

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 26th November, 2025

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson); Alderman Lawlor; and Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, Meenehan, McCabe McCallin, McKay, R. McLaughlin, Nelson and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy; Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development; Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development; Ms. C. Persic, City Regeneration Development Manager; Ms. N. Mulrine, Regeneration Project Officer; Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer, Climate; and Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) and Councillors McCormick and Murray.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted a report which provided an update on the Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) project and set out a final UP2030 Belfast Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework for the Committee's consideration. It was reported that, subject to the Committee's approval of the Framework and ratification by the Council, the Framework would be submitted to the UP2030 Horizon Europe Consortium in December.

The Director reminded the Committee that the Council had been involved in the three-year Horizon Europe consortium programme, UP2030, which aimed to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions, and that Belfast was one of eleven pilot cities within a large consortium of forty-seven partners across fourteen countries. She informed the Committee that the project would support the Council's NZ Roadmap, the city's Resilience Strategy, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and the city's ambition to become net zero by 2050.

She advised the Committee that the joint project, between the City Regeneration and Development team and the Climate team, developed the Framework with a focus based on the three thematic areas of active travel, greening and retrofit, and that those

themes were underpinned by the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience. It was reported that during the development of the Framework, communication, engagement and capacity building were identified as critical areas that required additional focus.

She highlighted the significant engagement that had been undertaken with local communities, city partners and Members to help shape the final framework. She highlighted that, although the geographic area of the UP2030 pilot, which was agreed at the Committee meeting in March 2023, had covered the Linen Quarter and surrounding city centre communities of Barrack Street, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets, the Framework had been developed to be transferable and used to assist in other areas and communities.

The City Regeneration Development Manager, the Regeneration Project Officer, and the Climate Project Support Officer presented the Committee with a detailed overview of the Belfast NZ Neighbourhood Framework's seven main sections:

1. **Climate change in Belfast** - The role of cities in achieving net zero, climate and health, climate and urban design, the Local Development Plan and climate measures;
2. **The Neighbourhood** – engagement with community stakeholders within the pilot area to understand the lived experience of residents and the challenges that exist;
3. **Vision, Themes and Pillars** – The vision would be to create a net zero neighbourhood that adapts and mitigates climate risks through increased greening, better active and sustainable transport, and more energy efficient low-carbon buildings. Three interconnected themes of Retrofit, Active Travel and Greening would be underpinned by the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience;
4. **Communication and engagement in the Neighbourhood** – key findings from communication and engagement with local communities to support a fair and just transition and to help communities understand climate change through a horizontal priority approach of engaging, educating, elevating, enabling and embedding;
5. **Carbon emissions data study in the neighbourhood** – detail of the work with the University of Cambridge (UCAM) to estimate the carbon footprint of the UP2030 project area;
6. **Net Zero enablers in Belfast** - how ambitions sit within the context of the citywide climate efforts such as major projects, governance, data, strategic partnerships and capacity building; and

7. **Opportunities for the Way Forward** – opportunities to move the work forward and highlight the need for cross-sectoral collaboration, a data-driven approach, and embedding climate action into decisions, policy and projects.

During discussion, the Members thanked the officers for the significant work that had been undertaken throughout the project to develop the final framework, in particular the engagement and co-design of the framework with local communities. The Members also highlighted the benefit of the research's extensive range of data collated in order to inform future interventions.

The City Regeneration Development Manager, the Regeneration Project Officer, and the Climate Project Support Officer answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the potential to extend low carbon district heating to residential and other non-central locations, how the learnings and findings could be shared, retrofitting Council buildings, the role of local communities, and the Walking Bus Programme for Schools.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved the UP2030 Belfast Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework;
- ii. noted that the Framework would be submitted to the UP2030 Horizon Europe Consortium in December, subject to Council ratification;
- iii. noted the contents of the report and the process to develop the Framework around the three main themes of Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project could be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities in respect of net zero; and
- iv. noted the opportunity to use the Framework to integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the area planning approach, climate-related work programmes, the housing led regeneration programme and how it would align with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.

Presentation

Department for Infrastructure Roads – 2025/26 Annual Report

The Chairperson welcomed the following Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads officials to the meeting:

- Mr. S. Wells, Divisional Roads Manager;
- Mr. P. King, Network Development Manager; and
- Mr. J. Torney, Belfast North Section Engineer.

The DfI officials submitted for the Committee's information the 2025/26 DfI Roads Annual Report on the works completed across the Council area during 2024/25 and the initial proposals for schemes to be undertaken in 2025/26.

Mr. Wells highlighted that funding continued to be the main challenge for DfI in maintaining and improving road infrastructure. He highlighted the 2019 Review of Structural Maintenance Funding, which recommended that DfI Roads required £140m (approximately £200m today) per annum for structural maintenance. He reported that the opening 2025/26 Capital budget for structural maintenance of the road network was £68m, which would enable the delivery of the highest priority resurfacing, roadside stability and drainage projects.

He advised the Committee that, in addition to the schemes outlined within the report, DfI had identified other resurfacing schemes within the Council area, and that should additional funding be made available, those schemes would be prepared for delivery.

In relation to revenue funding for essential maintenance operations, Mr. Wells stated that, regrettably, DfI has had to continue with a limited maintenance service policy and in combination with funding constraints, this has resulted in a gradual deterioration in the condition of the road assets. He assured the Committee that the DfI Roads team would continue to manage the road network in the most efficient and effective manner.

The Committee was provided with a brief overview of the works completed in 2024/25, which included the resurfacing of 31 lane-km of road and 21.5km of footways, with the most significant scheme being that of the Sydenham Bypass resurfacing. Mr. Wells reported that, for 2025/26, DfI would soon have completed 23.3 lane-km of resurfacing roads and 14.7km of footways, and that the two remaining projects to complete with the allocated funding were the resurfacing of Sydenham Avenue and Norglen Parade.

Mr. Wells also provided the Committee with an update on the following:

- the establishment of a multi-agency City Centre Task and Finish Group to address issues within the city centre;
- the extension of bus lane hours on key routes within South Belfast affected by congestion;
- the progress of Active Travel Schemes including Lagmore Avenue, Island Street and the first phase of the West Belfast Greenway;
- the £2.4m junction improvement at McKinstry Road/Derriaghy Road/ the Cutts to improve safety for car users and pedestrians;
- the new 20mph zones at primary schools within the city;
- the Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2;
- the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge;
- The Transport Strategy 2035; and
- The Regional Strategic Transport Plan.

During discussion, the DfI officials answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the following issues:

Knockbreda Road Crossing

A Member expressed frustration regarding the delay in its delivery. In response, Mr. Wells acknowledged the delay and advised that, due to an adjacent residential planning application, the crossing had been delayed to enable a redesign to be undertaken. He reported that once the redesign was completed, the crossing would remain a priority for DfI to deliver.

Ravenhill Park and Onslow Parade Traffic Calming Scheme

Mr. King advised that DfI had received objections to the proposals for the traffic calming scheme and that the next stage would involve engagement with public representatives to agree a way forward.

Eastern Transport Plan (ETP)

In response to a number of questions from the Members on the ETP, Mr. Wells advised that the ETP was in the final stages of preparation and should be due for publication in early 2026.

Residents' Parking Schemes

In response to a number of questions from the Members on Residents' Parking Schemes, Mr. Wells reported that this was currently under development by DfI and that, in parallel with the ETP, he would expect a Parking Strategy to be developed to identify areas that would particularly benefit from parking schemes.

Climate Crisis and Flooding

In response to a Member's question on how DfI dealt with the climate crisis and flooding, Mr. Wells advised that, for 2025/26, additional funding had been allocated to deal with drainage works and that DfI would continue to engage with the Council to be proactive in dealing with issues more efficiently.

Pedestrianisation of Hill Street

Mr. Wells advised that DfI had received an objection in respect of the scheme and that, once this had been addressed, DfI hoped to have the scheme in place as soon as possible.

Resurfacing of Tennent Street and Townsend Street

Mr. Torney stated that both Tennent Street and Townsend Street remained a priority for resurfacing. He advised that, due to other development works in the area, the resurfacing of Townsend Street could not be fully completed. He reported that, once those development works

were finished, DfI would prioritise the completion of resurfacing on Townsend Street. In respect of Tennent Street, Mr. Torney advised that the current surface of the road presented challenges in terms of the preparation work needed before resurfacing, however, this work remained a priority.

The DfI officials also answered questions in relation to the City Centre Task and Finish Group, utility works and maintenance, active and sustainable transport and the Island Street Active Travel Scheme.

In relation to communication, several Members acknowledged the Department's resource pressures, however, expressed frustration in respect of its communication with elected representatives and highlighted the lack of responses to queries and issues raised.

In response to the following additional issues raised by the Members, the DfI officials agreed to investigate and submit further information to the Committee in due course:

- an update on whether a road survey had been carried out by DfI on the A55, Milltown Hill junction, in respect of potential options, including the installation of traffic lights or other appropriate measures, given the road safety issues and traffic congestion;
- an update on the resurfacing of roads on Sicily Park and Locksley Park, given the poor road conditions;
- an update on the installation of traffic calming measures on Carnanmore Park and Tildarg Avenue, which had been previously surveyed a number of years ago, given the increased traffic on those streets;
- an update on the implementation and delivery of the Residents' Parking Schemes and the potential to explore a citywide approach;
- an update on the potential to reimagine the Westlink Footbridge;
- an update on the installation of traffic calming measures on Distillery Street;
- an update on the potential to extend the double yellow lines on Orby Street;
- an update on the timeline for the Sailortown and Ulster University pedestrian and cycling improvements and whether there were plans to consult in respect of the Limestone Road; and
- an update on the timeline to complete the works to the Victoria Park underpass.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance, and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI would provide further information on the issues raised.

International Engagement – Update on Proposed Approach

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to share an updated version of the draft approach to council’s engagement in international activity for the coming three-year period following discussion at the August, October and November committee meetings, and to propose a new framework for engagement, taking account of the comments received.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the amendments to the previous version, set out in section 3.5 of the report
- Approve the proposed approach to council activity in international engagement work for the coming three years, as well as the annual action plan for the current financial year.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At the August and October 2025 meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, members received draft versions of the proposed International Relations Framework 2025 – 2028 along with an action plan for 2025/26 activity. At both meetings, there was discussion that led to specific proposals for amendments to the draft document. It was agreed that officers would incorporate those amendments into a revised version of both the framework and action plan and that these would be shared at a future meeting.

3.2 At the October 2025 meeting of the Committee, the specific decisions included:

- Agreement to continue Belfast City Council participation in the Eurocities network

- Agreement to explore opportunities for collaboration with Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and other relevant partners, in relation to the potential for an annual event to be held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities
- Agreement to establish an EU stakeholder group
- Agreement to extend invitations to attend international engagement stakeholder groups to Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

3.3 Members also asked that the framework was updated to specifically identify how ethical and environmental considerations were taken into account in international relations activity. Finally, they noted that they wished to defer consideration of the proposed approach to Council international engagement work activity for 2025-28 and the Annual Action plan for 2025/26, to enable an updated draft International Relations Framework 2025-2028 to be submitted.

3.4 In November, Members again agreed to defer as although the framework had been updated in relation to ethical and environmental considerations and the action plan had been amended to reflect the above decisions in relation to the EU, the framework had not been updated to reflect the decisions on EU matters.

3.5 Taking account of the points raised above, the revised draft approach to council-led international engagement activity for the coming three-year period is set out in Appendix 1 and the supporting delivery plan for year one (2025-26) is set out in Appendix 2. The three-year “framework” document is intended to be a supporting document to other key strategies and plans such as the Belfast Agenda, the Corporate Plan and Local Development Plan – setting out how priority objectives and ambitions in those documents can be supported through international connections, networks and opportunities. Its purpose is to identify areas of collaborative advantage and help focus resources on opportunities that can maximise return on investment, in keeping with city priorities.

Specific changes to the content of the documents now include:

- Updating the framework to identify specifically how ethical and environmental considerations will be take into account in the planned activity. This includes references to “environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth” as part of the vision; additional references to sustainable growth under the

key work pillars and commitment to support mission-driven innovation actions focused on addressing social and environmental challenges faced by communities and individuals across the city

- Updating the framework on trade and investment, innovation and knowledge exchange and funding and partnership to reflect the decisions on the EU as outlined at para 3.2.
- Updating the action plan to include agreed deliverables as identified in 3.2 including network participation and work to develop additional engagement opportunities, including the EU Cities and Regions Work.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 The EU and International Relations budget was approved as part of the 2025-26 estimates setting process. Budgets for individual activities are the responsibility of the respective teams.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

No specific equality or good relations implications. Activities will focus on support for Belfast-based organisations and companies.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: [Draft International Relations Framework 2025-28](#)

Appendix 2: [International Relations Delivery Plan 2025/26](#)

During discussion, the Members stated that they were content with the updated draft International Relations Framework for 2025-2028, as set out in Appendix one of report, however, a Member raised an issue in respect of the draft Delivery Plan for 2025/26.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,

Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson),

That the Committee approves the International Engagement Activity Delivery Plan for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix two of the report.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the amendments to the previous version of the draft approach to the Council's engagement in international activity for the coming three-year period, as set out in section 3.5 of the report; and
- ii. approved the International Relations Framework 2025-2028; and
- iii. approved the International Engagement Activity Delivery Plan 2025/26.

Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed that, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 1st December, 2025, for ratification.

Chairperson