to note the further detail as set out in August and October's Housing Led Regeneration reports to CGR Committee in respect of this extensive workstream. - With planning appraisals and viability assessments complete now across a number of sites a subsequent report is to be brought shortly to the SP&R committee with recommendations on the delivery options of this initial tranche of sites.	G On Track
	Inner North-West Development Brief Manage the Development Brief, alongside DfC (as joint landowner) and development process for lands in the Inner	As per Housing Led Regeneration reports to CGR Committee in August and October, the Inner NW brief has closed with submissions received from the Housing Associations. Work is ongoing on the evaluation phases, and in relation to issues raised with respect to viability and infrastructure issues.	A On Track with

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
	North-West (INW) Northern Cluster to bring forward a Housing-Led Regeneration scheme.		some delay
	Funding models to deliver housing based placemaking: - Advance the Place-Based Growth Proposition including the lobbying and advocacy work aimed at devolving and increasing regeneration funding and with a focus on Housing-Led Regeneration and placemaking purposes. - Progress proposal for the reframing of the City Centre Investment Fund to support Housing Led Regeneration.	- Ongoing work including lobbying at recent Ministerial meetings. Work is ongoing in respect of sharpening the narrative and the 'ask'. - The review of the City Centre Investment Fund has been undertaken, noting alignment in underpinning the need to bring forward interventions to support delivery and unlock housing led regeneration.	G On Track
Connectivity and City Infrastructure Page 130	A Bolder Vision - Update and finalise A Bolder Vision (ABV) in line with the Eastern Transport Plan, including the SEA consultation. - Secure Council and Ministerial approval. - Align delivery with Corporate and PfG priorities including Belfast Agenda, LDP and corporate /city project prioritisation processes. - Maintain public visibility and engagement with stakeholders through comms and engagement programme. - Agree and commence city centre partnership projects with key stakeholders in line with ABV interventions. - Work with DfC and DfI to ensure public realm projects are delivered in line with ABV, adopting an integrated placemaking and sustainable mobility approach. - Under "Embracing the River" and through the Waterfront Taskforce progress implementation of the Waterfront Promenade Framework including progressing the agreed priority projects for delivery including the Under the Bridge and Sailortown Bridge projects as well as working with communities to realise the full potential of the Waterfront opportunities.	- Ongoing work with DfI and DfC in respect of reviewing the 'A Bolder Vision' strategy in line with the emerging Eastern Transport Plan City Centre Chapter. Note DfI are advancing the ETP city centre chapter, which is expected to be completed by early 2025. - On going public realm works at Grand Central Station. Design and Planning is ongoing with Little York St/Little Patrick St, Blackstaff Sq and the 5C's. - Ongoing work including building funding cases to advance 'Under the Bridges and Sailortown Bridge' proposals.	A On Track with some delay

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Page 131	Citywide Connectivity - Continue to create a more connected city by using existing and new greenways, urban greenways and existing and enhanced green spaces connecting the North, South, East and West of the city as well as the city centre. - Agree and progress partnership projects with key stakeholders (QUB, UU, BIDs, BHC) in line with ABV interventions including Under the Bridges project and Active Travel Enablers as well as projects emerging from the Eastern Transport Plan.	Ongoing work including building funding cases to advance 'Under the Bridges and Sailortown Bridge' proposals.	G On Track
	Belfast Bikes - Oversee the development and delivery of the public bike hire scheme. - Undertake a tender exercise to procure a new operator for scheme from Dec 2024 onwards.	- NSL continues to operate the Belfast Bike Scheme via a contract extension until Dec 2024. - The Tender for the new operator is now live. - There were 73,608 journeys recorded during H1, ↑ 2% on the same period the previous year.	A On Track with some delay
	City Infrastructure - Continue to champion the Council's preferred position for major infrastructure projects. - Continue to represent Council and play a key role on city-wide boards facilitating, enabling and influencing major infrastructure development and investment including: - York Street Interchange; - BRT Phase 2; - Belfast Cycle Network; - Living With Water project; - Belfast Streets Ahead; and - Weaver's Cross.	- Our work to champion the Council's preferred position is ongoing and has been strengthened within the emerging integrated prioritisation team, with DfI, on the Eastern Transport Plan city centre chapter. - We are continuing to feed council's position into the various major infrastructure boards.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Strategic regeneration and investment schemes	Tribeca - Progress options for vesting and /or acquisition by agreement of the Tribeca site including valuation and funding options, subject to agreement on a commercial and resourcing strategy. - Explore options to bring the Assembly Rooms into Council ownership and consideration of future development and use options.	Work is ongoing, with regular updates to the SP&R Committee and the City Regeneration Members Working Group.	A At risk
	2 Royal Avenue Secure the Long-term use of 2 Royal Avenue in line with council's objectives.	The Expressions of Interest period closed at the end of June 2024, and an update was reported to August's Committee. Briefs have now been issued and the deadline on submissions is early November.	A On Track with some delay
	The Sixth Progress options for the future use and development of the Sixth in partnership with the council's LLP partner.	Work on the Sixth is ongoing.	G On Track
	Dunbar Regeneration Scheme Progress comprehensive regeneration scheme at Dunbar bringing together council and private sector assets to deliver comprehensive placemaking redevelopment co-ordinated through a joint master-planning approach.	Work has advanced with private sector landowners in the area, an MOU has been agreed, and an inception meeting is being scheduled on the masterplan development. Note the Dunbar depot relocation is the first step on the critical path to this.	A On Track with some delay
	Arterial Routes Regeneration Develop proposals to address the regeneration of arterial routes aligned to existing and proposed programmes of work (including Vibrant Business Destinations, Housing-Led Placemaking pilots, Neighbourhood Regeneration and Area-Based Community Plans) in the context of previous initiatives including Renewing the Routes, Business Cluster & Community Grants and Dereliction, in line with the emerging ambitions of the Eastern Transport Plan.	Funding is being sought from a number of potential funders to enable the delivery of a city wide vacant to vibrant programme.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Page 133	Regeneration Framework and Place Based Growth Proposition - Progress and embed the Regeneration Framework approach to prioritise city and council priorities. - Progress the Advocacy and Lobbying programme of work aligned to the Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast and ensure alignment with priorities identified by the Regeneration Framework process.	- Ongoing implementation of the regeneration framework. - Lobbying and advocacy continues as reported above e.g. messaging at a recent Ministerial meeting. And sharpening the narrative and the 'ask' from Council.	G On Track
	Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS). - Continue to progress (with partners) projects and interventions identified within BCCRIS. - Take forward a ten-year review of BCCRIS building on the work of the recent Regeneration Trackers, to inform city and council priorities going forward.	- There has been an extensive programme of engagement on BCCRIS from June – August. This included PGLs, public and private sector, and industry specific as well as a number of on-line and in person community engagement sessions; to shape and inform the review. Additionally, there has been desktop based evidence building on annual regeneration trackers. Emerging areas of focus include: - increasing city centre living; - unlocking major regeneration opportunities including Tribeca; - continuing the transformation of the Waterfront through the vision in the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework; - ensuring the protection and preservation of our built heritage; - sustainable urbanisation to support decarbonisation; - ensuring the city centre is well managed, clean, vibrant, unique and thriving through animation, shared space and diversification of uses– capitalising on Belfast's distinct draw which will support hospitality, retail, SMEs, social enterprises, tourism and the nighttime economy; - Bolder Vision including public realm development, to support inclusive placemaking including further delivery of ABV, recognising that the ETP Belfast City Centre Chapter provides an opportunity for focus. This also includes reconnecting the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities, and the waterfront and TQ. - Proposed launch of messaging at a BCCRIS summit event in city Hall in late November.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Page 134	Regeneration activity - Work collaboratively with colleagues in Planning and across Council to support regeneration plans and secure and deliver schemes aligned to Developer Contributions as appropriate. - Delivery of the Vacant to Vibrant Pilot Capital Grant Scheme as a tool to address vacancy and dereliction while supporting SME's/ Independents to better utilise space aligned to council priorities. - Engage with public and private sector in respect of major regeneration schemes including facilitating and leading project reference groups for specified major schemes, including Tribeca and Waterside (Sirocco). - Lead the Joint Regeneration Group, Community Planning Partnership and City Development Boards with other partners to prioritise and drive key regeneration initiatives. - Management of identified Regeneration Assets (including 2 Royal Avenue, Commission House, Site 10, Corporation Street) in line with the objectives of the City Centre Investment Fund and ongoing regeneration proposals.	- Ongoing developer contributions work includes placemaking scheme at Little York Street / Little Patrick Street, and working with DfC on 5Cs and Blackstaff Sq (surrounding environs). 26 Vacant to Vibrant applications approved as of 30 Sept. representing a capital grant investment of £ 461,136. This results in approximately 80 direct employment opportunities with approximately a further 26 indirect jobs across the supply chain, and an estimated Rates Value of £1,789,055 (subject to LPS assessment) over the course of the lease periods. This means that for every £1 invested in the grant, at least £3.88 will be returned in rates income over the term of the leases. The total output of businesses/organisations through the scheme (based on sales for Year1 and Year 2) is £12.4 million. External funding is also being sought to deliver a city wide Vacant to Vibrant scheme. - Ongoing work and engagement across sectors in relation to major regeneration schemes, including the Joint Regeneration Group. - Ongoing management of regeneration assets, noting additional asset acquired in Royal Avenue (acquisition completed August 24).	G On Track
	Promote and Position the City for Inclusive Investment - Continue to support a joint public private approach, including via the Belfast Place Partnership, aimed at ensuring Belfast is positioned to continue to attract inclusive investment to underpin regeneration, development and infrastructure activities in the city required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions. - Facilitating investment and development related visits aimed at positioning the city to compete and promote inclusive growth and development for the city. - Maintaining and developing the Invest in Belfast website and associated promotion platforms (investment guide etc).	Approval to support BCRPP through 2024/25 was provided by CG&R Committee in June 2024. BCRPP 24/25 launched mid-September at the Belfast Grand Central Station with a focus on placemaking and gamechangers shaping the city and wider city region.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Future City Centre Programme	- Oversee the delivery of the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme five pillars, including: - Regeneration and connectivity - Business and investment proposition - Animation and distinctive offering - Clean, Green, Inclusive & Safe Vulnerability - Ongoing management and development of the Programme OBA performance measures (strategic and operational indicators) in the form of a FCC Performance Measures Dashboard. - Partnership working and engagement with city stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors.	Ongoing monitoring and reporting of City Centre strategic and operational indicators via the City Centre All Party Working Group, including detailed overview on Council led activity and comms digest.	G On Track
Deliver year 3 of the Tourism Strategy 'Make Yourself at Home'	- Launch and deliver the Neighbourhood Tourism Development Programme. - Development of visitor experience of Council Assets (visitor attractions). - Delivery of Accessible Tourism programme. - Delivery of Food Tourism programme. - Delivery of Business Tourism - Conference Subvention. - Position Belfast in national and international markets through Visit Belfast.	- Programme launched and Expressions of interest returned by 4th Oct. - A draft of the study has been received & actions are being considered. - Accessible tourism programme is progressing in partnership with TNI. - Food tourism work is continuing, and a facilitator has been appointed. - The Conference subvention scheme was approved by CG&R in May within the Tourism Plan. It is administered by Visit Belfast and match funded by Tourism NI. - Work is ongoing with Visit Belfast and a number of successful campaigns have been delivered as well as a new MOU with Tourism Ireland.	G On Track
City Events	- Deliver the annual programme of events including Christmas 2024, St Patrick's Day 2025, Maritime 2025, Made in Belfast and Lord Mayors Day. - Development and delivery work towards the Fleadh - Development and delivery work towards the Oireachtas 2025 - Development and delivery work towards the Euros 2028, including establishing and servicing governance structures for both.	- Lord Mayor's Day was successfully delivered on 18th May 2024, attracting 12,000 attendees and integrated with Belfast 2024 programming. - Christmas lights switch on is planned for 16th Nov. Planning for the Maritime Festival in 2025 is well under way. - BID for Fleadh was submitted in August 2024 and is anticipated that announcement of successful host will be in March 2025. - Euros work is currently under review with recent announcements to Casement Park. - Development of plans is underway aligned to the Fleadh.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
	- Development of Event Management Plans, including mobility plans (pedestrian/ traffic management) for larger events. - Securing associated permissions and land rental. - Continue working with partners to plan & develop future International Events bids.	Working closely with TNI and UK sport to align to future bidding cycles for major events.	
Cultural Strategy	'A City Imagining Plan' - Providing the cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG) and other grant streams. - Deliver a programme of sectoral development and strategic partnerships. - Implementation of heritage audit and roadmap for development. - Progress cultural animations activities including Belfast Canvass, City as a Gallery. - Design and deliver wraparound support programmes including leading sector forums for festivals, visual arts and sustainability. - Deliver a range of capacity building initiatives for the sector including initiatives designed to increase accessibility and cultural participation. - Complete the strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast and identify support to these organisations. - Develop and Deliver report on the impact of culture and cultural participation. Implementation of "Music Matters" Music Strategy - Deliver actions within the Music Strategy 4 strands: - Theme 1: Place artists at the heart - Theme 2: Nurture the Sector - Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience - Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UN - Support 10 Artists through the creative bursary programme.	- CMAG is continuing to be delivered. - Partnerships are established with arts and business and university of atypical. - Heritage audit report is complete and actions and recommendations are under review. - Belfast Canvass is currently underway following procurement and appointment of a contractor. 30 utility boxes selected with work to be completed by Nov 2024. - Work is continuing including two visual forum events, 5 festival forums and 4 green arts forums. Work includes production of Belfast Art Map, support for four pilot sustainability projects and delivery of marketing support for 18 festivals and Late-Night Art. - Delivery of year 3 of the Blueprint programme, supporting 17 organisations to enhance their financial sustainability. - A partnership with Theatre and Dance NI, including funding for 7 recipients, across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector, as part of the INVEST programme. - Continuing with support to increase participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people through initiatives such as the Gig Buddies programme and a new partnership with the University of Atypical. - Implementation of the Music Strategy continues. - Delivery of Artist Studio Support scheme with 12 artist studios receiving a combined £100k in support. - Strategic review completed, with findings forming the development of an action plan with key stakeholders over Q3 and Q4. - Report to be developed following evaluation of 2024 programme in Q4.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
		○ Delivery of £400k of targeted support within workplan presented to CG&R Committee in Aug 2024. ○ Support for 16 bursaries. Project finished in Nov 2024.	
Belfast 2024	• Deliver Belfast 2024, the city's biggest ever cultural and creative celebration, during the key visitor months of March to November. The celebration includes a combination of world-class activities and grassroots programmes, which will be shaped by community input. • Deliver a vibrant and diverse arts calendar. The Belfast 2024 programme includes three strands of work: ○ Over 20+ unique commissions, including 'come and see' activities, world-class collaborations and partnerships and locally-led projects. ○ Creative Citizens programme, forging new links with all communities to encourage them to get involved and develop our programme further. ○ Participatory budgeting scheme where residents will be able to put forward ideas for local projects they want to see in their areas.	▪ Belfast 2024 launched officially on 29th February 2024, and we've achieved significant successes across the programme, with very positive feedback: ○ 99 % of attendees agreed they had a good time. ○ 97 % agreed the activity was absorbing and held their attention. ○ 98 % agreed they would come to something like this again. ▪ We started with the weekend of events to welcome Little Amal to Belfast and our welcome performance, with over 200 community and professional performers. This was the biggest and most ambitious welcome Amal has seen across 160 cities she's visited previously. Following this activity a number of Belfast artists have been invited to work with the Amal team on future projects. ▪ Over event taking place through the summer and into September include: ▪ Lyric's Midsummer - sell out audiences in a new outdoor theatre space. ▪ Waterworks – the culmination of more than 90 workshops held with residents, community groups, schools and residential homes since February during which participants created their own boats. ▪ Drift – a floating river pavilion, opened at Stranmillis and was at full capacity for their special events. It moved to a second location at the ICC allowing for activity in the city centre. ▪ Green House has continued to grow their offering with a series of skills workshops to challenge fast fashion. ▪ Bank of Ideas – Participatory Budgeting as part of Belfast 2024 'Creative Me' Programme. This scheme awarded £50,000, divided evenly between ideas for North, South, East, West, Belfast, and City Centre. ▪ Safari in the City have completed their first mural at Cliftonville Football grounds – incorporating nest boxes for local wildlife which received extensive coverage from the BBC. ▪ 9ft in Common have mapped over 202km of alleyways in our city and led a series of events, from foraging to music gigs and art workshops, across the city.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Page 38		- Nobodaddy - Michael Keegan Dolan's world premiere opened in Belfast in September – a first for one of Ireland's most prolific choreographers. - Soundlinks – Townsend Street closed to traffic and welcomed 1,000s to their Block Party on International Peace Day, with food music and fun throughout the day for all ages and communities. - BBC Concert – A Century of Stories took place in Waterfront Hall and will be aired on TV at the end of October. - Eurocities Culture Conference - We hosted a 3- day Eurocities Culture Forum 25-27 Sept, with 136 participants from 64 cities & 23 countries. - We were able to showcase 14 Belfast 2024 projects, 22 venues and spaces, and 33 local artists and culture sector representatives. - An Irish Goodbye mural was launched on 30th Sept celebrating the success of this home-grown Oscar and Bafta winning film. - Shadowdock brought to life the Thompson Dry dock where the Titanic was built. Despite cancellation of one show due to adverse weather – this was followed by a sellout run over the last weekend in September.	
	Belfast Stories - Appoint Interpretive Planner and Concept Design Team. - Commence recruitment of Contract Manager. - RIBA Stage 1 Report. - RIBA Stage 2 draft designs – experience and buildings - RIBA Stage 2 Report - RIBA Stage 3 commence. - Members Study Visit. - Ongoing Stories Network and Panels. - Public Consultation and report findings. - Submit Outline Business Case to TNI and DfE.	- Barker Langham and Ralph Applebaum appointed. - Recruitment to commence October 24. - RIBA Stage 1 report complete. - RIBA Stage 2 underway – concept designs for experience and buildings. - RIBA Stage 2 report is due end of March 25. - RIBA Stage 3 is not yet due. - Members Working Group study visit to Liverpool August 24. - Network events held March and July 24. - Consultation planning underway – to commence Q4. - OBC development underway for submission Q1 25.	G On Track
	Commercial Assets Manage the delivery of Commercial Assets including: - Belfast Zoo; - Malone House; - Belfast Castle; and	Members of the City Growth and Regeneration committee receive regular quarterly updates on the Zoo with the most recent paper presented to November meeting.	G On Track

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
	▪ Council owned Car Parks. ○ Contract management of enforcement contractor to recover the income from car parking in consideration with the emerging SSA work. ○ Continue to work with the Department for Infrastructure on taking forward the Belfast off-street Parking Order for the city.	▪ An update was presented to CG&R Committee in September detailing subsequent work undertaken to improve Council off-street car parks in relation to a previous Notice of Motion. Members agreed to the remaining improvement work outlined in the report.	G On Track

Our Planet

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2024-25 we will:)	Progress from 1 st April 2024 to 30 th September 2024	Status
Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework: UP2030 Project	▪ Progress the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework project, to include: ○ Stakeholder engagement and community involvement in shaping and delivery of Net Zero Neighbourhoods Framework. ○ Identification of phased Net Zero interventions in UP2030 areas for Framework. ○ Finalise the Net Zero Framework and opportunities to scale in other areas of Belfast. ▪ Capture learning and development to support integration of Net Zero considerations across key workstream to lead our transition to an inclusive low-carbon economy. ▪ Ensure alignment with and implement other department responsibilities within the council's Climate Action Plan for 2024-25.	▪ Ongoing work with partners in respect of the UP2030 New Zero pilot, including extensive engagement and workshops through existing forums.	G On Track

Key Performance Indicators

As many of the indicators are new for this, many have no target for this year. Where there are targets in the Corporate Plan or other documents, these have been used below.

Our Economy	2024/25 Year End Target	KPI results from 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024	Status
Number of individuals accessing employment and upskilling academies.		(employment) 480 allocated for Sept start + (upskilling) 240 allocated (of which 193 already started)	On Track
% of those who move into a job/better job.	75%	Data not yet available – no academies have completed at the end of Q2 to be fully evaluated.	Data not yet available
Business start-up & growth – number of jobs promoted/business plans produced.	325	TBC	Data not yet available
Innovation Factory occupancy levels and jobs supported.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	83% 66 jobs supported	On Track
Number of social enterprises and co-operatives supported.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	25 through ‘Go Social’ programme	On Track
St George’s Market Visitor Numbers.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	New footfall counters will be installed in Q3 – City Centre footfall monitoring reports that visits during the first six months ↑ 10.6% compared to the same period last year.	On Track
Number of organisations signed up to the Belfast Business Promise accreditation.	50	52	Complete

Our Place	2024/25 Year End Target	KPI results from 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024	Indicator Status
Number of Belfast Bikes journeys	No target set – seek to establish baseline	There were 73,608 journeys recorded during H1, ↑ 2% on the same period the previous year.	On Track
Total no. of previously vacant city centre properties that have been awarded the Vacant to Vibrant grant and will become occupied due to the intervention.	26	26	Complete
The total amount of funding (£) awarded to city centre traders to address vacancy.	£420,000	£461,136	Complete
The total number of people engaged (traders, developers, business owners, landlords etc) in assisting with the completion of applications to the Vacant 2 Vibrant intervention.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	37 applications received at the end of Q2	On Track
Attendance levels at City events.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	12,000 (Lord Mayors Day)	On Track
Total value (£) of cultural funding facilitated.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	£1.425m over the first six months	On Track
Number of events and activities delivered (as part of Belfast 2024).	No target set – seek to establish baseline	382	On Track
Participants (Belfast 2024).	No target set – seek to establish baseline	8,993	On Track
Audiences (Belfast 2024).	No target set – seek to establish baseline	55,338	On Track
Number of creative organisations engaged (as part of Belfast 2024).	No target set – seek to establish baseline	811 Artists 203 Programme Partners	On Track
Visitor Numbers to the Zoo.	No target set – seek to establish baseline	There were 89.2k visitors to the Zoo during H1, ↓ 4% compared with the five-year average of 92.8k visitors.	At risk / change required