Public Document Pack

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

19th August, 2021

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 20th August, 2021 at 9.30 a.m., for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

(a) Apologies

(b) Minutes

(c) Declarations of Interest

2. Restricted Items

(a) Financial Reporting – Quarter 1 – 2021/22 (Pages 1 - 20)

(b) Medium Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme (Pages 21 - 28)

(c) City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress (Pages 29 - 36)

(d) Intelligent Client Function – Contract Management for New Regional Planning IT System (Pages 37 - 74)

(e) Update on Cyber Security (Pages 75 - 84)

(f) Community Diversionary Festivals Programme (Pages 85 - 92)

(g) Assets Management (Pages 93 - 110)

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

(a) Motion - Paid Leave for Miscarriage (Pages 111 - 112)

(b) Motion - Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee (Pages 113 - 114)

(c) Motion - Centenary of the Ulster Memorial Tower (Pages 115 - 116)

(d) Motion - Chat Bench and Tackling Loneliness (Pages 117 - 118)

(e) Motion - Charges for the Use of ATMs - Response from Payments System Regulator (Pages 119 - 124)

(f) Motion - Local Government Pension Scheme – Responsible Investment Strategy – Response from NILGOSC (Pages 125 - 130)

(g) Motion - Transfer of Regeneration Powers to Local Authorities – Response from Department for Communities (Pages 131 - 138)

4. Governance

(a) Update on Standards and Business Committee (Pages 139 - 162)

(b) Review of Active Belfast Limited/Governance Arrangements – Terms of Reference (Pages 163 - 166)

(c) National Association of Councillors Annual Conference (Pages 167 - 170)

5. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

(a) Update on City Region Growth Deal (Pages 171 - 196)

(b) Supporting Belfast's Digital Innovation Ambition (Pages 197 - 202)

(c) Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission 'Reset for Growth Report' - Council Response (Pages 203 - 252)

(d) Invitation to Inclusive Growth Network Annual Political Leaders Meeting - Building Back Places Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery (Pages 253 - 258)

(e) Consultation on draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Council Response (Pages 259 - 276)

(f) Belfast City Council Safeguarding Assurance Framework and Review of Policy (Pages 277 - 330)

(g) Off-Street Parking Enforcement Services (Pages 331 - 334)

(h) Funding Agreements to support Belfast Climate Action (Pages 335 - 340)

(i) Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Consultation on Complaints Handling Standards for the Public Sector - Council Response (Pages 341 - 376)

(j) Extension of Temporary Pavement Café Licence Scheme (Pages 377 - 382)

6. Physical Programme and Asset Management

(a) Leisure Transformation Programme - Assets Update (Pages 383 - 390)

(b) Update on Physical Programme (Pages 391 - 396)

(c) Update on Area Working (Pages 397 - 402)

7. Finance, Procurement and Performance

(a) Update on Contracts (Pages 403 - 410)

(b) Ad Hoc Request for Funding - Belfast Youth Cup (Pages 411 - 412)

(c) Tri-Cities Golf Event (Pages 413 - 414)

8. Equality and Good Relations

(a) Update on Language Strategy (Pages 415 - 418)

(b) Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24 (Pages 419 - 468)

(c) Equality and Diversity - Quarterly Screening Report and Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report (2020-21) (Pages 469 - 482)

(d) Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan – Response to Translink (Pages 483 - 526)

(e) Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership (Pages 527 - 552)

9. Operational Issues

(a) Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum (Pages 553 - 558)

(b) Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Policy Working Group (Pages 559 - 564)

(c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis (Pages 565 - 570)

(d) Minutes of the Meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board (Pages 571 - 594)

(e) Requests for Use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality (Pages 595 - 598)

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Motion – Paid Leave for Miscarriage**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To bring to the Committee's attention a motion in relation to Paid Leave for Miscarriage which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to consider the motion and, should the proposal be agreed, to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to submit to a future meeting a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The Council, at its meeting on 1st July, considered the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor M. Kelly and seconded by Councillor Mulholland.
3.2	*"This Council recognises the emotional trauma and loss suffered by parents as a result of stillbirths and miscarriages.* *The Council also notes that a growing number of employers across the UK and Ireland are offering paid leave to employees who have experienced or been affected by early pregnancy loss and miscarriage.* *As such, the Council will bring forward compassionate, fair and progressive proposals for bereavement leave to provide leave for miscarriage and for stillbirth, so that employees who have been impacted do not have to use sick or annual holiday leave."*
3.3	In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the Motion was referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** None.
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications** This Notice of Motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Motion – Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To bring to the Committee's attention a motion in respect of Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to consider the motion and, should it be agreed, to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to submit to a future meeting a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The Council, at its meeting on 1st July, considered the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Bunting and seconded by Councillor Spratt.
3.2	*"This Council acknowledges the unique achievement of Her Majesty The Queen as our longest serving monarch in history, hails her life of service to our nation, to the Commonwealth and to many aspects of international life, and agrees to organise in 2022 a programme of events to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee, including a funding programme for events organised by local communities across the City, as permitted by the Covid restrictions at that time."*
3.3	In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the Motion was referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** None.
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications** This Notice of Motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Motion – Marking the Centenary of the Ulster Memorial Tower**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To bring to the Committee's attention a motion on Marking the Centenary of the Ulster Memorial Tower which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to consider the motion and, should it be agreed, to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to submit to a future meeting a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The Council, at its meeting on 1st July, considered the following motion which had been proposed by Alderman Kingston and seconded by Councillor Pankhurst.
3.2	*"This Council notes that this November marks the centenary of the opening of the Ulster Memorial Tower, on 19th November 1921, near Thiepval in France, as a lasting tribute to the men of Ulster who served and who gave their lives during the First World War.* *Its position, opposite Thiepval Wood, is a particular reminder of the Officers and Men of the 36th (Ulster) Division who fell during the Battle of the Somme, and is a specific tribute to the Division's heroic charge on the opening day of that great offensive.* *This Council notes the various historic connections between the Ulster Memorial Tower and Belfast City Council and agrees to include recognition of this connection in our Centenary programme this year."*
3.3	In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the Motion was referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** None.
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications** This Notice of Motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Motion – Chat Bench and Tackling Loneliness**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To bring to the Committee's attention the Motion in respect of a Chat Bench and Tackling Loneliness which was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to consider the motion and, should it be agreed, to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to submit to a future meeting a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The Council, at its meeting on 1st July, considered the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Howard and seconded by Councillor de Faoite.
3.2	*"This Council notes the challenges of loneliness and how this has been compounded during the pandemic. Loneliness is now endemic across Northern Ireland. 88% of people in N.I. say that loneliness has become a bigger problem since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. 1 in 3 people in N.I. are 'more often lonely' and chronic loneliness affects 1 in 20 people.* *This Council further notes that the recent British Red Cross N.I report – The longest Year: Life under Local Restrictions, has called on the Executive to take urgent action to tackle loneliness and states that N.I remains the only part of the UK without a governmental loneliness strategy. 70 organisations, including NICVA, have also called for an urgent strategy to be brought forward.* *This Council can do something tangible to tackle isolation and loneliness by agreeing to consider the repurposing of 2 council owned benches as 'Happy to Chat Benches'. One of these is situated in the grounds of the City Hall and the other in the Titanic quarter. Many Councils across the UK, including some in N.I., have introduced chat benches to help break down the barriers of social isolation and to get people talking.* *This Council also calls on the Minister for Health to initiate the development of a Northern Ireland Loneliness Strategy in partnership with other relevant Executive colleagues."*
3.3	In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the Motion was referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** None.
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications** This Notice of Motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None.

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Motion: Charges for the Use of ATMs - Response from Payments System Regulator**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a response to a motion on charges for the use of ATMs (automated teller machines) which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 4th May.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are requested to consider the response and, in line with the Council's decision of 4th May, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 4th May, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Heading and seconded by Councillor Lyons, was passed: "This Council notes the increase in commercial (non-bank) ATMs in convenience stores and in our high streets. The Council further notes that the financial charge made against the consumer for withdrawing their own cash from their own bank account can range from 75 pence to £1.25 per withdrawal.

	The Council understands the need for people to be able to access cash while acknowledging the pandemic impact on the use of cash in circulating in the local economy. The Council also notes that those on fixed incomes face a financial charge to withdraw small amounts of cash, usually for necessities, and this is an unnecessary financial burden on older people and families. The Council, therefore, will write to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) urging it to cap the number of ATMs that charge for withdrawing cash. The Council will also ask the FCA to check on behalf of consumers, how such ATMs are sited and the criteria applied and if there is any correlation between the siting of cash ATMs which charge in areas of social deprivation, on the grounds they may be used more often in a seven-day period by people on fixed incomes and are, therefore, more profitable."
3.2	As called for in the motion, a letter was sent to the Financial Conduct Authority, which was then forwarded to the Payment Systems Regulator, as the organisation responsible for LINK, the United Kingdom's largest cash machine network.
3.3	The attached response from the Payment Systems Regulator recognises the important role which cash plays for many people and highlights the need for everyone to have a wide choice when making payments, in ways that work for them. The Regulator recently reaffirmed this commitment in a joint statement with the Financial Conduct Authority, which can be accessed at https://www.psr.org.uk/news-updates/latest-news/announcements/access-to-cash-fca-and-psr-joint-statement/
3.4	In relation to ATMs, the Regulator is focused on ensuring that LINK delivers on its 2018 commitment to maintain the existing geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs for cash access. To ensure this, it has issued Specific Direction 8 to LINK, which requires LINK to do all that it can to fulfil its commitment to maintaining the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs. Specific Direction 8 can be accessed at https://www.psr.org.uk/publications/general/psr-specific-direction-8/ The Regulator is currently reviewing the need to keep this Direction in place and plans to publish a decision on this shortly.
3.5	The response goes on to point out that LINK's commitment includes replacing free-to-use ATMs which close, if there is no alternative free ATM or Post Office within 1 kilometre. It adds that, should anyone feel that free access to cash is insufficient in Belfast, even in areas which already have an ATM, LINK can be contacted through its community request scheme which allows them to identify a location where a free-to-use ATM may be required. Requests can be made at https://www.link.co.uk/consumers/community-request-scheme/
3.6	Around 50 cashpoints have already been installed as result of community requests.
3.7	The response concludes by stating that the Payment Systems Regulator does not have the regulatory authority or power to cap the number of ATMs which charge for withdrawing cash. The provision of pay-to-use ATMs is a commercial matter for individual ATM providers and this is not controlled by LINK or the Payment Systems Regulator.

3.8	**Financial and Resource Implications** None associated with this report.
3.9	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** None
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Response from Payment Systems Regulator

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From: Contact Us <ContactUs@psr.org.uk>

Subject: COR/163/21 - PSR enquiry concerning LINK

Thank you for your letter dated 17th May, which has been passed on to the Payment Systems Regulator, as we are responsible for regulation of LINK, the UK's largest ATM scheme.

We recognise the important role that cash plays for many people and we think it's important that everyone has a good choice of how to make payments, in ways that work for them. We recently reaffirmed this commitment in a joint statement with the FCA.

In relation to ATMs, we are focused on ensuring that LINK delivers on its 2018 commitment to maintain the existing geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs for cash access. To ensure this, we issued Specific Direction 8 to LINK which requires LINK to do all it can to fulfil its commitment to maintain the broad geographic spread of free-to-use (FTU) ATMs. We are currently reviewing whether to keep this Direction in place, and plan to publish a decision on this shortly.

LINK's commitment includes replacing free-to-use ATMs which close, if there is no alternative free ATM or Post Office within 1km. If you think that free access to cash is insufficient in Belfast, even in areas that already have an ATM, you can contact LINK through their community request scheme and advise them of the locations where you think a free-to-use ATM may be required. Around 50 cashpoints have already been installed as result of community requests.

We do not have the regulatory authority or power to cap the number of ATMs that charge for withdrawing cash. The provision of pay-to-use ATMs is a commercial matter for individual ATM providers, and this is not controlled by LINK or the Payment Systems Regulator.

We hope that you found the above information useful.

Kind regards,

Fiona Hinds
Correspondence handling team

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Motion: Local Government Pension Scheme – Responsible Investment Strategy – Response from NILGOSC**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a response to a motion relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st June.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are requested to consider the response and, in line with the Council's decision of 4th May, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st June, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor Walsh, was passed: "This Council notes that recent weeks have seen the most serious escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory since 2014, with a tragic impact on innocent civilians and loss of life, including the deaths of over 60 children, and condemns the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations and

	infrastructure and the disproportionate impact which this has had, particularly in the Gaza strip. The Council recognises that the displacement of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank and the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements undermines the prospect of peace, not just in recent weeks but over decades, and represents a flagrant violation of international law. Therefore, the Council will write to the Local Government Pension Scheme to seek, as part of its responsible investment strategy, that it will begin the process of divesting from any Israeli Sate owned company or private company involved in the occupation and the violation of Palestinian human rights. This will include any companies listed by the United Nations as operating in these illegal Israeli settlements within the occupied Palestinian territories. The Council will also ask that NILGOSC carry out its own due diligence into any other companies which are not included on this list but are known to be involved in or with these illegal settlements. Finally, the Council will ask that the divestment process is time bound to a period of 12 months from when NILGOSC makes those companies involved first aware of the complaint and intention to divest."
3.2	A response to the motion has been received from Mr. David Murphy, the Chief Executive of NILGOSC, a copy of which is attached.
3.3	Mr. Murphy begins by stating that it is NILGOSC's policy not to divest (or invest) for political reasons and that all investment decisions are made on investment grounds. However, fund managers are required to take environmental, social and corporate governance matters into account.
3.4	He points out that the NILGOSC pension fund is the largest in Northern Ireland and was valued at £9.79bn at 31st March 2021, with investments being made in a range of asset classes across the world. NILGOSC's overriding obligation is to act in the best interests of the Fund's beneficiaries. In this fiduciary role, NILGOSC believes that environmental, social and corporate governance issues can affect the financial performance of investments. Accordingly, it believes that these factors should be taken into account when managing the Fund's assets, subject to the overriding fiduciary duty to maximise the financial return on investments.
3.5	He goes on to explain that NILGOSC has adopted the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment as a means of publicly demonstrating this approach and that it expects the companies in which it invests to comply with best practice, in terms of corporate governance. NILGOSC sets out this best practice in its Proxy Voting Policy, which can be accessed at; https://nilgosc.org.uk/pension-fund/being-a-responsible-investor/voting-policies-activity/
3.6	NILGOSC collaborates with other like-minded investors and groups in order to engage with companies, industries and countries in which it invests in order to improve levels of corporate governance where needed.

3.7	Further details on NILGOSC's responsible ownership practices are set out in its Statement of Responsible Investment, available from the NILGOSC website at: https://nilgosc.org.uk/pension-fund/being-a-responsible-investor/
3.8	Mr. Murphy then states that NILGOSC delegates the selection of investments held to its fund managers and does not impose any investment restrictions in relation to social, ethical and environmental issues. NILGOSC has instructed its active fund managers to take account of environmental, social and corporate governance considerations, provided the primary financial obligation is not compromised.
3.9	He concludes by stating that NILGOSC ensures that the fund managers whom it appoints are capable of appropriately considering environmental, social and corporate governance issues when making investment choices and that it monitors the managers' action in this area. It works with the fund managers and the investment sector to ensure that sufficient data is available to aid effective decision-making.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.10	None associated with this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.11	None
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Response from NILGOSC

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Templeton House
411 Holywood Road
Belfast BT4 2LP
T: 0345 319 7320
F: 0345 319 7321
E: info@nilgosc.org.uk

www.nilgosc.org.uk

Ms Carolyn Donnelly
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
By email to donnellycarolyn@belfastcity.gov.uk

11 August 2021

Dear Ms Donnelly

Divestment of Israeli Companies

Thank you for your letter dated July 2021.

NILGOSC notes that the Council has requested that NILGOSC divest of any holdings that are

- Israeli State owned
- Any private company involved in the occupation and the violation of Palestinian human rights
- Companies listed by the UN as operating in the occupied territories (which we have taken to mean those companies listed in the most recent report of the UN Commission for Human Rights as undertaking 'listed activities' in the Occupied Palestinian Territory).

It is our policy not to divest (or invest for that matter) for political reasons. All investment decisions are made on investment grounds however our fund managers are required to take environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) matters into account. I have provided further information below.

The NILGOSC pension fund is the largest in Northern Ireland. Valued at £9.79bn at 31 March 2021, investments are made in a range of asset classes across the world. NILGOSC's overriding obligation is to act in the best interests of the Fund beneficiaries. In this fiduciary role NILGOSC believes that environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) issues can affect the financial performance of investments. Accordingly, NILGOSC believes that these factors should be taken into account when managing the Fund's assets, subject to the overriding fiduciary duty to maximise the financial return on investments.

NILGOSC has adopted the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment as a means of publicly demonstrating this approach. NILGOSC expects the companies in which it invests to comply with best practice in terms of corporate governance. NILGOSC sets out this best practice in its Proxy Voting Policy. A copy is available at https://nilgosc.org.uk/pension-fund/being-a-responsible-investor/voting-policies-activity/. NILGOSC collaborates with other like-minded investors and groups in order to

engage with companies, industries and countries in which it invests in order to improve levels of corporate governance where needed.

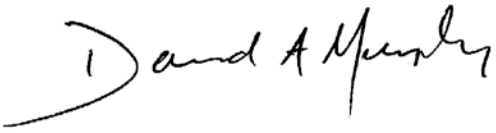
Further details on NILGOSC's responsible ownership practices are set out in its Statement of Responsible Investment, available from the NILGOSC website at https://nilgosc.org.uk/pension-fund/being-a-responsible-investor/.

NILGOSC delegates the selection of investments held to its fund managers and **does not impose any investment restrictions** in regard of social, ethical and environmental issues. NILGOSC has instructed its active fund managers to take account of ESG considerations provided the primary financial obligation is not compromised

NILGOSC ensures that the fund managers it appoints are capable of appropriately considering ESG issues when making investment choices. It monitors the managers' action in this area and works with the fund managers and the investment sector to ensure sufficient data is available to aid effective decision making.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



David Murphy
Chief Executive

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Motion: Transfer of Regeneration Powers to Local Authorities – Response from Department for Communities**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider a response to a motion calling for the transfer of regeneration powers and associated resources to local authorities, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are requested to consider the response and, in line with the Council's decision of 4th May, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st July, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor McReynolds and seconded by Councillor Hanvey, was passed: "The economic impact caused by Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on many of our businesses and it is essential that the Council has the necessary powers and funding to support the rebuilding of our local economy.

The new councils formed in 2015 were designed to be larger and more powerful, and since then Belfast City Council has demonstrated its competence and capability. Successfully undertaking planning and local economic development functions and delivering vital services.

One of the key levers that councils were promised, and is now needed, is the power of regeneration. Place shaping is increasingly becoming a critical part of the recovery process, especially in an environment where places will be different and there is a need of local solutions. Obtaining control of regeneration powers will also complement the Local Development Plans and our community planning framework.

In recognition of the consultation on Programme for Government, Investment Strategy and Budget, lobbying by NILGA and other stakeholders, we call on this Council to write to The Executive Office and the Department for Communities calling for the transfer of full regeneration powers and associated resources to local authorities as a matter of priority, as soon as an equality statement is agreed by all councils, to ensure the principle of objective need is central to any use of future powers or resources."

3.2 The Council has received a response from Mr. Ciaran Donnelly, Director of the Belfast Regeneration Directorate, on behalf of both the Department for Communities and the Executive Office. A copy of the response is attached.

3.3 Mr. Donnelly begins by stating that he is aware of the continued calls for the legislation to extend regeneration powers to local government to be reintroduced and that the Minister for Communities has addressed those on a number of occasions. He then proceeds to set out the Department's current position on the matter.

3.4 He explains that the Department for Communities has a range of powers which can be used to take forward physical, economic and social regeneration, including community development activities. The principal powers currently used by the Department to pursue physical regeneration projects are mostly contained within Part VII of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. These provide the legislative basis for progressing development schemes, acquisition, disposal and development of land for planning purposes and the extinguishment of public rights of way over land held for planning purposes. The Department exercises these statutory powers in the public interest in the assembly and vesting of lands for the purpose of comprehensive development schemes and projects. He highlights the Victoria Square as being one example where the Department worked closely with a preferred developer and used its vesting powers to acquire the necessary land to enable a Development Scheme to complete.

3.5 An alternative provision in the Planning Order 1991 allows the Department for Communities to acquire land where it is expedient to do so for a purpose which it is necessary to achieve in the interests of the proper planning of an area in which the land is situated. This provides it with scope to vest land in circumstances where it has not prepared a Development Scheme, such as where the use proposed would be consistent with strategic policies and site-specific proposals in the current Area Plan.

3.6	The Department also uses its powers under the Social Need (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 to underpin a wide range of activities to support diverse regeneration and community and voluntary sector projects. The bulk of its activities in this area involve the provision of financial assistance to third parties (including local councils, government agencies, private businesses and community groups). It also relies on the powers contained within the Order to fund environmental improvement works, ranging from tree planting to major public realm initiatives such as the 'Belfast Streets Ahead' programme.
3.7	Mr. Donnelly goes on to state that, as part of the Reform of Local Government, certain regeneration responsibilities and the associated resources were due to transfer from the Department to local government. To give effect to that decision, a draft Regeneration Bill was prepared, which provided for the powers available to the Department to be conferred on councils to allow them, where necessary, to address issues related to social need and to take forward regeneration within their areas. It provided also for the transfer of functions associated with Laganside to the Council.
3.8	The Department for Communities and its immediate predecessor (The Department for Social Development/DSD) developed proposals to transfer regeneration powers to local councils on a number of occasions, as part of the wider Reform of Public Administration (RPA) and a number of attempts were made to put the necessary legislation in place (2011, 2015 and 2016). On each occasion, this did not progress due to a lack of consensus on the issue. He states that there are significant practical difficulties associated with the reintroduction of similar legislation, including the requirement for primary legislation, and that it would not be possible to complete the passage of such legislation in the current Assembly's mandate.
3.9	He points out that, since the decision in 2016 not to progress the Regeneration Bill, the Department has been working more closely with councils and this collaboration is working well at present. The relationship has been strengthened further in the response to Covid-19, where the Department collaborated with councils and other stakeholders to develop locally designed recovery plans funded through the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme.
3.10	He concludes by stressing that the Minister is committed to strengthening this collaboration and focussing even more on partnering, co-design and delivery.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.11	None associated with this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.12	None
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Response from DfC

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Department for Communities
An Roinn Pobal
Depairtment fur Commonities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

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Phone: 028 9082 9274
Email: Ciaran.donnelly@communities-ni.gov.uk

Sara Steele
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Legal & Civic Services Department
City Hall
BELFAST
BT1 5ES

Via Email: SteeleSara@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Our ref: CORR-1243-2021

Your ref SS-CL 01.07.2021

30 July 2021

Dear Ms Steele

TRANSFER OF REGENERATION POWERS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Thank you for your email dated 22 July 2021 addressed to the Minister for Communities, Deirdre Hargey, MLA. Your email has been passed to me to provide a response.

You also wrote to First Minister and deputy First Minister on this matter. This was transferred to The Department for Communities (DfC) for response as the Department with policy responsibility for urban regeneration.

You advised that Belfast City Council, at its meeting on 1st July, passed the following motion which you requested the Department consider and respond to.

"The economic impact caused by Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on many of our businesses and it is essential Council has the necessary powers and funding to support the rebuilding of our local economy.

The new councils formed in 2015 were designed to be larger and more powerful, and since then Belfast City Council has demonstrated its competence and capability. Successfully undertaking planning and local economic development functions and delivering vital services.

One of the key levers that Councils were promised, and is now needed, is the power of regeneration. Place shaping is increasingly becoming a critical part of the

recovery process, especially in an environment where places will be different and there is a need of local solutions. Obtaining control of regeneration powers will also complement the Local Development Plans and our community planning framework.

In recognition of the consultation on Programme for Government, Investment Strategy and Budget, lobbying by NILGA and other stakeholders, we call on this council to write to The Executive Office and the Department for Communities for the transfer of full regeneration powers and associated resources to local authorities as a matter of priority as soon as an equality statement is agreed by all councils, to ensure the principle of objective need is central to any use of future powers or resources."

We are aware that there continues to be calls for the legislation to extend regeneration powers to local government to be reintroduced and the Minister has addressed these on a number of occasions so I will set out the Department's current position on this matter.

The Department has a range of powers which can be used for taking forward physical, economic and social regeneration, including community development activities. The principal powers currently used by the Department to pursue physical regeneration projects are mostly contained in Part VII of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. These provide the legislative basis for progressing development schemes; acquisition, disposal and development of land for planning purposes; and the extinguishment of public rights of way over land held for planning purposes. The Department exercises these statutory powers in the public interest in the assembly and vesting of lands for the purpose of comprehensive development schemes and projects. An example where the Department worked closely with a preferred developer and used its vesting powers to acquire the necessary land to enable a Development Scheme to complete, was Victoria Square in Belfast.

An alternative provision in the Planning Order 1991 allows the Department to acquire land where it is expedient to acquire the land for a purpose which it is necessary to achieve in the interests of the proper planning of an area in which the land is situated. This allows scope for the Department to vest land in circumstances where it has not prepared a Development Scheme e.g. where the use proposed would be consistent with strategic policies and site specific proposals in the current Area Plan.

The Department also uses its Social Need (NI) Order 1986 powers to underpin a wide range of activities to support diverse regeneration and community and voluntary sector projects. The bulk of the Department's activities in this area involve the provision of financial assistance to third parties (including local councils, government agencies, private businesses and community groups). The Department also relies on its Social Need Order powers to fund environmental improvement works ranging from tree planting to major public realm initiatives such as the 'Belfast Streets Ahead' programme.

As part of the Reform of Local Government (RLG) certain regeneration responsibilities and the associated resources were to transfer from the Department to local government. To give effect to that decision a draft Regeneration Bill was prepared which provided for the powers available to the Department to be conferred on councils to allow them, where necessary, to address issues related to social need and to take forward regeneration within

their areas. It also provided for the transfer of functions associated with Laganside to Belfast City Council.

The Department and its immediate predecessor (The Department for Social Development/DSD) developed proposals to transfer regeneration powers to local councils on a number of occasions as part of the wider Reform of Public Administration (RPA) and a number of attempts were made to put the necessary legislation in place - in 2011, 2015 and 2016. On each occasion this did not progress due to a lack of consensus on the issue. There are significant practical difficulties associated with the reintroduction of similar legislation including the requirement for primary legislation. It would not be possible to complete the passage of such legislation in the current Assembly's mandate.

Since the decision in 2016 not to progress the Regeneration Bill the Department has been working ever more closely with councils and this collaboration is working well at present. This is a relationship which has been strengthened further in our response to Covid-19 where the Department collaborated with councils and other stakeholders to develop locally designed recovery plans funded through the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme.

The Minister is committed to strengthening this collaboration and focussing even more on partnering, co-design and delivery.

Yours sincerely



Ciaran Donnelly
Director / Belfast Regeneration Directorate

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Update on Standards and Business Committee**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John, Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To advise the Committee of the current position and the decisions which are still required following the Council's decision to establish the Standards and Business Committee.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

	1. note the previous decision to establish the Standards and Business Committee and approve the Terms of Reference; 2. note that the City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services will undertake the role of Monitoring Officer; 3. note that the Committee will consist of 20 Members and representation will be based on the Quota Greatest Remainder system; 4. note the allocation of the positions of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson for the remaining 2 years of the Council term; 5. approve the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee, and approve the proposed reallocation of the SRAs as outlined below; 6. approve the changes to Standing Orders; and 7. note that, following ratification by the Council, the Committee will be established with effect from 1st September, 2021.
3.0	**Main Report**
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the decisions which have been previously agreed and those which are still required to be taken regarding the establishment of the new Standards and Business Committee.
3.2	Members will be aware that the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, ratified the decision to establish the Standards and Business and approved the Terms of Reference, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1. It also approved the new process for Notices of Motion.
3.3	To give effect to those decisions, it was noted that changes would be required to be made to Standing Orders and that a report would be submitted to a meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee indicating the changes required. It would also require agreement that an associated Special Responsibility Allowance be allocated to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson positions of responsibility and funded from the reallocation of the existing Special Responsibility Allowance fund.

Monitoring Officer

3.4 The Committee, at its meeting on 20th September, 2020, in considering the proposals in relation to a Standards Committee, agreed to the designation of the City Solicitor into a new 'Monitoring Officer' role responsible for all issues in relation to standards. The City Solicitor will continue to undertake this role in the new Standards and Business Committee.

Representation on the Committee

3.5 The Committee will consist of 20 Members. The appointment of Councillors to Committees is made in accordance with Section 13 and Schedule 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 "The Act" using the default method, that is, the Quota Greatest Remainder method of proportionality, which allocates places to Parties based on the number of Councillors who stood in the name of the Party when elected using the formula outlined in Schedule 2.

3.6 The representation will be as follows:

One-off Quota Greatest Remainder

SF	DUP	ALL	SDLP	GREEN	PBP	UUP	PUP
6	5	3	2	1	1	1	1

Additional Positions of Responsibility

3.7 With the establishment of the Standards and Business Committee, there are an additional 4 Positions of Responsibility places to be selected for Years 3 and 4, that is:

Year 3	Year 4
Chairperson	Chairperson
Deputy Chairperson	Deputy Chairperson

3.8 These positions are allocated in accordance with Schedule 1 to the Act and using the d'Hondt order of choices. Therefore, these seats will fall to the Alliance, DUP, SF and SDLP Parties, in that order.

Special Responsibility Allowance

3.9 The Council pays a Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors it considers having significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor. These special responsibilities are related to the discharge of the Council's functions and include all the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of each of the Council's Standing Committees.

3.10 The Department for Communities has set the maximum amount which a Council may pay to Members in respect of Special Responsibility Allowances at £117,774, of which £61,425 is paid to the Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons. At its meeting on 19th March, 2021, the Committee agreed to increase the rates of all SRAs to meet this limit.

3.11 Therefore, to enable the payment of additional SRAs to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee, it will be necessary to reallocate the amount which each Position of Responsibility receives.

3.12 The current and proposed rates, to include the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Standards Committee, are set out below:

Position	Current Allowances	Proposed Allowances
Chairpersons	£6,300	£5,460
Deputy Chairpersons	£3,150	£2,730
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£3,150	£2,730
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,575	£1,365
Total	**£61,425**	**£61,425**

3.13 The Committee is asked to approve the proposed allowances.

Changes to Standing Orders

3.14 As previously indicated, a number of changes to Standing Orders are required to give effect to the Committee. These are as follows:

	13. Notices of motion
3.15	Amendments required to SO 13 (a) All notices of motion shall be given in writing to the Chief Executive not later than ~~seven~~ fourteen days at least before the Council meeting. Such notices shall clearly state the nature of the motion intended to be submitted to the Council and shall bear the names of the proposer and seconder. (g) If a notice of motion fails to be considered at a meeting of the Council, such notice of motion will only be included on the Summons Paper for the following meeting if submitted in writing to the Chief Executive by the Member concerned not later than ~~seven~~ fourteen clear days, at least, before the date of that Council meeting.
3.16	Additional paragraphs to SO 13 (m) The Standards and Business Committee will have delegated authority to adopt or reject Notices of Motion. The Lord Mayor will indicate at the Council meeting those Notices of Motion that have been considered by the Standards and Business Committee and whether such Notices of Motion were rejected or adopted. In either case, the proposer only may speak on the issue at Council. (n) The Standards and Business Committee will refer all Notices of Motion directly to a standing committee when the matter to which the Notice of Motion refers falls within the remit of that committee. At Council, the Lord Mayor will indicate that the Notice of Motion was received and referred. There will be no speakers on such Notices of Motion at Council. (o) The Standards and Business Committee will refer Notices of Motion for consideration by full Council when the Notice of Motion relates to a strategic or constitutional matter. (p) The Standards and Business Committee will not have the power to amend the wording of any Notice of Motion that is being referred to the full Council for debate.

	(q) Any amendments to Notice of Motions to be proposed at the Council are to be furnished at least one day in advance of going to the full Council and will be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of the Council meeting. (r) In referring any matter to the full Council, the Standards and Business Committee may determine to restrict contributions to the debate in relation to any Notice of Motion to one per political party. At the Council meeting, the Lord Mayor will clearly indicate if the restriction applies. **17. Amendments to be submitted in writing and seconded** Amendment required to SO 17
3.17	All notices of motion shall appear on the agenda for the Council meeting. ~~All amendments to amend a notice of motion and •~~ Any amendments to Notices of Motion to be proposed at Council are to be furnished at least one day in advance of going to the full Council and will be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of the Council meeting.
3.18	All amendments to amend a motion that the proceedings of a Committee are approved and adopted shall, where practicable, be submitted to the Lord Mayor in writing by the proposer, and read to the meeting, and such amendment shall not be discussed by anyone other than the proposer until it has been seconded. **36. Standing Committees** Amendment required to SO 36
3.19	The following shall be the Standing Committees of the Council: (h) Standards and Business **37. Duties of Committees**
3.20	The Standing Committees shall be responsible to the Council for the matters described hereunder and shall control the various Departments which carry out the functions of the Council, that is to say:

	(h) Standards and Business Committee The main functions of the proposed Standards and Business Committee is to promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council; to promote a collaborative working relationship between senior officers and Members; to ensure the probity of all the Council's proceedings; and to review and improve processes in relation to bringing business before the Council (The Standing Order to include the remit of the Committee as previously agreed by the Council and appended to the report). **Next Steps**
3.21	If the Committee agrees to the recommendations, then Democratic Services will, prior to the meeting of the Council on 1st September, seek from the Party Leaders the names of those Members being nominated to sit on the Committee and, from the relevant Parties, the names of those Members who will act as Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in year 3 of the Council Term. **Financial and Resource Implications**
3.22	As the proposed Special Responsibility Allowances will be paid from a recalculation of the existing SRA budget, there are no additional financial or resource implications related to the above recommendations.
3.33	The Committee will be serviced by existing resources within Democratic Services, and Governance and Compliance. **Equality or Good Relations Implications**
3.34	There are not any equality or good relations considerations associated with this report
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Standards and Business Committee – Terms of Reference Appendix 2 – Revised Scheme of Allowances

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Appendix 1

STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for the Standards and Business Committee will include the following functions:

Standards

- **promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected Members and in their working relationship with officers**
- **a commitment to encourage positive joint working across political groups and between officers and Members and to uphold the high standards of values and behaviours in a relationship of mutual trust**
- **supporting and facilitating collaborative working between Members and senior officers, particularly to support the consideration of strategic priorities by relevant Committees**
- **advising the Council on the Code of Conduct for Councillors including any revisions to the Code**
- **oversight of any training required to train Members and relevant officers on all matters relating to standards and the promotion of the 12 Principles of Conduct in public life, including the Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors and any associated training identified by the Committee**
- **oversight of the Members' Register and Declaration of Interests**
- **to develop, monitor and review any local protocols required to support the standards regime within the Council**
- **to ensure adherence to the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol**
- **to consider any minutes of a formal meeting held under Section 5.9 of the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol [tbc re GDPR]**
- **oversight of the Local Resolution Protocol which will deal with "low level disputes" alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and is designed to restore positive working relationships through mediation1**
- **consideration of any recommendation by the Monitoring Officer to refer any Councillor to the Local Government Commissioner for Standards in respect of any potential breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, particularly where the alleged breach relates to a matter which would potentially have a reputational consequence for the Council**

[1] The Local Resolution Protocol will only deal with minor complaints about councillors made by other councillors. The Protocol will not consider complaints made by officers, members of the public or other third parties. The Protocol will not consider complaints made about officers.

- **the Monitoring Officer will retain a residual right to refer any matter to the Commissioner for Standards regardless of whether the Standards Committee has endorsed a recommendation from the Monitoring Officer to do so**

- **oversight of the procedural requirements of any mediation process put in place to restore internal relationships between Political Parties, Members and/or officers**

- **consideration of update reports into investigations carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman / Commissioner for Standards**

- **oversight of the implementation of recommendations made by the Public Services Ombudsman / Commissioner for Standards**

- **providing recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in respect of any amendments which need to be made to the Council Constitution in relation to the standards regime within the Council**

- **In respect of any other matter which may require some consideration in the context of standards, acting in an advisory capacity, with reports referred to it either directly by the reporting officer or by another Standing Committee**

- **consideration of agenda items for other Standing Committees which identify standards implications**

<u>Business</u>

- **receiving and reviewing all Notices of Motion and using the Committee's delegated power to recommend either adoption or debate at the next Council meeting**

- **Reviewing Council Standing Orders with a view to making recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

- **initial consideration and review of Council matters that are under internal or external investigation**

- **keeping under review and monitoring the Council's Scheme of Delegation**

- **keeping under review and monitoring the Council's administrative and procedural arrangements in relation to governance"**

Appendix 2

Belfast City Council

Scheme of Allowances

Payable to Councillors 2021/2022

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

Councillors' allowances

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

(a) Allowances:

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

(b) Expenses

(i) Travel
(ii) Subsistence

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

Information regarding other provisions for Councillors is also included:

(c) Additional Information

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

(a) Allowances

(i) Basic Allowances

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

The maximum annual allowance with effect from 1st April, 2020 is £15,486 payable monthly.

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

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

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

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

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

(ii) Special Responsibility Allowances

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

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

- The Council agreed a special responsibility allowance threshold of £117,774 which may be paid to holders of positions of responsibility. No more than 50% of the Councillors can receive a special responsibility payment and no individual member can receive more than one special responsibility payment.

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

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

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

Position	Committee	Allowance
Chairperson's Allowance	Strategic Policy and Resources	£5,460
	City Growth and Regeneration	£5,460
	People and Communities	£5,460
	Licensing	£5,460
	Planning	£5,460
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	£2,730
	Brexit Committee	£5,460
	Standards Committee	£5,460

Deputy Chairperson's Allowance	Strategic Policy and Resources	£2,730
	City Growth and Regeneration	£2,730
	People and Communities	£2,730
	Licensing	£2,730
	Planning	£2,730
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	£1,365
	Brexit Committee	£2,730
	Standards Committee	£2,730

Position	Party	Allowance
Party Group Leader	Sinn Fein (18 Members)	£6,383.70
	DUP (15 Members)	£5,897.25
	Alliance (10 Members)	£5,086.50
	SDLP (6 Members)	£4,438
	GREEN (4 Members)	£4,114
	PBPA (3 Members)	£3,951
	UUP (2 Members)	£3,789
	PUP (2 Members)	£3,789
Deputy Party Group Leader	Sinn Fein	£3,150
	DUP	£3,150
	Alliance	£3,150
	SDLP	£3,150
Party Secretary	Sinn Fein	£3,150
	DUP	£3,150

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

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

councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

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

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

(iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance

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

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

The entitlements, per annum, are:-

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

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

(iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance

Any Member who is the main carer of a dependant, where care is required to enable that Member to perform an Approved Duty (see page 9), may claim Dependent Carers' Allowance (DCA). The rate for Standard Care is based on the hourly national living wage for age 25 or over, and the rate for Specialised Care is double the rate for Standard Care. The rates from 1st April, 2021 are:

- Standard Care £8.91 per hour limited to £463.32 per month
- Specialist Care £17.82 per hour limited to £926.64 per month

A dependant is defined as:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(vi) Renunciations

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

(vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

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

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

Disqualification

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

Suspension

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

(b) Expenses

Travel and Subsistence Allowances

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

(i) Travel

- **Motor Mileage Claims**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Public Transport**

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

(ii) Subsistence

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

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

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

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

Within the UK

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

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

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

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

Outside the UK

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

Approved Duties

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

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

Or

(b) attendance approved by the Council for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the Council:

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

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

Tax

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

Councillors' Pension Scheme

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

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

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

(c) Additional Information

(i) IT /Phone Package

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

Councillors IT Package currently consists of the following:

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

- **Tablet PC**

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

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

- **Mobile Telephone costs**

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

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

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

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

Hands free mobile phone equipment

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

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

- **Home Telephone**

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

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

- **Broadband Internet Access**

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

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

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

- **Electronic Minutes System**

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

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

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

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

(ii) Councillors' Support Services

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

- **Members' Common Room**

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

- **Party Rooms**

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

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

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

- **Correspondence**

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

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

- **Post**

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

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

Circularised mail will not be accepted.

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

Postal facilities are not available for party political issues.

- **Message and Inquiry Service**

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

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

- **Council Stationery**

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

- **Civic Gifts**

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

- **Research and Information Service**

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

- **Receiving Constituents**

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

- **Car parking**

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

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

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Review of Active Belfast Limited/Governance Arrangements – Terms of Reference**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Noel Munnis, Partnership Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To present draft terms of reference for a review of Active Belfast Limited and the current tri-partite governance arrangements.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • consider the draft terms of reference set out below; along with the comments submitted by the Active Belfast Limited (ABL) Board, • approve the review timeline set out below; and • agree that officers proceed with the procurement of an independent consultant to conduct the review.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 20th November 2020, agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the Council's governance arrangements, in relation to the delivery of its leisure service.
3.2	The Committee noted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the ABL board, including its membership and governance arrangements.
3.3	Work to progress this action has been significantly delayed by the most recent COVID lockdown, however, officers have now had an opportunity to draft Terms of Reference for consideration.
3.4	The draft terms of reference set out below were presented to the ABL board on 9th August 2021 for comment. Members of the Board were content with the terms of reference, however, they had suggested that the review takes account of the boards own 2020 – 2025 strategy, as well as some of their other strategic development work (i.e aquatics strategy). (The minutes of that meeting are being presented separately to the Committee for noting under agenda item 9d.)
	Draft Terms of Reference
3.5	Introduction / Purpose Belfast City Council intends to conduct a review of the tri-partite operating model currently in place to govern the delivery of its leisure service with particular reference to the role, membership and governance arrangements of the Active Belfast Ltd (ABL) board.
3.6	Specifically, the objective of the exercise is to: 1 Undertake a review of the overall performance of the ABL Board against the Council's original objectives. 2 Review the ABL governance arrangements including the board's role in monitoring contract compliance and the performance of the strategic operating partner (GLL).

	3 Review the level of control delegated to the ABL Board. 4 Provide a commentary on the overall status of the partnership and governance, between the three parties to the contract. 5 Make recommendations in terms of how governance arrangements could be amended/improved going forward.
3.7	It is recommended that the work undertaken will include the following: • Review the existing tri-partite contractual arrangements. Any review of contractual arrangements will need to take into consideration input and advice from legal services. • High level assessment of the ABL governance arrangements including a review of performance. • Review the membership of the ABL Board. • Engage with members of the ABL Board for their views – including Council officers, GLL, current Board members and, where possible, previous Board members (up to 3-year period of notification of termination of membership). • Review the level of added value provided by ABL within the current tri-partite arrangements. • Consider how contractual and governance arrangements could be improved based on review findings and engagement with Board members. • Regular progress meetings with, and reports to, the agreed project manager or management team. Presentation of a final report with recommendations to the Committee.

Expected Outcomes

3.8 Based on the above activities, the following outcomes are expected:

- A report on the membership and governance arrangements of the ABL board.
- An options paper with recommendations for how governance arrangements for the Council's leisure service should operate in the future.

3.9 **Proposed Timeline**

Agree Terms of Reference	CMT Active Belfast Ltd SP and R	June 2021 9th August 2021 20th August 2021
Appointment of independent contractor	CNS	October 2021
Commence review		October/November 2021
Draft report and findings	CMT SP and R Active Belfast Ltd	January/February 2022

Communications and Public Relations

3.10 None

Financial and Resource Implications

3.11 Funding associated with the review will be resourced from within existing revenue estimates.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

3.12 None

4.0 Documents Attached

None.

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**National Association of Councillors Annual Conference**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider the attendance of the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors at the annual conference in Carlisle.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the attendance of the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors at the Conference to be held in Carlisle from 1st to 3rd October in Carlisle.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The Committee will be aware that it has appointed 8 Members to the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region).

3.2	The annual conference of the National Body will this year be held in Carlisle from 1st till 3rd October, 2021.
3.3	The theme of this year's conference is entitled The Future for the Regions / Levelling up. *Correspondence from the Association states:* *"The UK government has announced it is committed to levelling up across the whole of the UK to ensure that no community is left behind, particularly as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.* *That is why they are now making the biggest changes to the way they support local economic growth in a decade. To regenerate our town centres and high streets, support individuals into employment, improve local transport links and invest in local culture, while giving communities a stronger voice to take over cherished local assets that might otherwise be lost.* *This will involve the UK government decentralising power and working more directly with local partners and communities across the UK, who are best placed to understand the needs of their local areas and are more closely aligned to the local economic areas to deliver improvements on the ground.* *This conference will examine how this is to take place and if it will be affected with the current financial situation due to the pandemic."*
3.4	The Committee has in previous years authorised the attendance of its representatives at the annual conference.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.5	The fee for attendance at the conference is £350 plus VAT per delegate. There will also be travel and accommodation costs. Any expenditure in this regard can be met from within existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.6	None associated with this report.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None.

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Update on City Region Growth Deal**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	This report is to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), including progress on the development of the Programme Business Case for the Digital Programme and next steps in the establishment of Belfast City Council as the Accountable Body for the deal.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note: • the development of the deal document, based on the agreed approach to delivery of a phased deal; • that Belfast City Council will act as the Accountable body for the deal ensuring that decisions are made in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements;

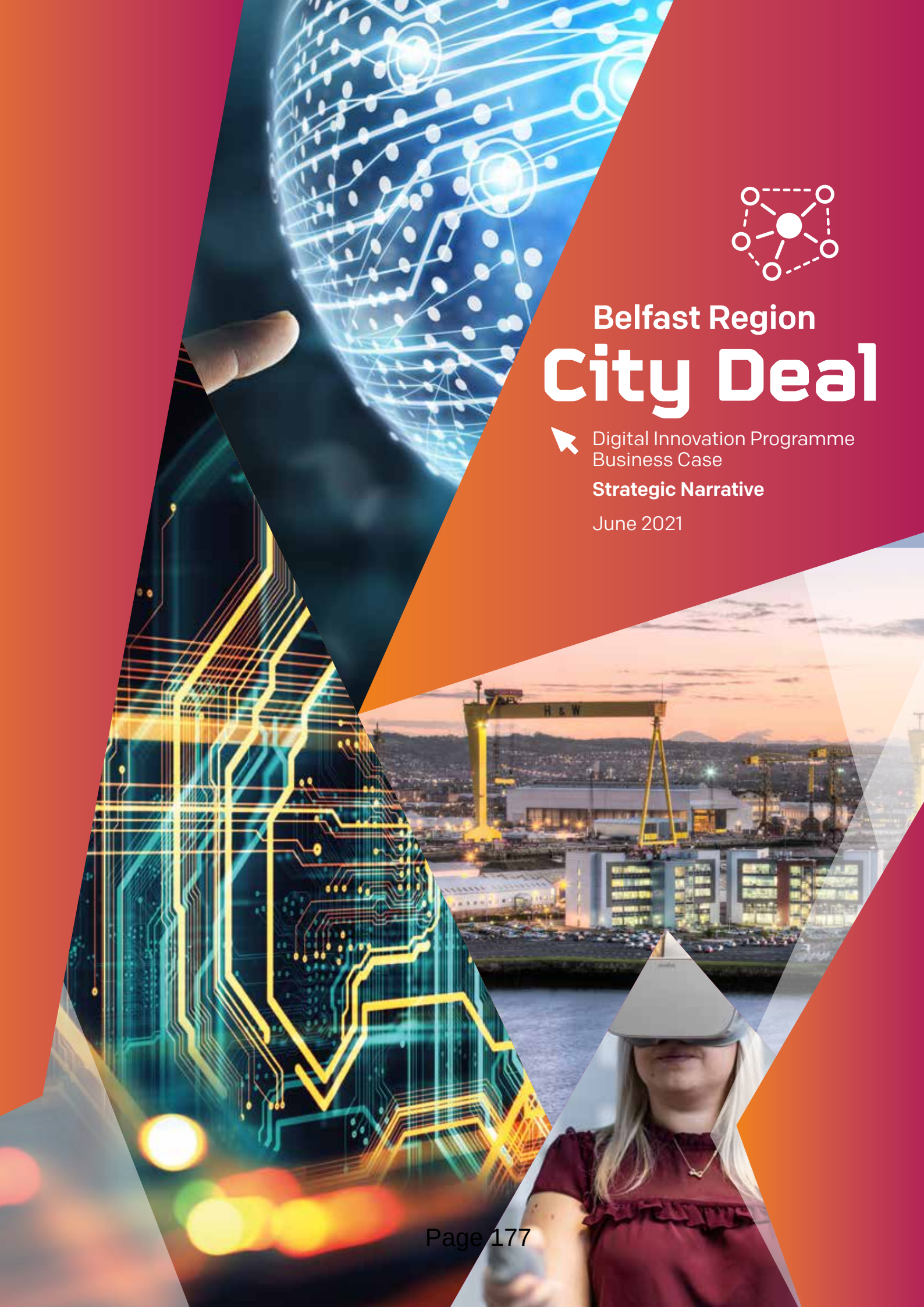
	• the programme overview and the progress that has been made in the Digital Innovation Programme Business Case; and • the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.
3.0	**Main Report**
	Programme Update
3.1	In May, the Committee received a detailed update on progress across the programme and an outline on the development of the deal document. The key components for a phased deal are now well advanced, with Business Cases submitted and being reviewed by NI and UK Governments across the programme. Discussions continue with UK and NI Governments to agree a timeline and process for negotiation and approval of the deal document, in parallel with the formal consideration of Outline Business Cases (OBCs).
3.2	As outlined previously the overarching deal document is supported by both an Implementation Plan and Financial Plan. Following the last update to Members in May work has continued with the NI and UK government departments and the Deal document and both the Implementation and Financial Plans are now well advanced. The BRCD partners are aiming for autumn for these plans to be finalised, allowing the deal to be signed and funding to start to flow to the projects.
3.3	As previously reported the Tourism and Regeneration and Innovation OBCs have been submitted to the relevant Government Departments for formal review. Four of the Innovation OBCs have been approved through Casework and by the Economy Minister and await Department of Finance approval. The remaining Innovation OBC is to be reviewed through Casework in October. Two of the Tourism and Regeneration have Casework dates confirmed for September and Partners are working closely with Departments to schedule Casework dates for the remaining projects.
3.4	The Employability and Skills Proposition for the BRCD has been developed, following a detailed engagement process with partners and key industry stakeholders, with the aim of creating a collaborative model for identifying and providing the skills required for the jobs that are being created through the BRCD programme of investment. It incorporates three core component elements of an Employability and Skills Partnership, a core E and S programme and approach to deliver inclusive growth. Partners continue to work to develop and implement collaborative partnership projects in support of the BRCD objectives.
	Digital Innovation Programme Business Case (PBC)
3.5	As previously outlined to Members, as part of the Deal, partners led by Belfast City Council have been developing a Programme Business Case (PBC) for the £125m BRCD digital

	innovation programme, which sets out the strategic areas of intervention under the Digital pillar. The Digital Advisory Board, chaired by the Digital Innovation Commissioner, has overseen the development of this business case which sets out an approach to create an agile, place-based funding environment to help address core societal and regional challenges through digital innovation.
3.6	This has been produced in line with HMT Green Book guidance and will enable a long-term and flexible investment programme, which continues to respond to economic and social challenges and opportunities. As with all BRCD projects, specific investments will require full Outline Business Cases in order to receive expenditure approval for significant expenditure.
3.7	Utilising BRCD funding, the Digital Innovation programme sets out to establish: • A £55 million Innovation Challenge Fund designed to help address the regional Grand Challenges of Health and Wellbeing, Artificial Intelligence and Data and Sustainability & Resilience providing potential for competitive grant funding, equity/debt finance and an SBRI-style programme; • £40 million investment in Enabling Infrastructure to support the Belfast Smart District and regional connectivity through investment in advanced wireless infrastructure and data infrastructure; and • £30m investment in Regional Innovation Hubs (including £5m of capital contributions from partner Councils outside Belfast) to ensure diffusion of innovation and skills throughout the region, building further on sub-regional strengths including the creative sector and cleantech.
3.8	The PBC has been developed in a highly collaborative way with detailed engagement and input from the Department for Economy, Department of Finance, Invest NI, Innovate UK, and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as well as with private sector organisations through an Industry Reference Group. Following detailed feedback and engagement from January 2021 until June 2021 the PBC has been updated to address stakeholder views – resulting in an assurance statement from UK Government that it is supportive of the proposals.
3.9	Following this, at its June meeting, the Digital Advisory Board recommended that the BRCD Executive Board support formal submission of the PBC to the Department for Economy and UK Government. With the Executive Board agreeing the recommendation the PBC has now been formally submitted with approval expected from NI Government in the coming weeks.

3.10	In parallel with development of the PBC, a Digital strategic narrative has also been advanced, as per the attached appendix, and will provide a strong communications tool for both the Digital Pillar and the overall Programme.
	Next Steps – Establishment of BRCD Accountable Body
3.11	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is the Lead Authority for the BRCD, which means it carries out a range of functions that support and enable regional partnership working, such as employing the Programme Management Office and providing administrative, professional and technical support as required to support the Deal.
3.12	When the final deal document is signed, Belfast City Council will also be the Accountable body for the deal ensuring that the partnership makes decisions in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements.
3.13	The main role of the accountable body is to: • Ensure that BRCD funds remain identifiable from Belfast City Council's own finances and are released and used appropriately and in accordance with the funding terms and conditions; • Put in place all financial and budget management arrangements and processes to ensure the BRCD funding is managed and accounted for. This will be through Belfast City Council's financial systems and subject to the Council's Financial Regulations • Establish appropriate accounting and reporting arrangements in line with the requirements set out in the letter of offer, financial plan and financial agreement • Prepare set of annual accounts • Provide appropriate internal audit services;
3.14	All grant funding for BRCD from the relevant NI government department will flow to the council, with the exception of projects delivered directly by NI departments (DfI) and the Council will then distribute the funding to the BRCD partners.
3.15	The Council is now working with the Department of Finance to agree funding flow and governance arrangements including the development of letters of offer, processes for the drawdown of money and reporting and monitoring requirements.
3.16	Over the coming weeks, officers from the BRCD team, finance and legal services will also work to ensure appropriate internal processes and procedures are put in place to allow the organisation to carry out the functions of the Accountable body as set out above.

	BRCD Council Panel
3.17	Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest parties.
3.18	Members received an update on the last Council Panel meeting in May and are asked to note that the next Council Panel meeting will be hosted by Belfast City Council on Wednesday 29th September.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.19	All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.20	The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that; *'BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.'*
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Digital Innovation Programme Business Case - Strategic Narrative

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Belfast Region City Deal

Digital Innovation Programme
Business Case

Strategic Narrative

June 2021



Introduction

Belfast Region City Deal partners have been working closely with industry, government and further and higher education to plan a series of major digital investments that, together with other City Deal investments, are designed to have a transformational impact on the region's economy.

This document briefly explains the rationale for these digital pillar investments, the challenges they are designed to address, the impact they will have and, at a programme level, the emerging projects and opportunities they are designed to unlock.

Belfast Region City Deal

Since 2017 the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partners have been working to secure £1 billion of co-investment that aims to accelerate inclusive economic growth for the Belfast region and deliver thousands of new and better jobs, accessible to people from all communities.

The UK and NI Governments have committed £700 million to BRCD, with a further £150 million committed by the BRCD partners and by leveraging private sector investment.

The BRCD programme seeks to build upon the strengths and unique characteristics of the Belfast region, and tackle barriers that have traditionally constrained productivity and excluded many from enjoying the benefits of economic prosperity.

Directly aligned with the UK Industrial Strategy, draft NI Economic Strategy and the NI Executive's Programme for Government, the BRCD programme aims to deliver its ambitions for inclusive growth through four pillars of investment:



Innovation and digital

Innovation and digital are closely integrated and mutually beneficial, and targeted investment will aim to transform the region's digital and innovation capabilities. As well as the digital innovation proposals outlined in this document, the investment will also deliver five world-class centres of excellence focusing on life and health sciences, advanced manufacturing, creative industries and big data.

Boosting tourism and regenerating our region

Investment aims to create a regional, sustainable, year-round tourism product that will provide stand out in international markets through investment in diverse world-class visitor attractions. In addition to these tourism products, investment is being directed towards towns that have suffered from industrial decline and economic restructuring.

Infrastructure

Investment in key transport infrastructure will connect people to opportunities across the region.

Employability and skills

Targeted investment will ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support the growth created by the capital investments across the City Deal - and its specific importance to the digital pillar is outlined in this document.

The case for digital investments

The overarching premise for the digital and innovation investments is a straightforward one. The Belfast Region has historically underperformed in terms of its productivity and its capacity to generate jobs in relation to the UK's average performance. This under performance is directly related to issues that to date have not been adequately addressed by existing policy interventions. Encouragingly, there is strong evidence to suggest that targeted investments that nurture digital innovation across the economy can have a transformational effect in addressing these systemic issues.

Without such proactive investments, the region's systemic weaknesses will continue to act as a drag on its economic performance, and ultimately have negative social consequences. The status quo does not offer a viable basis for going forward.

The good news is that the region has enviable strengths upon which to build an innovation economy. These include a deep history of research excellence in our universities, a grassroots tradition of hard work and entrepreneurship, a highly skilled workforce, investment in digital infrastructure and a flourishing knowledge economy sector that is punching well above its weight at national levels.

By building upon these strengths the region can better position itself to meet the challenges of the coming decade. Such challenges include the immediate COVID-19 crisis and its long tail implications which are likely to test the mettle of even the most resilient economies. However, we also face other momentous challenges - the need to rapidly decarbonise our economy over a very short timeframe; the need to address ever-widening levels of economic and regional inequalities; and the need to plan for the impact of a whole class of new technologies that are expected to disrupt many jobs and businesses; technologies such as AI, robotics, cloud and edge computing, 5G and the Internet of Things. How we prepare our workforce, our businesses and wider society for the consequences of these challenges is one of the most pressing issues facing public policy makers.

We believe that, properly prepared, the Belfast region is well-placed to seize the myriad of opportunities that these interwoven challenges represent. The City Deal offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make carefully tailored digital investments that can support the region in harnessing the many economic opportunities associated with these disruptions, while at the same time helping to mitigate any negative consequences.

What are the drivers of need?

Some of the key drivers for investment in the region:

Persistent levels of low productivity

Our region lags behind the UK average by about 18% (GVA per hour worked), and our employment rate is 7% lower than the UK average. [1]

Addressing inequalities

Tackling persistent regional and local inequalities in terms of investment and outcomes and thus contributing to the national 'Levelling Up' ambition.

Regional underinvestment in R&D

There is a strong correlation between R&D expenditure per capita and Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita. Northern Ireland is twelfth of 12 UK regions in terms of innovation investment. This is compounded by a disparity in UK government R&D funding in the region of £250 million per annum. [2]

Lack of resilience to disruption by emerging technologies

Emerging technologies may have an impact on employment and businesses. 7% of jobs are at high risk from automation, with a further 58% at risk of substantial change. Conversely, with proper policies in place, up to 98,600 additional jobs could be created by 2030. [3]

Low levels of automation and technology integration

Particularly amongst established SMEs in non-digital sectors, as well as wider societal and public service adoption.

Harnessing digital's contribution to the COVID-19 recovery

A need to recognise and support the role of digital innovation in contributing to economic and social recovery.

Better routes to commercialising R&D

The need to support further and higher education and industries to take world-class R&D through to market launch and commercialisation.

Upskill based on our digital expertise

The need to develop a strong network across sectoral clusters in industry, to support those in education to transition to employment.

Sources

1. Regional Accounts (GVA), Labour Force Survey (labour force and total employment), Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (hours worked), Nomis (mid-year population and working age population estimates), UUEPC analysis.
2. The Innovation Dashboard, UK Regional Innovation Rating, DfE, 2014.
3. www.nerinstitute.net/research/future-work-impact-automation-technologies-employmentnorthern-ireland



Our digital innovation proposition

City Deal partners have engaged with stakeholders to craft a proposition that builds on the region's unique opportunities and seeks to address the drivers outlined in the previous section.

The assumptions

There are several assumptions associated with the overall approach to the programme. We have tested these by looking at national and international policy and practice; by engaging with stakeholders at a regional level; and by looking closely at what is already working well in the region. Our assumptions:

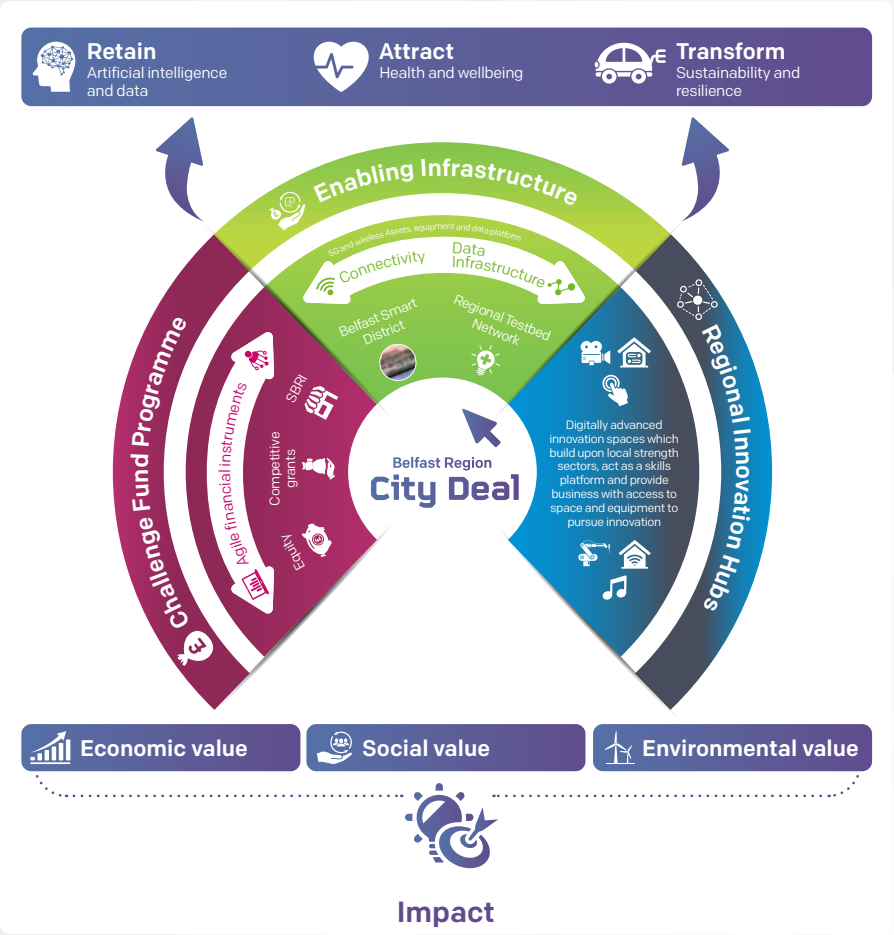
- Innovation is a powerful catalyst for increased productivity and economic growth.
- The outputs from successful collaborative innovation can be harnessed to directly address public policy challenges.
- Inclusion needs to be built into an innovation-led approach to ensure that benefits accrue across society.
- We are a small economy and there is merit in recognising those things that we are extremely good at and making them even better. The region has significant growth clusters with deep links to the research strengths of both local universities. These clusters offer a firm basis for us to build globally competitive offerings.
- Innovation does not happen in isolation. It requires an enabling environment that is rich in talent, offers advanced digital connectivity, supports local businesses, offers open access to rich data, and facilitates collaboration across many sectors. We need to actively nurture and invest in this enabling environment.
- The successful adoption, integration and exploitation of digital innovation is dependent on a range of factors. These include:
  - A leadership cohort committed to a partnership model that fosters triple helix collaboration between industry, further and higher education and the public sector.
  - A focus on those clusters where the region has unique strengths and that can offer the potential to compete nationally and internationally.
  - The ability for any programme to flex and pivot in response to emerging opportunities and rapidly changing circumstances.
  - Support for a generation of creators and entrepreneurs to fulfil their ambition.
  - A recognition of the power of place and its role in attracting talent, investment and in offering a rich real-world environment for research and development, trials and testing. 'Place' acts as a powerful contributor to collaborative innovation through agglomeration and networking effects.
  - Timely, and agile investment from both the public and private sectors.



Our approach

Systemic challenges require a collaborative approach, hence our emphasis on nurturing a new partnership model for leadership and delivery across industry, further and higher education and government, and wider society.

The public sector has a leadership role to play, with its unique value in building a common direction of travel for social outcomes, and its ability to make patient investments over very long timescales.



Our approach is to place decision-making and planning in the hands of those who best understand the nature of the local opportunity, and who can respond with agility and creativity within a supportive ecosystem of knowledge, resources and funding. This is particularly important in ensuring that growth is inclusive and that communities are supported in harnessing these opportunities.

Unsurprisingly, partners are placing great emphasis on the power of digital innovation to do much of the heavy lifting. Emerging technologies (including AI, 5G, IoT, quantum computing, robotics, etc.) will impact on all aspects of life and business. While we can't confidently predict what this disruption will look like, the partnership can draw on the region's existing research and knowledge economy successes to support SMEs and the workforce to prepare for it and to build resilience.

Investment in innovation will be targeted at the nexus where the deep research strengths of the local universities align with those key industry sector clusters that are demonstrating the potential for exceptional growth. Places that fail to invest in innovation are less wealthy, less productive and less competitive. Businesses that innovate are more productive, with sales and employment growing twice as fast as their non-innovating competitors.

Our programme aims to play a key role in driving and supporting a Digital Innovation Ecosystem to *'deliver transformative, sustainable economic growth for all of our citizens by coalescing the core capabilities of our industry and academic research excellence to address our most significant global challenges'.*



What is a Mission orientated approach?

Belfast Region City Deal partners have adopted a mission-orientated approach to shaping the digital innovation programme.

The approach uses the digital innovation programme's three Grand Challenges to stimulate collaborative innovation across industry, further and higher education and government.

By establishing timebound missions that address aspects of each Grand Challenge, we aim to stimulate innovation in key areas while at the same time encouraging R&D investment and business growth.

The mission-oriented approach is based on the work of Mariana Mazzucato at the Institute of Innovation and Public Purpose. It has also influenced the UK's Industrial Strategy and the EU's new €94 billion 'Horizon Europe' programme.

City Deal partners will define an initial batch of Missions that will shape the criteria and purpose of the programme's funding instruments and emerging projects.

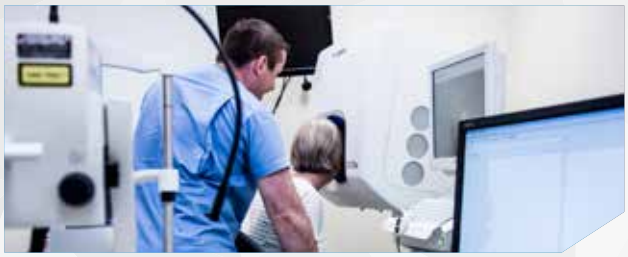
Building on the drivers of need and assumptions, partners have developed the following approach to the digital innovation programme:

1. Adopt a **mission-orientated approach** that supports both economic growth and innovative solutions to public policy grand challenges.
2. Support a **collaborative partnership model** that can drive co-investment and collaboration across industry, further and higher education and government.
3. Build on those **key industry clusters** in the Belfast region that demonstrate the potential for global excellence in innovation and research.
4. Create **investment instruments** that can respond with flexibility and agility to emerging opportunities and that support long-term digital, research and innovation investment.
5. Work better together to harness the potential of **existing funding mechanisms,** from Innovate UK and others, to better meet our regional ambition.
6. Support opportunities to maximise the translational research potential and societal impact of the five **new innovation centres of excellence** being developed by Queen's University and Ulster University.
7. Foster an **inclusive approach** by building strong links with the City Deal Employability and Skills pillar.
8. Invest in the necessary **enabling infrastructure** to nurture greater place-based investment in digital innovation and build excellence and capability across the Belfast Region.



Innovation Centres of Excellence

A key focus for the digital programme will be to create the conditions to maximise the impact of the universities' new centres of innovation, to encourage translational research into the key industry growth clusters identified in the digital innovation programme.



1. **Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (IREACH)**
   Unified capability for clinical research, bringing together academic, industry, NHS and government stakeholders to create a unique ecosystem for testing new drugs through their development life cycle and integration into care pathways.



2. **Global Innovation Institute (GII)**
   An innovation centre in digital technologies, applying cyber security, wireless connectivity, artificial intelligence, machine learning and scalable computing approaches to address local, national and global challenges, with primary areas of focus in health sciences and agri-food.



3. **Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC)**
   Facilities in Antrim and Newtownabbey to accelerate new manufacturing technology development through the innovation phase and ensure that real-world industrial challenges, based on market need, are solved through cutting-edge research.



4. **Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT)**
   A world-class space for researchers, industry and clinicians to innovate in Life and Health Sciences solutions including connected health and telemedicine, and provide the building blocks for a MedTech innovation cluster.



5. **Screen and Media Innovation Lab (SMIL)**
   Providing the physical infrastructure to support the rapidly expanding activity in the region's creative industries sector, encouraging new creatively-led, technologically-driven R&D in key areas.



The investment instruments

Through engagement with stakeholders, partners identified three instruments that are required to implement their approach and deliver the required impact:

1. A **Challenge Fund programme** will focus on a range of Missions designed to address the regional Grand Challenges of Artificial Intelligence, Health and Wellbeing and Sustainability and Resilience providing competitive grant funding, equity/debt finance and investments targeting innovation for societal impact, including SBRI and Challenge Prizes.
2. **Enabling Infrastructure** will support the development of a Belfast Smart District and a regional testbed network through investment in world-class digital connectivity and data infrastructure.
3. A network of **Regional Innovation Hubs** will ensure diffusion of innovation and skills throughout the region, and further build on regional strengths in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing and creative industries.

The likely shape of each investment is outlined as follows. The final budgets and shape of each instrument will be agreed in the coming months.

An agile governance partnership

Given the level of ambition and the range of stakeholders involved, robust yet agile governance will be a critical component of the digital innovation programme. The governance mechanisms are designed to foster and grow a unique triple-helix partnership model across the region. Commencing with a set of core components, the governance arrangement will grow in step to meet the increasing ambition of the programme.

Some of the responsibilities will include:

- Developing and managing the region's Grand Challenges, strategy, outcomes and evaluation framework.
- Setting the investment strategy, priorities and Missions for each fund.
- Fostering a regional triple-helix partnership model.
- Responsibility for City Deal funding obligations including the management and the distribution of each fund.
- Provision of independent investment advice.
- Identifying projects for business case development.
- Supporting assembly of complex collaborative projects and external funding bids.



The Belfast Region Innovation Challenge Fund

This £55m fund will stimulate innovation within the sphere of the programme's three Grand Challenges: *Artificial Intelligence and Data, Health and Wellness and Sustainability and Resilience.*

The agile fund will respond to the emerging needs and unique characteristics of the region and be shaped by a series of 'Missions' to stimulate collaborative innovation and investment.

The mission-orientated approach aims to support growth in key industry sectors as well as address the major public policy challenges.

We have placed great emphasis on challenge funding because we recognise that we exist in a rapidly changing environment. And while the City Deal offers funding across a ten year time scale, many of the challenges, solutions, and in particularly, technologies, often change over periods of time measured in months, not years.

A challenge fund approach does not attempt to second-guess solutions. Instead it is a means to articulate our shared challenges whilst offering fast acting channels to support emerging solutions.

Our fund will have three main instruments:

- Equity/debt financing
- Competitive grant
- Innovation for Societal Impact (including SBRI-type investments and Challenge Prizes)



Equity/debt financing

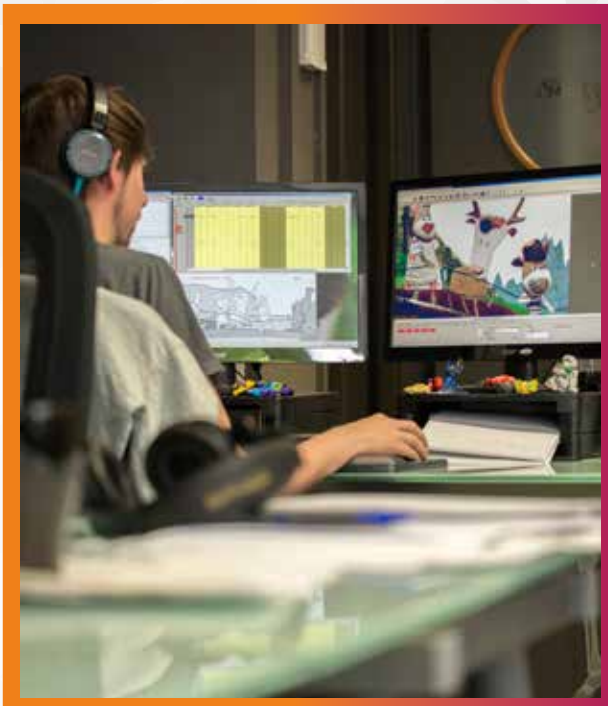
Designed to meet the gap in available equity finance in Northern Ireland at the Pre-Series A Venture Capital level, the partnership will seek to invest patient capital in a small number of deep tech start-ups that have significant global growth potential, demonstrating scalable market opportunities and early market traction.

It will also seek to support deep Intellectual Property (IP) that is linked to the three Grand Challenge areas.

The Equity Fund is expected to be Evergreen, seeking to plough returns back into the programme.

Key characteristics:

- Launching by 2022.
- £20-30 million fund.
- Initial investments in the £500,000 to £2 million range.
- Investing in approximately six companies.
- Estimated to achieve a Gross GVA of £171 million (before discounting).



Competitive grant

Designed to address the disparity in public sector R&D spending in Northern Ireland (relative to other UK regions), this fund will provide research finance for the region's deep tech start-ups and innovative SMEs that have significant global growth potential. It will be sensitive to the specific characteristics of the region, and companies will have a range of support.

The fund will also seek to support deep intellectual property (IP) exploitation that is linked to the three Grand Challenge areas.

Key characteristics:

- £15-20 million fund.
- Initial investments of approx. £500,000 to £2 million.
- Grant awards of circa 40% (and thus leveraging private sector funding).
- Investing in approximately 12 companies.
- Fund will be managed on the region's behalf by an independent body.



Innovation for Societal Impact

This programme builds on the elements of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) that are strong, but will address those parts of the approach that have traditionally been less successful. We will construct a variant that will encourage more collaborative innovation between the private, public and research sectors and place greater emphasis on both pre-development work and on the 'first customer'.

The programme will thus provide a supportive environment for SMEs to develop proofs of concepts through to real-world prototyping and commercialisation.

Key characteristics:

- £15-20 million fund.
- Providing up to 100% funding of approx. £500,000 to £2 million.
- Supporting a collaborative model that may include public, private and academic recipients.
- Investing in approximately 12 companies.
- Delivery model will complement NI Government's existing SBRI programme.

Enabling Infrastructure

The UK Digital Strategy notes that for *'businesses to thrive and grow, Government needs to create the conditions and set the framework for investment in widespread and up-to-date infrastructure.'* Investment in enabling infrastructure will stimulate the conditions for innovation and business growth.

By targeting investment in digital connectivity, data infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure, the partners can enhance programme interventions, for example, in supporting IoT applications, data platforms and other digital and physical hardware and equipment.

The fund will have a particular focus on supporting the rapid availability of advanced wireless networks, supporting the development of the Belfast Smart District and Regional Testbed Network and providing digital connectivity for wider City Deal projects, given technology's underpinning role in the future of many commercial and public services.

BRCD partners will identify investment opportunities and develop individual business cases prior to the drawdown of any funding.

Key characteristics:

- £39.5 million fund.
- Supporting large scale projects, developed through individual project business cases.
- A proportion of the fund will be competitive - providing grant funding to public sector partners.





Regional Innovation Hubs

A series of Regional Innovation hubs will build upon and leverage existing sectoral strengths in order to promote innovation activity and new business growth across the region via local hubs. Each hub will have a specific sectoral focus and purpose.

Collectively, the hubs will provide a horizontal digitalisation support to expedite the widespread adoption of digital technologies by companies at different digital maturity levels and thereby mainstream digital innovation activities across the region. The Hubs will also:

- encourage greater investment in innovation activities, particularly supporting open innovation;
- support business cluster and innovation support across the region;
- create SME digital hubs across NI to support more companies engage in e-business and benefit from digitisation; and
- work with industry and educational institutions to develop a network of digital hubs across the region.

Key characteristics:

- £25 million fund plus £5m investment from partner councils.
- Councils will develop individual business cases for each hub.

The impact

In the design of the programme and its instruments, partners wish to ensure a range of economic and social benefits for the region.

It is estimated that the impact of the £120 million digital innovation programme over the initial ten years could be up to £722.5 million in additional GVA to Northern Ireland through increased productivity and investment in jobs in addition to the societal benefits identified.

Increased regional productivity



This will be achieved by:

- Facilitating investment in R&D.
- Providing a mechanism for ideas to be fostered in response to Grand Challenges and leading to the creation of products and services
- Providing private businesses (particularly SMEs) with access to trial emerging technology that has the potential to enhance business efficiency
- Facilitating collaboration on a sectoral basis between further and higher education and industry, allowing ideas to move into development, higher TRL levels, and to market
- Directing the digital innovation ecosystem in an integrated manner for the region, linked to the emerging strategic context.

Regional competitiveness



This will be achieved by:

- Bolstering existing sectoral and cluster specialisms, while building upon new sectors such as Health & Wellness and Sustainability & Resilience to enhance competitiveness;
- Provide access to the skills, infrastructure and capability by enhancing the training and experience of the labour force, aligned to sectoral strengths through the Innovation Centres of Excellence and Regional Innovation Hubs; and
- Providing funding mechanisms to attract firms to the Region to support development of products and services in response to Grand Challenges and Missions.

Societal outcomes



Which contribute directly to the living standards of a society.

These will be achieved by:

- Building expertise and incentivising collaboration between industry and further and higher education in response to Grand Challenges, including AI, Health & Wellness and Sustainability & Resilience
- Facilitating an enhanced level of public services to improve societal outcomes
- Integrate societal and environmental obligations into investing instruments.

Digital capability



Improved digital capability and regional inclusivity.

This will be achieved by:

- Providing access to improved digital and connectivity infrastructure, such as 5G and wireless connectivity
- Providing access to wider enabling infrastructure such as access to high quality applications, systems and IoT and advanced technologies
- Providing access to digital skills provision to support business needs, as well as general digital literacy of the population.

A strong and resilient digital skills base



Creating a strong and resilient digital skills base amongst our communities and a digitally connected business community is central to the BRCD Employability and Skills programme. The Skills for the Digital Future aspect of the programme will seek to integrate with and support the digital innovation investments by building our digital literacy from grassroots up and support the digital transformation of our businesses across the region.

Key features of the programme include:

- Developing core digital skills across our economy;
- Ensuring a suite of provision exists to support essential digital skills and job specific digital skills;
- Enabling inclusive growth by creating employment pathways into the digital sector or into digitally focused occupations; and
- Increasing the pace and scale of digital transformation amongst the regions small business community.

Harnessing the opportunity: The project portfolio

Collectively, the Funds and the Regional Innovation Hubs will provide the necessary financing and the enabling environment to support a large number of projects and programmes that will stimulate and grow the innovation ecosystem over the coming decade.

Partners have worked closely with the further and higher education, local industry and public sector to identify a portfolio of transformational projects that can contribute to addressing the region's Grand Challenges while at the same time supporting SMEs in key industry growth clusters.

The following projects are offered to illustrate the types of opportunities that the investments can unlock.

The individual merits of project proposals will be considered by the Digital Advisory Board, which will select those brought forward for business case development.





Belfast Smart District

The ambition for a Smart District acknowledges the importance of 'place-making' in fostering digital innovation, and the role of a world-class recognised district as a catalyst for innovation and economic growth as well as being an international showcase for the city and wider region.

The Belfast Smart District will harness collective knowledge, assets and investments to drive a transformative innovation and inclusive growth programme. It will foster place-based opportunities to collaborate on shared grand challenges and will be home to a vibrant community of researchers, corporations, SMEs, start-ups, incubators, and a highly engaged community.

This collaborative environment will draw from a deep well of research excellence and strong industry clusters in the digital economy including fintech, cyber security and AI, and exciting emerging clusters in life and health sciences.

The District will offer partners access to resources to support collaborative open innovation including advanced wireless infrastructure, shared data resources, and a regulatory sandbox environment to enable the early adoption of new technologies, services and regulations to address urban challenges, paving the way for faster city-wide adoption.

The District brings the complexity of large-scale deployment to a more viable neighbourhood area. At this scale, the city and its regional partners can plan, pilot and learn about approaches that can then be adopted across site-specific thematic testbeds.

Inclusion will be an important strand of the development of the district - with inclusive growth being embedded in the design and development of projects and programmes. The approach will seek to maximise the societal impact of investments through skills and capacity building programmes, community co-design and the collaborative work of industry and anchor institutions.

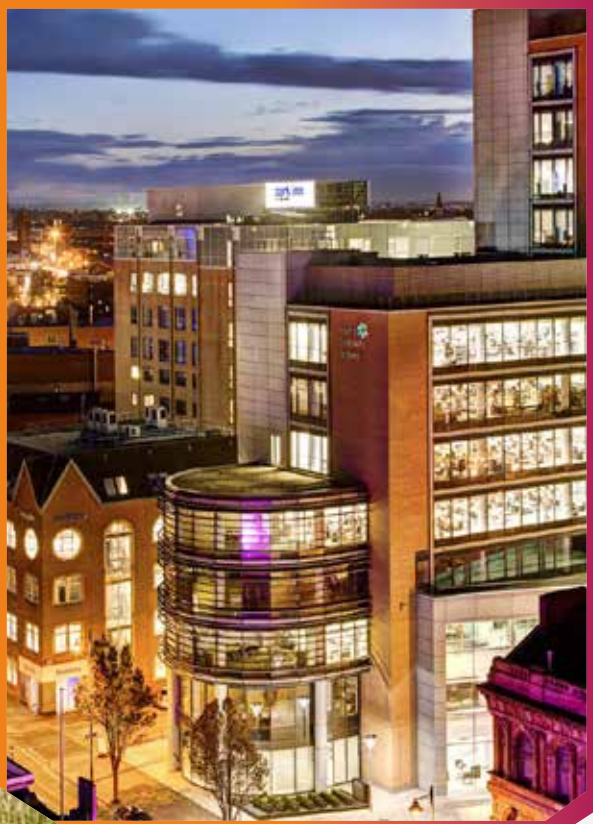
Advanced wireless infrastructure

World-class advanced wireless connectivity sits at the heart of Belfast Region's digital innovation ambition and in time will become the key enabling technology for many products, services and programmes.

5G will deliver a step change of ultrafast, low latency, reliable, mobile connectivity. It will also provide greater capacity to support ever-larger data requirements, as well as wide-ranging new applications that will positively impact different industry sectors such as connected healthcare and advanced manufacturing. It will create new opportunities for people, businesses and public services.

To support and accelerate the deployment of wireless infrastructure in Belfast, Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and smaller, new mobile entrants need access to real estate assets, such as building rooftops and street furniture, to install their mobile network equipment.

Establishing a Site-as-a-Service model will reduce barriers to deployment, encourage more timely investment in wireless connectivity by the private sector and help establish the Belfast Smart District as a national exemplar for innovation in connectivity.





Data foundations for innovation

Data is key to collaborative innovation and the success of Belfast's digital innovation ambitions. To foster a supportive environment for the effective use of data and data-driven technologies, the region needs to address key issues such as siloed approaches to data collection, management and access, as well as a shared approach to AI, ethics and privacy.

The development of two data foundations will create the basic infrastructures and organisational processes that need to be in place to drive a digital transformation in the city.

The **Citizen Office of Data Analytics** will support partners in engaging directly with the citizen/end user in the design, development and deployment of data-driven solutions. It will also build the capacity of citizens to engage in data and innovative technologies, and support capabilities in the co-creation and co-design of data-driven projects being delivered by industry, further and higher education and the public sector.

The Belfast **Urban Data Platform** will provide shared resources to enable industry, further and higher education and the public sector to generate, manage and analyse data in ways that spur collaboration and open innovation. By providing common standards, APIs, an open architecture and shared expertise and technologies, the platform will enhance data discovery, sharing and access amongst partners and facilitate greater collaborative innovation, research, deployment and delivery of services within the city region.

Digital twin

A digital twin is a fine-grain data model of a real-world physical object, process or service. They allow designers, engineers and planners to explore, design and monitor aspects of the real-world in a virtualised environment. By doing so they greatly reduce costs and risks and speed up the ability to test and experiment. The potential for such twins has grown rapidly over the past few years with the advent of low cost processing, AI, and IoT networks which together allow for the collection, manipulation and modelling of vast quantities of data.

The market for digital twins is growing rapidly as they become integrated into fields such as advanced manufacturing and the design of complex urban services such as mobility, health and energy management.

The Belfast region is well-placed to be at the forefront of research in the design and application of digital twins, with strengths in both local universities, and companies in emerging growth clusters that are in a position to exploit the technology.

A digital twin approach, underpinned by City Deal investment in advanced wireless connectivity (the basis for IoT networks), shared data infrastructure and the ability to develop ideas within the Smart District, provides researchers, industry and the public sector with a data-rich environment in which to explore innovative approaches.

Such twins have a specific role to play in the development and testing of mobility solutions as well as virtual testing of regulatory sandboxing, and the analysis of mobility and energy impacts of transportation systems.





Towards net zero carbon

A range of proposals have been identified across the region including an Energy District in Belfast and the Kilroot Energy Park in Carrickfergus. Building on the region's existing strengths in the energy sector, as well as world-class research by the local universities, hydrogen and cleantech are key areas for innovation and development.

Opportunities exist to develop industries and initiatives to help meet our net zero carbon targets such as in the emerging hydrogen economy that is ideally suited to Northern Ireland. The nexus of academic excellence, manufacturing knowledge and capacity, renewable energy provision, engaged public and private sector partners and a well linked ecosystem alongside clearly identified demands provides an ideal opportunity for economic development.

By investing in enabling infrastructure, as well as providing a supportive 'urban sandbox' environment, hydrogen demonstrator projects in Belfast and other key towns can be further exploited. The development of a digital twin approach for hydrogen will provide a simulated environment for virtual modelling of energy solutions.

Regional Innovation Hubs



The i4c Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks in Ballymena, led by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, will comprise of SME incubation labs and workshops, the iLAB (innovation laboratory) workshop and high-quality office accommodation including co-working space, supported by an environment to support open innovation, collaboration and economic growth.

The Mid and East Antrim Borough has existing strengths and assets in the cleantech sector and the iLAB facility will build on these, providing a fully staffed and equipped engineering-led 'industry makerspace' to support SME innovation activity. Likewise, the iLAB facility will include a cleantech demonstration space and training hub and will be the base for a Hydrogen Training Academy.

In addition to the i4c project, Ards & North Down Borough Council is developing proposals for the **Shed 1.0 project** which builds on the strong creative tech ecosystem for TV and film, games and sound production in the area. The hub will address the strong demand for accessible and flexible accommodation from growing firms in this sector to allow greater collaboration, access to expertise, equipment and technology and opportunities for growth. The plans include recording studios and mixing studios and presents new opportunities for a local skilled talent base working in partnership with the South Eastern Regional College (SERC).

Also, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is progressing initial plans alongside SERC for an **Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub** which will support a wide range of business development activities promoting growth, productivity and practical problem solving.

Furthermore, and building on the **Newry City Centre Regeneration project,** Newry, Mourne & Down District Council is progressing proposals around a digitally advanced space which stimulates innovation in core sectors such as creative.



Next steps

This document is an overview of the draft Digital Innovation programme which is part of the Belfast Region City Deal.

During summer 2021 City Deal partners will work with Northern Ireland and UK Government Departments to achieve programme approval and agreement of the BRCD Document.

Programme approval will allow the further development of Outline Business Cases to unlock the identified opportunities.

For more information on the Belfast Region City Deal visit:

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal

Or contact us

email: BRCD@belfastcity.gov.uk

call: 028 9027 0276





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Belfast City Council

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council

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

Queen's University Belfast

Ulster University

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Supporting Belfast's Digital Innovation Ambition**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Mark Gillan, Digital Innovation Commissioner Deborah Colville, City Innovation Manager Mark McCann, City Innovation programme lead

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To outline proposals for a Belfast Digital Innovation framework that seeks to unlock the power of digital innovation to support the city in its post-Covid recovery and longer-term plans. The framework will seek to maximise the combined impact of a series of planned initiatives and investments on the social, economic and environmental challenges facing the city over the next decade. Members are asked to approve the approach and agree to a number of temporary roles to support the work.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: 1. note the works strands on digital innovation in the city; 2. approve the recruitment of four temporary roles (three years) to support the further development of this work (an Advanced Wireless Infrastructure – Innovation Broker, Smart District Innovation Broker and two Innovation Challenge Fund managers); 3. note the rationale for a Belfast digital innovation framework and agree that proposals will be brought to the September Committee meeting; and 4. note that Mr. Mark Gillan has been appointed (via SIB) as the Interim Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner to replace Jayne Brady who will take up her new role as Head of the Civil Service on 1st September.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Over the past four years, the Council has been working with key institutions to develop a shared understanding of the importance of digital innovation to the future of the city and, more recently, seeking to build a common city level approach to maximise the opportunity that digital innovation represents in the post-Covid world.
3.2	This work began in 2017 with the Council's **Smart Belfast programme** developed in partnership with one of the UK Government's Catapults and local partners. Smart Belfast, which is managed by the Council's City Innovation team, has delivered a range of successful projects with industry, SMEs and our universities. Its core approach has been to clearly define shared urban 'challenges' and then create opportunities for business, academia and the public sector to collaborate and co-invest in developing innovative digital solutions, while at the same time generating opportunities for our local SMEs to develop ideas for new products and services. Over its life span Smart Belfast has delivered a diverse range of projects and attracted significant investments for the city and has been showcased at both a national and international level.
3.3	Earlier this year, the establishment of a new strategic partnership, **Innovation City Belfast** (ICB), which brings together the senior teams at Queen's University, Ulster University, Belfast Harbour, Invest NI and Catalyst, (has significantly increased the City's ambition in utilising digital innovation to transform our economy and tackle major societal challenges). The

	partnership is supported by the Digital Innovation Commissioner and a number of other jointly funded staff, along with the Council's City Innovation team.
3.4	ICB is committed to nurturing an urban environment in which industry, academia and the public sector can collaborate on urban challenges such as climate change, technological disruption and the health of our communities. The Covid-19 crisis has not only amplified these challenges and opportunities but has greatly accelerated the time scales against which they need to be addressed.
3.5	The Partnership has agreed to prioritise three interconnected place-based projects that will have a significant impact on our city and its economy across three geographical areas: 1. **The Innovation District** - a 400 acre area along Queen's Island and reaching over to the Ulster University Campus. This location act as a 'digital innovation economy multiplier' - an inclusive, mixed-use urban environment for research, innovation, entrepreneurialism and investment. ICB has recently appointed an **Innovation District Programme Director (Clare Guinness)** to take forward the phase 1 development of this district. 2. **The Smart Port** - With substantial investments in infrastructure and digital technologies, Belfast Harbour aims to become a Smart Port and Green Port, setting Belfast on the global stage with one of the world's best regional ports. 3. **The Smart District** – Mapping closely to the boundaries of the city centre, the Smart District will be the location where new digital and data technologies can be tested, trialled, scaled and deployed in a real urban setting. The concept is to encourage partners to work together to remove unnecessary barriers and bureaucracies, to create the supporting conditions in which communities, researchers, SMEs, innovators and public sector bodies can co-develop world-first novel solutions to real-world challenges. The Smart District's emphasis will be on bringing world-class innovation to bear on the critical priorities for our city, particularly those articulated in the city's Bolder Vision for the city centre and in our Climate Plan.
3.6	Within these districts, challenge-owners will have access to world-class connectivity, physical assets, data platforms, challenge funding, collaborative partnerships, and operate in a supportive sandbox environment in which new ideas can be explored. To further stimulate

innovation, we will develop a challenge programme that will incentivise local businesses and academia to collaborate with us on societal challenges to help transform the local economy. As the Districts grow they will become the showcase for the city's innovation ambition and become attractors for co-investment and funding.

3.7 To take forward the key elements of the work described above four three-year contracts are required:

Smart District Innovation Broker – This role will provide a programme approach to the development of the various strands of work within the smart district. This includes aligned of the co-creation and co design of the Smart Healthy Neighbourhood, Smart Mobility and Smart Energy projects as well as developing co-investment opportunities and leading bids to government funding schemes. The broker will also work to maximise the impact of Belfast Region City Deal digital and innovation investments on the city.

Advanced Wireless Infrastructure - Project Broker. This role will focus deployment of advanced wireless networks across the Districts and lead the development of a £30 million business case for submission to the Belfast Region City Deal Infrastructure Enabling Fund. The post holder will work with the mobile industry, city asset owners, and end-users to take forward the business case, and to establish a delivery vehicle to ensure that Belfast has world-class connectivity early in this decade.

Challenge Funds Managers (x2) – These roles will lead the development of challenges programmes and the business cases for drawdown from the £50 million Belfast Region City Deal. They will develop models for managing funds; lead the business case development; take recommendations and business cases through Council and the City Deal governance processes; and if successful in obtaining funds, initiate programmes to support delivery of the programmes.

Connected Places Catapult's Homes for Health Ageing

3.8 An early example of the 'attractor' role that the smart district is playing, even in its early stages, is Belfast's recent success in bidding to the **Connected Places Catapult's Homes for Health Ageing** programme. This £2.5 million programme will support a small number of innovative 'testbeds' that seek understand how scientists, engineers, and public policy leads can work more effectively with communities to develop technologies in the real-world setting of homes

	and neighbourhoods. In choosing our region, the Catapult was impressed with city's wider digital ambition and our long term plans for the smart district in particular.
3.9	A Northern Ireland consortium made up of Age NI, Belfast City Council, Connected Health Innovation Centre (CHIC), Market Development Association (MDA), Public Health Agency NI, Queen's University Belfast, The Health Innovation Research Alliance (HIRANI) and Ulster University is one of two UK partners selected for the programme, and has secured £50,000 for an initial scoping phase. Over the next two years, the NI consortium will explore and testbed innovative technologies to support people live longer in their homes and enjoy healthy, active lives as they age.
	Towards a new Belfast Digital Innovation ambition
3.10	As Members will note, the development of the Smart Belfast framework, the digital ambition of the Innovation City Belfast and the investments opportunities available within the Belfast Region City Deal, all took place in a pre-Covid policy environment. In the subsequent 16 months, the wider strategic environment has changed dramatically. The Covid crisis has both accelerated and highlighted a wide range of economic and urban policy issues facing the city. These range from the impact on the city's already underperforming economy, its impact on the future nature of the high street, through to Covid's implications for our approach to higher density urban living and travel modes.
3.11	Alongside this, a number of major policy pieces have been produced that have brought greater clarity to the city' challenges – including the Resilience Strategy, the Belfast climate plan, and the draft Bolder Vision for the city centre. And, at a regional and national level, the new 10X vision for the economy and the UK Innovation strategy, both have implications for our approach to digital innovation.
3.12	The new Digital Innovation Framework for Belfast will bring together the cities ambition and priorities for digital innovation and re-frame the Council's and the city's approach in the light of these new partnership initiatives and policy priorities. In particular, the revised framework would seek to ensure that the city maximises the positive impact of the planned Digital investments under City Deal to ensure they reflect the new priorities for the city.
3.13	Members are asked to note that this framework will be co-designed with Members and stakeholders over the coming four months – with initial proposals presented at the September Committee meeting.

	Financial and Resource Implications
3.14	Funding for the three (three-year) roles has already been identified within existing budgets, as follows: Smart District Innovation Broker – Smart Cities Budget Advanced Wireless Post – the Council's BRCD budget Challenge Fund Managers (x2) – the Council's BRCD budget
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.15	None.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None.

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission 'Reset for Growth' Report – Council Response**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To update Members on the final recommendations stemming from within the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission, `Reset for Growth' report and consider the Council's response.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4 May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: i. note the contents of the `Reset for Growth' report and its recommendations; ii. endorse the contents of the `Reset for Growth' report; iii. note the associated implementation plan; and iv. note the proposed expenditure of £25,000 from existing departmental provision for research to assist with the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission was set up to support the Council and city partners in the further development and implementation of the priorities as set out in the Belfast Agenda. A particular focus has been given to the priorities of (1) growing the economy and (2) city development. The Commission will seek to deliver the core objective of inclusive growth.
3.2	Regular reports on the work of the Commission have been brought to this Committee and to party group leaders, with Members regularly attending meetings of the Commission.
3.3	The Commission is made up of Independent, Authoritative, and knowledgeable voices from a range of relevant backgrounds. Brought together to develop constructive, deliverable and challenging proposals that are focused on delivering radical change to Belfast and Northern Ireland's long-standing challenges in areas including: - Lack of productivity - Economic inactivity - High levels of deprivation, and - Poor health
3.4	The commission is unique in that its independent and is viewing these challenges in the round, recognising the interrelated nature of the causes and effects.
3.5	It was initially envisaged that the Commission would be convened for one year. However, as COVID-19 took hold the Commissioners thought it was appropriate that it considered how it could be used as a potential recovery mechanism.
3.6	Commissioners seen the significant impact of the pandemic in terms of: - Increasing unemployment, - Increasing deprivation and social isolation, and - accelerating decline in some critical industries, such as retail, tourism and hospitality and noted that Belfast and Northern Ireland's prolonged structural weaknesses mean these impacts are likely to be concentrated and longer lasting.
3.7	Because of the impacts of Covid-19, and the presence of some strategic funding opportunities including Levelling UP, the Comprehensive Spending review and the Belfast

	Region City Deal. The Commissioners concluded that Belfast and Northern Ireland stood at an inflexion point. A point where if the long running structural weaknesses were not addressed it is likely that the standard of living for the people of Belfast and Northern Ireland could be eroded further.
3.8	The `Reset for Growth' report was launched by the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission on 28th June 2021. A copy of the report is attached
3.9	The report focused on five areas that were informed by Belfast and Northern Irelands structural weaknesses. These proposals are aimed at delivering the Commissions overarching aim of: `*An inclusive sustainable, open and resilient city economy that functions effectively and provides good employment opportunities for its residents and others'*
3.10	Under each of these strands were a series of ambitious proposals that recognised some of the underpinning challenges that have contributed to the structural weaknesses. These areas of focus, the proposals and the underpinning rationale are listed below. <u>Renewed Future City</u> - More than 8,000 households in housing stress - Lack of residential development in Belfast with only 3,700 units completed in the last five years - Lack of city centre population - **Target of 11,500 sustainable homes to be built in 10 years, creating new sustainable communities** <u>Sustainable Future</u> - Belfast will use up its carbon budget by 2030 - Reliance on fossil fuels exposes are most vulnerable communities to high levels of population and energy price volatility resulting in 1 in 6 families in Belfast living in fuel poverty - **Implement a carbon reduction programme in the city to reduce carbon emission by 66 % by 2025** - **To do this commence delivery of housing retrofit programme that will impact on our emissions and provide inclusive jobs**

	- **To ensure that Belfast and Northern Ireland businesses and residents benefit from the economic opportunity of the transition to net zero, provide funding and a strategy for developing green businesses and jobs** <u>Intelligent Future</u> - Current levels of investment are £300m less annually than other UK regions - Lack of digital catapult - Despite this strong performance in attracting FDi - For every £1 of public money invested in R & D and return on investment of £7 - **Secure the commitment to a digital catapult and £300m of annual ringfenced R and D funding** <u>Global Belfast</u> - Strong FDI record - Strong networks globally - Diaspora - Existing relationships Boston & China - **Maximise unique opportunities from Northern Ireland's unrestricted access to two markets and regulatory environments by growing the share of exports as percentage of GDP from the current level of 23% to 50% by 2025, similar to comparable economies.** - **Develop and agree with partners a city to city trade and investment strategic action plan by 2022.** <u>Inclusive Futures</u> - Changes in labour market - Displacement as a result of Covid – 19 - Lack of skills in critical areas - Growth in green and digital sectors - **Create a comprehensive programme of inclusive pathways to new growth areas**
3.11	The proposals above do not recognise all of the recommendations contained in the report, each of the core proposals articulated above are supported by a range of steps to accelerate the delivery of these ambitious goals. The Commission also identified several foundation pillars which are listed below.

	- Investment in education and skills to drive attainment and address economic imbalances and deprivation, and power economic growth and innovation - Place-based multi-annual financing model supported by a more agile and risk-based approach to decision making - Pursuing and inclusive growth agenda to ensure that economic benefits and success accrue to all residents
3.12	These recommendations are closely aligned to several council policies and current initiatives, including: - Bolder Vision - SSA/Housing Regeneration - City Centre Living - BCRIS - City Imagining Strategy - The Belfast Resilience Strategy
3.13	Given this alignment officers would recommend the formal endorsement of the recommendations contained within the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission report, `Reset for Growth'.
	Next Steps
3.14	Commission members were acutely aware that their proposals are far-reaching and involve system-wide change. They recognised that, while their proposals are borne of their collective experiences in other cities and places, they also recognise they cannot simply be transplanted into Belfast. For that reason, the Commission have suggested that implementation is co-ordinated through lead departments and agencies. These lead departments and agencies will convene small groups of senior officials and stakeholders to bring forward these proposals. In terms of governance regular updates on progress will be of course brough back to committee.
3.15	During the implementation phase there is a need to undertake research to develop work programmes related to implementation. This work as a value of £25,000 and would be drawn from the existing Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission budget. The work involved includes:

	- Developing projects and policies to deliver the Innovation City Belfast ambitions specifically around ensuring jobs in growth sectors are inclusive and open to all residents of Belfast. - Assessing the economic, environmental and social benefits associated with the delivery of the IIGC's recommendations.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.16	Note the £25,000 funding request for research into the implementation of the `Reset for Growth' report drawn from existing departmental budgets. This funding will be combined with partner contributions. This research will be used to educate departmental engagement and submissions.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.17	There are no equality or good relations requirements related to this activity.
4.0	**Document Attached**
	`Reset for Growth' A report by the Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission

Reset for Growth

A report by the Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission



Contents

Foreword	1
Executive summary	2
Manifesto for action	5
Context	6
Renewed Future City	8
Sustainable Future	14
Intelligent Future	20
Global Future	26
Inclusive Growth	29
Final recommendations	30
What happens next	36
Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission members	39



Sir Michael Lyons



Foreword

Welcome to "Reset for Growth", a report by the Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission.

The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission was established and resourced by Belfast City Council to build on the Belfast Agenda and to identify actions to advance its objective of inclusive growth. We were charged with taking an independent view of the challenges and opportunities facing the city, the surrounding region and Northern Ireland as a whole. The challenges have been magnified over the duration of our work, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's departure from the EU, but we have also identified new opportunities.

The Commission draws together a range of individuals who hold influential positions in key Belfast institutions, both public and private. To these are added a small number of authoritative voices who bring experience and understanding from elsewhere. We are confident that together this enables us to be challenging but also sensitive to local circumstances. We are clear that our conclusions need to be tested by those who govern the city and Northern Ireland, as well as those in the UK who control the wider policy context, exchequer funding and international relations.

We also want them to be sense checked by local people and have laid the foundations of a public engagement exercise for that purpose.

We have been working together for nearly two years taking evidence from local, national and international witnesses; drawing on our own experience and understanding and engaging with representatives of Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Executive, UK government and laterally, the Shared Island Unit. Our work has been extended and complicated by COVID-19, but we hope our conclusions may be the richer for that.

Throughout our work together, we have been driven by a series of overriding concerns. We share a common commitment to the objective of inclusive growth - growth that reduces the gaps between the living standards of local residents rather than increasing them. We know that far too often this ambition is jettisoned in any push for growth or prosperity. We acknowledge the inevitable tension between the search for growth and the now pressing need to put environmental concerns to the fore and have emphasised actions which seem able to meet both objectives. We have tried to maintain a collective optimism whilst avoiding bland assurance that "things will work out", so we have given greater weight to the opportunities we identify as opposed to the risks, which are clear for all to see. We have nonetheless tried to avoid the temptation to "big up" recent successes and good work in progress; intent instead on painting a picture of Belfast and its surrounding region which will be recognised by those who live and work here. We sincerely believe that Belfast's trading and maritime history coupled with its unique geo-political location are assets for the future.

We set out to ensure that our conclusions would take the form of a series of proposals for action by government bodies (local, NI wide and UK) and other agencies and organisations, both private and public. Finally, we have been intent on avoiding the "revolving door" of public policy discussion whereby reports replace each other with new jargon and objectives, often without any real impact on our lives. Our work builds on the still robust objectives of the Belfast Agenda and tries to offer a route map for some of the steps that need to be taken.

We have organised our conclusions in four clear sections or "pillars" with one over-riding strand running through - that is the importance of skills, education and training to both inclusive growth and innovation. Perhaps more than any other area of our work, this holds the key to early success and the building of a future in which all residents - including those making a home here for the first time - share a stake. Each pillar incorporates a number of key propositions for action and these are supplemented by a series of specific proposals which, we feel, will accelerate delivery.

We don't have a crystal ball so, like our readers, we can only discern the future through past and current experiences. We have spent much time reflecting on the future role of cities like Belfast and recognise new challenges as behaviours change in response to the impact of the pandemic and the impact of digital technology. We are confident that Belfast remains critical to the future health and prosperity not only of Northern Ireland but also the UK. That needs to be reflected in public policy and government expenditures. But the city and its people can do much for themselves. You can reach out to learn and collaborate with other cities and model your city on successes across the world. You can also take advantage of your compact scale to test initiatives, especially in reducing carbon use, which will be emulated by others.

Bold leadership will be essential and the City Council is in a unique position to provide that, working with local residents, government and key agencies to ensure progress on this action plan. The Commission itself demonstrates the desire and ability of local agencies, public and private, to work together, making full use of their energies, resources and connections to pursue a shared agenda. There is much to build on.

In closing, let me add a note of acknowledgment and thanks: to Suzanne Wylie and Grainia Long for recruiting the Commission members and helping us shape our initial discussions and enquiries; to John Greer, Lynsey Cameron and others for supporting our work and drafting the final report. The conclusions are our responsibility.

Belfast Harbour · Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry · Invest Northern Ireland · Housing Executive · CBI The Voice of Business · Belfast City Council · EY · Ulster University · Queen's University Belfast · RSA · World Economic Forum · The English Cities Fund · Northern Ireland Electricity Networks

Front cover Ulster University researcher photo credit to Paul Carlin

Executive summary

Over the past two decades, Belfast has worked hard to reinvent itself, creating a growing knowledge economy and changing perceptions associated with long-running social tensions. Despite this, it has continued to lag behind on competitiveness and has not adequately addressed disadvantage and exclusion, issues which have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

This Commission is concerned that Belfast, as a key part of the region's economy, is at a tipping point. We consider that there is an urgent need to press the reset button on how the city should develop in the next ten years. We are recommending a strongly interventionist, highly-focused and radical approach, which will require new ways of working and innovative investment models between the city, its agencies and across all levels of government.

The Commission is clear about the city's attributes. Our view is that these need to be built on and rapidly scaled. Examples include the world-class research in disciplines such as clinical health, bio-medicine and data analytics as well as global, sectoral specialisms in fields such as Cyber Security, Financial Technology, Aeronautics and Renewables. Underpinning the sectoral growth is a highly talented workforce, driven by the local universities and colleges.

However, the Commission sees a fragility in the city's economy across a number of areas. There are limitations on the numbers of highly skilled people, gaps in innovation capability, a lack of a coherent and funded plan to address the climate emergency, a highly impacted city core as a result of COVID-19 and a reticence to grasp the trading opportunity created from access to two close markets.

A very strong theme that runs through this report is the moral and economic responsibility to turn around the fact that much of growth achieved in the past 20 years was not felt equally by all residents, leaving levels of poverty and income inequality still stubbornly high.

The Commission took evidence from many local and world leading experts and stakeholders. This enabled members not only to understand the uniqueness of the NI context and the specific challenges and opportunities that exist, but also to present a manifesto for change which, if adopted, led, financed and delivered, will create a huge step change in prosperity across all of the region, whilst at the same time driving down inequality and exclusion.

We recognise that we are not starting from scratch. The government, the city and its businesses and anchor institutions have many policies, initiatives, and investments underway which can support this challenge to press the reset button. Our recommendations can help in the delivery of the Northern Ireland Executive's Strategies including 10X (the new economic vision which focuses on innovation with a view to delivering a ten times better economy with benefits for all), skills, energy and housing as well as the Programme for Government, and will generate ideas for access to levelling up programmers and other UK funds.

They will also help to accelerate the impact of the Belfast Region City Deal investments, the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, the city's Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, the joint 'Bolder Vision' for a re-imagined city centre, the Inclusive Growth Charter, the ambitions of the newly-formed partnership known as Innovation City Belfast and many more.

However, our recommendations go further. They pick up on gaps such as development of clean tech clusters and also present a number of actions which would not only kick start this step change but solve multiple problems at once, such as city centre house building at scale and housing retrofit. The focus on making Belfast a globally significant innovation hub in key sectors is a very deliberate city read out of 10X, alongside building skills pathways into these jobs. The Commission members all felt very strongly that the city needs to play a significant part in seeking out and landing the advantages of NI's geo-political positioning and trading advantages and should increasingly see itself on a global stage.

The ambition of this Commission is to leave Belfast and Northern Ireland PLC with a set of deliverable recommendations which can be implemented at pace and which will not only secure the city's future viability but ensure it performs as a thriving, sustainable, inclusive, innovative global city, sitting at the heart of a successful and more equitable future for the people of NI.

We have therefore focused on the following pillars for action:

Renewed Future City: more accessible, liveable and multifunctional, with a focus on building homes in the city core and reimagining space and transport.

Sustainable Future: immediate action to bring down carbon emissions, starting with energy efficient homes, decarbonising transport and growing clean tech.

Intelligent Future: creating globally significant innovative growth clusters, capability and talent.

Global Future: capitalising on trading advantages; building strong global co-operation frameworks.

A more detailed summary of the four key pillars is set out on the following pages.

Each of these four pillars is also underpinned by an inclusive growth agenda, with inbuilt expectations of addressing disadvantage and inequality, for example through innovative skills pathways, addressing housing stress and focusing on a just carbon transition.

Delivery will depend on the ability of those holding the purse strings to plan in multi-year cycles and to recognise the role of place-based delivery and a willingness on the part of leaders across the city and the Executive to drive these recommendations forward.

The Commission's wish after spending two years developing this framework, is that the local and regional leadership sees the very present risks to future prosperity and inequalities, magnified by COVID-19, and that they have the foresight to recognise that, at this particular point in time, there is a unique opportunity and an urgent need to work together and reset for growth by driving this very focused set of recommendations forward now. Belfast City Council is committed to taking a lead role in convening our city partners around this shared agenda.

Ultimately the collective delivery of these proposals for action can, in our view, close the long-standing chasm between high level policy and ambition and delivery on the ground in a way which will underpin wider regional growth and re-balancing.

Renewed Future City

Prior to the global pandemic, Belfast had successfully re-positioned itself as a global hub of Foreign Direct Investment and had seen a resurgence in real estate transactions. But, like many cities, the impact of Covid-19 and the associated acceleration of trends such as home working and online shopping has shaken the foundation of the city, resulting in an 80% reduction in footfall.

For regions to prosper they require vibrant, prosperous cities that act as hubs for innovation, creativity, culture, and people. In Northern Ireland's case, Belfast, as the regional capital, needs to create a re-imagined, liveable and



resurgent city core that provides unique experiences to attract visitors and welcome additional residents. If we don't take action to address this, the city and the region's economic resilience will be fundamentally weakened.

In most successful urban areas, residential development is a core element of the mix. People living in city centres bring vibrancy to the place and support the local business base. As debates continue around how city centres can bounce back from the challenges brought about by the pandemic, it is essential that efforts in Belfast are focused on bringing forward residential schemes of quality in the city centre. While much of this will come from the private sector, a generation of new social and affordable homes is also required to meet existing housing needs and address housing stress. The move away from a traditional model of retail-focused city centres, while underway for some time, has been massively accelerated by the impact of COVID-19. Belfast must bring forward a vision for a renewed, mixed-use city centre, and public bodies must engage actively with the market and with investment partners in this work. In doing so, consideration needs to be given to powers and levers at the city's disposal.

There will be a need for a more radical re-think on issues such as the agility of the planning system in supporting development and ensuring those developments are smart and sustainable and address relevant social issues. To enable this bolder thinking, policies are required in the areas of transport and public realm that enable lands to be re-purposed to make healthy, urban communities. This will require mature public-private collaboration to bring forward major private sector-led regeneration schemes that have the potential to deliver significant economic benefits and support inclusive growth.

Our key propositions:

1. Create sustainable, vibrant communities in the city centre, delivering 11,500 new homes by 2035
2. Create a connected and animated core city centre through the delivery of key commitments in the Bolder Vision Connectivity Strategy by 2026

Sustainable Future

Belfast, like all global cities, faces challenges associated with climate change. While there has been some progress, Belfast remains reliant on fossil fuels to heat its buildings, power its transport, and move people, goods, and services around the city. That reliance makes Belfast's most vulnerable communities exposed to high levels of pollution and volatility in energy markets that result in one in six Belfast residents living in fuel poverty.

Over the last few years, the discussion on city development has been



reframed, placing resilience and emissions reductions at the heart of the debate. The city's new climate plan sets out a Net Zero Emissions roadmap which has demonstrated that rapid decarbonisation and energy independence offer significant benefits to the city.

Focusing on sustainable growth can not only support economic and environmental goals, it can help address some of the deep-rooted social challenges such as improving health outcomes and addressing fuel poverty in many of the city's neighbourhoods.

The Commission endorses the need for investment at scale in a retrofitting programme across public and private housing stock, working in close partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

We note the ongoing engagement around a significant investment in upskilling and re-skilling to provide this solution and we believe that this proposition can not only help meet the carbon reduction targets, but also provide skilled employment opportunities in a challenging labour market.

This report identifies the need for the city to look closely at new financing and investment models and to bring these forward as a matter of urgency. Public partners need to explore and implement new ways of working if the investment required is to come forward.

In our view, Belfast has a unique opportunity to position a significant housing building programme at the heart of its economic recovery plans. The Commission sees this investment in housing stock as having the potential to address a number of economic and social problems.

Our key propositions:

1. Implement a rapid carbon reduction programme at city level, securing a 66% drop in carbon emissions by 2025
2. Develop a comprehensive strategy for green tech support and investment that aims to deliver five major foreign direct investments by 2025 and 100% growth in the value of sales from our indigenous green tech sector

Intelligent Future

Belfast is a city of creators and inventors. Innovation is in the DNA. The city is home to a vibrant and engaged community of SMEs, researchers, corporations, and start-ups and is the location for academic and research centres of excellence, set alongside dynamic indigenous companies and a strong support ecosystem. These ingredients combine to make Belfast a great place to nurture new ideas, to grow a business, to solve urban challenges, and to impress the world.

Over the next decade, innovative technologies are going to have profound impacts on our economy and on society. With Belfast's proud history of research excellence, its vibrant community of innovators and start-ups and significant investment on the horizon through the Belfast Region City Deal, the city is perfectly positioned to make the most of opportunities presented by innovation - not least by creating more and better jobs and improving the quality of life.



But the jigsaw is not yet complete. There are critical infrastructure gaps that, if addressed, could ensure delivery of the city's ambitions in this regard. These include interventions such as catapults and additional centres of excellence to mirror and support key business clusters. Likewise, there is a need to extend the scope of innovation. Belfast is a micro-business economy and it is essential that we drive more innovation-focused businesses that can grow and scale, contributing to city vibrancy and creating a solid foundation across not just the growth sectors, but also the wider business base.

New partnership structures such as Innovation City Belfast appear to be making good progress in building strong coalitions to focus on priority areas and drive delivery. This coherent narrative will be critical if the city is to maximise emerging investment opportunities such as the imminent CSR round and future Innovation Strategy funds.

The Commission recognises the strength of talent generated through the local universities and colleges. However, we are aware of emerging skills challenges in some sectors and suggest that there is a need for deeper academic-business engagement to service this growth and ensure the resilience and further development of these sectors - given their importance to city competitiveness. Likewise, the Commission is clear that there needs to be a strong commitment to inclusive innovation, widening access to participation by creating new pathways and extending the talent pool.

Our key propositions:

1. Secure commitments to investment in critical research and digital infrastructure that delivers a Northern Ireland Digital Catapult Centre and £300m of annual ring-fenced research and development funding by 2025
2. Deliver a unique innovation environment which enables key business clusters of global significance to thrive and deliver a decade of innovation, creating over 5,000 new entrepreneurs by 2025 and quadrupling the number of start-ups that survive and scale

Global Future

Belfast has a strong global brand and an extensive diaspora network. It has made significant progress as an investment location in key sectors in recent years and benefits from a unique strategic geographical location that offers the potential for further growth.

Yet the Commission feels that there is still work to do. For us, the key issue is the need to work collaboratively, taking a more strategic approach to exploring and developing market opportunities, building strategic networks and relationships and developing viable investment propositions to bring to market.



There is an increasing recognition of the power of place across government. New governance constructs developed to deliver City and Growth Deals as well as emerging partnership structures such as Innovation City Belfast demonstrate the value of place-based interventions. The Commission is of the view that the Northern Ireland Executive needs to consider how such partnerships can be commissioned to work alongside existing structures and bodies in the development and delivery of strategic economic growth interventions.

International city to city linkages can play a key role in creating the conditions for strong investment and trading relationships. Belfast has long-standing city partnerships in China and the USA. These links have already resulted in exchanges between the cities, universities and businesses and there are further opportunities to drill deeper. Likewise, while there is some engagement in networks such as Core Cities UK, opportunities exist to learn from and exchange practice across a range of key global networks such as the Global Covenant of Mayors and Urban 20. Closer to home, through our engagement with businesses, we consistently heard of the need for the city to capitalise on linkages with Dublin and London. The development of the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor presents significant opportunities to bring forward sector propositions of scale as well as collective investment proposals in key areas of research and innovation. In keeping with experience from successful economic corridor models elsewhere, this will require an appropriate governance and resourcing framework.

A critical point at this juncture is that the changing economic landscape arising from the UK's exit from the European Union will have material consequences for Northern Ireland. It is imperative that measures are put in place to maintain close trading relationships and maximise the opportunities arising from the region's unique trading position post Brexit.

Our key propositions:

1. Maximise unique opportunities from Northern Ireland's unrestricted access to two markets and regulatory environments by growing the share of exports as a percentage of GDP from the current level of 23% to 50% by 2025, similar to comparable economies
2. Develop and agree with partners a city to city trade and investment strategic action plan by 2022

Manifesto for action



Renewed Future City

Our key propositions:

1. Create sustainable, vibrant communities in the city centre, delivering 11,500 new homes by 2035
2. Create a connected and animated core city centre through the delivery of key commitments in the Bolder Vision Connectivity Strategy by 2026



Sustainable Future

Our key propositions:

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2. Develop a comprehensive strategy for green tech support and investment that aims to deliver five major foreign direct investments by 2025 and 100% growth in the value of sales from our indigenous green tech sector

Our ambition statement

An inclusive, sustainable, open and resilient city economy that functions effectively and provides good employment opportunities for its residents and others



Global Future

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2. Deliver a unique innovation environment which enables key business clusters of global significance to thrive and deliver a decade of innovation, creating over 5,000 new entrepreneurs by 2025 and quadrupling the number of start-ups that survive and scale

Our foundation pillars

Investment in education and skills to drive attainment, address economic imbalances and deprivation, and power economic growth and innovation

Place-based, multi-annual financing model supported by a more agile and risk-based approach to decision-making

Pursuing an inclusive growth agenda to ensure that economic benefits and success accrue to all residents

Context

Prior to the pandemic, Northern Ireland was on a positive economic trajectory. National and international visitor numbers were on the up and foreign direct investment (FDI) was generating significant employment opportunities across a range of tech sectors and professional services in particular.

But change in Belfast and Northern Ireland, like everywhere, has been constant. In the early part of the twentieth century, Belfast was recognised as one of the leading industrial cities in the UK. A combination of declining industries, global competition and a long running socio-political conflict impacted negatively on the regional economy and embedded structural weaknesses that have been so hard to shift.

Those structural economic weaknesses have included low productivity, low levels of entrepreneurial activity, low wages, low educational attainment for some parts of society and lower levels of economic activity than all other UK regions. Not surprisingly, these economic challenges have had knock-on effects on society in Belfast, including high levels of deprivation, poor health, low life expectancy, low social mobility and poor community cohesion relative to most other parts of Northern Ireland and to the UK as a whole.

Whilst poor economic performance has contributed to these societal challenges, it's clear to commissioners that it's impossible to disentangle the relationship between the legacy of the 'Troubles', the relatively lower levels of economic opportunity and other societal impacts that have persisted in the Belfast City Region and Northern Ireland.

However, in understanding the influence and interplay between the economic, environmental, and societal factors, the Commission sees an opportunity for the deployment of strategic interventions that have the potential to address these inter-related factors at scale.

Our report is a call to action, focusing on using this opportunity to reset for growth. It acknowledges these weaknesses and introduces a series of practical solutions for change that will require focus, courage and ambition to deliver. We feel that these investments are critical to move on from the status quo.

Research suggests that those areas that were economically fragile before the pandemic have been, and will be most severely impacted by it. For Belfast and Northern Ireland, the risks are significant:

- Residents, particularly young people, will move further from the labour market, increasing levels of economic inactivity
- Social mobility will decrease, causing further social division in already divided communities
- Health amongst deprived communities will suffer
- The gap in educational attainment across the population will grow

This simply cannot be allowed to happen. Current and future governments and public bodies would never be forgiven if they did not intervene and put measures in place to mitigate against this.

These impacts, if realised, will further impact on Northern Ireland's competitiveness, which has consistently lagged other regions and continued to erode as other countries have improved and outpaced Northern Ireland. In 2020, the UUEPC Competitiveness Scorecard suggested Northern Ireland was behind 59% of OECD/European comparator regions and would be behind 61% of those regions by 2030 - and that pre-dated the impact of COVID-19.

Improvements can only come about if partners across the public and private sector work together to create the right conditions for growth and commit to system-wide change. There are some positive models emerging, in particular through the Belfast Region City Deal, where partners across the public and private sectors have designed interventions to support inclusive economic growth.

The Commission considers that the time for incremental change has passed. What is needed now is a much more radical approach to change, moving faster and deeper. We consider that there is a need to reset and reframe the conversation, coalescing partners around a shared agenda for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Despite the deep-rooted economic and societal challenges, the Commission is struck by the unique assets of this place:

- One of the youngest populations in Europe: 53% under the age of 40
- A growing global reputation in areas including Cyber Security, MedTech and FinTech
- World class universities with strong industry engagement, creating a solid talent pipeline
- Established economic corridors with London and Dublin and global relationships including the United States and China
- Dual market access providing a trade gateway to GB/Europe
- £1 billion of investment into the economy via the Belfast Region City Deal
- Availability of development land and the existence of a single public sector landlord, at scale, along with excellent housing delivery partners
- Local partners with assets, resources and buying power working in deep partnership to deliver social and economic improvements
- Growing private/public sector approaches to investment

Through its combined experience, the Commission believes these attributes, if harnessed and allied with innovative policy interventions and public and private investment, could support a financially-efficient, jobs-led recovery.



Renewed Future City

Where are we now?

Belfast's re-positioning as a global hub for Foreign Direct Investment and a more recent bounce in the real estate market has strengthened the city's investment prospectus.

This has helped create a vibrant city core, with a stronger than average focus on independent retail and hospitality alongside a partly-revived waterfront.

However, COVID-19 has rocked the foundations of this renewal. Formerly the beating heart of the city, its workplaces, leisure spaces and cultural assets have become deserted as a result of the pandemic. With footfall levels falling back by more than 80% from previous numbers, there is a need to radically re-think the form, function and structure of the city centre.

None of this can happen without a focused investment plan. The High Street Task Force has been established as a collective forum for government and business engagement on how best to respond to the economic and social challenges facing town and city centres across Northern Ireland. The Task Force has no access to new resources and, by its own admission, is a long-term project.

Belfast and its city centre need immediate commitments and actions focusing on issues such as transport, environment and infrastructure, with consideration given to wider issues such as rating policy and planning.

Many of these developments are in train - but without any apparent immediacy or change of focus since the pandemic.

While COVID-19 has shone the spotlight on many of these issues and flagged the need for immediate actions, it is important too that the policy response to the pandemic is separated from the longer-term need to acknowledge the role of cities as economic drivers. Belfast supports more than 30% of employment across the region and drives regional productivity levels through higher value jobs which require agglomeration and co-location.

One of the unique factors in Belfast city centre is its very limited residential population. Estimates suggest that the city centre has a population of just over 9,000 people. In our experience, city centre residents provide vibrancy and round-the-clock presence. They work and live in the city and their spending power contributes to the local economy. Scaling up and bringing forward new mixed tenure city centre residential developments must be at the core of the new city centre vision.

The housing issue goes beyond the city centre. With significant levels of housing stress and a stated commitment to growth of the city's population by 66,000 by 2035, its clear that housing development needs to sit at the core of the city's renewal plans. The provision, quality and affordability of housing is key ingredient to a city's attractiveness as well as offering a significant economic benefit.

Development at scale in the past two decades in Belfast has overwhelmingly been in commercial real estate. Residential development has been much slower, particularly following the financial crash in 2008. However there is now significant demand in the city, leading to housing stress. This points to the need for a radical re-think of investment models, involving both the public and private sectors.



Housing

What needs to be done?

Like all cities, Belfast has many problems to solve in this decade. Economic recovery from COVID-19, reducing poverty and income inequality, tackling persistent health challenges, resolving housing need and reducing our dependency on carbon. This Commission believes that well planned sustainable urban development can enable the city to respond to several challenges at once.

We consider that the policy position, as articulated through the Belfast Agenda, remains sound. It focuses on a number of key areas to drive city renewal including:

- **Growing the population of the city by 66,000 additional people**
- **Meeting an associated need of 31,600 new homes**
- **Supporting 46,000 additional jobs by 2035**

However, our view is that the levers required to action these commitments at the pace and scale necessary to make an impact on these ambitions are not currently in place. We see a number of key gaps, principally in terms of the structural models required to support public-private collaboration and access to finance to bring forward developments.

We propose the establishment of a number of new institutions, namely a Strategic Land Partnerships and Housing Investment Funds.

	Strategic Land Partnerships	Housing Investment Funds
What is it?	The purpose of strategic land partnerships across the public sector will be to identify physical assets suitable for assembly into investable propositions of scale for housing or other development purposes	Housing Investment Funds will be dedicated funds that provide financing through a range of innovative vehicles aimed specifically at bringing forward housing development at pace
How will it work?	Strategic Land Partnerships will bring together public and statutory bodies to make more effective use of public lands, providing a stable, sustainable supply of land for housing or other development types, in line with strategic ambitions	These vehicles will address market challenges related to risk and yield that have historically acted as a barrier to investment in housing in Belfast and Northern Ireland, they will work by de-risking investment
Who needs to be involved?	Relevant public sector organisations including Department for Communities, Belfast City Council (for Belfast investment projects), Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Department of Finance as well as other major public sector land owners and private sector as appropriate	Partners to include local councils and other public sector land owners and private sector as appropriate
What advantages would it have?	Simplified governance and management process to release land for agreed uses, supporting delivery of strategic ambitions relating to housing and economic growth	It would provide assurances to the market to support the delivery of city and regional ambitions and would potentially lever additional resources for investment

Given the overwhelming focus on commercial property development in recent years, it is unsurprising that there are relatively few recent examples of new funding models to boost housing supply. The Commission notes with interest the recent announcement by the Minister for Communities to reform the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, establishing a new funding model that would enable borrowing for investment in existing stock and new build. This is a timely step, with a target date of 2025, albeit some way off, given the scale of need for new social and affordable housing across the city.

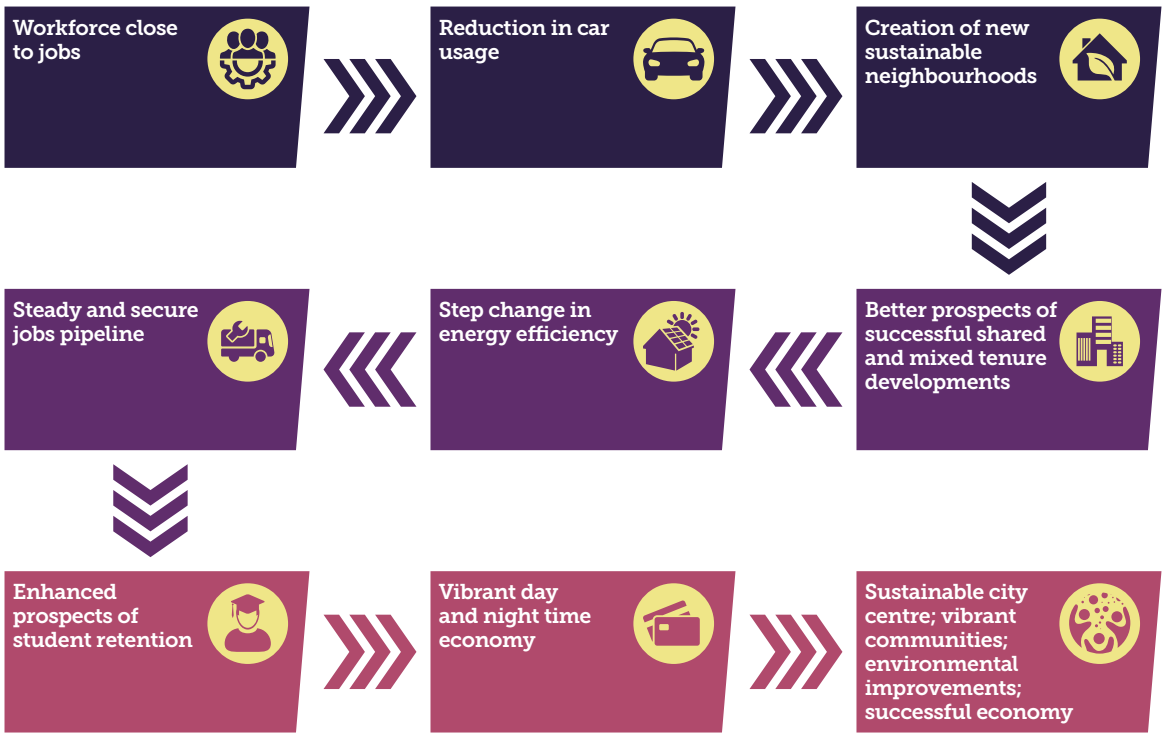
It is also positive to note that the Department for Communities is developing a Housing Supply Strategy aimed at bringing forward institutional, regulatory and policy change. It is critical however that this ambition will be matched with appropriate levels of funding and policy changes to deliver significant impact.

However, we feel that the scale of the task will require further intervention, particularly in stimulating private sector development, including affordable housing provision. For this reason, we are also suggesting that the regional government and the Treasury should consider developing a Housing Investment Fund. This model has been successful in stimulating new housing construction at scale across a range of classes in many UK cities.



A planned and strategic approach to new housing development is critical to ensuring that the city can both address the existing needs of those currently living in the city, those in housing stress and those wanting to move into the city. This Commission believes that, by making social and affordable housing a cornerstone of its economic strategy, Belfast could re-energise the city centre and establish a new generation of young people growing up in the city.

A housebuilding programme of scale can have multiple benefits as illustrated here:



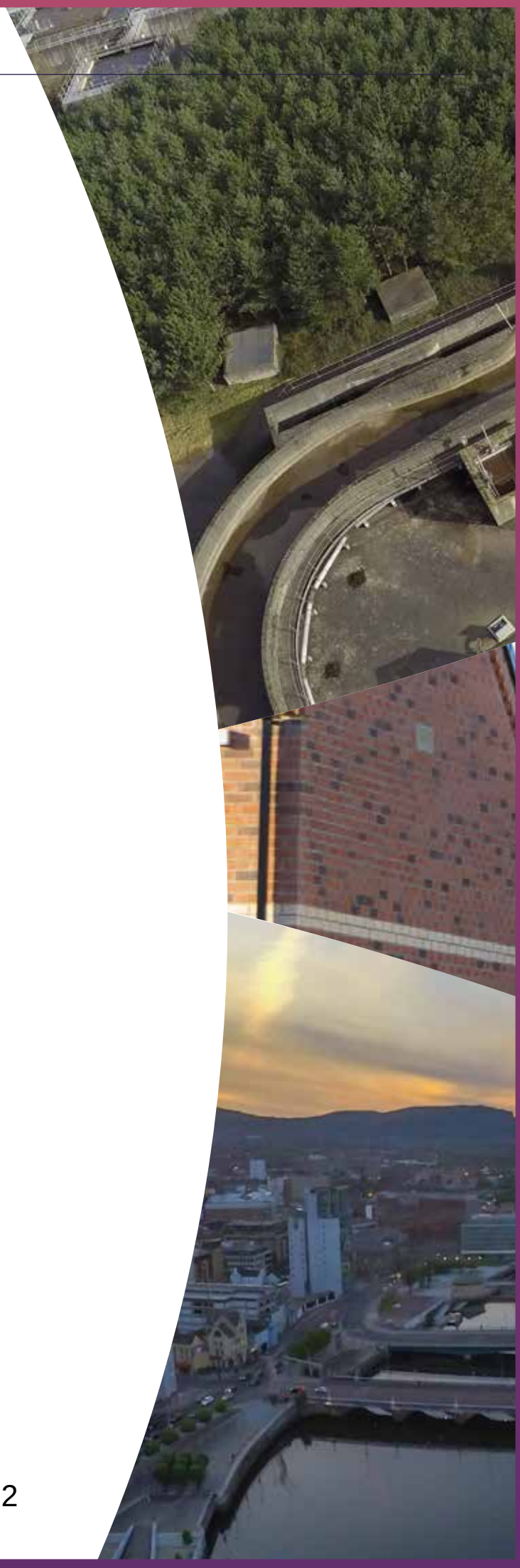
Reimagining the city core

While the economy is clearly volatile at present, we suggest that the time is now right for public sector partners to step up with vision and a willingness to look at things differently. This will require a focused approach on the city centre, given the depth of change that has been accelerated as a result of COVID-19. While the drive to increase the residential population will undoubtedly be at its core, this new place-shaping approach must incorporate a re-modelled, experience-based retail, leisure and hospitality offer alongside modern workplaces and investment in public transport and quality open and green space. The commitment by government partners to *A Bolder Vision* is welcomed: the vision now needs to be supported by appropriate policy levers and adequate levels of investment to bring forward the scale of change required.

Across the city, there is a need to look beyond the immediate term and ensure that a place-shaping approach remains at the core of how the city approaches its development and renewal.

For the Commission, there are a number of elements that are fundamental in this regard:

- Ensuring that the water, energy and transport requirements of a place are considered at an earlier stage in the development process
- Giving priority to a new generation of sustainable transport: this cannot be 'secondary' to the car, or an 'afterthought' in design terms
- Investing in the development of quality green space: the Commission notes exciting plans such as "One Million Trees" which provides an opportunity to ensure mass tree planting and advocates an extension to successful greenway proposals in parts of the city
- Investing in significant transformational interventions arising from the Bolder Vision, as well as wider city to community connectivity, including greenways and active travel routes



Renewed Future City
Our key propositions:

1

Proposition 1:
Create sustainable, vibrant communities in the city centre, delivering 11,500 new homes by 2035

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

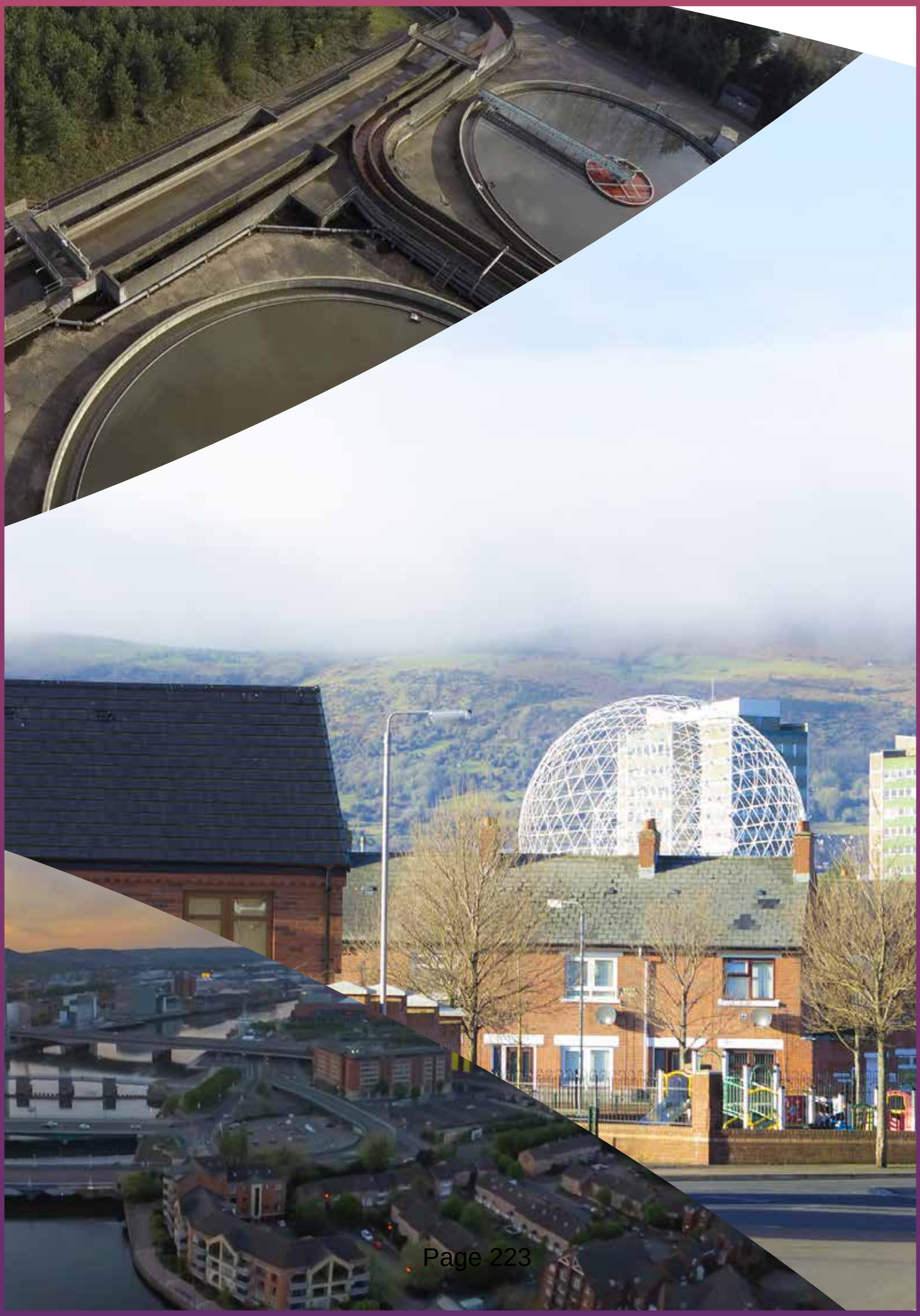
- Belfast City Council, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Department for Communities (DfC) to establish a delivery vehicle to utilise public sector land and undertake land assembly to facilitate new low carbon housing at scale across the city centre
- Vehicle will also develop housing mix, amenities and neighbourhood development plan for city core. Target: 11,500 new homes in 10 years
- Create new financial instruments including Housing Investment Funds to address market challenges related to risk and yield

2

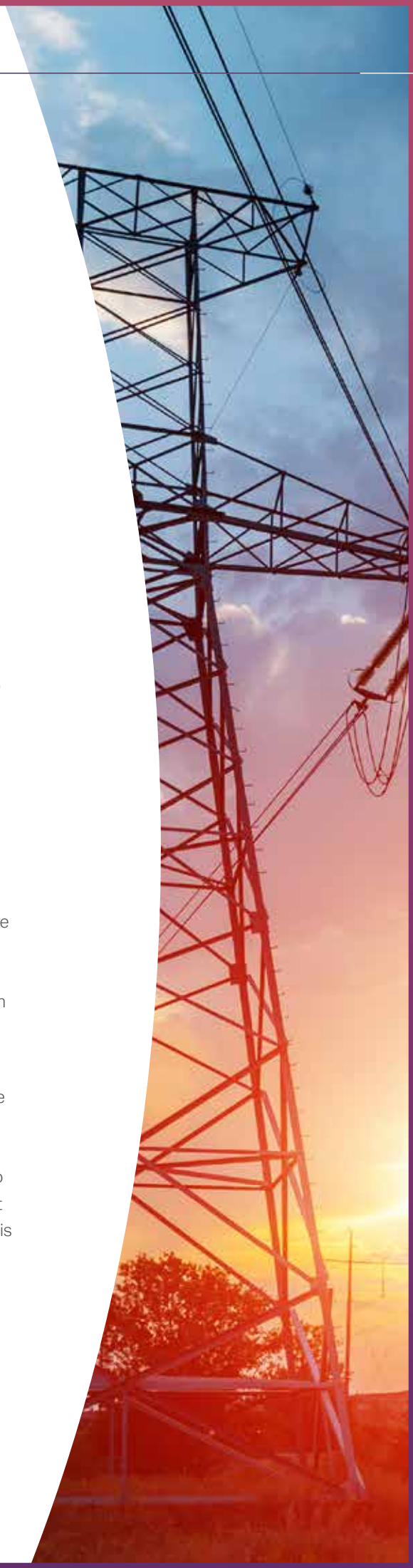
Proposition 2:
Create a connected and animated core city centre through the delivery of key commitments in the Bolder Vision Connectivity Strategy by 2026

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

- Establish a long-term town and city revitalisation programme to support active travel, pedestrianisation and green spaces schemes along with large-scale investment in tourism and cultural infrastructure and activities. For Belfast, deliver the Bolder Vision for the city centre, supported by a three year joint funding programme
- Secure changes in planning and permitting legislation and powers to allow rapid urban development



Sustainable Future



Where are we now?

Despite some progress over the last two decades, Belfast remains dependent on fossil fuels to heat its buildings, power its transport and move people, goods and services around the city. While there have been positive developments over the last number of years to focus collective efforts on ensuring sustainable urban development, it is imperative that this is maintained over the long term, given the scale of the challenge.

The city's energy demand is projected to increase substantially, with expenditure set to grow by almost 50%, from a £296 million annual bill in 2019 to a projected £466 million per year in 2050.

This level of reliance means the city is exposed to high levels of volatility in energy markets and energy supply, which will have increasingly negative consequences for households and businesses. Achieving the commitment articulated in the Belfast Carbon Roadmap - to work towards being carbon neutral by 2050 - will be challenging.

Taking action to address this challenge is essential if Belfast is to avoid an environmental, economic and social crisis. Almost one in six Belfast residents is in fuel poverty, and research has shown that poor energy efficiency and high fuel bills can have a significant negative impact on health outcomes, with those in the poorest households most adversely affected.

However aligned to this challenge, there is also significant opportunity. This lies in the potential for job creation as energy efficiency and carbon reduction interventions are brought forward.

Belfast, like other global cities, has seen its economic performance flatline over the last twelve months due to COVID-19. The Commission supports recent research on urban responses to economic crises which concluded that a green route out of the COVID-19 crisis can be highly economically effective. Belfast must focus on aligning the environmental and economic policy frameworks across varying levels of government if it is to position itself for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Belfast Carbon Roadmap - Pathway to Net Zero

The roadmap suggests the carbon emissions baseline of the city is 1.5m units per annum.
It proposes and costs a series of low carbon interventions which will help Belfast align to the UK legislative target of net zero carbon by 2050.

Background

1.5°C
The level of global temperature rise at which we risk triggering dangerous climate change

2030
The point at which - at current rates - the world will have locked into more than 1.5ºC of warming

Global to local

16m
tonnes
Belfast's share of the global carbon budget (to keep to 1.5˚C of warming)

Belfast is emitting
1.5m
tonnes
of carbon a year. At this rate, we will have used up our budget by
2030

Baselines and targets

42%
The decline in Belfast's carbon emissions since 2000

This needs to be increased to
66% by 2025
80% by 2030
100% by 2050

Belfast has committed to work towards being
CARBON NEUTRAL
by
2050

That leaves a **big gap** but we can close it by the following options:

Cost-effective options

Cost-effective options such as
better housing and transport
could close the 2030 gap by
60%

These would reduce Belfast's energy bill by
£286m
per year and would create nearly
4,779
years of extra employment

More ambitious options

More ambitious, but expensive, options could
close the 2030 gap by
59%
These would have **benefits for** health, equality, travel and the environment

Doing all of this leaves a
41%
shortfall to reach by
2050

Reaching our target

Belfast can close the remaining gap by
100% by 2030
through a range of
INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS

These include
reducing food waste, changing our diet, travel patterns and planting trees

Net Zero by 2050



What needs to be done?

The Commission has been encouraged and impressed by the enhanced focus placed on sustainability and environmental issues in Belfast over the last few years.

The establishment of a Resilience and Sustainability Board as part of the city's Community Planning structures, as well as the creation of the Belfast Climate Commission demonstrates the focus on sustainable approaches to economic growth. The commissioning of the Belfast Mini Stern - the first independent and authoritative study that demonstrates the economic dividends to be gained from decarbonisation - points to a collective acknowledgement of the need for energy policy and economic policy to be aligned.

The Mini Stern illustrates the critical "market-making" role that government agencies and the wider public sector can play. By making changes to how they build homes and invest in public transport as well as incentivising more sustainable and accessible transport and greater energy efficiency in homes, they can help create the necessary step change in carbon consumption. The tables on this page demonstrate the most cost-effective and the most carbon-effective emission reduction options.

While it is pragmatic to focus on these in order to build momentum, the Climate Commission and the Resilience and Sustainability Board must continue to shine the spotlight on the longer-term, more challenging issues. These have been identified through the recently-published consultation document on the regional Energy Strategy and should be considered as the "third pillar" in the city's approach to energy resilience.

Belfast's top ten most cost-effective emission reduction options

Rank	Measure	Cost Effectiveness (£/tCO2e)
1	Compressed air systems in industry	-603
2	Diesel car to diesel bus journeys	-492
3	Pump upgrades, repairs and maintenance in industry	-478
4	Fabric improvements in retail buildings	-432
5	Petrol car to diesel bus journeys	-376
6	Fabric improvements in public buildings	-367
7	Diesel car to walk journeys	-362
8	Petrol car to walk journeys	-356
9	Improved cooling in retail buildings	-326
10	Diesel car to bicycle journeys	-322

Belfast's top ten most carbon-effective emission reduction options

Rank	Measure	Emission Reduction Potential (ktCO2e)
1	Insulating domestic buildings	1,162
2	Petrol car to bicycle journeys	1,014
3	Upgraded heating controls in domestic buildings	998
4	Petrol car to walk journeys	982
5	Electrical upgrades in domestic buildings	811
6	Installing heat pumps in domestic buildings	808
7	Petrol car to EV journeys	725
8	Petrol car to electric bus journeys	700
9	Diesel car to walk journeys	675
10	Fabric improvements in public buildings	663



There are two key areas that will require focused collaboration across a range of city partners to contribute to the net zero commitments: housing and transport.

Housing

Despite the fact that the UK is a leader in smart technology adoption, it is lagging behind Europe on energy efficiency. In Northern Ireland, less than 50% of housing has an Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) band at C or above.

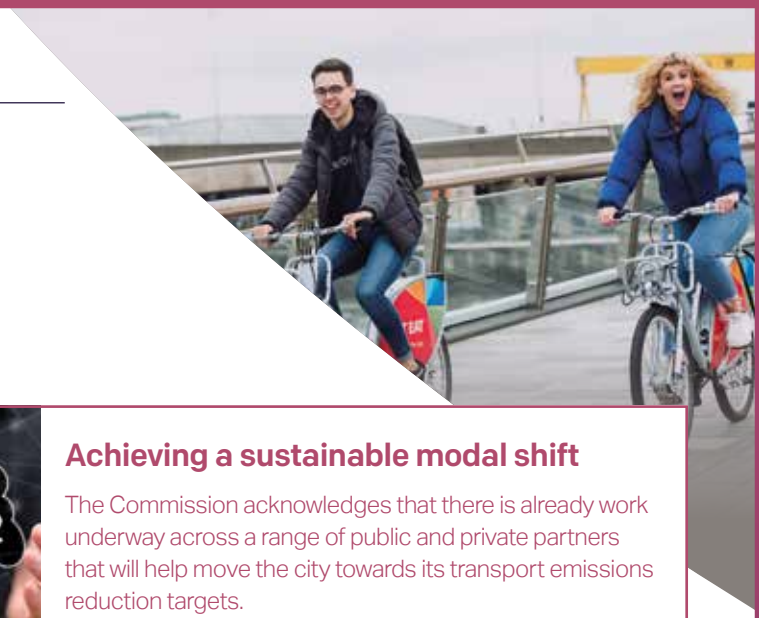
In our June 2020 update, this Commission identified that a retrofit programme at scale across Belfast would provide a significant boost to the local economy. Our discussions with officials across government have encouraged us that this will be a priority area of focus for the region.

The Commission has been encouraged by the findings of an independent study, commissioned by the Department for the Economy, which recommends "dramatic change in policy extent and funding levels… for Northern Ireland to put building energy performance in line with the UK's net zero carbon emissions commitment". The study concluded that policies would need to drive an annual peak of retrofits for over 50,000 buildings (across Northern Ireland) within the next decade. In practical terms, this means trebling the current pace of retrofits. The Commission strongly advocates this step change in activity, not only for its contribution to environmental targets, but also because of the potential that it offers to create new jobs and address Belfast's high level of fuel poverty.

As the Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is leading several retrofit programmes aimed at ensuring innovation and quality in the delivery of energy efficient homes. It is currently committed to delivering 3,000 retrofits across its homes in Belfast in the next three years through a jointly funded NIHE-ERDF programme, which will enable the organisation to develop its approach to innovation and retrofit and for up-scaling in this decade.

In keeping with this scaling up of effort, it is essential that an energy efficiency standard is established, for application across buildings. This will help provide clarity to the market and will also ensure that the investment can deliver in a measurable way on the significant challenges around carbon reduction.

To date, one of the most significant challenges has been the limitations of the funding models to support this work. The current landscape is relatively limited but it can be revamped, drawing on experience from cities across Europe to examine optimum models, ensuring affordability and equity of access. A number of new 'green finance' opportunities are available, and several cities are exploring the potential for community municipal bonds, for retrofit of public buildings and social and affordable housing or for low-income households.



Transport

The Belfast Mini Stern identified transport as the other primary source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the city and set out a number of key performance indicators for measures to be taken across the transport sector.

This Commission concurs with these indicators. However, we feel that they can only realistically be achieved if Belfast approaches this challenge in a holistic way.

Achieving Belfast's sectoral emissions reductions KPIs for transport

What we need to do

- **6km** of high quality, protected cycling highways built
- **40** additional new electric buses procured and in service each year
- **2 million** additional public transport trips taken each year
- **3,000** additional electric vehicles to replace conventional private cars each year

How we can do it

- Moving goods and services around the city in a more efficient and **zero carbon** way
- **Re-imagining** public space - and prioritising walking and cycling routes
- Proactive demand management interventions to **reduce car journeys**
- Comprehensive infrastructure investment **plan**



Achieving a sustainable modal shift

The Commission acknowledges that there is already work underway across a range of public and private partners that will help move the city towards its transport emissions reduction targets.



Public transport

We are encouraged by Translink's plans to transition to zero emissions public transport for city services by 2030. This will involve the procurement of a new generation of zero emissions fleet, expecting an 80/20 split between electric and hydrogen powered vehicles over the coming decade. This needs to be supported by a modal shift to increase the number of public transport journeys.



Sustainable travel - walking and cycling

As part of a decade-long re-imagining of the city, decision makers must accept the economic, as well as the social and environmental reality - that an over-dependence on the car acts as a drag on city economies.



Electric vehicle infrastructure

As part of a shift towards zero-emissions transport and transit, a network of electric vehicle infrastructure is essential to Belfast's future. Northern Ireland has been slow to develop this infrastructure due to a number of regulatory hurdles, which have been removed. Central government now needs to set aside public realm for charge points.



Transit and fleet

At present, Belfast deploys a range of carbon-intensive systems to move waste, freight and deliveries across the city. As a relatively compact port city, greater integration and planning of transit systems at a city-wide level could achieve a step-change in emissions from transit. There is a clear role here for city organisations, such as Belfast City Council, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and other public sector bodies, alongside private companies.



The economic imperative

If the city can make inroads to decarbonising its housing and transport systems rapidly, the potential for job creation, for enhancing local supply chains and for investment in innovation could be transformational.

Several cities across the UK and Ireland have already taken steps to place the transition to a green economy at the core of their economic strategies. COVID-19 has accelerated that movement, placing a spotlight on sustainability, encouraging the strengthening of local supply chains and creating challenges for local employment markets. If Belfast is to capitalise on this opportunity, it is essential that partners mobilise quickly, moving forward with public investment in housing and transport and promoting innovation and research in new areas such as hydrogen production.

The green economy offers opportunities for upskilling and reskilling but the current provision is not sufficient to meet projected needs, suggesting the need for targeted interventions aimed at a range of skills levels and work areas. Close working relationships between economic development, education partners, employers and investors across the city are vital to structure the qualifications necessary so that skills are available to support the expansion of green technology, construction, maritime and transport.

Sustainable Future
Our key propositions:

1 **Proposition 1:**
Implement a rapid carbon reduction programme at city level, securing a 66% drop in carbon emissions by 2025

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

- Secure funding for and commence delivery on a long-term at scale housing retrofit programme as soon as possible. Start with a three year programme, then scale. Target 3,000 properties in the first three years
- Develop large scale upskilling/re-skilling academies for retrofit and low carbon build
- Establish revolving funding instruments for green building and infrastructure and secure access to UK funds
- Develop a green mobility plan for the metropolitan area to include investments in decarbonising public transport and public sector fleets and encouraging modal shifts to active travel
- Develop a programme for electrification of building heat
- Amend current building regulations to ensure new homes support decarbonisation

2 **Proposition 2:**
Develop a comprehensive strategy for green tech support and investment that aims to deliver five major foreign direct investments by 2025 and 100% growth in the value of sales from our indigenous green tech sector

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

- Develop a local place-based green tech growth strategy to attract FDI and grow new business, enabling access to national and regional R&D investments and challenge funding
- Access investment in highly innovative green technology / design capability, including a Smart Design Centre for net zero carbon transport
- Develop a new green business stimulus investment vehicle that recognises the long-term return from energy savings and carbon reduction
- Develop and fund education and employability programmes to ensure a skilled workforce is in place to fuel green growth

Intelligent Future

Where are we now?

Belfast has long been recognised as a city of creators and inventors. Today, the city is home to a vibrant and engaged community of SMEs, researchers, corporations, and start-ups and is the location for academic and research centres of excellence, set alongside dynamic indigenous companies and a strong support ecosystem. And while the level of progress has been substantial, significant gaps remain.

As we move towards economic recovery, there is a clear ambition to put innovation at the core of the city's collective response efforts. This partnership approach - driven by Innovation City Belfast - aims to accelerate growth in Belfast's most exciting knowledge economy clusters, while at the same time supporting businesses and residents to prepare for the transformational impact of innovation.

Pre-COVID-19, Belfast accounted for around 30% of jobs across the region. The resilience of some sectors, particularly tech and digital, and the fundamental challenges faced by others such as retail and hospitality, means that there is likely to be a shift in what the "new" economy looks like as we emerge from a series of lockdowns. The progress of technology has become even more pervasive over that period, impacting all sectors to an unprecedented extent, and this will present additional challenges for the labour market as businesses look for new skills, particularly those with a digital focus.

The Department for the Economy's 10X vision for a decade of innovation recognises the need for a focused effort to drive innovation in key growth areas while also achieving a fairer distribution of opportunities for people to participate in and benefit from that growth. This is wholly complementary to the Innovation City Belfast ambition and presents an opportunity to come together across the sectors and deliver rapidly at scale within the city.

But gaps remain in the city's toolkit. There are a number of missing pieces in digital infrastructure, while R&D investment levels fall significantly below those in the rest of the UK. As a micro-business economy, the volume of businesses actively engaging in innovation needs to increase. And while the universities and colleges have made a significant contribution to creating a strong talent pipeline, challenges remain in key growth sectors. In terms of inclusion, too many people have low skills - and many of these have poor digital skills. The City Deal investment will provide a strong catalyst for change, driving investment in critical infrastructure and creating new place-based partnerships for action. These will be critical in helping articulate the case for investment ahead of significant new funding interventions being established at regional and national level.



What needs to be done?

Ulster University's Competitiveness Scorecard identifies four key policy inputs that can contribute to future economic competitiveness.

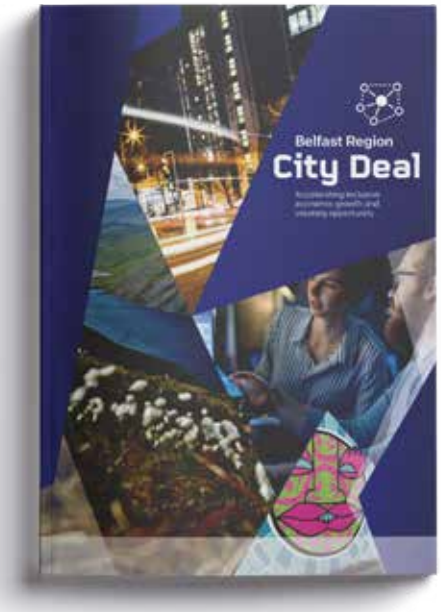
These are:

- Infrastructure investment
- Education and skills
- Innovation, research and development
- Business environment

While the business environment is largely shaped by national policies and regulations, targeted investment in the first three elements can make a significant impact on the city's growth potential.

Infrastructure investment

The vision for Innovation City Belfast is to make the city a place where global excellence in innovation supports inclusive economic growth, delivers more and better jobs, and has a sustainable positive impact on our city, its citizens and the wider region. Key to delivery of this vision are a series of investments including the development of an Innovation District, the establishment of a city centre-focused Smart District, creation of a Smart Port and significant investment in advanced wireless networks.



The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) will have a significant impact on the city region's ability to drive its future growth ambitions. Central to this work will be the strategic investment in a number of catalytic innovation projects, focused on the key growth sectors. These new centres of research excellence, alongside existing centres of excellence, will offer a unique resource to drive inclusive economic recovery and support urban transformation through mission-oriented innovation.

Capital investment alone is not sufficient to create the step change required in business performance. This point is illustrated in a 2020 report by Oxford Economics which includes a Digital Propensity Index to show how digital infrastructure, and SMEs inclination and ability to use digital tools, varied across the UK's regions. The key finding is that the majority of Northern Ireland sits within the bottom two quintiles of the Index. In the Belfast region, the infrastructure rank is 2 out of 170 areas yet the inclination amongst SMEs is very poor - at 111 out of 170 areas, across the UK. 95% of the businesses in Belfast are micro and small businesses and many lack the capability to fully benefit from these investments. To address this lack of capability there needs to be a strong focused programme of support for micro and small businesses to enhance their digital capabilities and help them understand the potential for digital to transform the business. We recognise the recent collective investment by all local authorities in this area and consider that this provides a strong platform from which to test and scale-up future investment.

Alongside R&D funding there is a requirement for R&D infrastructure. Northern Ireland remains the only UK region that does not have a dedicated Catapult facility. Catapults provide businesses with access to their expertise and facilities, enabling them to test, demonstrate and improve their ideas and collaborate with others. Given the underlying structural weaknesses in the regional economy, we consider that additional infrastructure of this type could be a critical tool in addressing productivity challenges, supporting employment and, ultimately, delivering an increase in living in standards across the region.

Commission members recognise global examples of economic corridors and their ability to generate additional economic growth through collaborative efforts, building on priority interventions. We note the emerging work on the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor and consider that there are significant opportunities to build an innovation corridor at scale between the two cities.



Education and skills

While investment in innovation and R&D is a defining characteristic of many successful urban economies, it is also clear that globalisation and skill-biased technical change are factors that have contributed to rising inequalities.

This Commission is acutely aware, therefore, that placing innovation at the centre of our economic strategy requires careful design and management to ensure that those who are most vulnerable do not face further exclusion. This is all the more acute at the present time as inequalities are exacerbated by the perfect storm of a global pandemic and the acceleration of new technologies across almost all sectors. Ensuring that citizens are equipped with the right skills to meet employer demands is central to driving inclusive city growth.

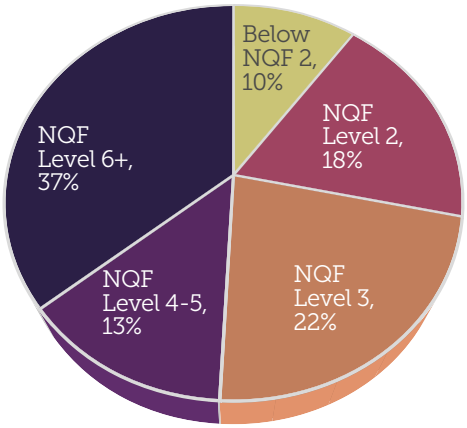
The Belfast Agenda makes a commitment to supporting more than 40,000 new jobs in the city by 2035. The Skills Barometer for Belfast gives some insights into which sectors and areas of work those jobs are likely to come from. These are largely based across the services sector - dominated by scientific and technical professionals and business services roles. Conversely, only limited growth is expected across areas such as retail and manufacturing (and these pre-COVID-19 estimates are likely to be optimistic given what we know about the increased challenges faced by these sectors).

The World Economic Forum's 2020 report on The Future of Jobs underlines the need for the public sector to provide stronger support for reskilling and upskilling for at-risk or displaced workers. At their peak, 16,000 Belfast residents were on furlough and many of them are employed in sectors that are unlikely to return to growth for some time. It is therefore essential that there is a coordinated and speedy response across the public sector to support individuals back into previous roles or to equip them with the skills to move into new work areas. In keeping with the Commission's view that the economic strategy for the city should focus on a small number of areas that have the most significant potential for return, we propose that the emerging skills strategy needs to provide significant investment for those key growth sectors - particularly Cyber, Fin Tech, Sustainable Technologies and Cloud Computing. The delivery system must become more flexible and agile to meet new and emerging areas of need and potential growth.

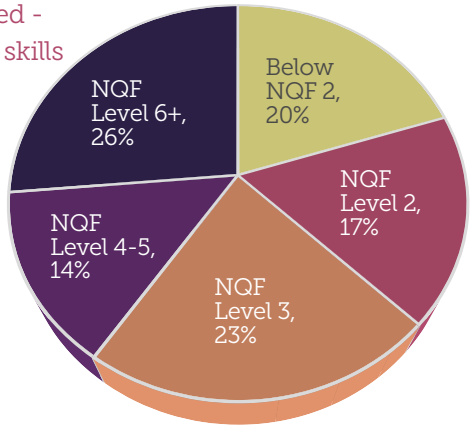
Skills demand v supply

NQF= National Qualifications Framework

Average net requirement for skills in Belfast (2017-27)



Employed - Stock of skills (2017)



Source: Belfast Skills Barometer, UUEPC, 2017

Innovation, research and development

One of the emerging priorities identified through this work is the chasm in the investment levels in innovation and R&D in Northern Ireland, when benchmarked with other parts of the UK. This Commission concurs with the findings of the NESTA study: The Missing £4 Billion (May 2020), which highlights regional funding inequalities, and estimates that additional UK Government investment of about £200-300m pa for Northern Ireland R&D is required to "level-up". With its commitment to put research and innovation at the heart of the UK Industrial Strategy and to increase total R&D expenditure, the Commission sees the opportunity for Belfast and Northern Ireland to target additional resources and investment. Partners have already effectively articulated their ability to use these resources: the challenge now is to drive further investment in order to maximise the economic impact.

The importance of the City Deal cannot be understated. Not only will it help bring forward up to £1billion of investment, it also represents a new form of working that fosters collaboration between industry, academia and the public sector.

The emergence of new partnerships such as the Innovation City Belfast Partnership presents an opportunity for co-developing strategic approaches to support inclusive innovation. With strong industry engagement, the partnership approach can articulate the future needs of the world of work and ensure greater alignment across a range of public policy areas. It also allows a "full system" approach to inclusive innovation, taking account of issues such as data access, ethics and skills requirements.

Intelligent Future
Our key propositions:

1 **Proposition 1:**

Secure commitments to investment in critical research and digital infrastructure that delivers a Northern Ireland Digital Catapult Centre and £300m of annual ring-fenced research and development funding by 2025

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

- Secure commitment to equitable ring-fenced funding for university R&D focusing on growing priority sectors
- Secure the establishment of a NI-based Digital Catapult
- Scale up existing and establish further interventions to maximise digital capacity and capabilities of business to engage in R&D
- Develop a digital inclusion programme for communities
- Deliver digital upskilling and re-skilling pathways at scale
- Deliver City Deal digital investment programme alongside private sector investment from Belfast Harbour to create Smart/Innovation districts

2 **Proposition 2:**

Deliver a unique innovation environment which enables key business clusters of global significance to thrive and deliver a decade of innovation, creating over 5,000 new entrepreneurs by 2025 and quadrupling the number of start-ups that survive and scale

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

- Place-based partnerships such as Innovation City Belfast (ICB) to be formally considered as part of the delivery structure for the 10x strategy. ICB should be commissioned to develop new funding bids and bring forward new ideas
- Establish a comprehensive and long-term funding mechanism for resourcing place-based approaches to entrepreneurship, start-up support and business scaling concentrated within growth sectors
- Support the development of world class health tech at scale, utilising City Deal-funded i-Reach and CDHD Centres of Excellence and promote as FDI opportunity
- Support establishment of a Global Centre for Secure and Intelligent Regulatory Technology in Belfast
- Develop incentivisation schemes for promoting innovation clusters in defined innovation districts (linked to Free Port concept)



Global Future

Where are we now?

Belfast benefits from a unique strategic geographical location that offers significant potential for further growth. At this critical juncture in the city's economic future, it is essential that partners work collaboratively to develop market opportunities in line with emerging strengths, build strategic networks and relationships and develop viable investment propositions to position the city globally.

The global pandemic has accelerated a structural shift in economies, with some sectors experiencing rapid decline and unemployment, and others benefiting from increased growth. The pandemic has also had a marked impact on people's behaviours and lifestyles. Almost every region has implemented restrictions that have resulted in homeworking / schooling and forced greater use of online channels. The question as we emerge from the pandemic is if, and to what extent, these changes will persist.

As cities and places understand the legacy effect of COVID-19, there will be a need to change, re-imagine and re-purpose their role and function. Early research suggests that those who are most vulnerable in society will be disproportionately impacted as a result of the pandemic. Given the significant pockets of deprivation in Belfast and many other locations across Northern Ireland, it will be essential to ensure that recovery efforts take account of the specific needs of these groups.

The Commission considers that Belfast and Northern Ireland have many assets that position them well for recovery. Critical among these are the availability of development land, clusters and specialities in growth sectors, trading advantages and strategic investments such as the Belfast Region City Deal. There is also the advantageous geographic position: located between London and Dublin, Northern Ireland already has access to several unique trading and investment advantages, strong key international relationships, and an extensive and passionate diaspora.

However, as an 'island off an island', Northern Ireland is challenged by a relatively small domestic population and increased cost and friction in moving people, goods, services and knowledge. The infrastructure requirements are complicated by the geographic location. While the region is served by three airports, services are limited in terms of direct international flights. A report by Oxford Economics in 2019 found that around 70 percent of Northern Ireland's air traffic was to Great Britain. With a small domestic population and potential market, the Commission views connectivity between Belfast/Northern Ireland and the rest of the world as being vitally important.

From an investment perspective, recent performance has been promising. In 2019, Northern Ireland attracted over 40 FDIs, supporting more than 2,300 jobs. There has also been significant capital investment. There is, of course, a level of uncertainty within the investment landscape as economies emerge from the global pandemic. However, the Commission sees opportunities arising from new patterns of trade and investment. To maximise those opportunities, we believe that new markets and relationships must be developed, while deepening the scope of existing relationships. The Commission recognises that two thirds of the world's population will be in Asia by 2050, so it's vital to build on existing connections in China and build relationships with Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and ASEAN cities.





What needs to be done?

The Commission's initial observation is that more should be done to market opportunities, build strategic relationships and develop viable investment propositions with properly-funded action plans and the right level of collaborative leadership. The Commission is convinced that without a strategic approach being taken to this work, the impact created by implementing the other pillars in this report will be reduced and a significant long-term opportunity lost. In other words, it is our view that this pillar, while potentially the most challenging, is also the one that will reap the greatest long-term economic benefits.

International city to city linkages can play a key role in creating the conditions for strong investment and trading relationships. Belfast has sister city relationships with Boston and Nashville in the United States and Shenyang in China. Both Boston and Nashville are globally recognised technology centres in Cyber Security and Health Technology, and these strengths are mirrored in Belfast. The links with Shenyang have supported the establishment of the Shenyang Queen's University China Medical University, resulting in more than 2,500 Chinese students attending Queen's University Belfast each year. These relationships have already resulted in exchanges between the cities, universities and businesses and there are further opportunities to drill deeper with these linkages.

Cities, regions and places need to develop with sustainability, resilience and inclusivity at their core. To help Belfast and Northern Ireland to realise the opportunities inherent with these changes, it is vital to engage in and develop new networks including the C40, Global Covenant of Mayors and Urban 20 alongside existing networks such as Core Cities UK to learn and partner with similar cities and regions. The Commission recommends the development of an action plan targeting global cities with whom to develop linkages for mutual economic benefit, including those where city partners such as Invest NI may already have strong connections and presence.

The process of identifying strategic target cities and regions should be based on the presence of:

- Complementary business clusters
- Complementary research and innovation infrastructure
- Presence of relevant investment funds/organisations

This action plan should be developed and delivered with Invest NI and the Department for International Trade (DIT) with the go to market plan delivered targeting FDI and capital investment. The Commission recommends that this place-based approach to executing strategies, global relationships and marketing investment propositions is consistently kept under review.

The focus of Invest NI is now more targeted at global relationships than ever before. In this context the Commission believes that trade and investment propositions need to be considered though the lens of place.

They must also take account of both scale and trading advantages, and this will require co-operation and strategic development of place-based collaborations such as:

- Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor: the Commission sees this initiative as a central pillar for the development of long-term inclusive economic sustainability in Belfast and Northern Ireland. The Commission recommends the development of a strategic action plan with associated resources to support the work of the corridor. Consideration should be given to the establishment of an economic entity, overseen by the North South Ministerial Council and funded via the Northern Ireland Office and the Shared Island Unit. A key focus of that unit should be the development of a corridor-specific approach to research & development investment, infrastructure and skills. This will enable the corridor to develop capabilities at scale that can lever further investment.
- The place-specific competitive advantage afforded through new trading patterns and conditions will create opportunities for new investment and trading opportunities. City to city linkages such as Belfast-London will require further focus to maximise the potential return.

City to city connections

The Commission has recognised that the importance of city to city diplomacy needs to be more fully understood by the devolved and national administrations. Cities and regions have an ability to react rapidly to emerging opportunities and threats. This agility in reacting to change can be used to support the development of national policies by using regional interventions as test beds. There is a recognition that cities and regions, through their informal and formal structures and networks, can effectively engage with communities to understand their needs and work with them to co-design interventions, thus making an agile system for designing policy and interventions. The Belfast Region City Deal has demonstrated this with new working relationships developed across universities, colleges, businesses, local government and central government.

The Commission recommends that these new partnership structures are formalised and recognised by government, leading to further devolution and funding for those activities. The Commission sees that, with new powers and funding, these structures could use their demonstrated innovation and agility to build new investment propositions and interventions that exploit specific attributes of places to drive jobs, productivity and social benefit.

There is an accepted recognition of the power of places and this recognition is manifesting itself across government. The UK Government has recognised the importance of place through its commitment to the development of a place-based approach to Research & Innovation. In Scotland there is a commitment to place-based local outcome improvement plans. These approaches combine public and private sector parties to focus on specific challenge areas and develop action plans to bring about positive improvements. The Commission is firmly of the view that to support and realise the full benefit of City and Growth Deals in Northern Ireland, it is the time for the Northern Ireland Government to commission place-based partnerships to work alongside existing structures and bodies.

As places specialise and redefine themselves post-pandemic, significant opportunities for FDI and capital that provide a financial benefit for the investor and a social benefit for the user will be created, thus providing another opportunity to address multiple challenges. For example, a housing retrofit at scale focused on sustainable smart buildings provides a significant commercial and innovation opportunity. But importantly, it can provide many social benefits, for example, improving health and reducing fuel poverty. There is an important role for policy makers to create the conditions for private investors to access these market opportunities and realise the positive social benefits.

Global Future
Our key propositions:

1 **Proposition 1:**
Maximise unique opportunities from Northern Ireland's unrestricted access to two markets and regulatory environments by growing the share of exports as a percentage of GDP from the current level of 23% to 50% by 2025, similar to comparable economies

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

- Develop and invest in initiatives to build more stable and robust supply chains in key sectors most impacted by the changed trading relationships
- Develop a specific FDI proposition for those sectors set to gain most from advantages
- Develop agreement with Enterprise Ireland / IDA on a joint proposition for business sectors which may gain from dual location
- Develop support interventions to assist key business to capitalise on trading advantage

2 **Proposition 2:**
Develop and agree with partners a city to city trade and investment strategic action plan by 2022

Our proposals to accelerate delivery:

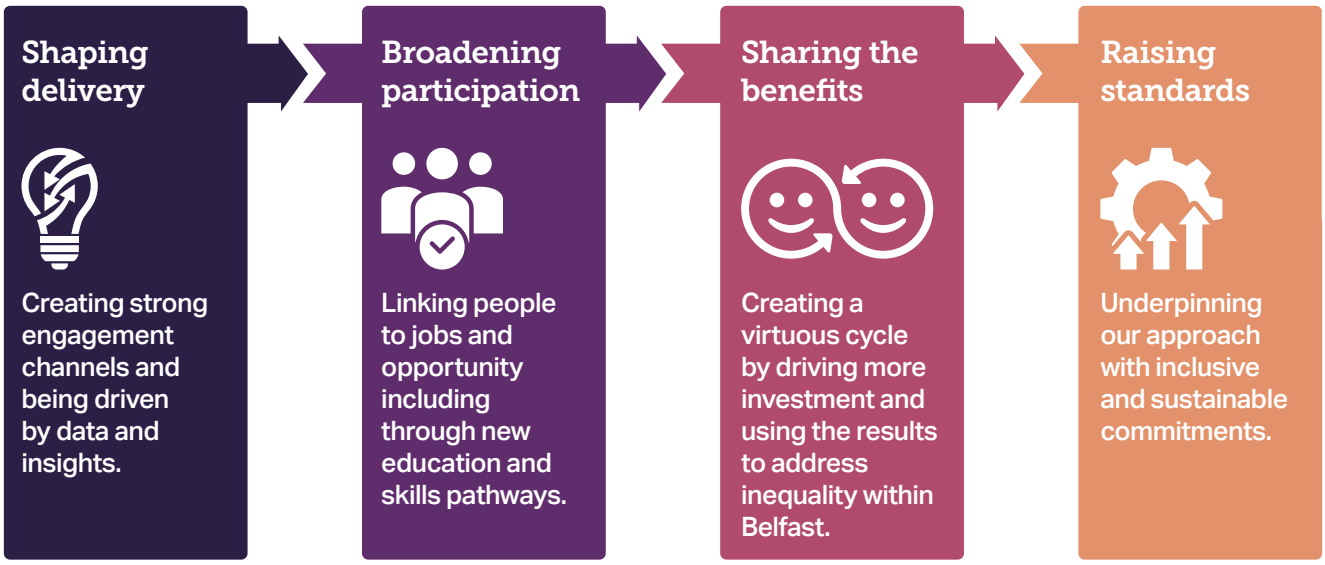
- Develop market-specific investment propositions, focused on Northern Ireland's unique regulatory advantages in FinTech & MedTech sectors
- Create a dedicated vehicle to fully realise the potential of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) with a focus on shared R&D hubs and business clustering at scale and a specific FDI proposition
- Maximise the potential of the Belfast-Dublin-London relationships

Inclusive Growth: at the core of our collective ambition

The Commissioners' discussions and our engagement with partners generated a range of views and perspectives as to what was required to reset the Belfast economy for growth. However, there was one common feature of our debate: the fundamental view that the city must be focused and determined in pursuing an inclusive growth agenda.

We have made numerous references to the current inequalities and the resultant impact on levels of deprivation and unemployment, as well as the associated social tensions and challenges. These issues can de-stabilise communities and cities, threaten investment and make it more difficult for marginalised communities and residents to engage with and benefit from economic growth.

Pursuing an inclusive growth agenda means ensuring economic benefits and success accrue to all members of a population. In making an explicit commitment to an inclusive growth agenda, the city needs to articulate what that means and rigorously ensure that interventions are in place to support delivery. This approach is detailed below.



Skills have a huge role to play in driving inclusive growth. Currently more than 20% of Belfast residents are skilled to level 2 and below; yet only 10% of jobs are open to those with qualifications up to level 2. Among the city's GCSE students, only 62% attain 5 GCSEs including English and Maths - and this can represent a significant barrier for those wishing to proceed to further and/or vocational training. Low attainment levels tend to be geographically focused in north and west Belfast, reinforcing the spatial nature of the challenges

However, the link between low skills / attainment and poor health and living standards is played out across the region with the Derry District and Strabane Council area, like Belfast, consistently having the highest economic inactivity rates in the UK.

Pursuing an inclusive growth agenda means introducing targeted interventions to address these challenges as well as working with employers to create bespoke and alternative pathways into jobs, thinking differently about how they can build a sustainable talent pipeline.

The work on the Inclusive City Charter has created a firm foundation on which to generate an understanding of the benefits of this approach. It has also helped build a strong coalition across the public and private sectors, bringing together organisations that have shown a willingness and commitment to move towards this way of working.

This coalition is already developing a range of interventions including:

- Digital skills pathways - providing opportunities for those with low or no relevant skills to access job opportunities within the technology sector
- Green Tech Skills Academies - developing targeted upskilling and re-skilling interventions to meet future growth needs

The city is also working on how it can lever its own spend and joint strategic investments to deliver inclusive economic growth through the development a social value procurement policy. The policy will require Belfast City Council to include inclusive growth interventions when commissioning goods or services. It is hoped that this approach to commissioning could be adopted wholly or partially by partners, and provide significant investment to tackle economic inactivity, unemployment and inequality.

Inclusive growth interventions can improve not only economic outcomes but also social and health outcomes, reducing inequalities and enhancing sustainability. As the economy is rebuilt in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that city partners combine in large numbers to pursue an inclusive growth agenda, for the benefit of all.

Final recommendations

Under each of our priority pillars, we have articulated a number of key propositions as well as a series of concrete proposals to accelerate delivery. This section brings all of those together alongside the rationale for prioritisation. We have also drawn out details of the "development leads" who will drive forward each of the propositions, and have identified those organisations that will play a key support role.

Renewed Future City

Our key propositions	Why is this important for Belfast and Northern Ireland?	Our proposals to accelerate delivery	Development lead	Key departments/ agencies
Create sustainable, vibrant communities in the city centre, delivering 11,500 new homes by 2035	• More than 11,500 Belfast households in housing stress • Only 3,700 completed homes in all of Belfast (1,300 social and 2,400 private) over last five years • Need a strategic shift in city centre living in line with other cities • Domestic housing in the city accounts for 39% of total carbon emissions - at scale sustainable new build programme is needed to meet targets	• Belfast City Council, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Department for Communities (DfC) to establish a delivery vehicle to utilise public sector land and undertake land assembly to facilitate new low carbon housing at scale across the city centre	• Joint NIHE/BCC and DfC Board	• Housing Associations • Department of Finance (DoF) • FTC Fund Managers
		• Vehicle will also develop housing mix, amenities and neighbourhood development plan for city core. Target: 11,500 new homes in 10 years	• As above	
		• Create new financial instruments including Housing Investment Funds to address market challenges related to risk and yield	• As above	
Create a connected and animated core city centre through the delivery of key commitments in the Bolder Vision Connectivity Strategy by 2026	• Successful regions need vibrant and socially sustainable core cities. UK Cities are 21 % more productive than non-urban areas and host 72% of all highly skilled jobs • Cities offer scale benefits with clusters of critical infrastructure / assets such as universities and research centres. • Cities are favoured by Knowledge Intensive Business Services (KIBS), KIBS jobs are 2x as likely to be concentrated in city centres • Northern Ireland's 10x economic vision needs a vibrant city • The impact of COVID-19 has been greater in city - increased retail vacancies, office homeworking and a stark decline in tourism. Long-term reshaping of the use of cities required, facilitated and funded by government • Current complex governance and funding arrangements need to be streamlined to protect and reshape urban environments	• Establish a long-term town and city revitalisation programme to support active travel, pedestrianisation and green spaces schemes along with large-scale investment in tourism and cultural infrastructure and activities. For Belfast, deliver the Bolder Vision for the city centre, supported by a three year joint funding programme	• BCC, DfI and DfC Permanent Secretary Delivery Board	• Department for Economy (DfE) • DoF • Local authorities • BIDs • High Street Task Force
		• Secure changes in planning and permitting legislation and powers to allow rapid urban development	• Belfast City Council to lead on developing proposals	• DfC • DfI • TEO

Sustainable Future

Our key propositions	Why is this important for Belfast and Northern Ireland?	Our proposals to accelerate delivery	Development lead	Key departments/ agencies
Implement a rapid carbon reduction programme at city level, securing a 66% drop in carbon emissions by 2025	• Belfast emits c.1.5 million units of carbon a year, so will use up its carbon budget by 2030 • Carbon-intensive and inefficient housing, buildings and transport systems create financial burden, poor health and impact standard of living • Reliance on carbon-based energy will continue to expose Belfast to high levels of price volatility for its energy and impact the disadvantaged the most • Investment in retrofit will provide return on investment in a number of ways	• Secure funding for and commence delivery on a long-term at scale housing retrofit programme as soon as possible. Start with a three year programme then scale. Target 3,000 properties in the first three years	• NIHE	• Strategic Investment Board (SIB) • Commercial Finance • Other local authorities • Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnerships
		• Develop large scale upskilling/re-skilling academies for retrofit and low carbon build	• NIHE and BCC	
		• Establish revolving funding instruments for green building and infrastructure and secure access to UK funds	• BCC with Green Growth Oversight Group	
		• Develop a green mobility plan for the metropolitan area to include investments in decarbonising public transport and public sector fleets and encouraging modal shifts to active travel	• BCC with DfI and Translink	
		• Develop a programme for electrification of building heat	• Energy Strategy lead, DfE	
		• Amend current building regulations to ensure new homes support decarbonisation	• Belfast City Council	
Develop a comprehensive strategy for green tech support and investment that aims to deliver five major foreign direct investments by 2025 and 100% growth in the value of sales from our indigenous green tech sector	• There is undoubtedly a demand window in green tech. We need to ensure that residents and businesses in Belfast and Northern Ireland benefit from that opportunity by utilising our existing strengths and building new capabilities	• Develop a local place-based green tech growth strategy to attract FDI and grow new business, enabling access to national and regional R&D investments and challenge funding	• DfE	• Invest NI • Belfast City Council • Local universities and colleges/ research institutions • Belfast Climate Commission • Department for Agriculture Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
		• Access investment in highly innovative green technology/ design capability, including a Smart Design Centre for net zero carbon transport	• Innovation City Belfast and industry consortia	
		• Develop a new green business stimulus investment vehicle that recognises the long-term return from energy savings and carbon reduction	• DfE	
		• Develop and fund education and employability programmes to ensure a skilled workforce is in place to fuel green growth	• BCC through Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnership	

Intelligent Future

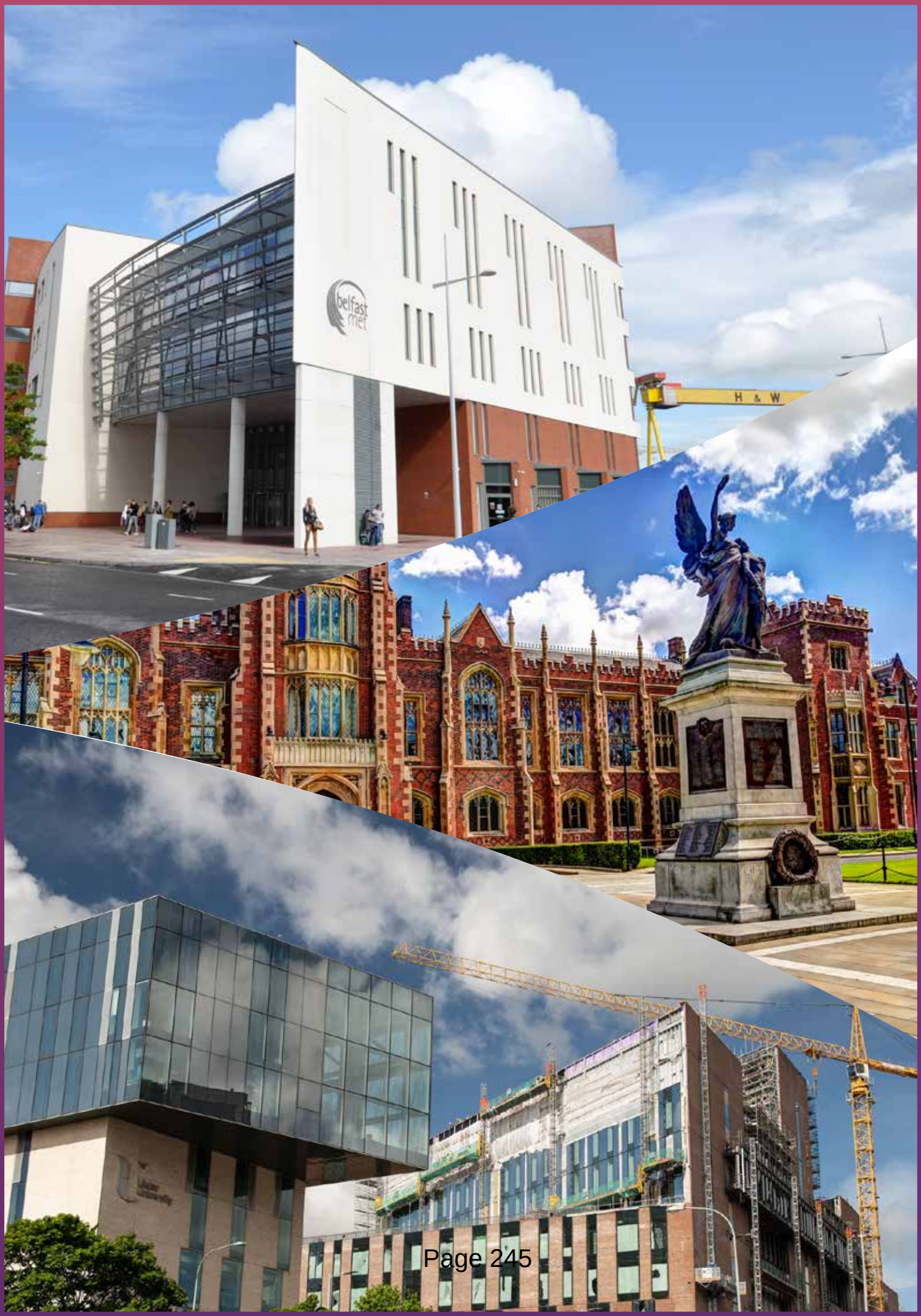
Our key propositions	Why is this important for Belfast and Northern Ireland?	Our proposals to accelerate delivery	Development lead	Key departments/ agencies
Secure commitments to investment in critical research and digital infrastructure that delivers a Northern Ireland Digital Catapult Centre and £300m of annual ring-fenced research and development funding by 2025	• Current level of investment is £200m - £300m less annually than many other UK regions - impacting negatively on competitiveness • NI lacks a commercially-focused research centre of excellence to support the development of new products and services by local businesses • Identified gaps in digital infrastructure including 5G, broadband provision and wireless	• Secure commitment to equitable ring-fenced funding for university R&D focusing on growing priority sectors	• Digital Innovation Commissioner with DfE	• Innovation City Belfast partners • Business Energy and Industrial Strategy • City Deal Digital Advisory Board • Universities and BMC • Belfast Harbour
		• Secure the establishment of a NI-based Digital Catapult	• Digital Innovation Commissioner with DfE	
		• Scale up existing and establish further interventions to maximise digital capacity and capabilities of business to engage in R&D	• Councils with Invest NI	
		• Develop a digital inclusion programme for communities	• Council with DfC	
		• Deliver digital upskilling and re-skilling pathways at scale	• Digital Innovation Commissioner with DfE	
		• Deliver City Deal digital investment programme alongside private sector investment from Belfast Harbour to create Smart/ Innovation districts	• Innovation City Belfast partnership	
Deliver a unique innovation environment which enables key business clusters of global significance to thrive and deliver a decade of innovation, creating over 5,000 new entrepreneurs by 2025 and quadrupling the number of start-ups that survive and scale	• Previous lack of priority and co-ordination - sub optimal in attracting funding support • New DfE-led 10x economic strategy prioritises innovation clusters • City Deal investment in 5 R&D centres • New partnership models such as Innovation City Belfast represent triple helix collaboration with strong networks and engagement	• Place-based partnerships such as Innovation City Belfast (ICB) to be formally considered as part of the delivery structure for the 10x strategy. ICB should be commissioned to develop new funding bids and bring forward new ideas	• DfE	• Local universities • Business Energy and Industrial Strategy • Local Businesses • Belfast Harbour
		• Establish a comprehensive and long-term funding mechanism for resourcing place-based approaches to entrepreneurship, start-up support and business scaling concentrated within growth sectors	• DfE/Invest NI	
		• Support the development of world class health tech at scale, utilising City Deal-funded i-Reach and CDHD Centres of Excellence and promote as FDI opportunity	• Specific consortium under Innovation City Belfast	
		• Support establishment of a Global Centre for Secure and Intelligent Regulatory Technology in Belfast	• Digital Innovation Commissioner with DfE	
		• Develop incentivisation schemes for promoting innovation clusters in defined innovation districts (linked to Free Port concept)	• ICB to lead the lobby	

Global Future

Our key propositions	Why is this important for Belfast and Northern Ireland?	Our proposals to accelerate delivery	Development lead	Key departments/ agencies
Maximise unique opportunities from Northern Ireland's unrestricted access to two markets and regulatory environments by growing the share of exports as a percentage of GDP from the current level of 23% to 50% by 2025, similar to comparable economies	• Recognised relative competitive trading advantage within key growth sectors including Med Tech, Fin Tech and advanced manufacturing • Further opportunities for FDI • Historic low levels of export activity in Northern Ireland negatively affecting productivity • Opportunities to build more robust local supply chains	• Develop and invest in sectors and supply chain development in sectors that have been impacted or can benefit from the changed trading conditions	• Invest NI	• Local authorities • DIT
		• Develop a specific FDI proposition for those sectors set to gain most from advantages	• Invest NI - supported by BCC at city level	
		• Develop agreement with Enterprise Ireland / IDA on a joint proposition for business sectors which may gain from dual location	• Invest NI	
		• Develop support interventions to assist key businesses to capitalise on trading advantage	• Invest NI	
Develop and agree with partners a city to city trade and investment strategic action plan by 2022	• Potential for strategic connections to play a key role in creating the conditions for strong investment and trading relationships	• Develop market-specific investment propositions, focused on Northern Ireland's unique regulatory advantages in FinTech & MedTech sectors	• Innovation City Belfast to develop the lobby	• Invest NI • Belfast City Council • DIT • Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor partners • Shared Island Unit • Relevant NI/RoI government departments
		• Create a dedicated vehicle to fully realise the potential of the Dublin- Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) with a focus on shared R&D hubs and business clustering at scale and a specific FDI proposition	• BCC with partner councils and DfE	
		• Maximise the potential of the Belfast-Dublin-London relationships	• Belfast City Council	

Inclusive future opportunities

Our key propositions	Why is this important for Belfast and Northern Ireland?	Our proposals to accelerate delivery	Development lead	Key departments/ agencies
Create a comprehensive programme of inclusive pathways to new growth areas	• Changes in labour market supply risks creating significant skills gaps • Cap on numbers means that ability to add to graduate numbers is limited • Commitment to inclusive growth requires alternative approaches to build the talent pipeline • A lack of skills in critical growth areas	• Create and coordinate new pathway models at scale in conjunction with employers, focusing on key growth sectors, securing mainstream resources to support delivery	• Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership, in conjunction with DfE and DfC	• DfC • DfE • Local businesses • Innovation City Belfast partners • Local authorities • Community and voluntary sector • Local colleges, universities and training providers
Develop at-scale interventions to address the legacy of low skills to support inclusion	• Almost 1 in 5 Belfast residents currently skilled to level 2 or below • Future demand forecasts suggest that only 1 in 10 jobs will require level 2 skills or less	• Invest in in-school support to enhance attainment levels (particularly at GCSE level), focusing on areas of deprivation	• Department for Education/ Education Authority	• DfE • Local colleges and skills providers • Local authorities • Schools • Area Learning Communities • Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government
		• Develop a funded programme to expand in-work essential skills provision, focusing particularly on those employed in low-skilled sectors	• Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership	
		• Develop alternative skills accreditation models and explore new pathways of informal and formal learning	• Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership, in conjunction with RSA	
		• Re-scope funded employability and skills support programmes (including ESF provision) to improve outcomes for participants	• Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership, in conjunction with DfE and DfC (and relevant funders)	
Focus on digital skills at scale	• Tech and digital sectors have been resilient and are driving city growth - need to ensure appropriate supply of talent to maintain competitiveness and drive further investment • Labour market challenges may create opportunities to establish new pathways, creating a wider talent pool to support business resilience and demonstrate commitments to inclusive innovation	• Develop and secure resources for comprehensive digital skills plan to service existing and future demand, including consideration of new access routes into the tech and digital sector to support inclusion	• Innovation City Belfast Partnership, in conjunction with Belfast Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnership	• DfE • Local colleges, universities and training providers • DfC
Scale up higher skills provision in key growth areas	• Future demand forecasts identify need for 10% increase in vocationally relevant subject areas	• Use place-based partnerships (e.g. Innovation City Belfast) to support greater alignment between skills supply and demand ensuring responsive, solution-focused engagement to meet future growth needs	• Innovation City Belfast	• DfE • Universities and colleges


belfast met
H & W

What happens next?

We believe Belfast and Northern Ireland stand at an inflection point, with windows of opportunity at both macro and institutional levels to create a positive generational benefit for both the city and the region.

At this juncture, we consider that the city's leaders must reset, refocus and regroup with a singular commitment to delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth that will drive prosperity for all residents and address the structural challenges in the economy.

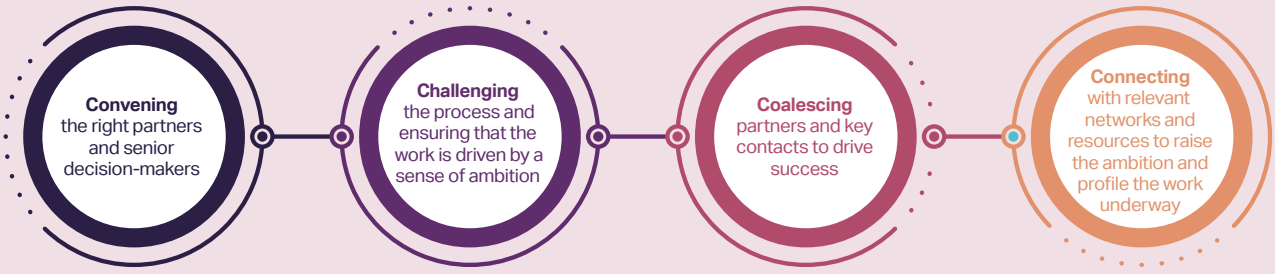
Emerging strategies and new approaches such as the 10x Economic Vision, the work of Innovation City Belfast and the emerging investment through the Belfast Region City Deal are indicative of a high level of ambition supported by critical investment proposals. However, they will only be realised if we are successful in convincing our partners across the various government departments and within the Northern Ireland Executive to think innovatively about developing a different relationship with the city, its agencies, its anchor institutions and its businesses.

Commission members are acutely aware that our proposals are far-reaching and involve system-wide change. We recognise that, while these proposals are borne of our collective experiences in other cities and places, they cannot simply be transplanted into Belfast. We know that understanding local context is critical and our two years of work here have demonstrated to us the unique complexities of this place. For that reason, we feel that we will only be able to make traction with these proposals if we can build collaborative coalitions to bring forward these proposals for the benefit of residents, businesses, communities and in support of wider city and regional ambitions. In practical terms, this will involve bringing together partners to test and shape interventions, secure resources and oversee delivery, as well as successfully influencing government partners to ensure that they consider and take account of these proposals in emerging policy approaches. We recognise that these propositions cover a wide range of areas, so we have suggested that the Development Leads convene senior representatives to develop delivery plans and secure resources to bring forward the commitments.

Commission champions

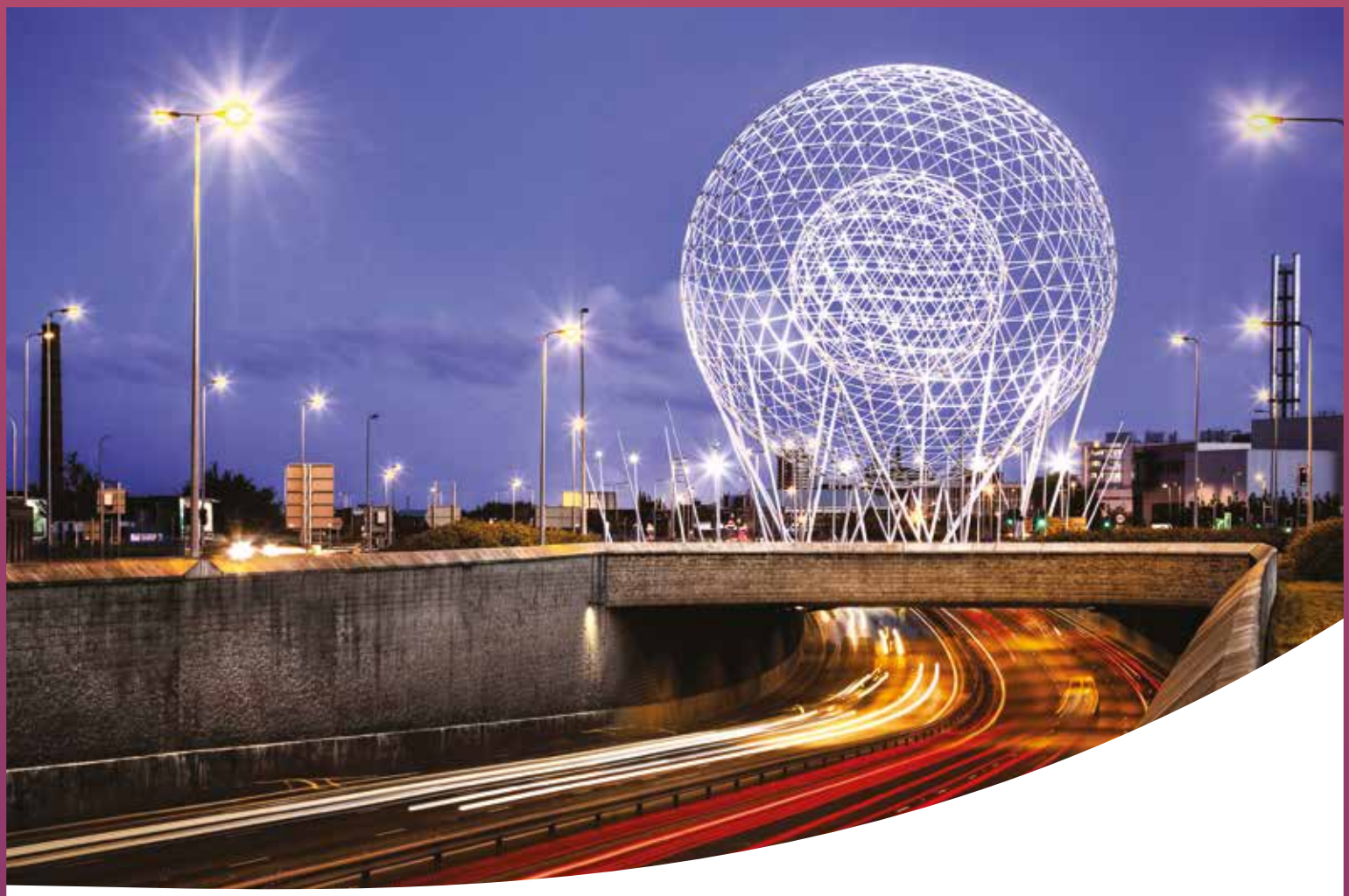
The Commissioners each feel passionately that the propositions in this report, if actioned, can help move Belfast and Northern Ireland towards a more inclusive and sustainable future. That commitment has driven us over the last two years and, having reached this point, we want to help, where we can, to move these ambitions forward.

Working alongside the Development Leads and other responsible agencies, a number of the Commissioners have agreed to champion key propositions in the document. The role of the champion will be to use their position, knowledge and networks to influence delivery by:



The respective champions are:

- **Renewed Future City: city centre development**
  Suzanne Wylie, Belfast City Council
- **Renewed Future City: housing development**
  Grainia Long, Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- **Sustainable Future: net zero**
  Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner
- **Sustainable Future: energy**
  Dame Rotha Johnston, NIE Networks
- **Intelligent Future City**
  Professor Ian Greer, Queen's University Belfast
- **Global Future**
  Ann McGregor, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- **Inclusive Future Opportunities**
  Ed Vernon, Strategic Advisor to BT, Deputy Chair of Queen's University Foundation Board and non-executive director of a number of technology businesses



Develop early stage proposals - defining investment rationale.

Establish challenge teams to test viability, develop delivery plans and secure resources and consider whether they can progress to delivery.

Programmes to be delivered through relevant lead agencies identified.

Commission champions to support.

Advisory Forum to review progress, provide advocacy advice and technical support.

Progress review by Commission after 12 months.

The Commission was established by Belfast City Council. Continuation beyond the production of this report was never in our gift. The proposed way forward is to establish a new City Innovation and Inclusive Growth Advisory Forum. This will involve senior Belfast-based representatives across the public and private sectors. This forum will work with nominated development leads to convene challenge teams comprising relevant partners to test, develop and source the required resources to deliver our recommendations. The forum will report progress to the Commission and in 12 months' time, at that point we will reconvene to review progress and, where appropriate, create a further call to action.

We want to mobilise local organisations to take ownership of these recommendations. We need our local businesses to endorse the proposed areas of investment as those that can make a difference to them. We need our local communities to engage with these proposals and to see them as solutions to some of the inequalities and challenges that they face. We also need to look beyond the city, positioning Belfast and its abundant economic assets as a dynamic location for investment, attracting the resources and financing to help deliver on some of the ambitions in this report.

We recognise the volatility of the economy at present. However, we have positioned this work as a 10 year plan. In order to stand any chance of successful implementation, the political environment will require greater stability and the operational environment will require greater commitment to collaboration, with more joined-up, long-term planning and multi-annual budget windows.

Our experience to date suggests that the commitment and ambition is in place among city partners. We remain committed to seeing this through and will re-engage in twelve months to review progress and offer our reflections at that point.


George Best
BELFAST CITY AIRPORT

Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission members

The Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission is a collaboration between Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour, Queen's University, Ulster University and a number of city partners, which was set up with the goal of agreeing an ambitious economic strategy for the city. Details of Commission members are included below:

Chair

Sir Michael Lyons
Non-Exec Chairman, English Cities Fund

Chairman of the English Cities Fund, Chairman of SQW Ltd, a director of Redrow Homes PLC and strategic adviser on public asset management and regeneration. He is a former Chairman of the BBC (from May 2007 to end of April 2011). Following a distinguished career in public service, he was knighted for services to Local Government in 2001.

During 2014 he led the Lyons Housing Commission, to produce a road map for building 200,000 homes a year by 2020. He led the national 'Lyons Inquiry' into the functions and funding of local government, which argued for greater devolution and emphasised the local authority's role in placeshaping and two other significant reviews concerning the relocation of government services (2004) and the management of public assets (2004). A former Deputy Chairman of the Audit Commission (2003 to 2006) and Professor of Public Policy at Birmingham University (2001 to 2006).

Members

Tim Brundle
Director of Research and Impact, Ulster University

Tim Brundle is Director of Research and Impact at Ulster University. Tim directs Ulster's research strategy, governance and administration, and guides its commercial output through knowledge transfer and intellectual property commercialisation. He also holds the position of Executive Director of Innovation Ulster Ltd, Ulster's venturing and investment company.

Tim has worked throughout his career in research-led organisations, with a focus on developing their customer-orientation, economic impact, business outcomes and shareholder value. He has led the establishment of more than 40 high tech start-up companies, secured over £400m of venture capital, managed a profitable investment fund and ensured investor value from company acquisitions and a stock market floatation. He has served as a Director of many of Ulster's spin out companies, Invest NI and the UK Knowledge Transfer Network.

Members (continued)

Emma Cariaga
Joint Head of Canada Water Development, British Land

Emma leads the development of Canada Water, a 53 acre project delivering a major new town centre in Central London. She joined the Executive Committee in 2019.

Emma is a Non-executive Director of Assura plc, as well as Non-executive Director of TEDI-London, a higher education provider for future engineers founded by Arizona State University, King's College London & UNSW Sydney.

Emma joined British Land in 2014 from Landsec where she delivered a number of Central London developments as well as overseeing their strategic land portfolio. Prior to this, Emma held development and land management roles at Barratt and Crest Nicholson.

Alice Charles
Lead, Cities, Infrastructure and Urban Services, World Economic Forum

Alice Charles leads the Cities and Real Estate workstreams at the World Economic Forum. This includes the Global Future Council on Cities and Urbanization, the Future of Real Estate, co-leading the Net Zero Carbon Cities: An integrated approach initiative and the Biodiverse Cities initiative, the production of all cities and real estate related content and events at World Economic Forum Summits (including Davos).

She is also a Member of the European Commission Intelligent Cities Advisory Board, a member of the UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group, a member of the Commission for Innovation and Inclusive Growth for the City of Belfast, a member of the Mayors' Global Council for the City of Buenos Aires, a member of the Visiting Committee of the Senseable City Lab, MIT, a member of the Urban Leadership Council (ULC) for the Coalition for Urban Transitions, jury member of the WWF One Planet City Challenge and a jury member of the Real Play City Challenge.

She has nineteen years' experience working in the areas of cities, urban development, town planning, real estate, infrastructure, environment, climate change and public policy globally. She was previously an External Board Member of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), Ireland Planning Advisory Committee from 2010 to November 2020.

Professor Neil Gibson
Chief Economist for Ireland, EY

Neil Gibson is EY Chief Economist in Ireland providing economic advice, commentary and modelling input across service lines. Current areas of focus include supporting firms to prepare for Brexit, forecasting the Irish economy and working with Government clients to ensure a policy focus on long term competitiveness.

Neil is a visiting Professor of Economic Policy at Ulster University and a regular commentator in the media on economic matters in Ireland and prior to joining EY, was their senior economic advisor across the island.

Prof Ian Greer FMedSci
President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

Ian Greer has been President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast since August 2018. He has extensive experience of university innovation, driving regional economic growth, including cross-sector developments such as the Northern Health Science Alliance, a collaboration of eight universities and NHS partners, and is the co-founder of the Health Innovation Research Alliance for NI.

He is a strong advocate for university social responsibility including widening participation. He leads the innovation pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal, driving innovation in key sectors for the local economy - creative industries, health innovation, data science and analytics and advanced manufacturing. He is currently President of Universities Ireland, promoting collaboration across the island and a Council member of Research England.

By way of background, he is a medical graduate of the University of Glasgow, with his research and clinical career in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. He has held senior leadership positions in several UK universities and was Vice President of the University of Manchester, immediately before moving to Queen's.

Dame Rotha Johnston DBE

Rotha is currently is director of Wildflower Property and previously owned a food service business with her husband, that operated in Great Britain and across the island of Ireland.

Rotha is chair of Northern Ireland Screen. She is also chair of NIE Networks, the transmission and distribution operator for Northern Ireland. In addition, she is a member of KPMG's Northern Ireland Advisory Board, a director of QUBIS Ltd, where she chairs the Developmentt Committee, and a director at the charity, Ulster Garden Villages Ltd.

In the past she has been a BBC Trustee for Northern Ireland, Pro-Chancellor at Queen's University Belfast, a member of the Industrial Strategy Council, an independent body assessing the progress of the UK Government's Industrial Strategy, a Belfast Harbour Commissioner, Deputy Chair of Invest Northern Ireland and a director of AIB UK.

Grainia Long
Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Grainia Long is the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the housing authority for Northern Ireland and one of the largest publically owned social landlords in Europe.

Previously, Grainia was the Commissioner for Resilience for the city of Belfast, and co-Chaired the Belfast Climate Commission. Grainia was also the Chief Executive of the National Child Protection Charity in the Republic of Ireland, ISPCC Childline. This position followed several years working in housing, including as Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), and previously National Director of the CIH in Northern Ireland. She has served two terms as a member of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, was a member of the Lyons Commission on Housing Supply and Advisor to the Best Commission on the Future of Housing in Northern Ireland.

Grainia is currently Chair of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing Trust, a social housing provider in England, and Senior Independent Director on MTVH Group Board.

Members (continued)

Angela McGowan
Regional Director, CBI Northern Ireland

Angela joined the CBI in October 2017 as Director for Northern Ireland having previously worked for eight years as the Chief Economist for Danske Bank. She has enjoyed a varied career spanning 23 years as an economist in both the public and the private sector. Angela has experience sitting on several boards including Vice Chair of Enterprise NI and Non-Executive Director of Young Enterprise.. She currently sits on the Northern Ireland Audit Office's external review panel and is a member of the Employer's Forum at Queen's University in Belfast.

Ann McGregor-Sistern MBE
Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce

Ann McGregor is CEO of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She was formerly Chief Executive of Enterprise NI and a director with Business in the Community. She commenced her career in the private sector working in production/materials management with Roche Manufacturing, Schering Plough and Bird's General Foods before moving into local economic development.

Ann is a council member of Dublin Chamber of Commerce and a member of British Chambers of Commerce National Accreditation Committee. She is currently the Deputy Chair of the Grand Opera House and a member of the Senate at Queen's University, Belfast.

Joe O'Neill
Chief Executive, Belfast Harbour

Joe joined Belfast Harbour in 1997, holding a number of roles including Commercial Manager and Port Manager as well as Commercial Director until his appointment as CEO in 2018.

Prior to joining the Port, Joe held positions with Undus Ltd and Cantrell and Cochrane Ltd. Joe is currently a board member of Simon Community and a Council member of the Ireland US Council.

Matthew Taylor
Chief Executive, RSA (2006-2021)

Matthew Taylor was Chief Executive of the RSA from 2006 to summer 2021. He has recently moved to a new role but remains a Fellow of the RSA. Matthew has blogged over 1,200 times on topics ranging from policy, politics, public service reform and cultural theory to the RSA itself.

Prior to becoming Chief Executive of the RSA, Matthew was Chief Adviser on Political Strategy to the Prime Minister. He was the Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research between 1999 and 2003, has written numerous articles, and is a regular panellist on Radio 4's Moral Maze.

Judith Totten MBE
Non-Executive Board Member, Invest NI

Judith Totten is the founder and Managing Director of 'Upstream,' an independent provider of working capital funding, trade and supply chain funding and credit management support to businesses across Northern Ireland.

She had a lengthy career in business banking, principally with Danske Bank (Northern Bank Ltd) before setting up her own business in 2011. A passionate advocate for business across NI, Judith is actively involved in funding, mentoring and advising business owners across a wide range of industry sectors. Judith is very well networked and aside from her own business is committed to supporting the key business bodies such as the CBI, IOD and Chamber of Commerce as well as sitting on the Prince's Trust Council.

Dr Ed Vernon OBE

Ed is a Strategic Advisor to BT Ireland, a Foundation Board Trustee of Queen's University and Chair of the Riddel Hall Founders' Club. Since 2007, he has been Chairman of Macildowie Ltd. a specialist recruitment agency in the East Midlands of England.

From 2011 until 2014 he was Asset Management Advisor to the NI Executive. Ed was awarded an OBE for services to economic development in 2012 and holds an honorary doctorate from Queen's University for exceptional services to business and commerce.

Suzanne Wylie
Chief Executive, Belfast City Council

Suzanne Wylie took up the post of Chief Executive of Belfast City Council in 2014.

Through the Council's City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy which involves securing a City Growth Deal, Suzanne is positioning the Council as a key driver in the continued growth of Belfast as Northern Ireland's capital city. She has been leading the Council's ambitious city's community plan, the Belfast Agenda, aimed at delivering economic growth and connecting neighbourhoods and people to the opportunities it creates.

Senior Responsible Officer

John Greer
Director of Economic Development, Belfast City Council

John Greer is the Director of Economic Development at Belfast City Council, and leads a division with responsibilities for economic development, tourism, and culture, aimed at developing the city's economy and vibrancy.

Prior to joining Belfast City Council John was a Director at the Special EU Programmes Body in Belfast, where he managed the PEACE IV and Interreg VA programmes. Before that, John spent more than a decade in North America. Initially working for Invest Northern Ireland, leading their trade and promotion activities on the US West Coast, before taking up a position at BDC in Vancouver, where he led a team delivering innovative debt and equity financing solutions for high growth technology, media and telecoms companies. Following this role John took up a position as a Director at the National Research Council of Canada, leading a team developing and delivering strategies to encourage the growth of the technology sector in Canada.



Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Invitation to Inclusive Growth Network Annual Political Leaders Meeting: Building Back Places: Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager Economy

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To make Members aware and seek a nominee to attend the Inclusive Growth Network Annual Political Leaders Meeting: Building Back Places: Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery taking place via Zoom 14th/15th September 2021. The invite was originally directed to the Lord Mayor but, given the subject matter, it has been directed to this Committee to agree participation and attendance.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to nominate the Committee Chair, Deputy Chair or nominee to attend the event.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Inclusive Growth Network was formed just under a year ago and is hosted by the Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP), funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and supported by Metro Dynamics and the Royal Society of Arts. Membership consists of 12 councils and combined authorities leading the drive for inclusive local economies across the UK.
3.2	The Inclusive Growth Network was established in September 2020 with the purpose of sharing intelligence, learning and experience to develop and test ideas for local interventions that tackle inequalities, alleviate poverty, and improve productivity within their communities. Membership consists of 12 councils and combined authorities leading the drive for inclusive local economies. These are, - Belfast City Council - Bristol City Council - Cardiff Council - Leeds City Council - Liverpool City Region Combined Authority - North of Tyne Combined Council - North Ayrshire Council - Greater Manchester Combined Authority - Glasgow City Council - Sheffield City Region Combined Authority - West Midlands Combined Authority - London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
3.3	Members of the Inclusive Growth Network have access to a package of peer-to-peer and tailored support to help address delivery challenges and harness opportunities to build inclusive local economies.
3.4	The first year of support provided through the network is structured around the following themes: - Advancing the ‘good work’ agenda within local economies - Repurposing local skills provision to respond to Covid-19 impacts - Driving a green recovery that delivers on local environmental targets - Tackling health inequalities and the social determinants of health - Leveraging community wealth through local levers such as procurement - Investing for inclusive growth - Measuring and evaluating inclusive growth outcomes

3.5	The event will take place via Zoom on Tuesday 14th or Wednesday 15th September from 10.00 -12.00 and will explore the role of local leadership in delivering a sustainable and inclusive recovery. The event will also mark the one-year anniversary of the launch of the IGN and explore how the network can facilitate Belfast City Council's inclusive growth priorities in year two.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.6	There are no finance and resource implications related to this activity.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	There are no equality or good relations requirements related to this activity.
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Official invite from Inclusive Growth Network - `Invitation to the Inclusive Growth Network Annual Political Leaders Meeting: Building Back Places: Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery'

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RE: Invitation to the Inclusive Growth Network Annual Political Leaders Meeting: Building Back Places: Towards a Green, Inclusive Recovery

10.00-12.00 Tuesday 14th or 10.00-12.00 Wednesday 15th September

Dear Cllr Nicholl,

As a member of the Inclusive Growth Network (IGN), I would like to invite you to save the date for a private, online annual meeting of IGN mayors and political leaders that will explore the role of local leadership in delivering a **sustainable and inclusive recovery.** The event will also mark the **one-year anniversary of the launch of the IGN** and explore how the network can facilitate Belfast City Council's inclusive growth priorities in year two. This follows the launch just one year ago, which many political leads participated in to help set the direction of the network.

The event will take place on Zoom on **Tuesday 14th or Wednesday 15th September at 10.00-12.00** (depending on political leaders' availability) to coincide with the run up to party conferences.

With the shared US & UK 'Build Back Better' motto to have become cliché, and the G7 leaders recently committing to "Build Back a Better World" at the latest annual summit, the Inclusive Growth Network brings to the forefront the power of local places to inject new life into the slogan by focusing on solutions centered around the lived experiences of local communities. It is our places and the people within them that bring meaning to such phrases, elevating them above empty rhetoric.

At this meeting, IGN members will commit to a whole system, place-based response to tackling the climate crisis locally. It will explore the practical challenges and opportunities for local leaders to ensure a just transition that leaves nobody behind whilst embracing opportunities to level up the country. Leaders will launch a communique expressing a collective commitment to sustainability that all communities can contribute to and benefit from.

I sincerely hope you can join us for what will no doubt be a clear step forward for collaborative local leadership across the UK on the just transition. As a means to this, we intend to use the opportunity of the annual meeting to **launch a joint communique from all IGN political leads**, to mark a shared commitment to achieving net zero in a way that leaves none of our communities behind. We will be in touch with Barry Rolston in your communications office to arrange this. Please do advise if you would prefer for us to arrange via another member of your team.

I would be grateful if you could respond to Annabel Smith, IGN Senior Network Lead, with your availability on the proposed dates to IGN@progressive-policy.net at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes,



Charlotte Alldritt
Director, Centre for Progressive Policy

About the Inclusive Growth Network (IGN)

The purpose of the Inclusive Growth Network (IGN) is to support areas at the forefront of the inclusive growth agenda with the practical evidence, knowledge and expertise to advance their local ambitions for more inclusive, green and sustainable economies. As we look ahead to year two, we will be working to develop pilots with members to test new ideas and initiatives.

The IGN is hosted by the Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP) and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). The IGN national partners also include Metro Dynamics and the Royal Society for the Arts (the RSA).

The national partners have teamed up with 12 areas from across the UK who represent the combined and local authorities who lead on the inclusive growth agenda. The IGN member areas are: **Barking & Dagenham, Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Greater Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool City Region, North Ayrshire, North of Tyne, Sheffield City Region and the West Midlands.**

Through membership of the IGN, you have access to a facilitated peer network and a package of funded support designed to inform and advance your local activity both during this critical response period from Covid-19 and looking ahead to delivering an inclusive recovery.

About the Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP)

CPP is a non-partisan think tank dedicated to making inclusive growth a reality. This means we focus on increasing productivity and prosperity across the UK, finding practical ways to create jobs, enhance opportunities and tackle decades of regional inequality. In short, we are setting out strategies to deliver on the Government's "levelling up" ambition.

To do this we:

- Conduct data-driven economic analysis to illuminate and address challenges faced by different communities.
- Work with local authorities, devolved administrations and UK politicians and officials to identify where and how national policy responses can deliver better outcomes for places.
- Draw on our Inclusive Growth Network of 12 member places across the UK to develop, test and learn from new approaches and interventions designed to 'level up' on the ground (see more below).

Two principles underpin our approach, at a national and local level: on the one hand, the importance of place in effective policy and investment decision making. On the other the role of social infrastructure (education, health, early years, childcare and youth services etc) in determining economic outcomes. CPP is the research partner for the APPG Inclusive Growth and an external member of the APPG Left Behind Neighbourhoods.

Our Research

Our research covers a range of topics under the banner of 'inclusive growth' – including what this term means and how it is being developed internationally to 'build back better' – both from the last recession (post-2008) and as look to recover from the impact of Covid-19. Specific topics include levelling up, skills and industrial strategies, population health, the role of business and creation of quality jobs. Devolution and institutional reform (local, regional and national) are themes that cut across our analysis and policy development. We develop our work in close engagement with local and national partners and stakeholders (e.g. Whitehall officials, Northern Powerhouse Partnership, Core Cities).

For more information visit www.progressive-policy.net
You may have heard about our last major report on Skills 'Reskilling for recovery'

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Consultation on draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Council Response**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Sinéad O'Regan, Employability and Skills Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of the report is to present the Committee with a draft response to the consultation on the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10x Economy. Subject to Council endorsement, this will be submitted to the Department for the Economy as the Council's contribution to the consultation.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • approve the response to the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland consultation for submission to the Department for Economy (DfE), as set out in the attached appendix.

	• given the deadline for submission of responses by 20th August (extended for the Council until 26th August), the Committee is asked to give delegated authority to officers to submit the agreed response before the deadline, with the proviso that it is subject to Council ratification on 1st September.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Department for Economy (DfE) recently launched a consultation paper on the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10x Economy. The Department has asked for views on how the challenge of building a world-class skills system is to be met. This Strategy sets direction for the development of a flexible skills system for the next decade, in line with DfE's 10x economic vision. It aims to align the skills system to better jobs and better wages across the economy. There is an overarching focus on creating a skills framework which can drive economic prosperity and tackle social inequality.
3.2	The Skills Strategy recommendations have been informed by preliminary work undertaken last year by the OECD. There has also been some stakeholder engagement through a Programme Board (including local government representation through Belfast City Council's Chief Executive), as well as further data input through UUEPC's NI Skills Barometer.
3.3	The draft strategy includes three broad objectives. These are: • Addressing skills imbalances, driving economic growth • Creating a culture of lifelong learning • Enhancing digital skills – developing a digital spine.
3.4	It also contains three strategic "enablers" which will support the delivery of the strategy: • Enhancing policy cohesion • Building strong relationships • Investment in the skills system.
3.5	Some of the key areas of challenge identified through the supporting research include: • Graduate and post-graduate levels: the overall number of qualifications produced in Northern Ireland is broadly in accordance with anticipated demand, but there is a need to rebalance the type of qualifications delivered towards STEM, with corresponding reductions in subjects more typically aligned to work in the public sector;

- Participation in lifelong learning: The Strategy sets a framework and objectives for the NI skills system to 2030. As 80% of the 2030 workforce will have already completed compulsory education, the education system needs to adapt to lifelong learning to adapt to a rapidly changing economy. OECD research suggests adults in OECD countries spend, on average, 30% more time in adult education than individuals here. As the skills demands of the labour market continue to grow, there is a risk that too many people are left behind, deepening inequalities even further;

- There is significant under-supply of level 3-5 qualifications (above GCSE and equivalent and below degree level). DfE assert that qualifications at this level will be vital in adapting to new technologies, driving economic growth and providing better jobs for more people. The Skills Barometer shows that too many people in the workforce have qualifications at level two or below. Jobs at this level are diminishing and, exasperated by Covid 19, low skilled individuals are more exposed to economic shocks and face challenges from automation;

- Enhancing digital skills: At the highest level, advanced digital skills are essential to develop the digital sector and key strategic clusters Digital, ICT and Creative Industries, Cyber Security, Agri-Food, Fintech/Financial Services, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering and Life and Health Sciences (e.g. Digital Medicine) – all of which are essential to drive the necessary productivity and competitiveness improvements that the city needs to address. However, the Strategy recognises that, as the economy and workplaces become increasingly digitised, digital skills will be required across the board – at all skills levels.

3.6 In order to address the challenges and deliver on the 10x growth ambitions, a series of costed interventions has been incorporated in the Strategy. Key proposed activities include:

- Lifelong learning project and action plan
- A Flexible Skills Fund
- Public sector and all age apprenticeships
- Overhaul of Careers Guidance (for young people)
- Publication of Work Quality Indicators
- Skills Action Plans to support priority clusters
- Review of Level 4/5 HE provision in FE
- Further Skills and Innovation research.

3.7	Members will be aware of the Council's work with the Department for Communities (DfC) in developing Belfast Inclusive Labour Market Partnership (LMP). The purpose of the LMP is to make employability and skills interventions more effective and support an inclusive approach to growth in the city. It aims to bring together, in a single body, the necessary local knowledge and expertise to build on existing structures and identify priority interventions within employability and skills that will: • Enhance the effectiveness of current interventions • Highlight specific areas of challenge that risk inhibiting the city's ability to develop in a way that is inclusive and ambitious and that supports our growth ambitions • Be informed by data and insights – and guided by local knowledge of "what works" • Enable testing at scale to be able to make a measurable impact on jobs and employment in the city.
3.8	Labour Market Partnerships form part of the local governance structure associated with a new approach to employability issues across government – called Employability NI. While DfC is the lead department, DfE is directly engaged in the work of the Labour Market Partnerships and the partnerships are directly referenced in the draft strategy as being critical vehicles for coordination and prioritisation of local employability interventions. Other relevant areas of work that are important considerations for the outworking of the skills strategy include the work of Innovation City Belfast (ICB) – and the need to ensure an appropriate supply of skilled labour to meet future growth prospects. ICB has also identified the importance of taking an inclusive approach to innovation, including in the approach to skills development. This will require the development of new routes into growth sectors, rather than relying on existing models that are largely based on university access.
3.9	It is recommended that the Council's response, as set out in the attached appendix, be submitted to DfE, subject to Council ratification. The response is structured in line with the consultation document issued by DfE. Some of the key points of the response include: • Agreement with the overarching strategic direction aligned to the Programme for Government and 10x ambitions. There is a commitment to fully resourcing the Labour Market Partnerships and an ambition for greater engagement and – potentially – devolution of responsibility, at an appropriate point;

- Recommendation that Labour Market Partnerships are utilised as the sub-regional skills structures within the strategy as outlined in the consultation document;

- Proposal that the Strategy should not only concentrate on providing access to better jobs, but also support people who may require additional assistance in getting a first foot on the employment ladder, and helping others to build the confidence and skills to obtain a better job. This will require – among other things – a fit-for-purpose independent careers advice and guidance service is needed for adults as well as young people to ensure inequality is tackled and the skills gaps are addressed. This has also emerged as a priority area of work within the Labour Market Partnership;

- Recognition of the important role played by the VCSE sector in engaging with those who are further back in the labour market, those with lower attainment levels, those experiencing in-work poverty etc

- Recommendation that intelligence from the proposed Labour Market Observatory, within Belfast's LMP proposals (and likely to emerge within most Labour Market Partnerships), should be used in tandem with the Skills Barometer to inform decision making and allocate appropriate resources

- Recognition of the challenges in attracting and retaining workers across a range of sectors such as transport and logistics (all driving occupations), hospitality, social care etc. Initiatives therefore need to be agile to meet immediate skills shortages at level three and below. The Council's Employment Academy model has been successful to date: with 4 in 5 participants finding a job at the end of the intervention. Models such as this need to be flexed and scaled up to address sectoral demand

- Identification of curriculum gaps at all levels across a range of new and emerging job areas in the green economy. In our view, this sector has not received sufficient profile in the draft Strategy. Without sufficient provision at all levels, there is a risk that we will not fully embrace the opportunities that will be created by the green economy

- The Strategy document states that some sectors such as hospitality, social care etc. have a reputation of not providing 'better quality jobs', however there is a work to be done to support these sectors to tackle this. Business and employers are needed as partners in skill provision. To this end, we welcome the 'better job pledge' as quality of work is important, together with security, wages, contracted hours, progression potential and

	better protection against precarious employment. We recommend that the Inclusive Growth City Charter (Belfast Business Promise) being developed by the Council is utilised as the basis for developing this 'better jobs pledge' • Given that the volume of replacement demand will significantly outnumber new job creation over the next ten years, it is important that skills interventions are open to employers across all skills areas – not just priority growth sectors. This will be particularly important in areas such as logistics, hospitality and social care. **Financial and Resource Implications**
3.10	No specific financial or resource implications associated with this strategy. **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
3.11	There are no equality implications in relation to our draft response.
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Draft Council Consultation Response

Belfast City Council's Response to the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland Skills for a 10x Economy - DRAFT

The Skills Strategy was considered by the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20 August with the enclosed corporate response agreed. This response remains subject to ratification by Full Council on 1 September 2021 and we will inform you at that stage if there are any changes made.

1. ***Are you content with the overarching strategic direction set out in the section The Programme for Government, our Economic Vision (a 10x Economy) and the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland:***

   "the Skills Strategy must be directly aligned to the PfG aim of improving wellbeing for all by supporting efforts to tackle inequalities, providing low skilled, low paid, or unemployed individuals with the opportunities they need to work in 'better jobs', whilst concurrently focusing on provision of the skills and qualifications needed to drive economic growth and competitiveness in the sectors where Northern Ireland has real global potential."

The Council agrees with the overarching strategic direction aligned to the Programme for Government. In particular, the focus on lifelong learning is welcomed to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of skills provision in NI. However, to ensure this is met in practice, independent and fit-for-purpose careers advice and guidance is needed – both for young people and for adults - to ensure inequality is tackled and the skills gaps are redressed. Independent careers/skills advice and guidance is needed to shape aspirations and to create skills pathways that support outcomes for individuals (better jobs) but also increasing talent pool for our economy.

As documented in the Council's response to the Executive on the PfG Outcomes Framework relating to Skills and Employability,[1] the Council calls for further devolution of employability and skills functions – such as those provided by Employability NI and the creation of the Labour Market Partnerships – to increase the effectiveness of interventions and improve outcomes for Belfast residents.

It is recommended that the Labour Market Partnership structures that have been established in each council area are designated as the subregional structures proposed within the Strategy. This will ensure that both Employability and Skills are aligned using a place-based approach.

[1] https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s90483/Programme%20for%20Government%20Outcomes%20Framework%20-%20Draft%20Consultation%20Response.pdf and https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s90485/Appendix%202%20-Draft%20Council%20Response%20to%20PfG%20Outcomes%20Framework.pdf

The Council would wish to explore how we can work with partners to use and intelligence-driven and evidence-based approach to enhance the effectiveness of the planning work around future skills needs and training provision to meet these needs with the objective of supporting inclusive economic growth. To do this, the Council intends to establish a Labour Market Observatory for Belfast – bringing together data and intelligence both in terms of supply and demand, and we understand that other councils are exploring similar approaches. We recommend that these insights are shared across partners and utilised to inform the design of interventions that are agile, optimise outcomes (jobs, education, training) and ensure alignment between labour market demand and skills. To do this effectively, the Council recommends that better data sharing among central government departments and the council is required (in compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation).

In Belfast, the work of Innovation City Belfast will be critical in shaping and directing the skills interventions required to meet the growing demand in the sector. Significant investments such as the City Deal will create opportunities that can enhance competitiveness and productivity levels. These will necessitate commensurate levels of investment in skills in order to ensure that there is a sufficient and appropriate supply of skilled workers.

As the planning authority, the city Council is now in receipt of significant intelligence regarding future employment opportunities at key developments. The Council would wish to explore how we can work with partners to use this information to plan better around skills needs and training provision to meet these needs with the objective of supporting inclusive economic growth.

The Strategy should not only concentrate on providing access to better jobs, but also support people who may require additional assistance in getting a first foot on the employment ladder and have the confidence, skills and career path created to obtain a better job. Quality of work is important, together with security, wages, contracted hours, progression potential and better protection for unstable work.

2. *Do you agree with the need to rationalise the skills landscape by limiting the number of strategies governing separate parts of the skills system, instead focusing on a single, overarching, Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland (see page 40-41)?*

The Council agrees with the need to rationalise the skills landscape. We propose that DfE works closely with the Labour Market Partnerships to do this, creating an overarching framework for Employability & Skills that works to actively reduce skills mismatches by ensuring that provision is directly matched to intelligence-driven demand. In our view, employability and skills should be closely aligned.

3. Have you any other comments on the Strategic Context Chapter?

In reference to the over-provision up to Level One qualifications, the Council agrees there is over provision at that level and below. However, Level One and below needs to be provided to allow foundational skills to be built. The role of local provision to engage those who are further back in the labour market also needs to be addressed and the role of the VCSE sector is crucial in doing the outreach amination and engagement within local communities needed to create a skills pipeline that meets employer needs. The challenge is to build transparent and coherent pathways from level one towards higher skills levels or towards other vocational pathways, rather than them necessarily being an end in themselves.

4. Acknowledging the need for the development of 'SMART' targets, do you agree that the skills supply gap identified under the Skills Barometer's high growth scenario should be placed at the centre of the proposed Strategy (see page 43)?

The Council broadly agrees that the skills supply gap identified under the NI Skills Barometer's high growth scenario should be placed at the centre of the proposed Strategy**.** Belfast's Skills Barometer is in line with the gaps identified at levels three to five. However, the NI Skills Barometer needs to be supplemented to capture real-time market intelligence on labour supply and demand: this volatility has been highlighted by the effects of COVID-19. A greater focus on 'highly skilled' workers should not overshadow acute labour shortages which are threatening the sustainability and survival of businesses across many sectors. The Council recommends that intelligence from the proposed Labour Market Observatory, within Belfast's LMP proposals, should be used in tandem with the Barometer to inform decision-making and allocate appropriate resources.

In addition:

- The Skills Barometer is an invaluable data source to guide the focus of the strategy however, it would be beneficial to see focus on not just higher skills levels such as the 4 cluster areas proposed but also on skills needed for a strong regional economy including health and social care; the skills gaps created by the demand for 'replacement jobs' in sectors such as logistics and transport; and emerging skills demand such as the green economy (transport and retrofitting).
- There are challenges in attracting and retaining workers being reported by employers and representative bodies across a range of sectors such as transport and logistics (all driving occupations), hospitality, social care etc. Some sectors are directly linking labour shortages to EU exit. Other issues such a "fear of further lockdowns" also means that workers who are currently furloughed are anxious about returning to work in specific sectors while many others

have left the sector for other types of work meaning many businesses are now facing into staff shortages as the economy begins to open up again. Initiatives therefore need to be agile to meet immediate skills shortages at level three and below. The success rate of the Council's Employment Academy model in helping people access jobs or better jobs sits at 79% although ffurther resources to address skills gaps in an agile way will be required to address sectoral demand.

- There is currently a lack of a skills development curriculum for new and emerging jobs in the green economy across all education and skills providers in NI. The green economy and related skills are largely overlooked in the strategy and, as a key growth area, it would be beneficial for a great emphasis on curriculum development and provision for new and emerging sectors if we want to future-proof the strategy. Without a proper curriculum (at all levels) it will be difficult to give local people the right skills to embrace the opportunities that will be created by the green economy
- The Strategy document states that some sectors such as hospitality, social care etc. have a reputation of not providing 'better quality jobs', however there is a work to be done to support these sectors to tackle this. Business and employers are key partners in employability and skills provision. To this end, the Council welcomes the 'better job pledge' as quality of work is important, together with security, wages, contracted hours, progression potential and better protection against precarious employment. We recommend that the Inclusive Growth City Charter (Belfast Business Promise) being developed by the Council is utilised as the basis for developing this 'better jobs pledge' and are happy to share this information
- The Skills Strategy should provide support to ensure better jobs across all sectors – not just higher growth sectors – recognising the need to support 'replacement jobs' which experience significant skills mismatches such as logistics and driving occupations
- Although the Strategy document specifically recognises the under-provision of skills level between level two to five, the sectors identified tend to need at least level four qualifications as an entry level. There is a lack of support for the sectors that employ those with qualification level two to five, for example logistics, administration and care sectors. In addition, given the recruitment challenges in some of the high growth sectors, it is important that work is undertaken with employers to look at new and alternative entry pathways, as a means of securing the labour market supply for the future
- The NI Skills Barometer will also benefit from DfE's policy Objective 11, on page 96 regarding investment in the development of a consolidated portal, providing open access to information on current and forecast labour market skill needs and applicable study/work opportunities.

5. Are you content that the proposals contained in pages 43 - 56 provide an ambitious and comprehensive approach to 'Addressing Skills Imbalance, Driving Economic Growth'?

No	Proposal	Page	Belfast City Council Response
1	We will examine the potential to mainstream remote learning provision in key areas of essential skills, employability skills and digital skills for individuals and employers.	50	We welcome this approach
2	DfE will work directly with DfC to support collaborative approaches between local and central government to develop the education and training provision required to underpin both the Skills Strategy and the 'Employability NI' Strategy.	52	We strongly welcome this approach
3	The outcomes from the 'Transition of Young People into Careers (14 – 19) Project', jointly led by DE and DfE will be recognised within the new Skills Strategy.	53	The Council welcomes the commitment to develop and introduce new measures on careers guidance outcomes for young people. However, the service should align and join up with an overall career service encompassing young people and adults and the proposal under Point 13 on 'Preparing for Success'. Under Belfast's LMP, the Council is proposing a "Gateway" service to provide residents with timely advice and guidance to help them find work or upskill.
4	DfE will review how it collects information on the destination and outcomes for FE College leavers, to improve evidence on long-term outcomes for FE qualifiers.	54	The Council welcomes this approach and would encourage DfE to share this information as part of their engagement with Local Labour Market Partnerships in order to improve outcomes for participants and inform the content of new interventions.
5	We will ensure Northern Ireland's Further Education sector has the resource and capability to deliver its dual objectives of providing essential, entry level pathways to education and professional and technical skills, to support economic and social prosperity.	55	The Council welcomes this approach. However we also acknowledge they key role played by the VCSE sector, particularly in engaging those who are further back in the labour market, those with lower attainment levels and those experiencing in-work poverty etc. We consider that there is an opportunity for the development of local models whereby the VCSE engages in the essential outreach and early engagement work and is supported by FE and other providers to ensure alignment with vocational and employment demand.

6	A review of level 4 and 5 'HE in FE' education will be conducted. Recommendations and actions arising from the review will be incorporated in the implementation of the Skills Strategy	55	We welcome this approach in order to ensure appropriate levels of supply for future economic growth, particularly in key growth areas
7	Relevant Government departments and arms-length bodies will contribute fully to the 'Independent Review of Education', announced by the Minister of Education in December 2020, to ensure our education system is sustainable, economically relevant and equipped to deliver the best outcomes for our children, young people and society as a whole.	57	The Council welcomes this approach.
8	We will increase collaborative investment between Government, research institutions and business in post-graduate education and research, which support the development of Northern Ireland's key strategic clusters set out in 'A 10x Economy'.	58	We support this approach. We consider that some of the models developed through the work of the Belfast Region City Deal can be useful blueprints for collaboration of this nature, and strongly endorse the work of Innovation City Belfast in taking some of these initiatives forward
9	Recommendations emerging from the Women in STEM Working Group will be fully recognised in the Skills Strategy and subsequent skills action plans.	60	The Council welcomes this approach. We also suggest that there should be a commitment to supporting inclusion amongst all under-represented groups as part of all of the interventions that are proposed.
10	We will build on 'Preparing for Success', by developing and introducing new measures of careers guidance outcomes and by developing clear, common, transparent and accountable quality standards.	60	The Council welcomes this approach. Encouraging Lifelong Learning is an important objective. However, plans need to ensure that adults as well as younger people are aware of industry and employment/skills opportunities – and how they can change career if desired. Delivery plans should consider the needs of adults in a population that may already have had a negative experience of careers guidance. However, to ensure this is met in practice people need independent guidance to navigate through the myriad of employability and skills provision through a fit-for-purpose independent careers advice and guidance service for adults as well as young people – as recommended by the Belfast Labour Market Partnership - to ensure inequality is tackled and the skills gaps are redressed. Independent careers/skills advice and

			guidance is needed to shape aspirations and to create skills pathways that support outcomes for individuals (jobs/better jobs) but also reducing skills mismatches within the labour market.
11	We will invest in the development of a consolidated portal, providing open access to information on current and forecast labour market skill needs and applicable study/work opportunities.	60	The Council welcomes this approach. However, it requires sufficient resources in staffing and outreach is required to enable quality interaction with people (mentoring, careers guidance advice clinics, roadshows and employment opportunities showcasing what industries need).
12	We will enhance engagement between employers and the education sector to identify and publicise opportunities for individuals in education to engage with the world of work.	62	The Council welcomes the focus on providing employer engagement opportunities and work experience opportunities. This will provide opportunities to all, including under-represented groups and those requiring additional support. However, enhanced engagement is required as early as possible to maximise impact. Engagement with industry should happen at primary school and then be continually re-enforced throughout secondary school and beyond. Strong role models should be used as "influencers" particularly where there may be gender (or other) imbalances in employment in specific industries. This approach will require greater collaboration between the Department of Education and Department for the Economy.
13	We will develop bespoke skills action plans to support Northern Ireland's key strategic clusters.	62	The Council welcomes this objective. However we would welcome extending this approach beyond the "core" priority sectors to cover those sectors that are likely to experience significant demand especially logistics, social care, hospitality etc.

6. Are there any additional proposals you believe should be considered under the 'Addressing Skills Imbalances, Driving Economic Growth' objective?

Broadly, the Council welcomes this approach. Additionally, we would welcome a focus on gender inequalities in skills provision, skills levels and access to 'better jobs'. Much of the skills provision is still unequal in gender balance, and this is particularly the case for high growth sectors.

7. Are you content that the proposals contained in pages 57 - 75 provide an ambitious and comprehensive approach to 'Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning'?

The Council acknowledges that the VCSE sector are a vital stakeholder in engaging with those who are further back in the labour market, those with lower attainment levels, those experiencing in-work poverty etc. and recommend that the provision of community-based education and skills development is recognised as a key mechanism to reach these residents in the city to support people's empowerment, motivation and confidence – a vital starting point for the skills pipeline in the city and regionally. However this can only work if the system is fully integrated and there is a need for much greater alignment to enable residents to benefit from clear pathways towards rewarding careers. We are exploring some interesting models in collaboration with the RSA e.g. digital badges and would be keen to engage with DfE on the outworking of these interventions.

No	Proposal	Page	Belfast City Council Response
14	We will assess the potential for more locally focused approaches, to support DE's policy interventions in relation to vulnerable children, particularly in areas of high social deprivation. This will include an assessment of how data can be better used to monitor pupil outcomes from education and the efficacy of policy interventions throughout the education system.	59	The Council welcomes the potential for more locally focused approaches to support DE's policy interventions in relation to vulnerable children, particularly in areas of high social deprivation. The Council is committed to addressing issues through Community Planning Partnership Structures, namely the Educational Inequalities within the Jobs, Skills and Education Board.
15	We will develop a new lifelong learning project and action plan, directly aligned to the achievement of the strategic goals set out in the new Skills Strategy.	60	For a number of years, Belfast has committed to being a "learning city" and is a member of UNESCO's Learning City Network. We are currently revisiting the focus of this work and would welcome the opportunity to explore how we can contribute to and drive the regional approach.
16	We will develop proposals for the expansion of childcare support, to enable all individuals with parental responsibilities to participate in lifelong learning.	63	The Council welcomes this approach. However, plans should be extended to those who have other caring responsibilities (e.g. disabled or older relatives).
17	We will review funding exemptions to ensure more individuals can participate in 'reskilling' opportunities, aligned to under-supplied qualifications in engineering and technology,	63	We support this approach and consider that it needs to incorporate re-skilling across a range of skills levels, in order to create inclusive pathways to new jobs

	mathematics, computer science and physical and environmental sciences.		
18	We will develop, and consult on, legislation to introduce training leave allowances for Northern Ireland employees.	64	
19	We will work with the FE Sector to examine the development of remote/blended, modular learning approaches, tailored to the needs of individuals and their employers.	65	The Council welcomes the Department's proposed commitment to remove current age-related barriers to make apprenticeship opportunities at levels two and three more available. However, the Council recommends that a new delivery approach is needed to offer 'portable' or 'flexi-job' apprentices. Some industries (construction and creative industries) cannot offer a long-enough placement with a single employer for apprentices to meet the government's minimum 12-month duration requirement. In the TV and film sector, for example, most roles are freelance and usually only run for two to three months. If we are to achieve the ambition of inclusive growth, a flexible intervention would greatly assist the Council [and the public sector], to deliver stronger social value outcomes within public procurement contracts, namely in construction. It will also lend itself to large construction infrastructure builds in city under City Deals. The Council recommends that a shared apprenticeship scheme is needed (for example, CITB's scheme in England and Wales, which supports apprenticeships while recognising that not all employers can provide full 104 weeks required for an apprentice to complete training). The strategy refers to public sector apprenticeships which should be welcomed; however, it must be balanced with support to the private sector to re-build and recover following Covid-19.
20	Under the auspices of the new Skills Strategy, DfE will develop a renewed approach to management and leadership in Northern Ireland.	70	We strongly support this approach – and would propose that DfE works closely with councils to tailor interventions for local businesses – as a means of driving up competitiveness and productivity

21	We will introduce a business pledge to recognise and promote employers who actively engage with principles of the work quality indicators. Businesses with 50+ employees must subscribe and actively promote the principles of the 'Better Jobs Pledge' prior to engagement with publicly funded support programmes.	74	Creating an inclusive economy is at the heart of the council's agenda. One key commitment was the development and implementation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for Belfast for employers across the city – setting a city wide standard in relation to procurement, employment and civic / neighbourhood engagement. Based on the engagement to date, the Council has drawn up a draft Charter – the Belfast Business Promise. The Charter focuses on good employment, procurement, and the role of businesses in their community through eight Charter Pledges. The Council therefore welcomes this proposal and offers that this city charter can inform the development of the 'better jobs pledge'.
22	The NICS will take steps to mark itself out as a leader in the adoption of High-Performance Working Practices and the development of management and leadership skills in Senior Civil Service grades.	75	The Council welcomes this approach.
23	We will develop a discrete, collaborative project, to define what employability skills means in the Northern Ireland labour market and propose a series of actions to improve the performance of our education system.	76	A focus is required, not only on traditional job search strategies but on enterprise, self-employment, social enterprises and job creation in the strategy. Supporting innovation and enterprise skills as a cross cutting skills set for the NI economy is particularly important as our comparatively low business start-up rates and high level of business deaths directly impact on productivity.

8. Are there any additional proposals you believe should be considered under the 'Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning' objective?

No additional comments.

9. Under 'Enhancing Digital Skills, Creating Our Digital Spine' we include only one recommendation, that an expert panel is appointed to develop a specific Digital Skills Action Plan for Northern Ireland (see pages 76 - 81). Do you agree with this approach?

No	Objective	Page	Belfast City Council Response
24	An expert panel of individuals from business and education will be appointed to develop a specific Digital Skills Action Plan for Northern Ireland.	82	The Council welcomes this approach and the work of Innovation City Belfast may be a useful model to consider. Digital skills are fundamental to the success of the economy as we move to economic recovery. The pandemic has accelerated the need for digital

			skills as those that were able to adapt and operate digitally were proved to be the more resilient. The Strategy recognises that digital skills are important for everyone in society, not just those with careers in the digital sector, and we fully support this.

10. Have you any other comments on the Strategic Goals and Policy Objectives?

No additional comments.

Chapter 5: Policy Enablers
11. The first two 'policy enablers': 'Enhancing Policy Cohesion' and 'Building Stronger Relationships' focus on a refreshed approach to the governance of the skills system (pages 84 - 90). Do you agree that these structures are a useful and appropriate approach to improving the development and implementation of skills policy in Northern Ireland?

No	Objective	Page	Belfast City Council Response
25	A new Northern Ireland Skills Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Skills Strategy. It will have ministerial leadership and include senior representatives from all government departments and local government.	86	The Council welcomes this approach. Cross-government buy-in and engagement is critical – at regional and local government level.
26	The Northern Ireland Skills Council should maintain an oversight role in the commissioning and development of all skills policies and related research.	86	The Council welcomes this approach in order to ensure greater coordination.
27	We will continue to work across central and local government to develop and implement sub-regional approaches to skills development, tailored to the needs of local businesses and communities.	87	The Council welcomes this approach and recommends that Labour Market Partnerships are used as the sub-regional structure.
28	The Northern Ireland Skills Council will be established to provide long-term, consistent, advice on the development and implementation of all aspects of skills policy. It will include representation from business leaders, senior representatives of education and employee representatives from trade unions.	88	The Council welcomes this approach. We recognise that there may be a need for additional working groups e.g. sectoral groups – but consider that the NISC should provide the vehicle for overall coordination. There may be an opportunity to consider how this aligns with the work of the Regional Employability and Skills Board
29	Under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Skills Council, we will review	88	The Council welcomes this approach

	and rationalise the existing (skills) advisory infrastructure.		
30	Employer, employee and education institutions will be given a key role in determining the terms of reference for the Northern Ireland Skills Council.	88	The Council welcomes this approach
31	The Northern Ireland Skills Council should develop a sub-committee to consider how gender, and other diversity issues, can be better addressed across education, skills and employment policies and practices.	89	The Council welcomes this approach. Once agreed, these commitments should then be mainstreamed and should form part of the commitments for commissioned bodies that have responsibility for delivering key skills interventions.
32	The new Skills Strategy will be underpinned by 2, 5 and 10 year action plans.	90	We agree with the need for a longer-term strategic plan supported by shorter-term action plans.

12. The third policy enabler focuses on 'Investment in the Skills System'. The programme of change proposed in this consultation document is likely to require substantial investment. Do you agree that this should be prioritised?

No	Objective	Page	Belfast City Council Response
33	The Skills Strategy will be endorsed, as a whole-of-government Strategy, by the Northern Ireland Executive, recognising the key, strategic importance of education and skills development to our social and economic prosperity.	93	The Council welcomes cross-departmental collaboration as well as effective support pillars to engage with local communities to promote inclusive growth and reduce inequalities.
34	A ring-fenced skills fund will be developed to provide new opportunities in the labour market and support the skills development of the working age population as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for the economic changes brought about by our exit from the EU.	93	The Council welcomes this approach. We also propose that the recent reductions in skills expenditure should be reversed as a matter of priority in order to support inclusive economic growth. We are content to ensure that the work of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership is aligned to relevant priority interventions.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Belfast City Council Safeguarding Assurance Framework and Review of Policy**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services, CNS
Contact Officers:	Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager Anthony McPeake, Safeguarding Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present to Members the draft Safeguarding (All ages) Policy and to inform them of the proposed timetable for public consultation.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: i. consider and approve the draft Safeguarding policy, which complies with the most recent developments in safeguarding. The Committee should note that the draft policy has been shared for comment across a range of frontline services including AGRS, Legal Services and corporate HR; and

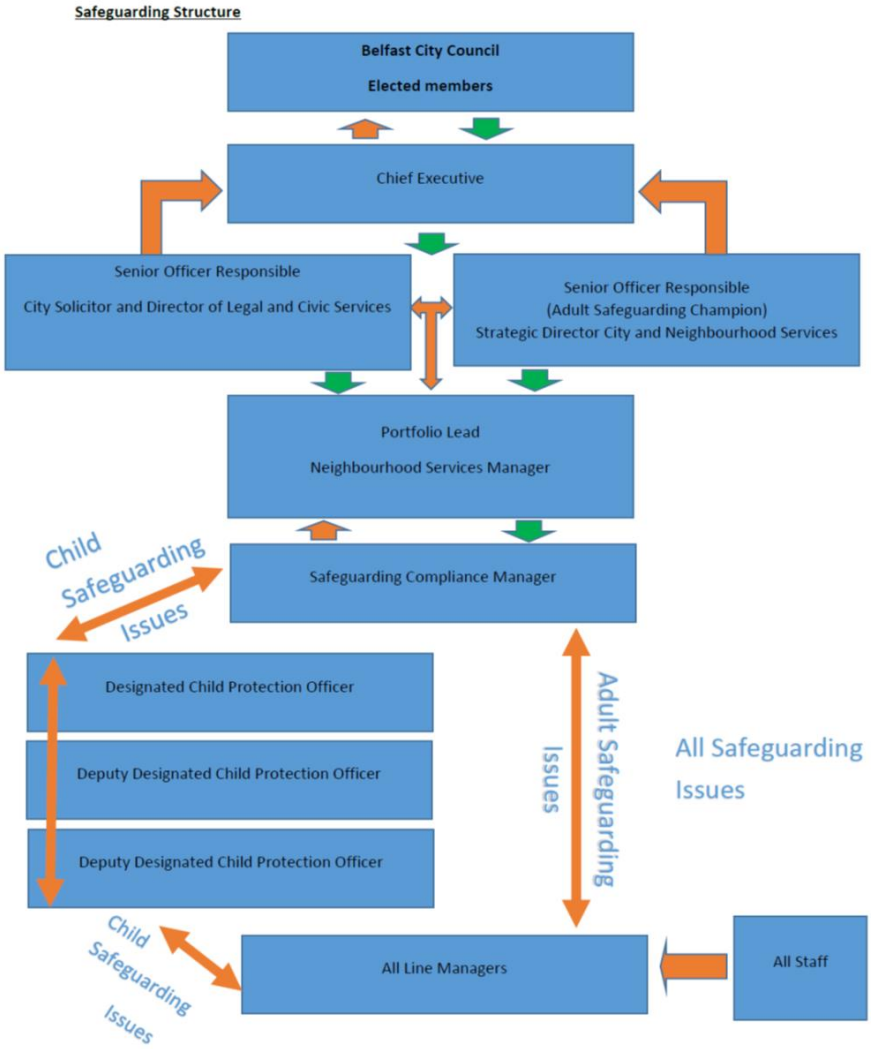
	ii. endorse the public consultation timeframe for the draft policy document from November 2021.
3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The new policy includes a series of arrangements to support an enhanced and robust assurance framework for safeguarding compliance across the council. These include more stringent pre-employment checks and periodic checks during the course of employment (every three years), improved training, clearer reporting procedures and line management responsibility, coupled with a greater awareness and understanding throughout the organisation.
	Background
	Context
3.2	Child protection has been a priority for organisations for many years, and there is a well-established process in place throughout Belfast City Council to deal with child protection issues. The current policy was written in 2009 and whilst it remains broadly compliant, changes in the wider operational environment, developments in technology, the rapid growth of social media and fluctuating socio-economic standards across the world has led to the need to revise the policy to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. The main guidance for safeguarding is currently managed by Volunteer Now and can be found in the document Keeping Children Safe, 'Our duty to care'. (https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2019/04/Keeping-Children-Safe-Our-Duty-to-Care.pdf)
3.3	Adult safeguarding is a distinctly different area of practise and, in reality, it is still in its infancy in comparison with child safeguarding. In April 2009, the Department of Health (formerly the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety) commissioned the 'Our Duty to Care Team' from Volunteer Now to develop standards and guidance for good practice in adult safeguarding for voluntary, community and independent organisations based on their experience of developing 'Keeping Children Safe'. Since the guidance was first published, there have been considerable developments in the area of adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland.

3.4	The Council has a corporate responsibility for safeguarding all ages (children and adults) which is currently supported by 'Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults' which has been in operation since 2009.
3.5	The policy applies to elected members, BCC Chief Officers and all staff and volunteers who work within or in the name of the council. It is a demonstration of the Council's commitment to providing and maintaining services across all Departments that protect these service users from harm as well as protecting the organisation and our staff and volunteers from potential allegations.
3.6	The policy is broadly relevant; however, it is no longer fit for purpose and presents a significant risk to the organisation particularly when considered alongside rapid growth in social media, technology, and recent news reports concerning high profile Safeguarding issues. <u>Current Position</u>
3.7	Since August 2019, officers have worked to review the existing provision, identify the areas for improvement and enhance the risk assessment for the Corporate risk register.
3.8	The new policy has been developed and is attached at Appendix 1. The document is based on the principles of current good practice, shared learning and current legislation and will be reviewed every three years in line with new developments and best practise. The policy document is supported with robust operational procedures and guidance for all staff.
3.9	This policy is the basis on which the assurance framework will be built and will include the following steps: ▪ Safeguarding is on the BCC corporate risk register with the Director of Neighbourhood Services as risk owner. This risk has recently been reviewed by AGRS and is subject to review on a quarterly basis. The risk is reviewed in line with corporate policy with the last review being June 2021. ▪ SROs: Director of Neighbourhood Services and the City Solicitor act as joint SRO's. ▪ Safeguarding Panel: Meets every two months starting April 2021 to provide strategic direction and leadership, discuss outstanding matters and is made up of senior Safeguarding champions from different departments across the Council.

- Safeguarding Operational Group: Will be established to disseminate information to the teams and help with the roll out of the new policy. This group meets in the alternate month to the Panel.

- Adult Safeguarding Champion: Although the Council does not currently have any regulated posts in relation to adult safeguarding, best practise would suggest that we should nominate an Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC). Therefore, the Director of Neighbourhood Services was nominated and accepted by the panel as ASC. We can only name one ASC, however, there can be as many nominated persons as operationally required. The Panel suggestion is the Director of Neighbourhood Services will be the ASC and the responsibility is delegated to the Safeguarding Compliance Manager (SCM).

- There is now a clear structure, as demonstrated below:



Training programme

3.10 The Panel has also agreed a new training programme, for both adult and child safeguarding. There will be four levels of training:

	Who	When	Delivery method	Time Commitment	Refresher requirement
Level 0	All staff	At induction	Online/Paper based/in person	1 hour	Every 3 years or in response to major changes.

Level 1	Staff working in regulated positions, line managers of regulated staff, staff with regular contact with the public and other identified staff	During the first six months of employment	Face to face facilitation	6 hours	Every 3 years or in response to major changes
Level 2	Line managers	During the first six months of employment	Face to face facilitation	3 hours	Every 3 years or in response to major changes
Level 3	Designated/nominated Officers	As necessary	Face to face facilitation	3 hours	Every 3 years or in response to major changes

- Safeguarding training will be offered to all Elected Members.

- HR/Access NI checks: As part of the review process a piece of work has been completed to identify all 'regulated positions' within the council. This work is reaching completion and has to date identified 165 identified post holders undertaking regulated activity on behalf of the council. This provides a baseline for one part of the Safeguarding Compliance and assurance in the recruitment process.

- A list of regulated posts will be maintained and reviewed periodically.

- All new job roles will be reviewed and assessed using the defined descriptions of regulated activity by the continuous improvement department.

3.11 <u>Projected Consultation Timetable.</u>

Below is the expected timetable of events to allow the new policy to become operational, this is dependent on multiple factors and may be subject to amendment.

Date	**Activities associated with Safeguarding Policy are as follows:**
July 2021	Final draft policy to be presented to the Safeguarding Panel
	Present policy to CMT
August 2021	SP and R Committee report to be prepared and presented
	Equality Screening and RNIA to be undertaken
September 2021	New staff training rolled out.
September – November 2021	External engagement and consultation with relevant public bodies to be undertaken
	Public consultation to be undertaken
Ongoing	Explore communications needs with Corporate Comms – internal and external
November 2021	Consultation analysis
December 2021	Final Committee Report to be prepared and presented.
Jan 2022	Roll out of new policy and Communication to staff.

Financial and Human Resource Implications

3.12 The cost of the Safeguarding Compliance Manager - the salary is secured within CNS revenue estimates.

All other costs have been absorbed by existing budgets:

- Training
- Access NI Checks

Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs Implications

3.13 There are no relevant equality considerations associated with the report at this time. The implementation plan will include arrangements for Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the new Safeguarding Policy.

4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Summary - Safeguarding all ages Draft Policy and Procedures 2021 Appendix 2: Safeguarding all ages Draft Policy 2021

Appendix 1: Summary of draft policy

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and safeguarding all ages is important to us.
The Council recognises everyone has a fundamental right to be safe. Whatever the cause, or wherever it occurs, harm caused to children, young people or adults by abuse, exploitation or neglect is not acceptable. In response to Keep Safe Children – Our duty to Care (2017) and Keep Adults safe – A shared responsibility (2015) published by Volunteer Now to reflect development in Safeguarding and changes in legislation and guidance, we reviewed the current policy and procedure and recommended some improvements

In summary, the revised policy is designed to improve the safety and minimise the risk of harm of people of all ages living in Belfast (including staff) with whom Council may come into contact. It seeks also to enable all Council staff and Members to recognise and know how to respond to concerns about abuse. The policy provides definitions of the forms of abuse for both young persons and Adults at risk and details the steps that need to be taken by all staff, and others, if they have a concern about anyone potentially being abused.

The policy also enables Council staff to identify those adults within the community who may use Council services and who may be defined as being "at risk." The policy details how staff can get support and advice in situations where they have concerns about an older person or an adult who may be vulnerable as a result of learning disability, illness or physical or mental infirmity.

The policy is aligned with the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people produced by the DHSSPS "Cooperating to safeguard Children and Young People" (2016) and with the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP) "Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures" (2016).

The draft policy is divided into 2 sections which set out Council's commitment to safeguarding people of all ages:

Section 1: Is specifically child and young person's safeguarding
Section 2: Is specifically adult safeguarding

Both sections cover: Safeguarding Policy statement, Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers, Effective management of staff and volunteers, Reporting Concerns, Assessing and managing risk, Dealing with comments, suggestions and complaints, Information sharing , Code of behaviour, General safety and management of activities, Implementation and Monitoring Procedures,

Additional information for staff is included in an Operational procedures document that compliments and works alongside the policy. By keeping the operational procedures as a live, but separate document it will allow the Safegaurding panel and operational group to develop these procedures in line with operational need

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Belfast City Council

Safeguarding All Ages Policy (July 2021)

Draft version 8 final.

Approved Date	
Review date	Every three years or in response to changes in legislation or guidance.
Related legislation	Please see policy
Replaces	Policy and procedures for the protection of Children and Vulnerable adults 2009
Policy Lead (name, Position, contact details)	Cate Taggart
Policy Author	Anthony McPeake
Sponsor Directorate	City and Neighbourhood services
Version	V8

Version Record

Date	Version	Revision description
27/05/2021	V8	Small amendments in response to JNCC TU call.
10/03/2020	V7	Revision for typos
27/02/2020	V6	Revision following JNCC call by ARGS
10/01/2020	V5	Final revision from HR
18/12/2019	V4	Revision after feedback from HR and Legal.
20/10/2019	V3	Feedback from Safeguarding panel members
01/09/2019	V2	Used for Development of current policy. This document was never approved by council or seen outside of the Safeguarding panel for development.
01-09-2009	V1	Revisited due to need to update in line with changes in guidance and legislation

Part 1

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Part 2

Safeguarding Adults Policy

Chief Executives Foreword:

Everyone has a fundamental right to be safe. Whatever the cause, and wherever it occurs, harm caused to children and adults by abuse, exploitation or neglect is not acceptable. This policy emphasises that safeguarding is everyone's business and that as a Council, we will strive to prevent harm to children and adults from abuse, exploitation or neglect. This policy requires us to put all individuals who may be at risk at the centre of what we do, to listen to them and to work in partnership with them and on an inter-agency basis to create an organisation which has a zero-tolerance of harm to the most vulnerable people living in Northern Ireland.

This policy is Belfast City Council's contribution to the fulfilment of a Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government commitment to deliver a package of measures to safeguard children and adults who are at risk of harm and to promote a culture where safeguarding is everyone's business.

The Council recognises that the Safeguarding Policy must be owned at all levels within the organisation. As Chief Executive of Council I have directed that this policy be developed and I, the elected members and the Corporate Leadership Team, will be responsible for its approval and ensuring it is fully implemented and reviewed. A key element of the safeguarding policy is the recruitment of a Safeguarding Compliance Manager who will ensure that this council embraces best practice in this area.

We will also strive to incorporate the ethos of trauma informed practise into all aspects of council life by incorporating the six key principles of Safety, Trustworthiness and Transparency, Peer support, Collaboration and mutuality, Empowerment, voice and choice, Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues.

The Policy applies to all employees, elected members, casual/agency workers, volunteers, contractors, grant-aided organisations and those using our facilities irrespective of their function, remit or role. It provides a robust platform which sets out the Councils responsibilities and details where support can be obtained.

I particularly commend this Policy to all employees and would ask that you take the time to familiarise yourself with the contents.

Suzanne Wylie

Chief Executive

Rationale

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and safeguarding all ages is important to us.

The Council recognises everyone has a fundamental right to be safe. Whatever the cause, or wherever it occurs, harm caused to children, young people or adults by abuse, exploitation or neglect is not acceptable. In response to Keep Safe Children – Our duty to Care (2017) and Keep Adults safe – A shared responsibility (2015) published by Volunteer Now to reflect development in Safeguarding and changes in legislation and guidance, we reviewed the current policy and procedure and recommended some improvements; Following this in 2018 we introduced a Safeguarding Panel and began a piece of work to establish robust policies and procedures, demonstrating our commitment to safeguarding and to provide clear and practical support to elected members, staff, agency workers, casual workers, and volunteers.

We have designed this document to be user friendly and to incorporate the ethos that safeguarding of **all** ages is **everyone's** responsibility.

Part 1

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

INDEX

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy		
Topic	Table of Contents	Page
1	Introduction	4 - 5
2	Legal and best practise basis	5
2	Policy statement	6
2.1	Aims	6
2.2	Objectives	7
3.0	Definitions	8
4.0	Recognising abuse	8 - 9
4.1	Types of abuse	9 - 10
5.0	Recruitment and selection	11-12
6.0	Training	13-17
7.0	Record Keeping	17-18
8.0	Governance, Monitoring and reporting	18-19
9.0	Third Party contracts	20

1.0 Introduction

1. What is safeguarding?

Within this policy the term 'safeguarding' is used in its widest sense, that is, to encompass both activity which prevents harm from occurring in the first place (council safeguarding procedures) and activity which protects children and adults at risk where harm has occurred or is likely to occur (council reporting to statutory agencies procedures).

Preventative safeguarding includes a range of actions and measures. Council employees may come into contact with children and adults who may be at risk of harm and so must recognise the potential for, and to prevent, harm. In practice we support staff by providing safeguarding procedures which include:

- Recruitment and selection – vetting procedures
- Management, support, supervision, training and awareness
- Reporting procedures for safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm
- Assessing and managing risks
- Comments and complaints procedures
- Management of records, confidentiality and sharing of information
- Workplace domestic violence policy and trusted colleagues
- Safeguarding codes of behaviour
- Booking procedures for council facilities including Safeguarding requirements.
- Photographic guidance
- Role of Safeguarding Compliance Manager

Protective safeguarding is targeted at children and adults who are in need of protection, that is, when harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect is suspected, has occurred, or is likely to occur. The Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts and PSNI lead the protection service. In practice the Council has internal reporting protocols for concerns regarding children and adults which may lead to referrals to these statutory agencies.

The duty to safeguard is a responsibility of all organisations, groups, services and agencies within society that come into contact with children and adults at risk of harm.

Standards

We have designed the standards in this policy on Information taken from the following:

Legislation;

- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC International Treaty)
- Data Protection Act 2018 - GDPR (Replaces Data Protection Act 1998)
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Commencement No. 11) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Order (NI) 1978.
- Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967
- Safeguarding Vulnerable groups (NI) Order 2007
- Section 75 NI Act 1998
- The Safeguarding Board Act (NI) 2011

Guidance Documents:

- Volunteer Now – Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults – Policy Standards 2012
- SBNI – Safeguarding Board for NI - Policy standards
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children (DHSSPS) Guidance
- Our Duty to Care: Standards and Guidance for Keeping Children and Young People Safe (2014), Volunteer Now.
- Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, March 2016

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of a child is any person under 18 as per The Children Order (NI) 1995

Definition of Safeguarding and Child protection

Safeguarding is more than child protection.

Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

(Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, August 2017)

Children and young people have the right to live their lives to the fullest potential, to be protected, to be able to participate in and enjoy activities and to be treated with dignity and respect. There is a considerable body of legislation, government guidance and standards designed to ensure that these all children and young people are protected from harm.

Everybody has a responsibility for the safety of children and young people and in accordance with relevant legislation we, as an organisation which has significant contacts with children and young people across its services, have both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care.

The purpose of this policy and its associated procedures is to help protect the children and young people who use our services and to ensure that Belfast City Council employees, volunteers, and elected members are aware of issues that can cause children and young people harm and take effective action to protect them.

By complying fully with the policies and procedures, we seek to ensure that employees, volunteers, and elected members are also protected whilst carrying out their duties.

2.0 Policy Statement; aims and objectives.

Policy Statement.

Every child and young person have a right to feel safe and protected and, as a provider of public facilities and services, we are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for the children and young people who use our facilities. Access our services and come into contact with members of our workforce. We will take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people using our facilities and services from harm, discrimination, or degrading treatment whilst respecting their rights, wishes, and feelings.

2.1 Aims

We aim to do this by:

- Recognising that all children and young people have the right to freedom from abuse and protection from harm.
- Putting in place robust recruitment procedures to ensure that those individuals whose behaviour could be a threat to the safety and well-being of children and young people are not offered employment.
- Raising the awareness of the duty of care responsibilities throughout the council.
- Actively encouraging good practice amongst all employees, volunteers, and elected members throughout the council and promoting wider awareness wherever possible, with partnership organisations and user groups.
- Creating a safe and healthy environment within all our services, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur.
- Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes, and feelings of children and young people and working closely with other agencies.
- Recruiting, training, supervising, and supporting employees who work with children and young people to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse, and themselves against false allegations. Employees who work with children and young people will be subject to the appropriate level employment checks. All appropriate new staff will be inducted on these policy and procedures with sign-off from their line managers'
- Introducing a Code of Behaviour specific to Safeguarding
- Responding to any allegations appropriately and implementing the appropriate council policies and procedures.
- Requiring employees, volunteers, and elected members to follow the council's safeguarding children and young people policy and procedures.
- Having appropriately trained Designated Safeguarding Officers in place to co-ordinate children and young people safeguarding issues and give advice. (Please note, certain council

facilities / services operate outside of 9am – 5pm, therefore, this may result in a Duty Manager rather than a Designated Officer being onsite outside of these hours.)

- Ensuring we maintain confidentiality where appropriate and we restrict access to confidential information to the appropriate authorities.
- Carrying out a regular audit and review of the effectiveness of our safeguarding children and young people policy and procedures.
- Helping to maintain professionalism and standards of service which are associated with best practice provision, including a Code of Behaviour.
- We are committed to reviewing our policies, procedures, practices and training in line with changes in legislation and best practice or at a minimum every three years.

2.2 Objectives

Our objectives to achieve these aims are:

- To provide appropriate training for all appropriate employees, volunteers and elected members
- To aid employees, volunteers, and elected members to respond sensitively and seriously to anyone who discloses information about abuse and be confident and able to take appropriate action swiftly, regardless of whom the allegation is about.
- To promote the general welfare and well-being of children and young people within council facilities and services.
- To develop and implement effective procedures for recording and responding to complaints of alleged or suspected child or young person abuse.

3.0 Definitions

Throughout this document 'children or child' is used. Unless specifically mentioned this relates to 'children and young people'.

- The term children or young person is used to refer to anyone under the age of 18 years as defined in the Children (NI) Order 1995
- The term parent is used as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians.
- The term employees, staff and elected members is used to refer to employees, agency workers, casual workers, volunteers and District Councillors' and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing the Council (contractors).
- A volunteer is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation (other than reimbursement of agreed expenses, for example mileage) performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the council.

4.0 Recognising abuse.

Recognising child abuse is not easy. It is **not** our responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child or young person is at significant risk of harm from someone. We do, however, have both a responsibility and duty, as set out in our children and young people safeguarding policy and procedures, to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child or young person.

Everyone who works with children or young people or comes into contact with children or young people through their work, should be able to recognise, and know how to act upon, indicators that a child's or young person's welfare or safety may be at risk.

Abuse can occur from:

- parents,
- others with parental responsibility,
- adults in a position of trust,
- people within the wider family circle or neighbourhood,
- complete strangers, or
- Other children.

Abuse or harm occurs as much from omissions and lack of protection as from commission of the actual acts of abuse. Child protection/safeguarding processes should always consider the wider needs of the child and family; the council's elected members, staff, agency workers, casual workers and volunteers should always be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect.

Disabled children

Disabled children are at increased risk of abuse because they can experience greater vulnerability. This is the result of negative societal values, attitudes, and assumptions and unequal access to services and resources. They may have problems seeking help because of barriers to communication such as no verbal communication, isolation or inaccessible services. If staff or volunteers supporting people with disabilities have limited knowledge and skills with regard to a disability, this can increase the barriers to the recognition of abuse. The nature of a disability will be unique to each individual child or young person. They are likely to have additional needs relating to physical, sensory, cognitive, and/or communication impairments.

Reasons why disabled children and young people are more vulnerable:

- More risk of social isolation.
- Increased dependency for practical assistance which may increase risk of exposure to abusive behaviour.
- Impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse.
- Speech and language communication needs can affect ability to report abuse.
- Lack of access to someone they trust.
- Vulnerable to bullying and intimidation.

- Looked after Children who are disabled are vulnerable due to being in care but also vulnerable due to the additional dependency of their disability.

4.1 Types of Abuse

A child or young person can suffer harm through acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs or alcohol, or mental health issues, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse (NSPCC Stats suggest children with disabilities are three times more likely to be abused)

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. The key is effective and ongoing information sharing between professionals.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm.

Harm can be caused by:

- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- neglect; and/or
- *Exploitation* [(1)].

Physical abuse

Is deliberately physically hurting a child or young person. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child or young person.

Sexual abuse

Occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Emotional abuse

Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. We sometimes call this psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving an opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying, including online bullying through social networks, online games, or mobile phones by a child's peers.

Neglect

Is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Neglected children often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Exploitation [(1)]

Is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud, or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Self-harm

Although not categorised as abuse, it is important that we recognise and respond appropriately to children and young people who may have self-harmed or are suspected of self-harming. Self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms himself or herself on purpose (also called self-injury or deliberate self-harm) rather than by accident. Common examples include cutting, hitting, scratching or burning. Attempted suicide is the most serious form of self-harm.

Course of action: If a young person discloses that they self-harm you or you suspect a young person could be self-harming then you should follow the safeguarding process/procedures. .

(1) Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse

5.0 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF EMPLOYEES

Council implement transparent and clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures in accordance with legislative and statutory requirements as set out in the Local Government Staff Commission Code of Procedures for Recruitment and Selection.

The procedures set out in this document are in place to screen out those who are not suitable to work with children and young people.

As part of the Councils commitment to safeguarding children and young people we undertake 'Safer Recruitment' when recruiting to posts which are considered 'regulated activity'.

Regulated Activity (definition)

Regulated activity is defined as a position which requires working closely, regularly and unsupervised with children and is defined in Schedule 2 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Regulated positions include those whose normal duties require them to care for, train, advise, counsel or are in sole charge of children, or have unsupervised contact with children, as well as the supervisors/managers of individuals in regulated positions.

Access NI

Access NI provides criminal history information to organisations and individuals on three levels of 'Criminal Record Check', standard, enhanced, basic disclosures.

The level of checks required will be determined at the beginning of the recruitment process by the employing department. Corporate HR will also hold a list of Regulated posts, and the related procedures will be managed by the HR department.

An Access NI Enhanced Disclosure with Barred List Check is required for employees and volunteers in posts designated as regulated activity i.e. those posts which work with children and young people (as defined under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012). Before commencing a selection process for a post, the line manager in consultation with Departmental HR, Corporate HR and Continuous Improvement will determine if the post is considered to be a 'regulated post'.

During the selection process the preferred candidate must give consent for the relevant Access NI Disclosure Check. If the preferred candidate refuses to give consent for the check or if they are found to have withheld information this will be sufficient grounds for the Council to withdraw their conditional offer of employment.

Checks will be requested for any employee in a regulated position and those whose business or professional practice dictates. Checks will be repeated every three years for those in regulated activity and/or excepted posts, as appropriate. Checks will not normally be requested for existing employees (in non-regulated activity) however, a check will be requested if, an employee takes up new duties in a regulated position, where this has not previously been the case.

Access NI Disclosures

If a Criminal Records check reveals details of convictions which may render the applicant unsuitable for the applied for post Departmental HR/Corporate HR will discuss the situation with the applicant in accordance with the guidance set out in the Councils Guidelines for Dealing with Applicants with Convictions.

It is an offence for a barred person to work, apply to work or offer to work in Regulated Activity with a group they are barred from working with. Candidates on the Barred List will not be employed in Regulated Activity by the Council. If the checks reveal that a candidate is on the Barred List for Regulated Activity, the Council will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to notify them of the individuals attempt to apply for barred work.

Identification

The Council require all those applicants who have to complete the Access NI check to produce evidence of their identity e.g. a long birth certificate. This is important as Access NI can only make checks if the person's identify is confirmed.

References

The Council require two references from people who have employed you and who are not family members. Where a post involves work with children the Council may request references from any other previous employment, which involved working with children or young people.

If for legitimate reasons there is difficulty in sourcing suitable references, we reserve the right to seek alternatives as described in the referencing guidance document.

Agency workers

Council will ensure that agency workers in Regulated Activity are required to complete the relevant Access NI checks before they commence work.

Volunteers

Where volunteers work in Council and they are carrying out work considered as Regulated Activity, the council will:

- Require the Volunteer to complete an registration form
- Confirm their identify (e.g. provide a long birth certificate)
- Receive 2 written references
- Organise a meeting with the volunteer to review the details on the application form, review the volunteering role, ensure they are aware of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures and the induction paperwork
- Give permission for Council to apply to Access NI for an Enhanced Disclosure

Young Workers / Placements

Should the Council engage for any purpose a young person under the age of 18 then a safeguarding and health and safety risk assessment must be completed at induction.

6.0 TRAINING OF EMPLOYEES / AGENCY WORKERS / VOLUNTEERS AND ELECTED MEMBERS

Learning and development must not be seen as a one-off event, but a continuous process which requires the investment of time and resources within organisations to create a learning environment and a competent workforce. Each organisation must take responsibility to develop both knowledge and expertise in safeguarding and protecting children and young people, and seek to identify the most appropriate and relevant opportunities to develop the confidence, abilities and competence of staff and volunteers.

Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, March 2016

Safeguarding children and young people training will be offered as per SBNI Child Safeguarding Learning and Development Strategy and Framework (currently 2020 -2023) on a regular basis facilitating employees, agency workers, volunteers and elected members to update their knowledge and skill as appropriate.

The Council will provide refresher training every 3 years. The training will be provided at three levels - according to job description and role.

Level 1- Awareness Raising (Online and in person)

General awareness for all, employees, agency workers, volunteers and elected members. Attendees will gain basic knowledge of signs and indicators of child abuse and contributory factors; agency / staff policy and procedures; reporting procedures / processes and record keeping. Learning outcomes will include the ability to recognise and respond appropriately to child safeguarding issues and understand own role and the role of others within the organisation using the safeguarding policy and procedures. This will form part of the Council's induction programme.

Level 2 – facilitated training (Online during COVID 19)

Safeguarding children and young people training for relevant managers, employees, agency workers and volunteers who have substantial contact with children and young people. Attendees will gain more in-depth knowledge of values and principles of safeguarding children and young people; code of behaviour; recording skills; relevant legislation and referral process. Learning outcomes will include the ability to contribute to the assessment and management of risk; assist in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and understand the importance of own behaviour and boundaries.

Level 3 – Facilitated training (Online Due to COVID 19)

Comprehensive training for Designated Safeguarding Officers', Relevant Managers and Duty Mangers. Attendees will gain knowledge of key tasks to safeguard children; national, regional and local policies, standards and guidance: 'the protocol for joint investigation by police officers and social workers of alleged and suspected cases of child abuse – Northern Ireland' (April 2013). Learning outcomes will include the ability to develop working relationships with other professionals; identify learning from case management reviews and contribute to interagency safeguarding plans.

Record keeping, confidentiality and information sharing.

Confidentiality

While it is important that we adopt a partnership approach to ensure the safety and welfare of adults at risk, it is of equally important that all concerned are confident that the information they provide will only be disclosed where it is in the best interests of the adult at risk to do so. We have carefully constructed the council's policy and procedures to ensure such confidentiality while protecting the interests of the adult at risk.

We have an Adult Safeguarding Champion and officers with designated responsibility due to the complex nature of operations.

Officers' who have been specially trained in the area of safeguarding and are committed to the principle of confidentiality.

Information obtained by organisations in the exercise of their safeguarding duties may be of a personal nature about a particular adult at risk, and therefore is governed by the common law duty of confidentiality, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (the DPA).

The six principles state that personal data should be:

- processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary
- accurate and where necessary kept up to date
- kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer that is necessary for the purposes for which those data are processed, and
- processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data
- Accountability is central to GDPR.

Data Controllers are responsible for compliance with the principles and must be able to demonstrate this to data subjects and the regulator.

8.0 Governance, Monitoring and reporting.

In order to ensure compliance with the requirements of safeguarding legislation and expectation there are a number of procedures in place:

Operationally there are a number of provisions:

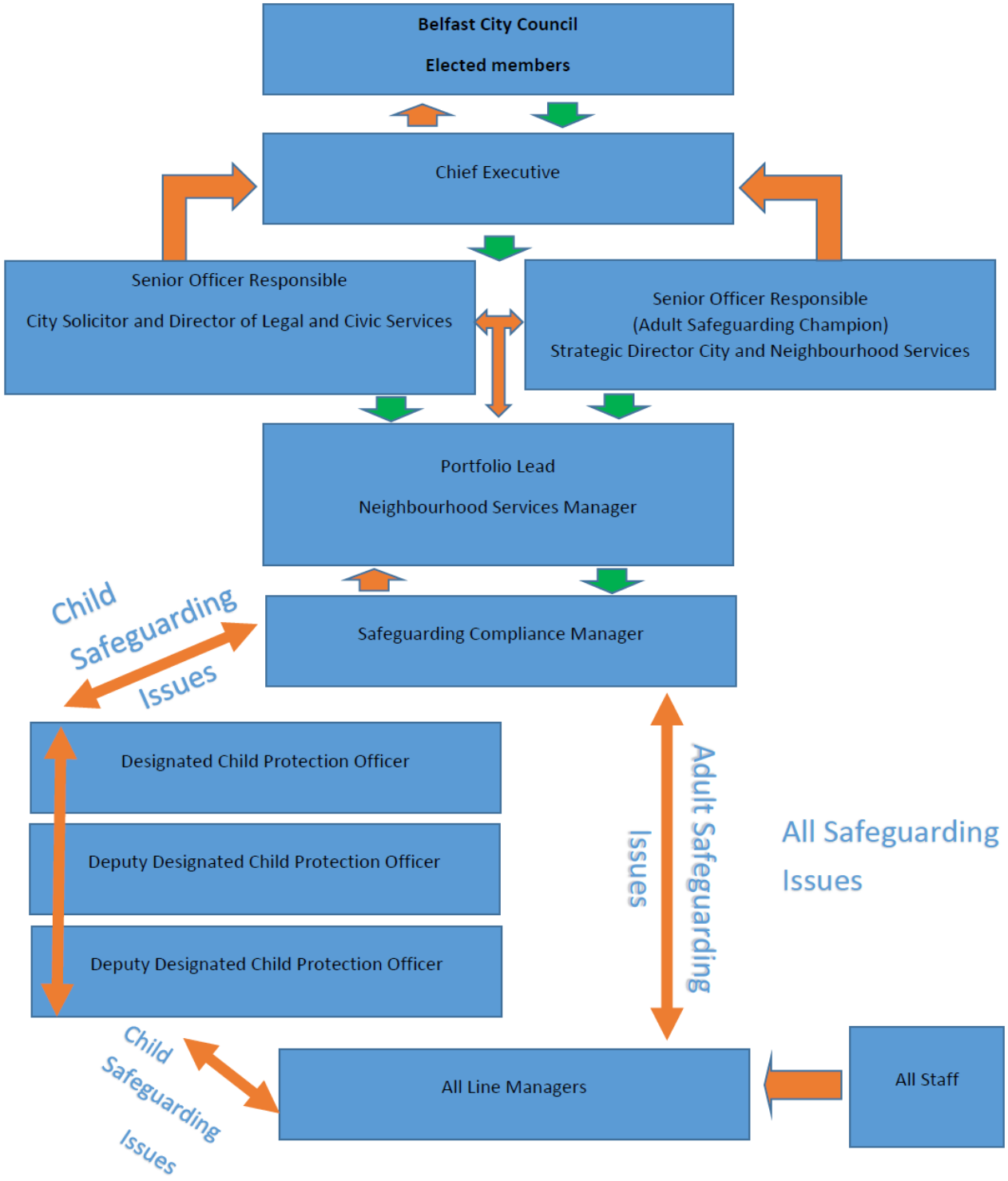
- <u>The Safeguarding Panel:</u>

The Safeguarding Panel is a cross-departmental assurance and compliance group set up by the Council to oversee the practical implementation of this Policy and to develop, monitor and review safeguarding procedures.

Its role includes:

- Identifying safeguarding training needs within services
- Developing supplementary safeguarding procedures as they are required
- Promoting good practice within council services – to include procurement of services
- Discussing incidents and concerns raised in services to facilitate a council-wide response if necessary
- Setting internal reporting requirements
- Regularly review the internal reports, identify any actions needed and oversee implementation of these actions
- Review risks and emergent issues that may require action for the council.

Safeguarding Structure



Please see the diagram below for the operational structure:

Third party Contracts and interactions:

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and safeguarding all ages is important to us. The Council recognises everyone has a fundamental right to be safe. Whatever the cause, or wherever it occurs, harm caused to children, young people or adults by abuse, exploitation or neglect is not acceptable.

This expectation extends to all 3rd parties that work with or on behalf of the council, this includes 3rd party Contracts such as Greenwich Leisure Limited (our delivery partners for leisure services), organisations who receive grant funding, supply contracts, funded projects, events and anyone hiring our venues. In line with this policy we expect our contactors/partners to:

- have in place their own policy and procedures for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk of harm consistent with current legislation and best practise.

- In absence of their own policy, agree to use ours until such time as they can write/implement their own.

- Ensure that all members of staff and volunteers who will be employed in the programme and fall in to the regulated categories as per the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) have had the appropriate level of Access NI check carried out.

Part 2:

Adult Safeguarding Policy:

Safeguarding Adults Policy		
Topic	Table of Contents	Page No.
1.0	Policy statement	22
2.0	Legal background information	22 - 23
3.0	Aims of safeguarding adults policy and procedures	23 – 25
4.0	Principles of Safeguarding	26
5.0	Safeguarding definitions	26 - 29
6.0	Categories of abuse	29 - 34
7.0	Recognising/Dealing with abuse	35
	• Record keeping confidentiality and sharing information	
8.0	Adult safeguarding champion (ASC)	36 - 37
9.0	Safe recruitment	38 - 39
10.0	Training	40 -41
11.0	Governance, Monitoring and reporting	41-42
12.0	Third Party Contracts	42

Index:

1.0 – Policy Statement

We are dedicated to the comfort and safety of all our Elected Members, all Staff, Volunteers and service users. We recognise our duty of care and want to make sure that we protect adults at risk are protected from harm while they visit our premises. The following safeguarding adult's policy outlines the systems in place within the Council in order to achieve this aim. Its successful achievement requires co-operation and partnership between our staff/volunteers and our many users.

We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and accepts our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all adults involved in our activities in accordance with the safeguarding adults operational procedures (Sept 2016). [(2)]

The safeguarding adult's policy and procedures apply to all individuals over the age of 18 at risk of harm. We are is committed to the delivery of a quality service that also promotes good practice which protects adults at risk from harm.

It will also ensure procedures are in place to safeguard our staff and volunteers and the Council from potential or unfounded allegations.

These safeguarding adults' policies and procedures are applicable to all Elected Members, Staff, Agency Workers, Casual Staff, and Volunteers indeed anyone associated with Belfast City Council who may have direct or indirect contact with adults at risk.

It should also be noted that latest guidelines have moved from using the term "vulnerable adults" in favour of the new terminology of 'Adult at Risk', the reason for this change is to standardise the language use in line with the new definitions and that we can all be vulnerable given the right life circumstances and/or personal characteristics.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that the council is a safe environment for all visitors who attend. Therefore, you should be vigilant and alert to possible safeguarding incidents at all times when the public are using the building. You must report all incidents must in accordance with the procedures laid out in this document.

(1) http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/PUBLICATIONS/safeguard-vulnerable-adults/niasp-publications/Adult-Safeguarding-Operational-Procedures.pdf

2.0 legal background information

We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights which states that everyone is entitled to

> 'all rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as age, disability, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status'.

The practices and procedures within this policy are based on the principles contained within UK legislation and government guidance and have been developed to complement the Northern Ireland Adults Safeguarding Panel (NIASP) policy and procedures, which take in to consideration the following;

Legislation.

- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018 Inc. GDPR (replaced 1998 DPA)
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

Guidance Documents.

- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (July 2015)
- Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures (Sept 2016).

3.0 Aims of the safeguarding adult's policy and procedures:

This aim of this document is to:

- demonstrate our commitment to providing and maintaining an organisation that protects adults from harm, and protects staff, agency workers, volunteers and the organisation itself from potential allegations;
- promote zero-tolerance of harm to all adults from abuse, exploitation, or neglect;
- Influence the way our organisation thinks about harm to adults resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect by embedding a culture which recognises every adult's right to respect and dignity, honesty, humanity and compassion in every aspect of their life;

- prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults, while supporting people's right to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices free from coercion;
- encourage our staff, agency workers and volunteers to work collaboratively across sectors and on an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary basis, to introduce a range of preventative measures to promote an individual's capacity to keep themselves safe and to prevent harm occurring;
- establish clear guidance for reporting concerns that an adult is, or may be, at risk of being harmed or in need of protection and how these will be responded to; including a Code of behaviour;
- promote access to justice for adults at risk who have been harmed as a result of abuse, exploitation or neglect;
- promote a continuous learning approach to adult safeguarding;
- make sure our staff are carefully selected, vetted and trained in issues of safeguarding adults;
- provide guidance on appropriate and relevant supervision; including the appointment of officers with delegated safeguarding responsibility within each of our business units;
- make sure staff are aware of the adults safeguarding policy and procedures within the council; their role within the policy and the consequence of not following these procedures;
- make sure appropriate action is always taken in the event of an incident, in-line with best practice;
- provide clear procedures and guidance on how staff, agency workers, volunteers and contractors must deal with any safeguarding issues or concerns; (Code of Behaviour)
- provide guidelines on appropriate safeguarding training for staff / agency/ workers / volunteers.
- provide guidelines for staff, agency workers, volunteers when dealing with adults at risk; (Code of Behaviour)
- provide a Safeguarding Adults Code of Behaviour for staff and volunteers; and,
- Provide a complaints procedure with guidance on how a complaint can be raised regarding a safeguarding issue.

We will ensure staff, agency workers, volunteers and contractors are aware of the safeguarding standards within the organisation, their role within the policy, and the consequence of not following our procedures.

We will make sure that appropriate training or awareness is given to staff, agency workers, and volunteers to ensure an understanding of their role in recognising abuse and to familiarise them with our safeguarding adult's policies and procedures.

We are committed to reviewing our policies, procedures, practices and training in line with changes in legislation and best practice or at a minimum every three years.

4.0 Principles of Safeguarding Adults at Risk

The guidance given in the policy and procedures is based on the following principles:

- A rights-based approach: To promote and respect an adult's right to be safe and secure; to freedom from harm and coercion; to equality of treatment; to the protection of the law; to privacy; to confidentiality; and freedom from discrimination.

- An empowering approach: To empower adults to make informed choices about their lives, to maximise their opportunities to participate in wider society, to keep themselves safe and free from harm and enabled to manage their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk.

- Person-centred approach: To promote and facilitate full participation of adults in all decisions affecting their lives taking full account of their views, wishes and feelings and, where appropriate, the views of others who have an interest in his or her safety and well-being.

- A consent-driven approach: To make a presumption that the adult has the ability to give or withhold consent; to make informed choices; to help inform choice through the provision of information, and the identification of options and alternatives; to have particular regard to the needs of individuals who require support with communication, advocacy or who lack the capacity to consent; and intervening in the life of an adult against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances, for very specific purposes and always in accordance with the law.

- A collaborative approach: To acknowledge that safeguarding adults will be most effective when it has the full support of the wider public and of safeguarding partners across the statutory, voluntary, community, independent and faith sectors working together and is delivered in a way where roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. Working in partnership and a person-centred approach will work hand-in-hand.

All adults, regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status have the right to be protected from abuse and poor practice and to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment.

We will seek to make sure that the organisation is inclusive and make reasonable adjustments for any ability, disability or impairment, we will also commit to continuous development, monitoring, and review.

We will always respect the rights, dignity and worth of all adults.

We recognise that ability and disability can change over time, such that some adults may be additionally vulnerable to abuse, for example those who have a dependency on others or have different communication needs.

We recognise that an adult with an impairment or a disability may or may not identify themselves/be identified as an adult 'at risk' or vulnerable.

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/adult-safeguarding-policy.pdf

Working in partnership

The diversity of our functions and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding adults at risk. We will endeavour to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to promote safeguarding.

Good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with adults at risk and to all those with whom we work in partnership. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Equality

We are is committed to ensuring that equity is incorporated across all aspects of our development.

- We respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally within the context of their activity while on council premises, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality or social/economic status.

- We are committed to everyone having the right to enjoy their activity in an environment free from threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.

- We have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour and promote equality of opportunity.

- We will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously, according to the council's disciplinary procedures.

5.0 Safeguarding definitions

In recent years there has been a marked shift away from using the term 'vulnerable' to describe adults potentially at risk from harm or abuse.

To help you work through and understand this policy, we have provided a number of key definitions;

- Adult is anyone aged 18 or over.

- Adult at risk of harm:

  Is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

  a. Personal characteristics which may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

  AND / OR

  b) Life circumstances which may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

- Adult in need of protection:

  Is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

  a) Personal characteristics

  AND / OR

  b) Life circumstances

  AND

  c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests;

  AND

  d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him / her to be harmed.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.

6.0 Categories of abuse.

What is abuse?

Abuse is defined as:

> Abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights. Abuse is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. It can involve direct and indirect contact and can include online abuse.

(Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures 2016)*

Everyone who works with adults or comes into contact with adults through their work, should be able to recognise, and know how to act upon, indicators that an adult's welfare or safety may be at risk. It is essential that you understand the different types of abuse that adults may suffer. Abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm. Harm can be caused by:

- physical abuse
- sexual violence and abuse
- psychological/Emotional abuse
- financial Abuse
- institutional Abuse
- neglect
- exploitation

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is considered a form of physical **and** sexual abuse.

Sexual violence and abuse:

Sexual abuse is 'any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability). Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non-penetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping). Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation.

*http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/PUBLICATIONS/safeguard-vulnerable-adults/niasp-publications/Adult-Safeguarding-Operational-Procedures.pdf

Psychological or emotional abuse:

Psychological or emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal or non-verbal conduct. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and coercion.

Financial abuse:

Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.

Institutional abuse:

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside Health and Social Care (HSC) provision. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm.

Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

Neglect:

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support which is required by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action given the information and facts available to them at the time.

It may include physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, or failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others, particularly when the person lacks the capacity to assess risk.

Exploitation:

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person; to take advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain from using them as a commodity. It may manifest itself in many forms including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.

This list of types of harmful conduct is neither exhaustive nor listed here in any order of priority. There are other indicators that we should not ignore. It is also possible that if a person is being harmed in one way, he/ she may very well be experiencing harm in other ways.

Related definitions:

Victims of domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, human trafficking and hate crime are regarded as adults in need of protection. There are specific strategies and mechanisms in place designed to meet the particular care and protection needs of these adults and to promote access to justice through the criminal justice system. It is essential that we refer such safeguarding concerns to the appropriate services as outlined below.

Domestic violence and abuse:

Domestic violence or abuse is 'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member'. Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography.

The response to any adult facing this situation will usually require a referral to specialist services such as Women's Aid or the Men's Advisory Project. Specialist services will then decide if the case needs to be referred to a HSC Trust for action under the safeguarding procedures. If in doubt, anyone with a concern can ring the Domestic and Sexual Violence helpline (0808 802 1414) to receive advice and guidance about how best to proceed.

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery:

Human trafficking and modern slavery involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking/ modern slavery can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities. The response to adults at risk experiencing human trafficking/modern slavery will always be to report the incident to the PSNI.

Hate crime:

Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity. The response to adults at risk experiencing hate crime will usually be to report the incident to the PSNI.

*http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/PUBLICATIONS/safeguard-vulnerable-adults/niasp-publications/Adult-Safeguarding-Operational-Procedures.pdf

Self-neglect and Self harm

Is when a person seriously neglects their own care and welfare and putting themselves and/or others at serious risk. The seriousness of this issue lies in the recognition that self-neglect in vulnerable persons is often not just a personal preference or a behavioural idiosyncrasy, but a spectrum of behaviours associated with increased morbidity, mortality and impairments in activities of daily living.

Therefore, we should view self-neglect referrals as alerts to potentially serious underlying problems requiring evaluation and treatment (Naik et al, 2007).

Self-harm or self-neglect are not included within the definition of an 'adult in need of protection'. Each case will require a professional Health and Social Care (HSC) assessment to determine the appropriate response and consider if any underlying factors require a protection response. For example self-harm may be the manifestation of harm which has been perpetrated by a third party and which the adult feels unable to disclose.

People wish to respect autonomy and may not wish to be intrusive. However, if concerned or aware of a significant negative change in behaviour, staff must consider making contact or alerting statutory services.

Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures 2016*

7.0 Recognising abuse.

Being alert to potential abuse plays a major role in ensuring that adults are safeguarded and it is important that we take all concerns about possible abuse seriously and take appropriate action.

There are a variety of ways that someone could alert you that an adult is suffering harm:

- they may disclose to you;
- someone else may tell you of their concerns or something that causes you concern;
- they may show some signs of physical injury for which there does not appear to be a satisfactory or credible explanation;
- their demeanour or behaviour may lead you to suspect abuse or neglect;
- The behaviour of a person close to them makes you feel uncomfortable (this may include another staff member, volunteer, peer or family member); or through general good neighbourliness and social guardianship.

Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures 2016*

* http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/PUBLICATIONS/safeguard-vulnerable-adults/niasp-publications/Adult-Safeguarding-Operational-Procedures.pdf

Recognising adult abuse is not easy. It is not our responsibility to decide whether or not adult abuse has taken place or if an adult is at significant risk of harm from someone. We do, however, have both a responsibility and duty, as set out in our adults safeguarding policy and procedures, to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect an adult.

Abuse can occur from:

- parents/carers;
- intimate partners;
- friends;
- adults in a position of trust;
- people within the wider family circle or neighbourhood;
- Strangers.

In general, there are four possible situations where you may need to respond to a concern or case of alleged or suspected abuse:

a. Responding to an adult disclosing abuse, - an adult makes an allegation of abuse
b. Responding to allegations or concerns against staff, agency, workers, volunteers, regular contractors
c. Responding to allegations or concerns against any other person, for example parent, carer, other service user.
d. Raising concerns over incidents, observations, interactions and suspicion that they themselves have recognised.

Abuse or harm occurs as much from omissions and lack of protection as from commission of actual acts of abuse. You should report any concerns you have for the welfare of adult in the council to your line manager or Safeguarding Compliance Manager using the safeguarding incident form.

Health and Social Care Trust (HSC) adult safeguarding teams should always be informed when there are reasonable grounds for concern that an adult may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

Dealing with disclosures

When dealing with a disclosure you should follow the procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns but there are some extra considerations for you to take:

- Ensure the immediate safety of the person. If urgent medical / police help is required, call the emergency services.
- Stay calm and listen attentively; avoid expressing your own views on the matter. A reaction of shock or disbelief could cause the person to 'shut down', retract or stop talking so try to stay calm.
- Express concern and acknowledge what is being said; they've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person to believe them and help them.
- Tell them it's not their fault. Abuse is never the person's fault and they need to know this.
- Tell the person that they did the right thing in telling you; Reassurance can make a big impact to the person who may have been keeping the abuse secret.

It can be very hard for adults at risk to reveal abuse. Often, they fear there may be consequences. Some delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to. Adults at risk value being believed and it is vital that you act on what you've been told.

DO

- ✓ Say you believe them. An adult at risk could keep abuse secret in fear no one will believe them. They've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person to believe them and help them
- ✓ Don't talk to the alleged abuser. Confronting the alleged abuser about what the adult at risk told you could make the situation a lot worse for the adult at risk.
- ✓ Explain what you'll do next. Explain to the adult at risk you'll need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to help.
- ✓ Let the person know that the information will be taken seriously and provide details about what will happen next, including the limits and boundaries of confidentiality
- ✓ Explain to them that it is your duty to share your concern with your Adult Safeguarding Champion or Designated Safeguarding Officer unless to do so could increase their risk – for example, the Designated Safeguarding Officer is the subject of the allegations. In this case contact Safeguarding Manager
- ✓ Reassure the person that they will be kept involved at every stage; explain that the Designated Safeguarding Officer will seek their consent before making any referral is made to external agencies.
- ✓ If you think a crime has occurred be aware that medical and forensic evidence might be needed. Consider the need for a timely referral to the police service and make sure nothing you do will contaminate it;
- ✓ Complete a safeguarding Incident form as soon as possible and report to your Designated Safeguarding Officer immediately.

DO NOT

- ☒ Stop someone disclosing to you.
- ☒ Promise to keep secrets.
- ☒ Criticise the alleged perpetrator.
- ☒ Make promises about the future.
- ☒ Use leading questions or put words in the person's mouth.
- ☒ Press the person for more details or make them repeat the story.
- ☒ Gossip about the disclosure or pass on the information to anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know.
- ☒ Contact the alleged person to have caused the harm.
- ☒ Attempt to investigate yourself.
- ☒ Leave details of your concerns on a voicemail or by email.
- ☒ Don't delay reporting the abuse. The sooner the abuse is reported after a disclosure the better.

Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Complete a safeguarding incident form and pass to the Adult Safeguarding Campion or Designated Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. The Adult Safeguarding Campion or Designated Safeguarding Officer will take any immediate action required to make sure the adult at risk of harm is safe and make a decision as to when it is appropriate to speak with the adult at risk of harm about the concerns and any proposed actions.

How to record a disclosure

If someone discloses abuse to you, you must complete a safeguarding incident form and give it to your Designated Safeguarding Officer. If you have a literacy or language difficulties, the Designated Safeguarding Officer may assist you to complete the form but you must acknowledge this on the incident form.

The safeguarding incident form will be retained securely and confidentially by the Safeguarding Manager. We will retain Safeguarding records with protected status as per GDPR guidelines.

When recording the disclosure you must:

- Make a note, as soon as practical, of what the adult has said, using their own words.
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about. Take care to distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion. It is important that the information you have is accurate; and,
- be mindful of the need to be confidential at all times, this information must only be shared with your Designated Safeguarding Officer and others only on a need to know basis.

Depending on the individual circumstances, for example, the age of the adult or level of understanding, it may be necessary for an advocate to be present to enable the adult's voice to be heard more effectively. This might be the adult's group leader, carer or parent, unless she or he is the person of concern. If the supervising person is not available, you can ask another member of staff to assist in representing the voice of the adult if appropriate. If the adult at risk is part of an organised group the Designated Safeguarding Officer will inform the group's leader and will make every effort to agree an appropriate course of action.

Responding to allegations of or concerns against a member of staff, agency worker, elected member or any other person.

Any staff member who receives allegations should follow the process below:

- take all allegations or concerns seriously
- Record in writing on a safeguarding incident form all the details that you are aware of as soon as possible.
- Report to and inform the Safeguarding Manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

- The Safeguarding manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer will inform the relevant persons, i.e. HR, AGRS (Whistleblowing) or external agencies social services and / or the Police if appropriate.
- The Safeguarding manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer should inform the Head of HR as soon as possible.

Possible outcome:

- Depending on the allegation, the individual may be asked to stand aside from duties or be temporarily suspended pending an investigation.

Safeguarding concerns or Allegations about a Designated Safeguarding Officer

If the concern or allegation is about a Designated Safeguarding Officer, you should refer such concerns to Council's Safeguarding Manager and / or Head of Service who will follow the steps outlined above.

Concerns about failures to adhere to safeguarding policy and procedures

If you have concerns about a colleague not fulfilling the requirements of Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, these concerns should be taken to your line manager or any member of Council's Designated Safeguarding Team. The line manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer should contact the Safeguarding Manager for advice and support.

Support for external service providers.

If an external provider has any concerns regarding council staff, agency workers or volunteers, a visitor, or other contractor they should report their concerns immediately to one of our Designated Safeguarding Officers. There will always be a Designated Safeguarding Officer on duty in all areas, and they may be accessed via the Duty Manger.

If the concern is about a Designated Safeguarding Officer, external service providers should report their concerns to Safeguarding Manager.

Consent and capacity

It is important to include the adult at risk throughout the process and seek consent for any referral to social services or the PSNI unless the adult in need of protection is in imminent danger of harm. Designated Safeguarding Officers are not in the position to determine capacity of adults; if you are unsure if an adult is able to consent you should contact the HSC Trust Adult Safeguarding Team for advice and guidance. If an adult at risk does not want a referral made to the HSC Trust or PSNI, the Designated Safeguarding Officer must contact the Adult Safeguarding Team for advice and guidance about whether or not to make a referral. These factors will influence whether or not you should make a referral without consent:

- Do they have capacity to make this decision?
- Have you given them full and accurate information in a way which they understand?
- Are they experiencing undue influence or coercion?
- Is the person causing harm a member of staff, a volunteer or someone who only has contact with the adult at risk because they both use the service?
- Is anyone else at risk from the person causing harm?

- Do you suspect a crime has been committed?

The HSC may determine that a referral without consent should be made and you should follow their instructions for making the referral.

If it is determined that the concern(s) do not meet the definition of an adult at risk or an adult in need of protection and a referral cannot be made without consent, the concerns raised must be recorded, including any action taken, and the reasons for not referring to HSC. In situations where the adult in need of protection is in imminent danger it may not be possible to discuss their wishes with them and obtaining a valid consent may not be possible. Under these circumstances, you should take whatever action you feel is appropriate to protect the adult at risk, including seeking medical and/or PSNI intervention.

Record keeping, confidentiality and information sharing.

Confidentiality

While it is important that we adopt a partnership approach to ensure the safety and welfare of adults at risk, it is of equally important that all concerned are confident that the information they provide will only be disclosed where it is in the best interests of the adult at risk to do so. We have a carefully constructed the council's policy and procedures to ensure such confidentiality while protecting the interests of the adult at risk.

We have an Adult safeguarding champion and officers with designated responsibility due to the complex nature of operations.

Officers' who have been specially trained in the area of safeguarding and are committed to the principle of confidentiality.

Information obtained by organisations in the exercise of their safeguarding duties may be of a personal nature about a particular adult at risk, and therefore is governed by the common law duty of confidentiality, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (the DPA).

The six principles state that Personal data should be:

- processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes
- adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary
- accurate and where necessary kept up to date
- kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer that is necessary for the purposes for which those data are processed, and
- processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data
- Accountability is central to GDPR.

Data Controllers are responsible for compliance with the principles and must be able to demonstrate this to data subjects and the regulator.

8.0 Adult Safeguarding Champion:

The ASC provides strategic and operational leadership and oversight in relation to adult safeguarding for an organisation or group and is responsible for implementing its adult safeguarding policy statement. The ASC should ensure that, at a minimum, the organisation safeguards adults at risk by:

- recognising that adult harm is wrong and that it should not be tolerated;
- being aware of the signs of harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect;
- reducing opportunities for harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect to occur; and
- Knowing how and when to report safeguarding concerns to HSC Trusts or the PSNI.

The ASC role has both strategic and operational components.

Adult safeguarding: prevention and protection in partnership summarises the key responsibilities for the ASC as follows:

- to provide information and support for staff on adult safeguarding within the organisation;
- to ensure that the organisation's adult safeguarding policy is disseminated and support implementation throughout the organisation;
- to advise within the organisation regarding adult safeguarding training needs;
- to provide advice to staff or volunteers who have concerns about the signs of harm, and ensure a report is made to HSC Trusts where there is a safeguarding concern;
- to support staff to ensure that any actions take account of what the adult wishes to achieve – this should not prevent information about any risk of serious harm being passed to the relevant HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service for assessment and decision making;
- to establish contact with the HSC Trust Designated Adult Protection Officer (DAPO), PSNI and other agencies as appropriate;
- to ensure accurate and up to date records are maintained detailing all decisions made, the reasons for those decisions and any actions taken;
- to compile and analyse records of reported concerns to determine whether a number of low-level concerns are accumulating to become significant; and make records available for inspection.

In larger or more complex organisations the ASC may delegate some of the operational tasks or activities as appropriate. For example, a provider with a number of Nursing Homes throughout Northern Ireland may choose to delegate some of the tasks of an ASC to a member of staff in each facility. They would then report to the ASC on adult safeguarding matters on a regular basis and assist in the compilation of reports, training needs analyses and data analysis

9.0 Safer recruitment.

NB; There are currently no roles in Belfast City Council that are categorised as regulated under the Adult safeguarding criteria.

Safer recruitment and selection procedures help to ensure a safe work place by deterring and screening out unsuitable individuals. We will endeavour to promote the safety of adults at all times and provide a safe environment, by following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff, agency workers and volunteers and by carrying out the appropriate vetting procedure for staff, agency workers and volunteers.

Recruitment and selection of employees

We implement transparent and clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures in accordance with legislative and statutory requirements as set out in the Local Government Staff Commission Code of Procedures for Recruitment and Selection. These procedures are in place to screen out those who are not suitable to work with adults at risk.

As part of our commitment to safeguarding adults at risk we undertake “safer recruitment” when recruiting to posts which are considered ‘regulated activity’.

Access NI

Access NI provides criminal history information to organisations and individuals on three levels of ‘Criminal Record Check’, basic, standard, enhanced disclosures.

We will determine the level of checks required at the beginning of the recruitment process and Corporate HR will manage the related procedures. An Access NI Enhanced Disclosure with Barred List Check is required for employees, agency workers and volunteers in posts designated as regulated activity that means, those posts which work with children and young people and Adults at risk (as defined under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012). Before commencing a selection process for an established post the line manager in consultation with the Safeguarding Compliance Manager, Departmental HR Officer and Corporate HR Officer will determine if the post is a ‘regulated post’. If it is new post the line manager, in consultation with the Safeguarding Compliance Manager and the continuous improvement team, will ensure that this assessment is included as part of the job design process.

During the selection process the preferred candidate must give consent for the relevant Access NI Disclosure Check. If the preferred candidate refuses to give consent for the check or if we find they have withheld information this will be sufficient grounds for the council to withdraw their conditional offer of employment. We will repeat the checks every three years for regulated posts. If in the course of their employment with BCC, an employee moves from a non-regulated post to a regulated post then that employee will be subject to Access NI checks prior to deployment and may be subject to further relevant reference or line management recommendation checks.

Identification

We require all applicants who have to complete the Access NI check to produce evidence of their identity for example, a long birth certificate. This is important as Access NI can only make checks if the person's identify is confirmed.

Access NI Disclosures

If a Criminal Records check reveals details of convictions which may render the applicant unsuitable for the applied for post Departmental HR/Corporate HR will discuss the situation with the applicant in accordance with the guidance set out in the Councils Guidelines for Dealing with Applicants with Convictions.

It is an offence for a barred person to work, apply to work or offer to work in regulated activity with a group they are barred from working with. We will not employ candidates on the barred list in regulated activity. If the checks reveal that a candidate is on the barred list for regulated activity we will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service to notify them of the individuals attempt to apply for barred work.

References

The Council require two references from people who have employed you and who are not family members. Where a post involves work with children the Council may request references from any other previous employment, which involved working with children or young people.

If for legitimate reasons there is difficulty in sourcing suitable references, we reserve the right to seek alternatives as described in the referencing guidance document.

Agency workers

We will ensure that agency workers in Regulated Activity are required to complete the relevant Access NI checks before they commence work.

Volunteers

Where volunteers work in the council and they are carrying out work considered regulated activity, we will:

- Require the Volunteer to complete an registration form
- Confirm their identify (e.g. provide a long birth certificate)
- Receive 2 written references
- Organise a meeting with the volunteer to review the details on the application form, review the volunteering role, ensure they are aware of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures and the induction paperwork
- Give permission for Council to apply to Access NI for an Enhanced Disclosure

10.0 Training

We must not see learning and development as a one off event, but a continuous process which requires the investment of time and resources to create a learning environment and a competent workforce. Each organisation must take responsibility to develop both knowledge and expertise in safeguarding and protecting adults, and seek to identify the most appropriate and relevant opportunities to develop the confidence, abilities and competence of staff and volunteers.

We are committed to providing all staff, agency workers and volunteers with appropriate safeguarding awareness sessions or the relevant level of training in accordance with the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership Training Strategy 2013.

At each level, the training or awareness raising will identify:

- required safeguarding knowledge and skills
- key learning outcomes
- target audience

Safeguarding Adults at Risk Training Schedule:

Level 0: Safeguarding awareness

All staff, agency workers, and volunteers within the organisation.

This will involve familiarising staff / agency workers / volunteers with the working environment, with Belfast City Council expectations and the requirements of the job. All staff / agency workers / volunteers will be provided with a corporate code of behaviour and a safeguarding code of behaviour, which they must read. The code of behaviour will draw particular attention to Belfast City Council's Safeguarding policy and procedure.

This will be part of the induction process for all new employees.

Level 1: Safeguarding adults training (Face to face facilitated Learning)

All staff , agency workers and volunteers who have relevant contact with adults at risk, or with carers/parents of adults at risk and those who have regular contact with adults at risks, or adults known or suspected of posing a risk to adults at risk.

This six -hour, face-to-face training session will enable managers, staff, agency workers and volunteers to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding adults at risk within the context of the organisation's policies and procedures.

Level 2: Managers responsibilities and supervisory awareness training.

Available to all managers, staff, agency workers and volunteers who have supervisory responsibilities.

This six-hour, face-to-face training session will enable managers, staff, agency workers and volunteers to understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding adults at risk within the context of the organisation's policies and procedures.

Level 3: Adult safeguarding champion, or designated person training

All officers with designated responsibility. (delivered externally)

This full-day, face-to-face training session will enable Adult safeguarding champion, or designated person to become familiar with the role and responsibilities of their role and to develop competence and confidence in carrying out this role.

Completion of Level 0: Safeguarding awareness and attendance at all subsequent relevant training is a mandatory requirement and individual training records will be maintained by HR.

11.0 Governance, Monitoring and reporting.

In order to ensure compliance with the requirements of safeguarding legislation and expectation there are a number of procedures in place:

Operationally there are a number of provisions:

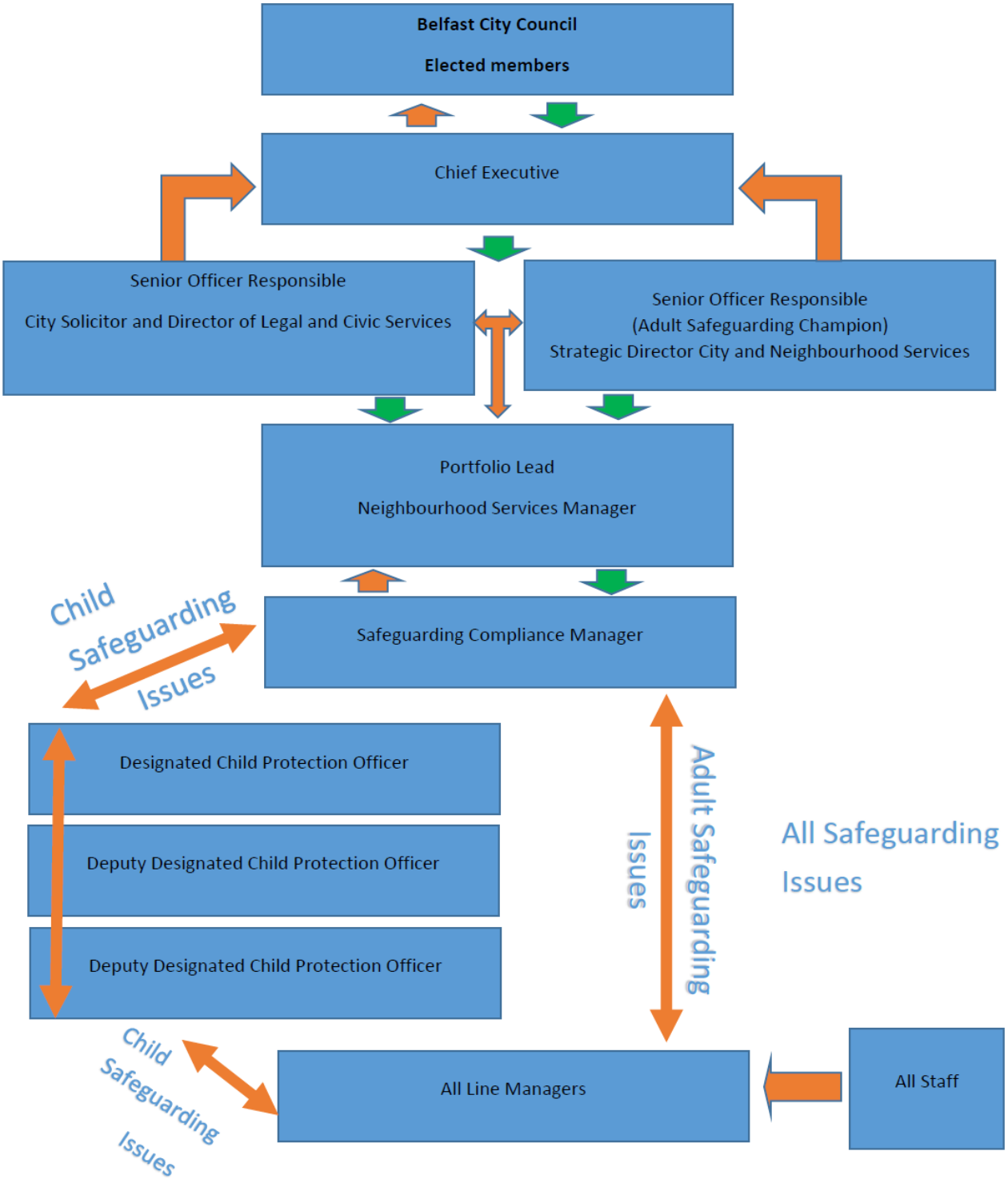
- The Safeguarding Panel:

The Safeguarding Panel is a cross-departmental assurance and compliance group set up by the Council to oversee the practical implementation of this Policy and to develop, monitor and review safeguarding procedures.

Its role includes:

- Identifying safeguarding training needs within services
- Developing supplementary safeguarding procedures as they are required
- Promoting good practice within council services – to include procurement of services
- Discussing incidents and concerns raised in services to facilitate a council-wide response if necessary
- Setting internal reporting requirements
- Regularly review the internal reports, identify any actions needed and oversee implementation of these actions
- Review risks and emergent issues that may require action for the council.

Safeguarding Structure



Please see the diagram below for the operational structure:

12.0 Third party Contracts and interactions:

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and safeguarding all ages is important to us. The Council recognises everyone has a fundamental right to be safe. Whatever the cause, or wherever it occurs, harm caused to children, young people or adults by abuse, exploitation or neglect is not acceptable.

This expectation extends to all 3rd parties that work with or on behalf of the council, this includes 3rd party Contracts such as Greenwich Leisure Limited (our delivery partners for leisure services), organisations who receive grant funding, supply contracts, funded projects, events and anyone hiring our venues. In line with this policy we expect our contactors/partners to:

- have in place their own policy and procedures for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk of harm consistent with current legislation and best practise.

- In absence of their own policy, agree to use ours until such time as they can write/implement their own.

- Ensure that all members of staff and volunteers who will be employed in the programme and fall in to the regulated categories as per the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) have had the appropriate level of Access NI check carried out.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Off-Street Parking Enforcement Services**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Valerie Brown, City Services Manager
Contact Officer:	Valerie Brown, City Services Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	As part of local government reform responsibility for off street public car parking transferred to the council from DRD Roads Service on 1st April 2015.
1.2	All 11 councils entered into an Agency Agreement with the DFI (formerly DRD) who provided enforcement, cash collection and penalty charge (PCN) processing services on behalf of the councils. This Agency Agreement was extended in November 2016 and again in November 2019 and the current arrangement is due to expire on 31st October 2022.

1.3	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the recommended approach for the procurement of enforcement and PCN processing services post 31st October 2022, as agreed by SOLACE at its meeting in March 2021.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to consider and agree the SOLACE approach and following recommendations: i. That councils should tender for enforcement services on the open market rather than renew the service agreement with DfI. This will involve a joint tendering procurement exercise with the other councils for car parking enforcement services and PCN processing; ii. That officers formally advise DfI that BCC does not wish to enter into another Agency Agreement and will, alongside other councils, tender on the open market for off street enforcement and associated services; and iii. That a further report will be brought to Committee regarding the procurement process, outlining potential efficiencies, value for money and any financial challenges in delivering the off street car parking function beyond October 2022.
3.0	**Key Issues**
3.1	The current arrangements will expire on 31 October 2022, which allows 14 months to prepare the specification and tender documents between all the councils; tender for the contract and embed the new arrangements by the end of the existing contract.
3.2	There are currently 9 councils still operating through the Agency Agreement with 8 councils indicating that they wish to end the arrangements with DfI and collaboratively tender for the services. One further council which left the arrangement in 2019 has indicated its interest in the collaborative approach.
3.3	At the SOLACE meeting in March, Ards and North Down Borough Council offered to take the lead in the procurement exercise with support from other councils, including Belfast City Council. Following assessment and the awarding of the tender, each council will draw services from the tender and run their services independently.

3.4	The joint tendering procurement approach recommended by SOLACE is supported by BCC Legal Services, it is of the view that, given there are alternative service providers in the open market, BCC could potentially be challenged if we simply extended the agreement with DfI again.
3.5	This collaborative approach will also allow councils to explore other methods of enforcement, evaluate potential savings and efficiencies, and offer more assurance that each council is receiving value for money.
3.6	Whilst the recommendation is to end the arrangement with DfI, the current pandemic has impacted on the necessary processes and there is the possibility that the current agreement may be extended on a temporary short term basis to allow both DfI and the regional group of Councils to make appropriate preparations for termination and embed new arrangements. The regional group has asked DfI for confirmation that this extension will be facilitated if required.
	Finance and Resource Implications
3.7	Provision has been made in the estimates for a suitably qualified person to assist the councils in drawing up a collaborative specification and tender documents. Each of the participating councils will contribute equally to this cost.
3.8	Assistance and support will be required from several council services including, but not exclusively, Legal Services, Procurement, Finance and Business Support, Estates, City Centre Regeneration, the Commercial Manager and the OSCP team.
	Equality, Rural Needs or Good Relations Implications
3.9	None
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Funding Agreements to support Belfast Climate Action**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner Richard McLernon, Project Coordinator

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval for the following funding agreements, which are required to support delivery of Belfast's programme of climate activity: - Linenquarter BID - £20,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Festival of the Circular Economy, which will align with COP26; - Common Purpose - £10,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Common Purpose Legacy Programme which will focus on young leaders roles in relation to climate and be scheduled in advance of COP26; - Woodland Trust - £45,000 for the delivery of volunteer coordination, community outreach and support for PR and communication for the Belfast One Million Trees Programme.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the awarding of funding agreements to the following organisations which are supporting the delivery of the Belfast Resilience Strategy and the programme of climate activity linked to COP26, which runs from 1st to 12th November. - Linenquarter BID - £20,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Festival of the Circular Economy, which will align with COP26 in November 2021; - Common Purpose - £10,000 contribution towards the delivery of the Common Purpose Legacy Programme, which will focus on young leaders roles in relation to climate and be scheduled for October 2021, in advance of COP26; - The Woodland Trust - £45,000 for the delivery of volunteer coordination, community outreach and support for PR and communication for the Belfast One Million Trees Programme over a 3 year period. Members are also asked to note the ongoing work by officers on the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) and WWF One Planet City Challenge.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Climate Team within Council is leading on the delivery of the Belfast Resilience Strategy Ambitions Document and a number of associated workstreams such as planning for COP26, engagement with and capacity building for young people, and the development of Council's own Climate Plan.
3.2	Three projects are planned which require funding agreements to be put in place to allow delivery to take place. These are:
3.3	***Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy*** The Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy event will support business engagement around the concept of circular economy and will include high profile speakers including Belfast Lord Mayor and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool. The event is one of the key events in the City's programme of activity during the COP26 fortnight and will provide a platform to engage with business on a range of climate issues in the future. The Council is requested to fund £20,000 of a total £100,000 budget. The Council's contribution is included in the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget provision for the current financial year.

3.4	The event organisers will ensure that the event is linked to the ambitions of the Resilience Strategy and will acknowledge the role of Belfast City Council and the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board in supporting the event. The organisers will also produce an Evaluation Report for the event, which will demonstrate how it supports the ambitions of the Resilience Strategy.
3.5	Further information will be provided to Members as the event content and dates are confirmed.
	Common Purpose Legacy Programme
3.6	The Common Purpose Northern Ireland Legacy Programme is an engagement and capacity building programme focused on young people.
3.7	Legacy programmes convene up to 100 young leaders (18-25 year-olds) – in and out of work, studying, campaigning and volunteering - to shape the future of their communities. The programme challenges them to think 20-30 years ahead to what their legacy will be and builds their confidence, know-how and social capital as well as identifying opportunities for them to get more involved in things ahead. Common Purpose have held Legacy programmes in Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford in 2020. Common Purpose plan to run second programmes in each of those cities as well as in Northern Ireland, Lancashire, Glasgow and Edinburgh in 2021.
3.8	The Northern Ireland programme dates are 14-15 October and 18-19 October 2021. The central challenge that the group will address is: **How do we act together to transform our community into a cleaner and greener space for all?**
3.9	Sponsorship of £10,000 from the Council for this regional programme will secure 10 places for Belfast. The Council will work with Common Purpose to ensure that participation from Belfast targets agreed cohorts under our Inclusive Growth ambitions, partner organisations/community sector and young staff within BCC. The Council will also input to the curriculum explore how we can contribute on the programme itself.
3.10	Further information for the Legacy Programme will also be provided to Members as the event content and Belfast participation is confirmed.
	The Woodland Trust – Belfast One Million Trees Programme
3.11	Members will be aware that the Council leads and coordinates the Belfast One Million Trees Programme, working with a diverse range of partners across the city. A city steering group includes representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. At the heart of the programme is a partnership with The Woodland Trust, who support a core delivery team which includes Belfast Hills Partnership, The Conservation Volunteers and the National Trust.

	In April 2021, Belfast City Council secured £289,000 external funding through the Emergency Tree Fund for a number of critical workstreams to the success of the project, such as environmental impact assessments, tree nursery development, tree maintenance plans, tree planting, volunteer coordination, community engagement and education, communication, the development of the Belfast Tree Strategy, and the production of a Belfast I-Tree ECO Report.
3.12	This external funding is managed by the Council's Climate Team, with the support of colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services. To facilitate delivery of the Volunteer Coordination, Community Engagement/Education and communication support role we propose to enter into a funding agreement with the Woodland Trust, who are the key delivery partner in the initiative. Funding will be £45,000 over a 3-year period, which will be fully funded through the external funding received through the Emergency Tree Fund. A detailed plan will be developed based on funding targets and an agreed programme of activity which will be monitored and evaluated through the Climate Team.
	Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) and WWF One Planet City Challenge
3.13	Members are asked to note that the Council has made a submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) – ICLEI reporting platform, which is a global reporting framework to assess progress against climate ambitions at city level and is required as a prerequisite to a number of global climate campaigns. This submission will be assessed by CDP, with feedback and a score provided to the city by the end of 2021, which will inform the submission in 2022. A further report on CDP and other associate initiatives will be brought to committee at a future date.
3.14	The One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) is a friendly competition which supports cities in developing climate action plans and targets that align with the Paris Agreement's 1.5 °C maximum global warming goal. The OPCC recognises leading cities at the national and global level and inspires other cities to join the movement. In 2021, the OPCC celebrates 10 years of engagement during which time they have seen the participation of nearly 600 cities in over 50 countries.
3.15	To participate in the One Planet City Challenge cities must register by 31st August 2021 and Members are asked to note that work is underway to register Belfast for OPCC.

	Financial and Resource Implications
	Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy and Common Purpose Legacy Programme
3.16	The £20,000 contribution to the development and delivery of the Linenquarter BID Festival of Circular Economy and £10,000 sponsorship for Common Purpose Legacy Programme will be funded from existing City and Organisational Strategy budget provision.

	The Woodland Trust – Belfast One Million Trees Programme
3.17	The allocation of £45,000 over a 3-year period will be fully funded through the external funding received from the Emergency Tree Fund.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.18	The participant selection process for the Common Purpose Legacy Programme will be reviewed to ensure that it is fully representative.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Consultation on Complaints Handling Standards for the Public Sector - Council Response**
Date	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Andrew Kyle, Complaints Champion

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To advise Members of the ongoing engagement with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and other local authorities and to present the draft Council response to the NIPSO Complaints Handling Standards for the Public Sector Consultation.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • note the ongoing engagement with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and other local authorities; and

	• approve the draft response to the Standard Complaint Handling Standards consultation, as set out in Appendix 3, based on going engagement with Party Group Leaders, Departments' complaints officers and feedback from CMT.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Over recent years, the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) has undertaken research (2018-19) with all the public sector bodies under its remit. Following this work, NIPSO engaged with all public sector bodies (2020-21), including Belfast City Council and other councils, to identify complaint management improvement opportunities, in partnership with each sector, with the intention of introducing a public sector model complaints handling procedure.
3.2	Under Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the Act), NIPSO have been given the authority by the Northern Ireland Assembly to produce a set of principles and procedures to help standardise complaints handling by public bodies in Northern Ireland.
3.3	As planned, NIPSO's Complaints Handling Standards Public Consultation was launched in June and is open to public bodies, advocacy and support groups, politicians, members of the public and anyone with an interest in improving complaints handling and public services in Northern Ireland.
3.4	Alongside the complaints handling consultation, NIPSO has also launched its Research Report on 'Complaints handling in the public sector in Northern Ireland'. The research addresses the complaints handling procedures of public bodies in Northern Ireland, including: the experience of complaining to a public sector body in Northern Ireland; barriers to improved complaints handling; and improvements that might be made to complaints handling in the future.
3.5	In early July, the Deputy Chief Executive (DCEO) requested all Party Group Leaders, to consider completing the consultation questionnaire in order to prepare a formal response by council. As outlined in that request the questionnaire is based on two key documents: • A draft Statement of Principles (SOP), attached as Appendix 1. • A draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP), attached as Appendix 2.

3.6	NIPSO is also asking the public and stakeholders to comment on the suggested approach it plans to take when implementing future complaint handling changes in the public sector in Northern Ireland.
3.7	The Council's draft response, prepared for approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, is attached at Appendix 3. It also takes note of previous feedback from chief officers and senior managers since the start of the Ombudsman's research and engagement, as well as ongoing discussions with departmental complaints officers in preparation for both the consultation and subsequent co-design, all of which will be taken into account during that phase.
3.8	The consultation was due to close on 2nd September but has now been extended to 30th September. Once the consultation has finished, the NIPSO will collate the responses and consider any changes it might need to make and go back to the NI Assembly to seek final approval for its plans.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.8	None
	Equality or Good Relations Implications
3.9	None
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Draft Statement of Principles (SOP) Appendix 2: Draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) Appendix 3: NIPSO Consultation - draft Council response.

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Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

To provide good complaints handling public bodies should:

1) Start off right

- Ensure effective leadership and governance of complaints.
- Create a culture that embraces complaints.
- Provide a simple and time bound complaints process.
- Ensure clarity of process, roles and responsibilities.
- Provide a point of contact.
- Manage complainant's expectations.
- Ensure effective and timely communication.
- Signpost to advocacy and support services, where appropriate.

2) Fix it early

- Acknowledge mistakes and resolve complaints early.
- Provide an apology, where appropriate.
- Provide prompt, appropriate and proportionate remedies.
- Consider alternative methods of resolution.

3) Focus on what matters

- Put the complainant at the heart of the process.

- Accommodate different complainant's needs, where possible.
- Help the complainant access and use the procedure.
- Listen, respect and treat complainants with dignity.
- Provide a safe, secure and confidential service.
- Inform complainants when timescales cannot be met.

4) Be fair

- Ensure fair investigations in accordance with law and guidance.
- Provide impartial and objective complaint handling.
- Deal with complaints within the agreed timescale.
- Ensure thorough and proportionate investigations.
- Deliver complete and appropriate responses.
- Provide clear and evidence-based outcomes.
- Ensure consistency from case to case, where appropriate.

5) Be honest

- Be open and accountable.
- Keep full and accurate records.
- Provide full, honest and clear reasons for decisions.
- Publish service standards for handling complaints.

6) Learn and Improve

- Regularly review complaints handling procedures.
- Provide complaints handling training for relevant staff.
- Regularly publish complaint outcomes and use feedback to help improve service delivery.

- Record, analyse and learn from complaints.
- Review the complainant's journey and satisfaction.
- Promote complaints handling networking opportunities with stakeholders.

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Northern Ireland
Public Services
Ombudsman

Draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure

The complaints handling process

Contents

The definition of a complaint……...3

The complaints handling process 3

Resolving the complaint.....5

What to do when you receive a complaint 6

Stage 1: Frontline response 8

Notifying staff members involved 8

Timelines 8

Extension to the timeline.....8

Closing the complaint at the frontline response stage 9

Stage 2: Investigation 10

Acknowledging the complaint.....10

Agreeing the points of complaint and outcome sought.....10

Notifying staff members involved 11

Investigating the complaint 12

Alternative complaint resolution approaches 12

Meeting with the complainant during the investigation 13

Timelines 13

Extension to the timeline.....13

Closing the complaint at the investigation stage 14

Signposting to NIPSO.....14

Post-closure contact.....15

Appendix 1 - Timelines.....17

Appendix 2 - The complaint handling process (flowchart for staff).....19

The definition of a complaint

An organisation's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) must include a definition of what a complaint is. The agreed definition within the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) is:

'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the organisation's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the organisation'.

This should be clear within the organisation's CHP, and in its 'Customer facing CHP', both of which should also provide examples of what is and what is not a complaint.

The complaints handling process

1. An organisation's CHP aims to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process for responding to complaints early and locally by capable, well-trained staff. Where possible, the organisation will resolve the complaint to the complainants satisfaction. Where this is not possible, the organisation will give the complainant a clear and reasoned response to their complaint.

Complaint received

A complainant may complain either verbally or in writing, including face-to-face, by phone, letter or email.

Stage 1: Frontline response

For issues that are straightforward and simple, requiring little or no investigation. 'On-the-spot' apology, explanation, or other action to put the matter right.

Complaint resolved or a response provided in **five working days** or less (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

Complaint addressed by any member of staff, or alternatively referred to the appropriate point for frontline response.

Response normally face-to-face or by telephone (though sometimes the organisation will need to put the decision in writing).

The organisation will tell the complainant how to escalate their complaint to stage 2.

Stage 2: Investigation

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the frontline response, or refuses to engage at the frontline, or where the complaint is complex, serious or 'high-risk'.

Complaint acknowledged within **three working days**.

The organisation will contact the complainant to clarify the points of complaint and outcome sought (where these are already clear, the organisation will confirm them in the acknowledgement).

Complaint resolved or a definitive response provided within **20 working days** following a thorough investigation of the points raised.

Independent external review (NIPSO)

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the stage 2 response from the organisation.

NIPSO will assess whether there is evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the organisation.

Resolution

The complainant and the organisation agree what action will be taken to resolve the complaint.

Where a complaint is resolved, it is not usually necessary to continue investigating, although the organisation may choose to do so, for example to identify learning.

The organisation must signpost the complainant to stage 2 (for stage 1 complaints) or to NIPSO as usual.

Reporting, recording and learning

Action is taken to improve services on the basis of complaint findings, where appropriate.

The organisation records details of all complaints, the outcome and any action taken, and use this data to analyse themes and trends.

Senior management have an active interest in complaints and use complaints data and analysis to improve services.

Learning is shared throughout the organisation.

Resolving the complaint

2. A complaint is resolved when both the organisation and the complainant agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the complainant, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.

3. The organisation will try to resolve complaints wherever possible, although it accepts that this will not be possible in all cases.

4. A complaint may be resolved at any point in the complaint handling process, including during the investigation stage. It is particularly important to try to resolve complaints where there is an ongoing relationship with the complainant or where the complaint relates to an ongoing issue that may give rise to future complaints if the matter is not fully resolved.

5. It may be helpful to use alternative complaint resolution approaches when trying to resolve a complaint (see **Alternative complaint resolution approaches)**.

6. Where a complaint is resolved, there is not normally a need to continue looking into it or provide a response on all points of complaint. There must be a clear record of how the complaint was resolved, what action was agreed, and the complainant's agreement to this as a final outcome. In some cases it may still be appropriate to continue looking into the issue, for example where there is evidence of a wider problem or potential for useful learning. The organisation should use its professional judgment in deciding whether it is appropriate to continue looking into a complaint that is resolved.

7. In all cases, the complaint outcome (resolved) must be recorded and any action taken, and signpost the complainant to stage 2 (for stage 1 complaints) or to NIPSO as usual (see **Signposting to NIPSO**).

8. If the complainant and the organisation are not able to agree a resolution, the organisation must follow this CHP to provide a clear and reasoned response to each of the issues raised.

What to do when you receive a complaint

9. Members of staff receiving a complaint should consider four key questions. This will help them to either respond to the complaint quickly (at stage 1) or determine whether the complaint is more suitable for stage 2:

What exactly is the complainant's complaint (or complaints)?

10. It is important to be clear about exactly what the complainant is complaining about. It may be necessary to ask the complainant for more information and probe further to get a full understanding.

11. It should be decided whether the issue can be defined as a complaint and whether there are circumstances that may limit the organisation's ability to respond to the complainant (such as the time limit for making complaints, confidentiality, anonymity or the need for consent). The organisation should also consider whether the complaint is serious, high-risk or high-profile.

12. If the matter is not suitable for handling as a complaint, explain this to the complainant (and signpost them to NIPSO).

13. In most cases, this step will be straightforward. If it is not, the complaint may need to be handled immediately at stage 2 (see **Stage 2: Investigation**).

What does the complainant want to achieve by complaining?

14. At the outset, clarify the outcome the complainant wants. Of course, the complainant may not be clear about this, and this may require further probing to find out what they expect, and whether they can be satisfied.

Can I achieve this, or explain why not?

15. If a staff member handling a complaint can achieve the expected outcome, for example by providing an on-the-spot apology or explain why they cannot achieve it, they should do so.

16. The complainant may expect more than the organisation can provide. If so, tell them as soon as possible.

17. Complaints which can be resolved or responded to quickly should be managed at stage 1 (see **Stage 1: Frontline response**).

If I cannot respond, who can help?

18. If the complaint is simple and straightforward, but the staff member receiving the complaint cannot deal with it because, for example, they are unfamiliar with the issues or area of service involved, they should pass the complaint to someone who can respond quickly.

19. If it is not a simple and straightforward complaint that can realistically be closed within five working days (or ten, if an extension is appropriate), it should be handled immediately at stage 2. If the complainant refuses to engage at stage 1, insisting that they want their

complaint investigated, it should be handled immediately at stage 2 (see **Stage 2: Investigation)**.

[*The organisation may wish to include more detail on local processes for directing a complaint to stage 2, for example, the contact details of the complaints handling team*.]

Stage 1: Frontline response

20. Frontline response aims to respond quickly (within five working days) to straightforward complaints that require little or no investigation.

21. Any member of staff may deal with complaints at this stage (including the staff member complained about, for example with an explanation or apology). The main principle is to respond to complaints at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible.

22. The organisation may respond to the complaint by providing an on-the-spot apology where appropriate, or explaining why the issue occurred and, where possible, what will be done to stop this happening again. The organisation may also explain that, as an organisation that values complaints, it may use the information given when the organisation reviews service standards in the future. If the organisation considers an apology is appropriate, it may wish to follow NIPSO's 'Guidance on issuing an Apology'.

23. Complaints which are not suitable for frontline response should be identified early, and handled immediately at stage 2: Investigation.

Notifying staff members involved

24. If the complaint is about the actions of another staff member, the complaint should be shared with them, where possible, before responding (although this should not prevent us responding to the complaint quickly, for example where it is clear that an apology is warranted).

Timelines

25. Frontline response must be completed within **five working days**, although in practice the organisation would often expect to respond to the complaint much sooner. 'Day one' is always the date of receipt of the complaint (or the next working day if the complaint is received on a weekend or public holiday).

[Organisations may wish to add additional detail on their usual arrangements for receiving and dating of mail and other correspondence – for example if there is a policy to mark correspondence received after a certain time as received the next day.]

Extension to the timeline

26. In exceptional circumstances, a short extension of time may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances (such as the availability of a key staff member). Extensions must be agreed with an appropriate manager. The organisation will tell the complainant about the reasons for the extension, and when they can expect a response. The maximum extension that can be granted is five working days (that is, no more than ten working days in total from the date of receipt).

27. If a complaint will take more than five working days to look into, it should be handled at stage 2 immediately. The only exception to this is where the complaint is simple and could normally be handled within five working days, but it is not possible to begin immediately (for example, due to the absence of a key staff member). In such cases, the complaint may still be handled at stage 1 if it is clear that it can be handled within the extended timeframe of up to **ten working days**.

28. If a complaint has not been closed within ten working days, it should be escalated to stage 2 for a final response.

[*The organisation may provide further guidance or examples in relation to extensions to the five working days timeline. This can be inserted here or be included in an annex to this document*.]

29. **Appendix 1** provides further information on timelines.

Closing the complaint at the frontline response stage

30. If the decision is conveyed face-to-face or on the telephone, there is no requirement to write to the complainant as well (although the organisation may choose to). The organisation must:

    - tell the complainant the outcome of the complaint (whether it is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld)
    - explain the reasons for its decision (or the agreed action taken to resolve the complaint) (see **Resolving the complaint**); and
    - explain that the complainant can escalate the complaint to stage 2 if they remain dissatisfied and how to do so (the complainant should not be signposted to NIPSO until the complainant has completed stage 2).

31. Keep a full and accurate record of the decision given to the complainant. If the complainant cannot be contacted by phone, or speak to them in person, a written response to the complaint where an email or postal address is provided, covering the points above, will be provided.

32. If the complaint is about the actions of a particular staff member/s, any part of the complaint response which relates to them, (unless there are compelling reasons not to) will be shared with them.

[*The organisation may provide further guidance or examples about when to provide written confirmation of the decision at the frontline stage of the procedure. This can be inserted here or be included in an annex to this document.*]

33. The complaint should then be closed and the complaints system updated accordingly.

34. At the earliest opportunity after the closure of the complaint, the staff member handling the complaint should consider whether any learning has been identified.

Stage 2: Investigation

35. Not all complaints are suitable for frontline response and not all complaints will be satisfactorily addressed at that stage. Stage 2 is appropriate where:

    - the complainant is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage at the frontline stage, insisting they wish their complaint to be investigated. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the complainant must escalate the complaint within six months of when they first knew of the problem or within two months of the stage 1 response, whichever is later.

    - the complaint is not simple and straightforward (for example where the complainant has raised a number of issues, or where information from several sources is needed before it can be established what happened and/or what should have happened); or

    - the complaint relates to serious, high-risk or high-profile issues.

36. An investigation aims to explore the complaint in more depth and establish all the relevant facts. The aim is to resolve the complaint where possible, or to give the complainant a full, objective and proportionate response that represents the final position. Wherever possible, complaints should be investigated by someone not involved in the complaint (for example, a line manager or a manager from a different area).

37. Details of the complaint must be recorded on the complaints system. Where appropriate, this will be done as a continuation of frontline response. If the investigation stage follows a frontline response, the officer responsible for the investigation should have access to all case notes and associated information.

38. The beginning of stage 2 is a good time to consider whether complaint resolution approaches other than investigation may be helpful (see **Alternative complaint resolution approaches**).

Acknowledging the complaint

39. Complaints must be acknowledged within **three working days** of receipt at stage 2.

40. The acknowledgement must be issued in a format which is accessible to the complainant, taking into account their preferred method of contact.

41. Where the points of complaint and expected outcomes are clear from the complaint, these must be set out in the acknowledgement and ask the complainant to get in touch immediately if they disagree (see **Agreeing the points of complaint and outcome sought**).

42. Where the points of complaint and expected outcomes are not clear, the complainant must be told that the organisation will contact them to discuss this.

Agreeing the points of complaint and outcome sought

43. It is important to be clear from the start of stage 2 about the points of complaint to be investigated and what outcome the complainant is seeking. The complainant's expectations about the scope of the investigation may also need to be managed.

44. Where the points of complaint and outcome sought are clear, the understanding of these must be confirmed with the complainant when acknowledging the complaint (see **Acknowledging the complaint**).

45. Where the points of complaint and outcome sought are not clear, contact must be made with the complainant to confirm these. The organisation will normally need to speak to the complainant (by phone or face-to-face) to do this effectively. In some cases it may be possible to clarify complaints in writing. The key point is that there is a shared understanding of the complaint between the complainant and the organisation. Respect for the complainant's stated/preferred method of contact should be given. A clear record of any discussion with the complainant should be kept.

46. In all cases, there must be a clear shared understanding of:

- **What are the points of complaint to be investigated?**

  While the complaint may appear to be clear, agreeing the points of complaint at the outset ensures there is a shared understanding and avoids the complaint changing or confusion arising at a later stage. The points of complaint should be specific enough to direct the investigation, but broad enough to include any multiple and specific points of concern about the same issue.

  Every effort should be made to agree the points of complaint with the complainant (alternative complaint resolution approaches may be helpful at this stage). In very rare cases, it may not be possible to agree the points of complaint (for example, if the complainant insists on an unreasonably large number of complaints being separately investigated, or on framing their complaint in an abusive way). Any such cases should be managed in accordance with the organisation's policy [Unacceptable Actions Policy, or equivalent], bearing in mind that the complaint should continue to be investigated (as is understood) wherever possible.

- **Is there anything that cannot be considered under the CHP?**

  It must be explained if there are any points that are not suitable for handling under the CHP.

- **What outcome does the complainant want to achieve by complaining?**

  Asking what outcome the complainant is seeking helps direct the investigation and enables the organisation to focus on resolving the complaint where possible.

- **Are the complainant's expectations realistic and achievable?**

  It may be that the complainant expects more than the organisation can provide, or has unrealistic expectations about the scope of the investigation. If so, this should be made clear to the complainant as soon as possible.

Notifying staff members involved

47. If the complaint is about the actions of a particular staff member/s, the staff member/s involved (including where the staff member is not named, but can be identified from the complaint) will be notified. The organisation should:

- share the complaint information with the staff member/s (unless there are compelling reasons not to);

- advise them how the complaint will be handled, how they will be kept updated and how the complaint response will be shared with them;

- discuss their willingness to engage with alternative complaint resolution approaches (where applicable); and

- signpost the staff member/s to a contact person who can provide support and information on what to expect from the complaint process (this must not be the person investigating or signing off the complaint response).

48. If it is likely that internal disciplinary processes may be involved, the requirements of that process should also be met *[organisations may wish to link their grievance process here].*

Investigating the complaint

49. It is important to plan the investigation before beginning. The staff member investigating the complaint should consider what information they have and what they need, about:

    - what happened? (this could include, for example, records of phone calls or meetings, work requests, recollections of staff members or internal emails);

    - what should have happened? (this should include any relevant policies or procedures that apply); and

    - is there a difference between what happened and what should have happened, and is the organisation responsible?

50. In some cases, information may not be readily available. The need for the information should be balanced against the resources required to obtain it, taking into account the seriousness of the issue (for example, it may be appropriate to contact a former employee, if possible, where they hold key information about a serious complaint).

51. If there is a need to share information within or outwith the organisation, the organisation should be mindful of its obligations under data protection legislation.

Alternative complaint resolution approaches

52. Some complex complaints, or complaints where complainants and other interested parties have become entrenched in their position, may require a different approach to resolving the matter. Where it is considered appropriate, alternative complaint resolution approaches such as complaint resolution discussions, mediation or conciliation should be used to try to resolve the matter and to reduce the risk of the complaint escalating further. If mediation is attempted, a suitably trained and qualified mediator will be used. Alternative complaint resolution approaches may help the organisation and the complainant to understand what has caused the complaint, and so are more likely to lead to mutually satisfactory solutions.

53. Alternative complaint resolution approaches may be used to resolve the complaint entirely, or to support one part of the process, such as understanding the complaint, or exploring the complainant's desired outcome.

54. If the organisation and the complainant (and any staff members involved) agree to using alternative complaint resolution approaches, it is likely that an extension to the timeline will need to be agreed. This should not discourage the use of these approaches.

[The organisation may provide further guidance or examples in relation to alternative complaint resolution approaches. This can be inserted here or be included in an annex to this document.]

Meeting with the complainant during the investigation

55. To effectively investigate the complaint, it may be necessary to arrange a meeting with the complainant. Where a meeting takes place, the organisation should always be mindful of the requirement to investigate complaints (including holding any meetings) within 20 working days wherever possible. Where there are difficulties arranging a meeting, this may provide grounds for extending the timeframe.

56. As a matter of good practice, a written record of the meeting should be completed and provided to the complainant. Alternatively, and by agreement with the person making the complaint, a record of the meeting in another format may be provided. Notification of the timescale within which the organisation expect to provide the record of the meeting should be given to the person making the complaint.

Timelines

57. The following deadlines are appropriate to cases at the investigation stage (counting day one as the day of receipt, or the next working day if the complaint was received on a weekend or public holiday):

    - complaints must be acknowledged within **three working days**
    - a full response to the complaint should be provided as soon as possible but not later than **20 working days** from the time the complaint was received for investigation.

[Organisations may wish to add additional detail on their usual arrangements for receiving and dating of mail and other correspondence – for example if there is a policy to mark correspondence received after a certain time as received the next day.]

Extension to the timeline

58. Not all investigations will be able to meet this deadline. For example, some complaints are so complex that they require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond the 20 working day timeline. It is important to be realistic and clear with the complainant about timeframes, and to advise them early if the organisation considers it will not be possible to meet the 20 day timeframe, and the reasons why. It should be bore in mind that extended delays may have a detrimental effect on the complainant.

59. Any extension must be approved by an appropriate manager. The organisation will keep the complainant and any member/s of staff complained about updated on the reason for the delay and give them a revised timescale for completion. The organisation will contact the complainant and any member/s of staff complained about at least once every 20 working days to update them on the progress of the investigation.

[Organisations may provide further guidance or examples in relation to extensions. For example: The reasons for an extension might include the following:

- *essential accounts or statements, crucial to establishing the circumstances of the case, are needed from staff, complainant or others but the person is not available because of long-term sickness or leave;*
- the *organisation cannot obtain further essential information within normal timescales; or*
- *the complainant has agreed to alternative complaint resolution approaches as a potential route for resolution.*

These are only a few examples, and the *organisation will judge the matter in relation to each complaint. However, an extension would be the exception.]*

60. **Appendix 1** provides further information on timelines.

Closing the complaint at the investigation stage

61. The response to the complaint should be in writing (or by the complainant's preferred method of contact) and must be signed off by a manager or officer who is empowered to provide the final response on behalf of the organisation. [*Organisations may wish to include guidance on local sign-off arrangements*.]

62. Inform the complainant of the complaint outcome (whether it is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld). The quality of the complaint response is very important and in terms of good practice should:

    - be clear and easy to understand, written in a way that is person-centred and non-confrontational;
    - avoid technical terms, but where these must be used, an explanation of the term should be provided;
    - address all the issues raised and demonstrate that each element has been fully and fairly investigated;
    - include an apology where things have gone wrong (this is different to an expression of empathy);
    - highlight any area of disagreement and explain why no further action can be taken;
    - indicate that a named member of staff is available to clarify any aspect of the letter; and
    - indicate that if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the local process, the complainant may seek a review by NIPSO (see **Signposting to NIPSO**).

63. Where a complaint has been resolved, the response does not need to provide a decision on all points of complaint, but should instead confirm the resolution agreed (see **Resolving the complaint**).

64. If the complaint is about the actions of a particular staff member/s, any part of the complaint response which relates to them, (unless there are compelling reasons not to) should be shared with them.

65. The decision, and details of how it was communicated to the complainant, should be recorded on the complaints system.

66. At the earliest opportunity after the closure of the complaint, the staff member handling the complaint should consider whether any learning has been identified.

Signposting to NIPSO

67. Once the investigation stage has been completed, the complainant has the right to approach NIPSO if they remain dissatisfied. The organisation must make clear to the complainant:

    - their right to ask NIPSO to consider the complaint;
    - the time limit for doing so; and
    - how to contact NIPSO.

68. NIPSO considers complaints from the complainant who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of a organisations' complaints procedure. NIPSO looks at issues such as service failure and maladministration (administrative fault), and the way complaints have been handled. There are some subject areas that are outwith NIPSO's jurisdiction, but it is NIPSO's role to determine whether an individual complaint is one that it can consider (and to what extent). All investigation responses must signpost to NIPSO.

69. NIPSO recommends that the organisation uses the wording below to inform the complainant of their right to ask NIPSO to consider the complaint. This information should only be included on the organisation's final response to the complaint.

Information about NIPSO

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) is the final stage for complaints about public services in Northern Ireland. This includes complaints about the organisation. NIPSO is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. It is not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

If you remain dissatisfied when you have had a final response from the organisation, you can ask NIPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through the organisation's complaints handling procedure;
- it is less than 6 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

NIPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of the organisation's final response to your complaint. You can do this online at How do I make a complaint to NIPSO? • Office of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman or call them on Freephone 0800343424

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint.

NIPSO's contact details are:

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN
Tel: 028 9023 3821
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk
Web: www.nipso.org.uk
Twitter: @NIPSO_Comms

Post-closure contact

70. If a complainant contacts the organisation for clarification when a final response has been received, further discussion may occur with the complainant to clarify the response and answer their questions. However, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the response or does not

accept the findings, it should be explained that this is the final response on the matter and the complainant should be signposted to NIPSO.

Appendix 1 - Timelines

General

1. References to timelines throughout the CHP relate to working days. Non-working days, for example weekends, public holidays and days of industrial action where a service has been interrupted, are not counted.

2. School holidays are not counted as non-working days. Complaints received during school holidays should follow the same timelines as set out for frontline response and investigation, unless there are special circumstances which would extend these timelimes.

[The date of receipt will be determined by the organisation's usual arrangements for receiving and dating of mail and other correspondence - organisations may wish to include more detail on local arrangements, for example if mail received after a certain time is marked as received the next working day.]

Timelines at frontline response (stage 1)

3. Will aim to achieve frontline response within five working days. The date of receipt is day one, and the response should be provided (or the complaint escalated) on day five, at the latest.

4. If the timeline has been extended at the frontline response stage in line with the CHP, the response should be provided (or the complaint escalated) on day ten, at the latest.

Transferring cases from frontline response to investigation

5. If the complainant wants to escalate the complaint to the investigation stage, the case must be passed for investigation without delay. In practice this will mean on the same day that the customer is told this will happen.

Timelines at investigation (stage 2)

6. For complaints at the investigation stage, day one is:

    - the day the case is transferred from the frontline stage to the investigation stage.
    - the day the customer asks for an investigation or expresses dissatisfaction after a decision at the frontline response stage.
    - the date the organisation receive the complaint, if it is handled immediately at stage 2.

7. The complaint must be acknowledged within three working days of receipt at stage 2 i.e. by day three.

8. The complaint should be responded to in full by day 20, at the latest. The organisation has 20 working days to investigate the complaint, regardless of any time taken to consider it at the frontline response stage.

9. Exceptionally, a full response may require longer than the 20 working day limit. If so, the reasons should be explained to the complainant (and any staff involved), with an update at least once every 20 working days.

Frequently asked questions

What happens if an extension is granted at stage 1, but then the complaint is escalated?

10. The extension at stage 1 does not affect the timeframes at stage 2. The stage 2 timeframes apply from the day the complaint was escalated (20 working days from this date, unless an extension is granted).

What happens if the extended timeframe cannot be met?

11. If the extended timeframe at stage 1 cannot be met, the complaint should be escalated to stage 2. The maximum timeframe allowed for a stage 1 response is ten working days.

12. If the extended timeframe at stage 2 cannot be met, a further extension may be approved by an appropriate manager if there are clear reasons for this. This should only occur in exceptional circumstances (the orginal extension should allow sufficient time to realistically investigate and respond to the complaint). Where a further extension is agreed, the situation should be explained to the complainant and a revised timeframe for completion provided. The complainant and any staff involved in the investigation must be updated at least once every 20 working days.

What happens when a complainant asks for stage 2 consideration a long time after receiving a frontline response?

13. Unless exceptional circumstances exist, complainant's should bring a stage 2 complaint within six months of learning about the problem, or within two months of receiving the stage 1 response (whichever is latest).

Appendix 2 – The complaint handling process (flowchart for staff)

A complainant may complain verbally or in writing, including face-to-face, by phone, letter or email.

The first consideration is whether the complaint should be dealt with at stage 1 (frontline response) or stage 2 (investigation).

Stage 1: Frontline response	**Stage 2: Investigation**
Always try to respond quickly, wherever the organisation can.	Investigate where: • The complainant is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage with attempts to resolve the complaint at stage 1. • It is clear that the complaint requires investigation from the outset.
Record the complaint and notify any staff complained about.	Record the complaint and notify any staff complained about. Acknowledge the complaint within three working days.
	Contact the complainant to agree: • Points of complaint • Outcome sought • Manage expectations (where required) (these can be confirmed in the acknowledgement where the complaint is straightforward).
Respond to the complaint within five working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.	Respond to the complaint as soon as possible, but within 20 working days unless there is a clear reason for extending the timescale.
Is the complainant satisfied? The organisation must always tell the complainant how to escalate to stage 2.	Communicate the decision, normally in writing. Signpost the complainant to NIPSO and advise of time limits.
(Yes) Record the outcome and learning, and close complaint. *(No) -> to Stage 2: Investigation*	Record the outcome and learning, and close complaint.

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Appendix 3

Consultation on creating complaints handling standards for the Northern Ireland public sector

This questionnaire provides an opportunity for organisations and other interested parties to provide feedback on the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's (NIPSO's) proposals for a set of principles and procedures aimed at standardising complaints handling by public bodies. If you haven't already done so, you may wish to read the consultation document before providing your feedback by clicking here.

The Statement of Principles

The draft Statement of Principles (SOP) consists of six basic principles that NIPSO believe all public bodies should follow when handling a complaint. The full SOP is available by clicking here.

The six key principles are:

1. Start off right

2. Fix it early

3. Focus on what matters

4. Be fair

5. Be honest

6. Learn and improve.

For each of the six principles above, NIPSO has set out what it expects public bodies to do when they receive a complaint. These include: acknowledging mistakes at the earliest opportunity, providing clear reasons for decisions, investigating complaints fairly, and using complaints as an opportunity for improvement.

Is there anything you would like to see added or changed in terms of the content of the principles? If yes, please indicate which principles and provide details.

Please enter your response below

The principles as stated are sufficiently comprehensive, easily understood and will, in the council's opinion, meet the needs of both the council and its customers.

Model Complaints Handling Procedure

The draft Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) is designed to: make sure complaints to public bodies are dealt with in a straight-forward and simple way; provide a general complaints handling procedure that all public bodies will broadly follow where complaints are resolved early, and where this is not possible, complaints are thoroughly investigated. The draft MCHP also makes it easier for public bodies to analyse and learn from the complaints they receive. The full draft MCHP is available here.

Please consider each element of the draft MCHP outlined below and comment on any changes or additions.

A Complaint Handling Procedure should contain an agreed definition of what is and what is not a complaint.

Please enter your response below

A suitable and agreed definition is important to ensure that complaints are identified as such, as quickly as possible, and provide guidance to both complainants and council, to promote the early resolution of all complaints.

A register of all complaints received should be kept by public bodies.

Please enter your response below

Agree. This is the groundwork of ensuring that council successfully manages all complaints received, and learns from complaints through purposeful analytics. In particular providing information on feedback trends that can be used in conjunction with other approaches to customer insight to achieve a customer focused approach to service improvement.

Complaints should be dealt with in no more than two stages; an initial 'frontline response' based on early resolution and a stage 2 'investigation' where early resolution is not possible and a complaint needs to be thoroughly investigated.

Please enter your response below

Council considers this to be a modern and sensible approach that both simplifies the complaints process for customers and council. And importantly, will serve to help reduce the frustration sometimes felt by customers who perhaps feel they are engaging in a long drawn out procedure.

Based on experiences in other places, a 'frontline response' should be responded to within a maximum of 5 working days, with the possibility of an extension in exceptional circumstances of up to 5 additional working days.

Please enter your response below

This is a practical solution to give every opportunity for a frontline response to be provided in as many cases as possible.

All complaints escalated to stage 2 'investigation' should be acknowledged within 3 working days.

Please enter your response below

Agree. This is achievable and is good practice.

A full response to stage 2 complaints should be provided as soon as possible but no later than 20 working days from the time the complaint was received for investigation

Please enter your response below

Based on council's experience twenty working days is sufficient to bring to conclusion the vast majority of complaint cases.

In more complex cases, if it is not possible to meet the 20-day timeframe, a revised timescale should be provided, and an update at least once every 20 working days on the progress of the investigation.

Please enter your response below

This is a very practical and efficient approach which will allow more time when needed for complex complaints, such as those involving planning service, to be addressed within an extended time frame. And will also keep the complainant aware of progress at pre-agreed milestones in the investigation process.

Information about complaints received should be reported and publicised.

Please enter your response below

Agree. Council already reports on all aspects of complaints management. And equally an easily understood quarterly and annual report, posted on the council's website, would meet this requirement.

Public bodies should demonstrate active learning from complaints.

Please enter your response below

Agree. This is fundamental to the council's culture of customer focussed learning and gathering insight into customer journeys and experiences in a structured and transparent way, including from complaints.

Suggested approach to implementation

NIPSO feels standardisation is necessary across all public bodies, however it also recognises that circumstances may sometimes differ between sectors. It is therefore expected that detailed discussions will be needed with public bodies **within** each sector, to decide precisely what their complaints handling procedures should look like.

Five distinct sectors have been identified: **health and social care, councils, government departments, housing,** and **education**.

NIPSO is proposing to introduce MCHPs for public bodies on a sector by sector basis. Do you consider this is the most effective approach? If not, what would you propose?

Please enter your response below

The council views a sector by sector approach as a sensible and effective way to introduce and implement the MCHP. It will enable a programme of work which can address and learn from issues as it rolls out across different sectors.

NIPSO has yet to decide the first sector(s) it will work with to introduce the MCHPs. Some of the factors being considered in this decision are: the number of complaints received by the sector, size/complexity of the sector, risk attached to public service provision. Do you have any views on this issue?

Please enter your response below

Given that the majority of local authority complaints are relatively straightforward and that referrals to the NIPSO are quite low, council would encourage the NIPSO to consider local authorities to be in the first tranche of sectors to adopt the revised approach. The Belfast City Council has been considering a change to a two stage procedure for quite some time and is well placed to implement 5/20 format following co-design.

Are there any issues or concerns specific to any particular sector or area of work, that you feel NIPSO should take into account when refining MCHPs?

Please enter your response below

If you have any further comments on these proposals, or any other

Yes, it will be important that all services within local authorities are considered in the co-design phase, encompassing and taking account of both the more operationally focused 'frontline services' as well as the more complex service providers such as, planning, building control and environmental health.

suggestions or comments about NIPSO's Statement of Principles, MCHP and/or approach for implementing complaints standards and ensuring compliance with them, please provide details below.

Please enter your response below

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation and looks forward to working with NIPSO and other councils in the co-design and implementation of the complaints handling standards for the Northern Ireland public sector.

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Extension of Temporary Pavement Café Licence Scheme**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To consider and agree the extension of a scheme for the temporary licensing of Pavement Cafes.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Taking into account the information presented Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to determine that: 1. the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme should be extended to 30th September 2022 and that any new licences that are granted be issued with the same expiry date;

	2. any application fees associated with the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme should be waived until 30 September 2022; 3. there should be a gradual return to normal and proportionate enforcement procedures in line with established council policy guidance, and 4. a follow up report should be brought before the Licensing Committee prior to September 2022 to seek Members views on how to proceed in relation to Pavement Café licensing.
3.0	**Main Report**
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Licensing of Pavement Cafes Act (NI) 2014 ("the Act") came into operation on the 1October 2016. However, the Council did not implement the legislation at that time as the Department for Infrastructure, Roads had not, and still has not, issued their technical guidance in support of the Act.
3.2	That technical guidance was deemed crucial in that, among other matters, it was required to provide councils with the necessary information on an acceptable size and position of a pavement café such that there was clear demarcation between pedestrians and cafés to enhance health & safety regarding obstructions, tripping hazards and to provide a clear indicator for the visually impaired.
3.3	In June last year, a temporary process for considering pavement café applications was introduced. This process, and associated temporary guidance for applicants, was developed, based on DfC and Licensing Forum guidance, in unique circumstances to assist the hospitality sector during the pandemic. When introduced it was made clear to applicants that it will be subject to review and that the council may modify or dispense with such aspects of the guidance as it thinks appropriate depending upon issues which may arise, or in response to changes in the Government's guidance in relation to Covid-19.
3.4	The aim of the scheme was to facilitate the controlled expansion of suitable premises such as cafes, restaurants and pubs, providing small businesses with an opportunity to boost their income at a time of economic crisis.

3.5	At that time authority was granted by the SP and R Committee to waive the licence application fee given the prevailing circumstances.
3.6	The scheme was established with the intention of running for a year and all licences that have been issued have an expiry date of 31st August 2021.
3.7	<u>Temporary Pavement Café Applications</u> • Since the scheme was launched 60 licences have been issued • More than 60 other applications have been received which we cannot progress due to applicants failing to provide sufficient information to consult with DfI Roads • A number of other pavement cafes are operating that have not applied for a licence.
	<u>Complaints</u>
3.8	Complaints about pavement cafes and the licensing process are being monitored and any recurring themes will be used to inform how we implement the licensing process once the temporary scheme ends. Complaints about individual pavement café premises are investigated and followed up with licensees to address issues raised.
3.9	Many of the complaints received related to the re-opening of outdoor areas for the 2021 May Bank Holiday weekend and most were resolved quickly. Common complaints included: • furniture obstructing pedestrian movement, particularly for those with disabilities, • furniture obstructing access to other premises, • problems for Cleansing Services, • the Pavement Cafe area not being managed effectively.
	<u>Enforcement</u>
3.10	Over the course of the pandemic, the Council has responded to requests from the Assembly and industry to assist recovery and we have therefore been endeavouring to provide support and minimise impact on small businesses.
3.11	For that reason, there has been a very ‘light touch’ approach to enforcement in relation to those who have not made application or failed to provide the necessary information to progress their application as well as those who may not be operating in accordance with the terms of their licence.

	Universal access
3.12	Consultation when the legislation was enacted included regular engagement with groups representing people with disabilities and relevant issues were captured in our "Pavement Cafes: Guidance for Applicants during the Covid19 Pandemic" document which was equality screened in June 2020.
3.13	The Council consults with DfI Roads on all licensing applications received and the impact on pedestrians and particularly for disabled people is considered.
3.14	At a recent meeting with a representative of the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) on Pavement Cafés, their feedback was generally positive on extending the temporary licence scheme as people with disabilities are still cautious about going out and feel safer sitting outside in well ventilated spaces.
3.15	Whilst highlighting that there are some problem premises there was support for how we have implemented the scheme but it was suggested we should be taking more proactive action where premises don't apply.
	Proposed extension to the temporary scheme
3.16	As the pandemic has continued for much longer than anticipated when the scheme was set up last June, and in recognition that the hospitality sector remains subject to operating restrictions, Members are asked to consider that the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme be extended for a further period of time.
3.17	Recently the Business and Planning Act 2020 (Pavement Licences) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 came into effect which extended temporary pavement licence provisions in England to 30 September 2022.
3.18	It is suggested therefore that all existing temporary licences due to expire on 31st August 2021, be extended to 30th September 2022 and that any new licences that are granted be issued with the same expiry date.
	Fees
3.19	Members are asked to consider that any application fees associated with the temporary Pavement Café licensing scheme be waived until 30th September 2022.

	Enforcement stance
3.20	As restrictions continue to ease, it is suggested that there is a gradual return to normal and proportionate enforcement procedures in line with established council policy guidance. This will include addressing applications which cannot progress because sufficient information has not been provided and commencing proactive action in relation to unlicensed pavement cafes.
	Transition to a permanent scheme
3.21	If the temporary scheme is agreed, a follow up report will be brought before Licensing Committee prior to September 2022 to seek Members views on how to proceed in relation to Pavement Café licensing. The additional period will enable further process review to take place and any issues arising from enforcement measures to be considered.
3.22	This will also provide an opportunity to review and improve our guidance, particularly in terms of accessibility, but also in relation to pavement café furniture and the standards that we should set to ensure a vibrant and attractive city.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.23	The grant application fee for a 5-year pavement café licence is £225.00 with an annual licence fee of £55.00 for the subsequent 4 years. If the temporary scheme is to be extended and the fees are waived there will be a total lost income of at least £31000 on the basis of applications granted and pending at present.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.24	If the temporary scheme is to be extended as proposed the equality screening exercise undertaken in June 2020 will be reviewed and updated as necessary.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Leisure Transformation Programme: Assets Update**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Alistair Charles, Project Sponsor

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	This report updates Members on the development and implementation of the £105m leisure assets capital programme.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note:

	i. that the ICT and Business Case consultant for the proposed new leisure facility at Girdwood have been appointed and options are currently being developed in advance of public consultation, as outlined at 3.1; ii. that S & P Architects have now completed Phase A of the Future Options review for those centres not currently included in the Leisure Transformation Programme and agree that a special SP and R meeting and Party Group briefings are organised to update Members, as outlined at 3.2; iii. that the three new leisure facilities at Lisnasharragh, Brook and Andersonstown have all now fully re-opened following lockdown and continue to see strong membership numbers as outlined at 3.3; and iv. that works are progressing at Avoniel and Templemore centres and both facilities remain on schedule as outlined at 3.4
	Main Report
3.1	**Girdwood Integrated Sports Facility (GISF)** Following appointment of the ICT and business case consultant, a range of options for the new facility have been developed in line with the previous options developed by SIB/DfC back in 2017. These options all include a new community pool, changing for the existing 3G pitch alongside a new dry side leisure offering. The options are currently being tested through the business case with a view to arriving at a preferred option. It is currently envisaged that the preferred option will be developed by end September. This will then be presented to Members before being consulted on with the local community and key stakeholders. This consultation will help inform the final design of new facility. **It is currently envisaged that work on the new facility will commence in summer 2022.**
3.2	**Future Options Review – (Ozone, Ballysillan, Whiterock, Shankill, Loughside and Belvoir)** Members will be aware that Space and Place Architects (S&P) have been appointed to perform a review of current leisure provision across the city, with a specific focus on the impact to date of LTP and the future options for those centres not included in the current programme of redevelopment. This commission was split up into three distinct phases (A-C), with each phase to be brought into Committee for approval before proceeding with the next phase.

- Phase A – Baseline Review
- Phase B – Consultation –consultation with Members and a wide range of key stakeholders with a view to begin the process of developing options for the remaining six centres.
- Phase C – Concept Designs - Phase C would then involve the development of concept designs as required.

Phase A specifically focused on the performance and future strategic options for those centres not included in LTP Phases 1-3 and included carrying out a full analysis of the performance of the six existing centres, including metrics such as facilities mix, usage, catchment, condition, revenue costs and current subvention levels. The study also looked at the current supply and demand across city taking into account LTP phase 1-3 developments (both completed and underway) and reported on likely demand for the replacement/re-purposing of the 6 remaining facilities under a potential further phase of works.

3.3 Leisure has been identified by Members as being a key priority for the next few years and it is, therefore, recommended that **a future special SP and R Committee meeting (to which all Members will be invited) and Party Group Briefings be organised in order to present the findings from Phase A and to agree next steps which will inform Phase B**. Members are asked to agree to S&P attending a future meeting and Party Group briefings.

Phase 2- Update on new centre performance

3.4 **Lisnasharragh, Andersonstown and Brook** centres are now fully re-opened and continue to enjoy strong membership numbers. Despite all leisure facilities experiencing a significant drop off in membership numbers over lockdown, the new centres have recovered extremely strongly with Lisnasharragh experiencing higher member numbers than pre-Covid. Lisnasharragh currently has 3,838 live pre-paid members (109% of pre-lockdown figures), Brook 1,700 (93% of pre-lockdown figures), and Andersonstown 1,708 (opened post lockdown). These figures are well in excess of the UK average which shows gym memberships currently averaging around 60%-70% pre-lockdown figures and is testament to the strength of the offering.

	Phase 3- Project Updates (Avoniel and Templemore) **Avoniel** – The majority of works are now complete including construction of the pavilion, the laying of the five-a-side and seven-a-side 3G pitches and the installation of the new car park. The eleven-a-side 3G pitch will be laid later this month, while the internal fit out of the building and the finishing touches to the outdoor spaces are now underway. It is currently envisaged that the new facility will be completed by late Autumn 2021 (photos at Appendix 1). **Templemore** – the contractor has been on site since late last year and works are progressing on schedule. In terms of the existing building, significant works have been completed such as complete re-pointing of the existing chimney and installation of new lantern roofs over the main pool, derelict pool and slipper baths. A new roof has also been installed over the old courtyard to incorporate the new café area (refer to attached photos in Appendix 1). Significant progress has also been made on the new build element of the project. Foundations have been completed, the pool tank has been installed and the structural steelwork has also been completed. Blockwork has now commenced to the internal and external walls. It is currently envisaged that construction will complete on the facility by May 2022. Following construction completion, the interpretive fit out will take place (circa 8-10 weeks) in advance of a planned opening in late summer 2022.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.5	Financial – Templemore and Avoniel - The design costs limits for each centre were agreed by Committee in April 2015 as part of the overall £105m leisure programme. Leisure Phase 4 – no financing in place Resource - Council to act as delivery partner for Girdwood Phase II ICT engagement. To be managed through current LTP governance arrangements.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications
3.6	There are no direct equality implications
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Photos of Avoniel and Templemore sites

Appendix 1

Avoniel Progress



Fig 1- Avoniel- Aerial view



Fig 2- Avoniel- 7 a side pitch and covered structure



Fig 3- Templemore- Aerial view



Fig 4- Templemore- new lantern style glazed roofs to main pool, derelict pool and slipper baths (steel frame for new building to the right-hand side)



Fig 5- Templemore- existing courtyard area being roofed and floored to incorporate new café area

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Update on Physical Programme**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The Council's Physical Programme currently includes 170 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report requests a movement under the Capital Programme (IT Programme) and provides an update on contracts awarded.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- **Proposed Movement -** *'IT Programme – Replacement Hardware for NIHE System'* (*Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme) - Note that a satisfactory tender return has now been achieved and that it is recommended that a maximum £360,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
- **Contracts awarded in Q1 2021/22 –** note the update in relation to contracts awarded.

3.0 Main Report

Capital Programme

3.1 Members agreed that all capital projects under the Council's Capital Programme must go through a three-stage process, where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project.

3.2 Members will recall that, in June 2021, the stage movement was agreed for *IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System* project to *Stage 3 – Committed (Hold at Tier 0 – Scheme at risk pending tender return).* This was to be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation upon receipt of the tender returns. Members are now asked to note that the tender has now been returned within the affordability limits of the Council and **that it is recommended that a maximum £360,000 is now allocated to this project.**

Project	Overview	Stage
IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System	The Council has a major contract to support systems on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. This project is to update IT hardware for that system.	Move to *Stage 3 – Committed (Tier 2 – Scheme Underway)*

Contracts Awarded

3.3 Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works, including services related to works set out in the attached appendix.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.4 Financial – **IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System** - up to a maximum of £360,000. The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resources – Ongoing operating costs are within existing revenue budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

3.5 All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.

4.0	**Document Attached**
	Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for notation (Mar – July 2021)

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Appendix 1 - Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (Mar-July 2021)

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
PeaceIV – Single Party Construction Framework	McQuillans	15/03/2021
Holylands Environmental Improvements Scheme	Clive Richardson Ltd	10/03/2021
Waterfront Hall Replacement Escalators	ThyssenKrupp	19/05/2021
Boodles Dam Decommissioning Works	McQuillans	08/06/2021
SIF – Main Contractor for Mornington Community Centre	M&N Contracts	08/06/2021
Balmoral Bowling Club - Floodlight Installation and Ancillary Works	AG Wilson	07/06/2021
Refurbishment of CHP unit at Ballysillan LC under a self-financing energy supply contract ESCo	Harvey Group PLC	22/06/2021
Upgrade of Castle Place Kiosk	Fabrite	01/07/2021
Design and Operation of an E-Cargo Bike Trial Scheme	StreetDock Systems Limited	19/07/2021
Supply & Installation of Football Goals for Avoniel Leisure Centre	Podium 4 Sport	23/07/2021
Supply & Installation of Café & Office Furniture at Avoniel Leisure Centre	Joseph Flanigan & Son	26/07/2021

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Update on Area Working**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To seek Members' approval of the minutes of the most recent AWG minutes.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the most recent AWG minutes *(East – 21 June*), as attached.

3.0	**Main Report**
	KEY ISSUES **Area Working Group Minutes**
3.1	Members agreed in June 2016 that the Area Working Group minutes would be taken into the SP and R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups. Members are asked to approve the most recent round of AWG minutes as attached. - East AWG – 21st June 2021
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.2	As outlined in the minutes.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment
3.3	No implications
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Minutes of the East Belfast Area Working Group meeting of 21st June 2021

East Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 21st June, 2021

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present:	Alderman Sandford (Chairperson) Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire and Rodgers; and Councillors Brooks, De Faoite, Flynn, Hanvey, Hussey, M. Kelly, Kyle, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland and Smyth.
In attendance:	Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes, Ms. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager, Ms. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer; and Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer

Election of Chairperson

In line with its agreement of 6th February 2020, the Working Group was requested to nominate a Member of the Democratic Unionist Party or the Alliance Party to serve as Chairperson of the East Area Working Group for the year June 2021 – May 2022.

Moved by Alderman Haire,
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved – that Alderman Sandford would serve as Chairperson of the East Area Working Group for the year June 2021 – May 2022.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Howard and Newton.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 6th May were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Kyle declared an interest in the Lagan Village Youth and Community Association, in that he was Chairperson of the group. However, as it was an update from the Director of Physical Programmes and did not require a decision, he remained in the meeting for the item.

Presentation

Castlereagh Presbyterian Church

The Chairperson welcomed the Rev. M. Burnside, Mr. A. McCann and Mr. B. Knox, Architect, to the meeting.

Mr. Knox provided the Working Group with an overview of the planned works to the Church Hall along with a construction cost estimate from a Quantity Surveyor. The proposed works included works to external doors and windows, roofing works, upgrading works to the toilet facilities and boiler house, and electrical and mechanical works. He outlined that the cost guidance included a 5% cost for design risk/contingency.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Physical Programmes advised the Working Group that the cost of materials had risen in recent years, some by as much as 30%, and that the Working Group should be mindful of that. She reminded the Members that the only way of knowing the final cost of a project would be when the tender costs were received.

Mr. McCann advised the Members that 600 new houses were being built in the surrounding area and that there was already significant use of the Church by the local community. He outlined that the Church worked with the two local schools and permitted them to use the Church premises for free. The Members were advised that upgraded footpaths on Church Road were due for completion soon and, as the Church backed onto the Henry Jones Playing Fields, they would like to be able to offer the use of their car park, and the use of the Church Hall, to allow the Playing Fields to be used at full capacity, with cars being able to safely park off the road. He added that the Church would be organising fundraising events to raise some money towards the renovations themselves.

The Rev. Burnside outlined that the Church Hall was used by a wide range of external groups in the community, including mums and toddlers' groups, the Girls' & Boys' Brigade, bowling groups, dance, drama and fitness classes, the Badminton Union of Ireland and for blood donation sessions.

A number of Members stated that Church Road was dangerous and that it was difficult to park on or to cross.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their informative presentation and they retired from the meeting.

The Director of Physical Programmes reminded the Working Group that it had, in principle, agreed to provide £382,000 towards the project, but that it was at "Stage 1 – uncommitted". She outlined that all projects had to go through the due diligence process. The Members were advised that the plans presented at the meeting had not been scrutinised by officers yet, as they had only been received that morning, but that they seemed to be a scaled back version of the project, with their estimated costs now at £325,000.

After further discussion, the Working Group agreed:

- to undertake a site visit to the BIF/LIF projects under consideration, namely, Castlereagh Presbyterian Church, Bloomfield Community

Association, the Strand Cinema and the Westbourne/Titanic People project in order to familiarise themselves with the projects.

The Working Group further agreed, at the request of the Director of Physical Programme, to undertake a site visit to the two leisure facilities in East Belfast which were currently under renovation, the Templemore Baths and Avoniel Leisure Centre.

The Working Group agreed that the date and time of the site visits would be agreed in consultation with the Chairperson.

Lagan Village Youth and Community Association Hall – Verbal Update

The Director of Physical Programmes reminded the Working Group that, at the last meeting, she had advised the Members that Lagan Village Youth and Community Association (LVYCA) had unfortunately had a fire in their building and that they were awaiting the outcome of a fire safety report.

She reported that the safety report had since come through and that everything except the cost of the fridge would be covered by their insurance claim.

She outlined that LVYCA was the agreed reserve project under Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) and that, if money was to become available through BIF, it would be next in line to receive funding.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised the Working Group that the City and Neighbourhood Services Department might be able to assist the LVYCA with the costs of a new fridge through a grant and that they would contact them to offer assistance.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to also visit the LVYCA site as part of the BIF/LIF projects which were under consideration.

Chairperson

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Update on Contracts**
Date:	20 August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: • Seek approval from Members for tenders and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000 And to ask Members to • Note Contract Modifications to Contract Term and retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs)
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 1**) • Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 2**)

	• Approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 3**) • Note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 4**)
3.0	**Main Report**
	Competitive Tenders
3.1	Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender
3.2	Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
	Single Tender Actions (STAs)
3.4	The following STAs are being submitted for approval: • Contract for for £45,000, for up to 16 weeks, awarded to Hysopt for improvement of the efficiency of the heating and cooling systems within the Waterfront Hall with a view to reducing operating costs, reduce carbon emissions, and increase comfort. An initial investigation has indicated a potential efficiency gain of approximately 16% which could result in potential utility savings of approximately £19,000 per annum. If successful, the payback would be less than 2.5 years. This is a trail project which then could be rolled out to other sites to realise additional efficiency savings at other sites. Any further roll out would be subject to an open tender process should the trail prove successful. • Contract for £45,000 (revenue for the contractor from sales at the venue), for up to 18 months, awarded to Now Group T/A Loaf Catering, for an extension to the current Bobbin catering contract. This will help enable the Bobbin to reopen, navigate a potential uncertain short-term future and enable the Council to re-tender a later date once COVID restrictions are lifted and there is more certainty about the future business environment.

- Contract for £45,000, for up to 18 months, awarded to North Down Group, for the supply of a range of fruit and vegetables for the canteen in Cecil Ward Buildings. Due to Covid and Brexit the current marketplace is not stable and not suitable for a re-tender. In addition the extension would help support the supplier who received no revenue from the contract whilst the canteen was closed during the pandemic.

3.5 Members are asked to note an increase in value for a STA approved in January 2021, awarded to MMAS/OGU Architects, for the appointment of integrated design team to provide design development services to support Covid19 'Revitalisation programme' (funded). Due to additional funding becoming available, the value of the STA has increased by £45k, from £60k to £105k.

3.6 The following retrospective STAs were awarded:

- An 8 month extension to contract with no additional costs to BCC (cost is coming from the RAP sponsorship budget), awarded to Lanyon Communications, for event management and support services to deliver collaborative pubic private partnership (Renewed Ambition Programme RAP) T2149. Previously approved by SP&R June 2020.

- Contract for £120,000 for up to 2 months work, awarded to WJM Building Services Ltd, for Measured Term Contract for mechanical services including callouts and repairs. The new tender for the MTC mechanical was to be in place for the 1st July 21 but has been delayed.

- Contract for £125,000 for 8 months, awarded to Deloitte, for an urgent requirement for consultancy services and dedicated programme management resources and capacity to support the current operational pressures within C&NS. This role will drive business planning, address current risks to service delivery and aid implementation of the recommendations of the Coll report. The capacity and capability needed is not currently available in BCC.

Modification to Contract Term

3.7 The following contract terms were modified:

	• A 4 month extension for T1852 - delivery and supply of live and frozen animal feed to Belfast Zoo (lot 3 frozen meat), supplier WD Meats. Extension will allow sufficient time for a new tender to be awarded • A 4 month extension for T1883 - supply and delivery of frozen fish to Belfast Zoo, supplier Marine Nutrition. Extension will allow sufficient time for a new tender to be awarded • A 6 month extension and no additional cost for T1947 - delivery of Peace IV Transform for Change project, supplier The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. Extension required as Covid impacted on project delivery and participation. *<u>Renewal of existing Council Contract</u>*
3.8	Provision of Property Details Surveys to Land and Property Services
3.9	Members are asked to note that the Council has provided a service to Land and Property Services (LPS) for over 15 years, in respect of carrying out property details surveys. The Council carries out these surveys on behalf of LPS, for buildings being inspected for Building Regulation compliance, as a means of streamlining the valuation process. LPS have requested that the contract for this service is renewed for a further term of 3 years, with the option to extend for 2 periods of 12 months. The service will continue to be provided on a cost recovery basis. Legal Services have been consulted and have approved the contract. Members are asked to agree to this renewal.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.10	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.11	None
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix Table 1 - Competitive Tenders Table 2 - Single Tender Actions Table 3 - Modification to Contract Term Table 4 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Replacement Building Control solutions IT system which provides functionality to manage service delivery	Up to 7 years	£636,000 1st year capital	A Reid	The existing legacy solutions are considered not fit for purpose in the current constantly changing digital age.
The provision of Insurance Brokerage Services	Up to 2 years	£2,700,000 (this includes the annual insurance premium payments plus any potential broker fee)	R Cregan	The provision of insurance brokerage services is needed to ensure that suitable insurance policies are purchased for the Council on the most cost-effective basis
Replacement of vehicles and mobile plant	Up to 1 year	£3,200,000	S Toland / R Black	Current vehicles have exceeded the Council's recommended replacement criteria (age & mechanical condition)
Delivery and supply of live and frozen animal feed	Up to 3 years	£72,000	S Toland / R Black	Animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Supply and delivery of frozen fish to Belfast Zoo	Up to 3 years	£84,000	S Toland / R Black	Animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Replacement of hardware that supports the NIHE environment	Up to 1 year	£263,719	R Cregan	Existing hardware becoming end of life (being reported retrospectively)
Deliver a programme of cross community activities - Forth Meadow Community Greenaway - Peace IV	Up to 11 months	£150,000	S Toland / R Black	To improved footfall along the Greenway's connecting foot / cycle paths, encouraging movement between communities and creating unique experiences for local residents, and people from other communities.
PEACE IV Youth Engagement & Civic Education Project	Up to 11 months	£160,000	S Toland / R Black	A key deliverable of the PEACE IV Shared Space & Services theme, that will build positive relations between young people along the Forth Meadow Community

				Greenway and contribute to building positive relations.
Supply of hay, meadow hay, barley straw, lucerne and browse	Up to 3 years	£126,000	S Toland / R Black	Animal feed for Belfast Zoo
Provision of public address, staging and lighting equipment	Up to 4 years	£480,000	A Reid	PA, staging and lighting equipment for a planned events programme
Hire of ancillary equipment for Council events	Up to 4 years	£250,000	A Reid	To provide a range of equipment at Council Events
Inspection, cleaning and maintenance of automatic public conveniences	Up to 6 years	£600,000	S Toland / R Black	Maintenance and cleaning support contract of automatic public conveniences
Tender for qualified professional team to explore regeneration opportunities and produce a concept place-making plan for Council owned land at Corporation Street and Exchange Street	Up to 6 months	£50,000	A Reid	To prepare a place making concept for regeneration of Brownfield Council land at Corporation Street and Exchange Street that will facilitate residential opportunities as part of the Strategic Sites Assessment (Housing Led Regeneration) workstream

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Improvement of the efficiency of the heating and cooling systems within the Waterfront Hall	£45,000	S Grimes	Hysopt
Bobbin Café City Hall - contract extension	£45,000 income	J Walsh	Now Group - Loaf Catering
Supply of a range of fruit and vegetables to the Canteen	£45,000	J Walsh	North Down Group
*Appointment of integrated design team to provide design development services to support Covid19 'Revitalisation programme' (funded)	Additional £45,000	A Reid	MMAS/OGU Architects

***** For Information - addendum to the STA approved in January 2021 for £60k with an additional £45k value added.

Appendix 1

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Contract Duration	Modification	SRO	Supplier
T1852 - Delivery and supply of live and frozen animal feed (lot 3 frozen meat)	Up to 3 years	Additional 4 months and £6,000	S Toland / R Black	WD Meats
T1883 - Supply and delivery of frozen fish to Belfast Zoo	Up to 3 years	Additional 4 months and £6,000	S Toland / R Black	Marine Nutrition
T1947 - Delivery of Peace IV Transform for Change	Up to 2.5 years	Additional 6 months	S Toland / R Black	The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
T2149 - Event management and support services to deliver collaborative public private partnership (Renewed Ambition Programme RAP)	Up to 8 months	£70,400	A Reid	Lanyon Communications
Measured Term Contract for mechanical services including callouts and repairs	Up 2 months	£120,000	S Grimes	WJM Building Services Ltd
Consultancy Services – strategic support for C&NS	Up to 8 months	£125,000	J Tully	Deloitte

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Belfast City Council

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Subject:	**Ad Hoc Request for Funding - Belfast Youth Cup**
Date	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Ryan Black, Director Neighbourhood Services

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To bring to Members attention an ad hoc request for funding from Playing for the Future CIC in relation to the Belfast Youth Cup.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to consider the ad hoc request for finance.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Director of Finance and Resources has received a request from Playing for the Future CIC in relation to the Belfast Youth Cup. The organisation exists to bring people together to create opportunities for local children and celebrate diversity and provide “Playing for the Future Academy” in Lurgan and Belfast.

3.2	The Belfast Youth Cup was set up to help promote opportunities for local children to experience playing in an International Youth Tournament on their doorstep and showcase Belfast to a wider audience. Established in 2019 as a pilot programme which evolved into something much bigger than originally planned. The plan was to have 8 teams and we ended up with 24 from all over NI and ROI, plus Leeds United, Sheffield United, Hibernian FC (Scotland). 2020 was shaping up to have teams from NI, ROI along with professional clubs from England, Scotland, Denmark and South America. With 2020 being cancelled due to Covid the tournament suffered a huge hangover this year with 30% of revenues through team registrations being lost due to a knock on effect.
3.3	This year there are 120 teams from all over Ireland attending the event from Co. Kerry, Dublin, Tipperary, Mayo and Galway. Over 500 bed nights have been created with 45% staying in Belfast City Centre itself. There is a partnership agreement with Holiday Inn Belfast, which are fully booked throughout the duration of the tournament.
3.4	Playing for the Future CIC believes that the tournament showcases all that is good about the city of Belfast. The games are played at Seaview, Ulidia and UUJ. The budget for the tournament has been provided and shows expenditure of £43,794 and income of £14,550 with a net loss of £29,244. The request states, "If we are to lose money in 2021, the knock-on effect for 2022 will see us make major cutbacks including reducing the number of teams, to 24, as increased number of teams = increased costs. We also wouldn't be able to attract the likes of Leeds United, West Ham United, Sheffield United, Hibernian FC (who have all committed to 2022). In 2022, we are planning to utilise the facilities throughout Belfast to expand the tournament from 120 to 220 teams."
3.5	The tournament is organised primarily at the pitches at University of Ulster with games played and Seaview and two days of matches at Belfast City Council's Ulidia Playing Fields. The hire cost for Ulidia for two days at concession rate amounts to £544.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.6	The amount of funding required has not been specified. If Members are minded to provide financial support, for example, by covering the £544 hire charges at Belfast City Council's synthetic surface pitch at Ulidia Playing Fields or making a contribution to support an element of the tournament deficit, then the cost will be charged to the Covid-19 reserve.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications
3.7	None
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Tri-Cities Golf Event**
Date:	20th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	Since 2002, the cities of Edinburgh, Dublin and Belfast have participated in the annual Tri-Cities Golf Event. The event rotates round each of the three cities on an annual basis. The 2021 event is scheduled to take place in Belfast.
1.2	The Tri-Cities Golf Event originated from a city network named “Cities of the Isles”. The Golf Event was developed to establish strong social capital networks across the cities alongside opportunities for networking, collaboration and engagement on a range of shared challenges.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4 May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree to the Council’s part-sponsorship of the event, up to a maximum of £2,000.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The golf competition is between representatives from each of the city councils. The teams all travel at their own expense and meet their own accommodation costs. No subsequent allowance or expenses of any kind are paid to any of the participants. Each year the host city meets the costs of the green fees for the visitors and a meal in the clubhouse after the match.
3.2	The event dates are 2nd – 3rd September, with the first day of the tournament taking place at Belvoir Park Golf Club and the second at Dunmurry Golf Club.
3.3	**Financial and Resource Implications** The request is for funding up to a maximum of £2,000 provided from existing revenue budgets
3.4	**Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications** There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Update on Language Strategy**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Language Strategy.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of the report.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**Background** The Council agreed a strategic approach to progress the Language Strategy in May 2021 including approving the establishment of:

	• a cross-party, bi-annual / quarterly Member Language Strategy Working Group; • a new external Irish Language Forum and a new external Ulster-Scots Forum to add to the existing Council stakeholder fora for the other language communities; and • an internal Language Strategy officer working group.
	Key Issues **Progress update on Language Strategy**
3.2	A report agreeing the next steps for the Language Strategy was brought to the Equality and Diversity Network – Strategic, which is chaired by the City Solicitor, in June where it was agreed that the Governance and Compliance Manager would carry out Departmental Management Team briefings so senior officers are aware of the implications of the Language Strategy. These are currently underway.
3.3	The internal Language Strategy officer working group has been established and comprises officers from Marketing and Communications; Customer Focus; Good Relations; Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts; Building Control; Corporate HR; City and Neighbourhood Services; Physical Programmes as well as the Language Officers. The key outcome from this officer working group is to develop draft action plans for each of the five language strands which we will bring to the first meeting of the Elected Member Working Group.
3.4	Nominations for the Elected Member Working Group will be sought in August, with the first and second meetings planned for September and October. It is planned to use these first two meetings to invite key stakeholders from the five language strands to brief the Working Group and for Elected Members to review and agree the draft action plans.
3.5	It is planned to establish and hold the new stakeholder fora for Irish and Ulster Scots in October / November.
3.6	In addition, English and Irish versions of the Council's logo have been provided to Glór na nGael to use for the Irish Language in Business Awards later this year and also Cairde Ard Eoin, a community group in Ardoyne, for local history storyboards as part of an environmental improvement scheme from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme. This is in line with the decision made by the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group from October 2013 which was agreed through SP and R to design a logo in Irish for use by

	individual Members and organisations. It is suggested that a process is developed so that these requests are approved and logged by the Irish Language Officer.
3.7	The Irish Language Officer is also working with Foras na Gaelige on the Council hosting an online event as part of the Foras na Gaelige and Scotland's Bòrd na Gàidhlig's joint Comicille1500 celebrations.
3.8	**Progress update on the revised Dual Language Street Sign Policy** Following the ratification of the revised Dual Language Street Sign Policy in May 2021, an officer working group has been established and procedures have been developed for implementation of the revised policy. An external equality specialist has been engaged to carry out the EQIA and this work is currently underway. The revised procedures and other steps necessary to establish the policy will be brought through the Elected Member Working Group in the coming months.
3.9	**Financial and Resource Implications** There are no financial implications as a result of this report.
3.10	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations are key principles within which the Language Strategy is delivered. The Language Strategy was subject to the Council's usual screening process.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	None

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager Lorraine Dennis, Equality and Diversity Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of report or summary of main issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to submit for approval a final version of the Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • note the results of the public consultation; and • agree the recommendations including the submission of the final documents to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**<u>Background</u>** Members agreed to the draft Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24 which was issued for public consultation earlier in the year. The draft documents were prepared as

	part of our compliance requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Equality Action Plan is scheduled to run from 2021 until 2024, to align with our Corporate Plan.
3.2	**Key Issues** Consultation mechanisms used The online survey, which was a key mechanism of the twelve-week public consultation, was launched through our social media platforms on Wednesday 10 March 2021. Consultees were advised: That the Council's Equality Scheme includes a commitment to gather information about inequalities in Belfast, which we can address through our functions. This is called an 'Audit of Inequalities'. Based on this, we've put together an Equality Action Plan. This sets out the actions we propose to address inequality in the functions we're responsible for like economic development, waste management and parks services and contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. All Equality Scheme consultees were invited to participate, and invitations issued to various fora. Meetings were held as part of the Equality Consultative Forum and Disability Advisory Panel and two further public meetings were facilitated. Reminders to participate were also issued via social media on several occasions throughout the consultation period, which closed on Tuesday, 1st June 2021. A summary of both quantitative and qualitative feedback from the results of the public consultation are set out in **Appendix 1**.
3.3	Recommendations: i. Data gathered throughout the course of this consultation will be considered through the internal officer Equality and Diversity Network Strategic and Operational groups and will be fed into specific, relevant programmes. ii. No changes are made to the draft Audit of Inequalities and this is now submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and published as the final document (**Appendix 2**). iii. No changes are made to the draft Equality Action Plan 2021-24 and this is now submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and published as a final document (**Appendix 3**).

3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** This work is covered by existing budgets. Whilst the EDU will lead on this work, officer input from across the Departments will be required.
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** The actions outlined contribute to our legal compliance regarding the promotion of equality and good relations.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 -Summary of feedback from public consultation Appendix 2: Audit of Inequalities Appendix 3: Equality Action Plan 2021-24

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Appendix 1

Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan 2021-24:

summary of consultation feedback

Quantitative data

Response numbers overall were relatively low, both at meetings and survey returns. This is in line with other local councils as reflected at a recent meeting to discuss the statutory Section 75 duties.

The table below summarises the areas surveyed and the percentage of respondents who fully or generally agreed with the statements presented:

Do you agree with/ that:	**% demonstrating broadly positive agreement**
information contained in the Audit of Inequalities provides a sufficient evidence base for the development of appropriate actions to address inequalities?	75%
actions under Growing an inclusive economy?	75%
actions under Living here?	75%
cross-cutting actions?	80%
actions listed in Our organisational priorities?	63.6%
Equality Action Plan 2021-24 will have a positive impact on addressing inequalities?	58%

Qualitative data

Summary of observations:

i. The consultation feedback demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the entrenchment of inequalities in the city and the tensions between sectarian divisions and broader identity groups.
ii. The ambitious aims of the Belfast Agenda and the functional purpose of the Audit of Inequalities can lead to a misinterpretation of the remit of Council in addressing inequalities.
iii. Much of the information gathered relates to particular programmes to be delivered
iv. The needs of specific identity groups are reflected across a wide range of inequalities.

v. Data gaps are having an increasingly detrimental impact on our understanding of inequalities, particularly in relation to BAME communities, young carers and younger members of the LGBTQ+ community
vi. Intersectionality is increasingly understood in relation to equality and service provision. This relates to the intersection of Section 75 categories and occurs when an individual may face overlapping discrimination due to different aspects of their identity, eg a carer from the BAME community faces discrimination due to their dependent status as well as their ethnicity.
vii. Support for the lobbying role of Council in addressing inequalities beyond our functions
viii. Acknowledgement of Council's position in promoting inclusion, with momentum to continue in this regard

The feedback gathered in this consultation has provided a useful insight into inequalities in the city of Belfast.

Appendix 2

Belfast City Council

Audit of Inequalities 2021

We are committed to making sure that our services and information are available to all parts of the community. If you need this information in an alternative format or language, please contact us at:

Equality & Diversity Unit

Legal & Civic Services

Belfast City Council

City Hall

Belfast

BT1 5GS

Telephone: 028 90270511

Freephone: 0800 0855 412

Text phone: 028 90270405

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Contents

Section 1: Background *3*

1.1 The Legislative Background 3

1.2 The Strategic Context 3

1.3 The Corporate Context 4

Section 2: About Belfast City Council *5*

Section 3: Methodology *7*

Section 4: Key findings *8*

Findings from the Policy Review 8

Section 5: Profile of Belfast City Council *9*

5.1 Religion 9

5.2 Political opinion 9

5.3 Ethnicity 10

5.4 Age 10

5.5 Marital status 11

5.6 Sexual orientation 11

5.7 Gender 11

5.8 Disability 12

5.9 Dependants 12

5.10 Belfast City Council Staff 12

Section 6 Auditing Inequalities Data *14*

6.1 Access to council services 14

6.2 Education 14

6.3 The Economy 16

6.3 Health and wellbeing 20

6.4 Positive relations 22

Section 7: Selected bibliography *25*

Section 1: Background

1.1 The Legislative Background

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that:

> (1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity-
>
> (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
>
> (b) between men and women generally;
>
> (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
>
> (d) between persons with dependants and persons without
>
> (2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

While much good work has been achieved in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, there remains persistent inequalities within our society. Within its guide Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) recommends that public authorities should undertake an audit of inequalities by systematically reviewing and analysing its services and how these relate to the promotion of equality and good relations. Having identified any inequalities it is recommended that public authorities should set out specific actions to address these in an action plan attached to the public authority's Equality Scheme.

ECNI defines an audit of inequalities as a "systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies". The purpose of this report is to detail how the Council conducted its audit of inequalities, and to identify some of the key inequalities, which emerged.

1.2 The Strategic Context

The Belfast Agenda

Community planning is a process led by councils working with community planning partners, including other statutory agencies, businesses and local communities, to develop and implement a shared vision and plan for the council area.

Belfast City Council took on responsibility for community planning as part of local government reform in 2015, and Belfast's first community plan, the Belfast Agenda, was launched in 2017. Its long-term aspirations or intended outcomes for the city are:

- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all
- Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential
- Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing
- Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city

The Belfast Agenda is underpinned by values including “A focus on outcomes for people”, “Equality and good relations” and “Inclusiveness, care and compassion”. It recognises the need to “deliver services differently, in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of people and helps them participate fully in the life of the city.”

The Belfast Agenda’s immediate priority (2017 to 2021) is inclusive growth. Inclusive growth aims to improve the wider outcomes for people in Belfast, regardless of where they were born or where they live, by addressing issues of poverty, economic inactivity, unemployment and underemployment. This will be supported by four pillars or areas of work:

- Growing the economy: a competitive city region economy that creates opportunities for all
- Living here: Great place to live, good houses, excellent local facilities and open spaces, healthy and safe neighbourhoods
- City development: Connected, well planned with the right infrastructure to succeed
- Working and learning: Making sure people have the right skills for the future

1.3 The Corporate Context

The Corporate Plan (2020 to 2024) supports the Belfast Agenda through its themes of:

- Growing the economy
- Living here
- Working and learning
- City development
- Resilience and sustainability
- Cross-cutting priorities, including implementing the Good Relations Strategy and developing and implementing the city’s cultural strategy ‘A City Imagining’

It also introduces a number of organisational capabilities required to deliver excellent service and city leadership. Priorities under organisational capabilities include data development, people development, customer focus, continuous improvement and equality, diversity and inclusion.

Section 2: About Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council is led by 60 elected representatives supported by approximately 2,300 full and part-time staff.

The council is made up of 10 District Electoral Areas and has a budget of *c.*£160 million. Its role can be divided in to three main areas:

- direct service provision
- a representative role
- a consultative role

It does this by:

- the direct provision of a number of services and facilities
- the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development
- the regulation and licensing of certain activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection and public safety
- carrying out a representative role on a number of bodies and boards including the Education Authority and Health and Social Care Board
- carrying out a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other government bodies and agencies on issues such as regional planning, water, roads and housing
- carrying out an advocacy role for the people of the district

On 1 April 2015, the council took on new or enhanced powers including local planning, community planning and off-street parking. As part of local government reform, a reorganisation of government aimed at modernising and improving services.

To carry out its role and functions, the council performs the following activities (not an exhaustive list):

- the provision and maintenance of facilities for recreational, social and cultural activities including leisure centres, community centres, parks, open spaces, sports and playgrounds and places of entertainment
- street cleansing
- waste collection and disposal
- the provision of burial grounds
- the provision of grants to support arts, community development, good relations, sports development and so on
- the administration and regulation of certain matters relating to the environment, public health and public safety including building control, food safety, statutory nuisance, dangerous buildings, air pollution, noise pollution, dog control, consumer protection and health and safety
- the licensing and regulation of street trading, places of entertainment, amusement centres, sex shops, society lotteries, cinemas and petrol stations
- the making of bye-laws and regulation of same

- a wide range of powers and duties placed on the council by statute.

The council also has a General Power of Competence under Section 79 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. This power enables the council, in broad terms, to act with similar freedom to an individual unless there is a law to prevent it from doing so. It provides the council with the ability to act in its own interest and to develop innovative approaches to addressing issues in its area.

Section 3: Methodology

A four-stage approach was taken to developing this Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan as follows:

1) Review of the Equality Scheme. The council's Equality Scheme was approved by ECNI in March 2015. A new scheme will be reviewed, revised and submitted to ECNI for approval.

2) Review of evidence including:
   a) statistical baseline data for Section 75 groups in the Belfast City Council district area
   b) Belfast City Council strategies, plans, programmes, policies, complaints, surveys, consultations and a range of completed Section 75 screening templates and any Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)

3) Review of previous audits and action plans produced by Belfast City Council, other local authorities and other statutory bodies

4) Audit of service areas and functions through consultation with council departments and units. This included a series of workshops and meetings on preparation and design; auditing; prioritisation; and action planning.

Regular progress reports were provided to the City Solicitor and the Governance and Compliance Manager who have responsibility for equality matters across the council.

Key findings of the research are summarised in the next section 'Key Findings'. Through this research, a range of issues were identified. These are outlined in the Profile of Belfast City Council, Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan in the appendices.

The Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The results of this monitoring will be included in the council's Annual Equality Progress Report, which is forwarded to ECNI. Responsibility for monitoring and review of the Equality Action Plan will rest with the relevant officers within council.

Section 4: Key findings

Findings from the Policy Review

The policy review included:

- a desktop review of various Belfast City Council policies, strategies, and plans
- the Council's Equality Scheme
- consultation with departments and units responsible for the design and delivery of those policies, strategies and plans

The Belfast Agenda has at its core the aim of improving the wellbeing of all Belfast citizens. It has the potential to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, tackle and address issues of exclusion and marginalisation and have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups.

The ability to achieve its ambitions, however, will be dependent on greater understanding of inequalities at both programme and operational level. Respondents to consultation on the Belfast Agenda EQIA highlighted the importance of screening at strategic, programme and project-level. This will ensure that all activity has the desired positive impact and does not negatively impact on others.

Respondents to the Belfast Agenda EQIA also suggested that relevant population indicators should not only be tracked in aggregate (for example economic inactivity), but also by Section 75 group (for example economic activity by age and gender). This feedback has informed the format of this audit.

Data development is also an ongoing priority of the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan. While using data to identify and address key inequalities is essential, it is not straightforward: there are gaps in evidence or, in some cases, a myriad of information of variable quality than can conflict or compete. Rather, data development is an ongoing process and further work will be required to ensure quality data is available at the most appropriate level. The format of the Audit of Inequalities and its accompanying Equality Action Plan allows for this ongoing development and consideration of new evidence, impacts and developments.

Section 5: Profile of Belfast City Council

According to NISRA Population Estimates **mid-year population estimates for 2018, the population of Belfast local government district is 341,877**, accounting for 18.2 per cent of the population of NI. 99 per cent of those people live in the urban environment, with 4,600 (1.3 per cent) living in rural or mixed urban/rural areas.

The population has increased by 8,006 or 2.4 percent since the 2011 Census (when the usually resident population of Belfast was 333,871).

The Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency (NISRA) projects that by 2041, the population of Belfast will be 353,280, an increase of 11,403 people or 3.3 per cent.

The following demographic information is arranged under the nine Section 75 equality categories and provides basic information on the make-up of the Belfast City Council (as extended in 2015 as a result of local government reform).

5.1 Religion

On Census day 2011, 48.8 per cent of the population of Belfast identified as Catholic and 42.5 per cent identified as Protestant. Belfast had **a slightly higher percentage of people identifying as "Other" or "None" religion than the NI average**.

	Religion or religion brought up in: Catholic (%)	Religion or religion brought up in: Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related) (%)	Religion or religion brought up in: Other religions (%)	Religion or religion brought up in: None (%)
Belfast	48.8	42.5	1.6	7.1
NI	45.1	48.4	0.9	5.6

5.2 Political opinion

After the May 2019 Belfast City Council election, the following parties were elected to the council.

Party	No. of councillors
Sinn Féin	18
Democratic Unionist Party	15
Alliance Party	10
Social, Democratic and Labour Party Green Party	6
Green Party	4
People Before Profit	3
Ulster Unionist Party	2
Progressive Unionist Party	2

5.3 Ethnicity

According to the 2011 Census, **96.7 per cent of the population of Belfast are White**. The main minority ethnic groups were Chinese, Indian and Mixed ethnic group.

	% Belfast	% NI
White	96.7	98.2
Irish Traveller	0.1	0.1
Mixed	0.5	0.3
Indian	0.7	0.3
Pakistani	0.1	0.1
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.03
Other Asian	0.6	0.3
Black Caribbean	0.03	0.02
Black African	0.3	0.1
Other Black	0.1	0.1
Chinese	0.7	0.4
Other ethnic group	0.2	0.1

In addition, migrant workers from the A2 and A8 European Union (EU) Accession countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) represented 1.9 per cent of population, with a further 0.7 per cent from other EU countries.

The Census also identified that 4.3 per cent of the Belfast population aged 3 and over did not have English as their main language, which was higher than the NI average of 3.1 per cent. In 2018, the Department for Education identified 3,510 “newcomer” pupils (a newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment, and does not have a language in common with the teacher, whether that is English or Irish) across NI.

While the Census data is the most accurate dataset available on ethnic minorities in NI, in 2021 it is likely to be an under estimation of the ethnic minority population.

5.4 Age

According to NISRA 2018 mid-year population estimates, **Belfast has a relatively young population with 55.7 per cent of the population aged under 40** compared to 51.6 per cent of the NI population.

	% of population			
	0-15 years	16-39 years	40-64 years	65+ years
Belfast	19.9	35.8	29.6	14.6
NI	20.9	30.7	31.9	16.3

NISRA projects that by 2041, people under 40 will make up 51.3 per cent of the population, but that the 65+ age bracket will be the fastest growing, comprising 72,245 people or 20.4 per cent of the Belfast population.

5.5 Marital status

On Census day 2011, **a higher proportion of Belfast residents aged 16 and over were single, separated, divorced or widowed than the NI resident population.** 22.2 per cent of people also lived alone, which was the highest rate across NI where the average was 16.8 per cent.

0.1 per cent or 353 residents were in civil partnerships, almost a third of all such partnerships in NI at that time. This is likely to be higher in 2021

	% of population	
Marital status	Belfast	NI
Single	45.3	36.1
Married	35.6	47.6
Civil partnership	0.13	0.09
Separated	5.4	4.0
Divorced/civil partnership dissolved	6.2	5.5
Widowed/Surviving civil partner	7.5	6.8

5.6 Sexual orientation

There are currently no or limited statistics that monitor the sexual orientation of the population in NI. The 2018 NI Life and Times found that 94 per cent of respondents identified as “heterosexual or ‘straight’”; 1 per cent as “’gay’ or ‘lesbian’ (homosexual)”; 1 per cent as “bisexual”’ and 1 per cent as “Other” (3 per cent declined to answer). A **commonly used estimate of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is 5 to 7 per cent of the population**.

5.7 Gender

According to NISRA 2018 mid-year population estimates, **the population of Belfast by gender is broadly even**, although there is a higher proportion of older females (59.3 per cent of the over 65 population are female).

	% of population				
	All ages	0-15 years	16-39 years	40-64 years	65+ years
Male	48.5	10.2	17.7	14.3	6.3
Female	51.5	9.7	18.1	15.3	8.4

5.8 Disability

The 2011 Census asked people to what extent a long-term health problem or disability (that is, which has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months) limits their day-to-day activities. At 25.9 per cent, **Belfast has a higher proportion of people with a limiting health condition or disability than the general NI population** (20.7 per cent).

	% Belfast population	% NI population
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	14.4	11.9
Day-to-day activities limited a little	11.5	8.8
Day-to-day activities not limited	76.5	79.3

5.9 Dependants

The 2011 Census defines a “dependent child” is defined as a person aged under 16 or young person aged 16 to 18 who is a full-time student and living in a family with a parent or grandparent.

The 2011 Census showed that **28.6 per cent of households in Belfast included a dependent child compared to 33.9 per cent of households across NI**. Historical Census data shows that the proportion of households with dependent children in both NI and Belfast has been in decline since 1981.

The Belfast City Council 2014 Residents Survey reported that **32.3 per cent of the population have dependents or caring responsibilities**.

In Belfast in 2018, 15,550 people or 4.5 per cent of the population claimed Carer’s Allowance. (Carer’s Allowance is a non-contributory benefit for people who look after a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours a week.) This was higher than the NI average of 3.9 per cent. Most claimants were female: 62.9 per cent compared to 37.9 per cent male.

5.10 Belfast City Council Staff

As at February 2021 the council’s workforce comprised (as far as staff disclosed their identities):

- 50.2 per cent were from a Protestant community background and 45.4 per cent from a Catholic community background
- 99.1 per cent were from a White ethnic group and 0.9 percent from another ethnic group
- 0.5 per cent were aged 16 to 24; 11.2 aged 25 to 34; 26.8 aged 35 to 44; 29.6 aged 45 to 54; 29.6 aged 55 to 65; and 2.3 per cent aged over 65
- 52.2 per cent were married; 34.3 per cent single; and 6.6 per cent co-habiting. The remainder were civil partner, divorced, partner, separated and widowed
- 96.9 per cent identified as heterosexual and 3.1 per cent as gay/lesbian/bisexual/other
- 62.2 per cent were male and 37.8 per cent female
- 5.3 per cent were disabled and 94.7 per cent non-disabled
- 40.5 per cent had dependants or caring responsibilities

Section 6 Auditing Inequalities Data

6.1 Access to council services

Evidence from recent Belfast City Council surveys suggests that **younger people tend to be less involved in council consultation** and engagement. For example, 2 per cent of respondents to a 2019 council survey were under 24 compared to 61 per cent who were aged 25 to 59.

There have also been difficulties securing sufficient **responses from people from ethnic minority communities** to ensure the data is statistically reliable.

According to the council's Consultative Forum, **people with caring responsibilities may find it difficult to take part in engagement opportunities**, and the council's draft Putting You First strategy notes that people with dependants may prefer to carry out business digitally due to demands on their time.

However, digital solutions do not work for everyone: Age-friendly Belfast found that **51 per cent of people aged 65 and over in Belfast have never accessed the internet**.

Putting You First also notes increasing challenges due to **language barriers and cultural differences** as the council's customer base becomes more diverse.

6.2 Education

Our population is highly qualified. According to the Labour Force Survey, in 2018, 38.9 per cent of Belfast's working age population (that is, people aged 16 to 64 inclusive) had a higher-level qualification (degree-level and above) compared to 34.9 per cent of the NI population.

However, **there are also more people of working-age with no qualifications** – 16.9 per cent in Belfast compared to the NI average of 14.7 per cent.

There are a number of inequalities within these statistics. In 2017, ECNI's Education Inequalities report found that:

- **Some equality groups experience bullying** (including minority ethnic students, trans pupils, students with same sex attraction; disabled pupils with a disability; and students with a Statement of Educational Need (SEN))
- **Males have lower levels of attainment than females**
- There is **persistent underachievement of school leavers entitled to free school meals, particularly Protestants males**
- **Underachievement of working class Protestants, particularly males**
- **Students with a disability or SEN have lower attainment levels**
- **Roma and Traveller pupils have the lowest levels of attainment**

According to the Labour Force Survey Religion Report, in 2017, 37 per cent of working-age economically active Protestants and 39 per cent of working-age economically active Catholics had a higher-level qualification. This is an increase from 2015 for both groups when the respective figures were 32 per cent and 37 per cent.

The proportion of economically active Protestants with no formal qualifications was 12 per cent and 11 per cent for Catholics in 2017.

The Department of Education's Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2017/18 identified that while 71.4 per cent of Catholics and 69.7 per cent of Protestants leave school with at least five GCSEs A* to C including English and Maths, at 56.3 per cent, Catholic school-leavers are considerably more likely to attain three A levels (grades A* to E) than Protestant (50.3). However, female pupils consistently out-perform male, with Protestant males least likely to attain A levels (41.8) or GCSEs (64.2) to the same standard.

75.2 per cent of Catholic school leavers and 77.9 per cent of Protestant went on to further or higher education, although again there is a marked difference according to gender (83.3 per cent of female school leavers compared to 70.3 per cent of males).

Attainment of A levels by ethnicity is relatively consistent at 52.4 per cent for ethnic minority[1] school leavers and 53.4 for White school leavers. However, there is a more pronounced difference at GCSE at 65.4 and 70.8 per cent respectively.

The main exception is Traveller children: ECNI's 2018 briefing on Travellers states that between just over half and 8 out of 10 Traveller children leave school with no GCSEs.

83.7 per cent of school leavers from ethnic minority communities went on to further or higher education compared to 76.4 per cent of White school leavers.

The Labour Force Survey for October to December 2019 found that disabled people are less likely to be qualified above GCSE and more likely to have no qualifications than the general population.

Highest level of qualification	Without a disability (%)	With a disability (%)
Degree or equivalent	30.3	14.6
Other higher	10.5	9.0
A Level or equivalent	24.7	18.4
GCSE or equivalent	20.9	22.2
Other	4.3	6.9
No qualification	9.3	28.8

[1] Including Travellers

6.3 The Economy

Enterprise

According to the Inter-department Business Register, there were 10,705 businesses in Belfast in 2018, accounting for 14.0 per cent of businesses in NI.

According to the Global Enterprise Monitor, **female entrepreneurship in NI is considerably lower than male entrepreneurship** and the UK average (7 per cent). In 2017, 7.9 per cent of NI males reported that they were intending to start a business in the next three years compared to 2.3 per cent of females.

The latest Labour Force Survey reports that for the period October to December 2019, 15.3 per cent or 134,000 of those aged over 16 in employment were self-employed. More males (22.4 per cent) than females (7.6) were self-employed. **People aged 45 to 59 were more likely to be self-employed** (41.2), while those aged 16 to 29 (9.5 per cent) and 60 and over (15 per cent) were least likely. 32.8 per cent of self-employed people had a higher-level qualification, while 11.9 per cent had no qualification.

It may be that men with a higher-level qualification aged 45 to 54 are more likely to benefit from enterprise programmes. However, more data is required to determine whether and how different Section 75 groups are being affected in relation to enterprise.

Employment

The latest Labour Force Survey estimates that between October and December 2019, the **NI unemployment rate was 2.4 per cent – one of the lowest on record**, below the UK average of 3.8 per cent and ROI average of 4.8 per cent. The employment rate was 72.4 per cent and the economic inactivity rate,[2] 25.8 per cent (above the UK average of 20.5, but significantly reduced from 27.2 per cent in 2018).

Labour Force Survey figures are available for Belfast between January and December 2018. Accordingly, **Belfast has lower employment at 64.7 per cent and higher economic in activity at 32.7 per cent** (second only to Derry and Strabane at 34.1).

In its 2018 report on Key Inequalities in Employment, ECNI identified persistent inequalities in employment spanning 2007 and 2016:

- There is a **persistent employment gap between people with and without disabilities**
- **Women experience a lower employment rate and a higher economic inactivity rate when they have dependants**
- **Lone parents with dependants and carers experience barriers to employment**
- **Irish Travellers are less likely to be in employment** than all other ethnic groups
- **Those aged 18 to 24 years have higher unemployment rates** than those aged 25 years and older

[2] Including students ,who, according to the Labour Force Survey, made up 22.7 per cent of this group between October and December 2019.

- **Those aged 50 to 64 years are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be economically inactive** than those aged 25 to 49
- **Women, lone parents with dependants and carers** providing less than 49 hours of care **are more likely to be in part-time work**
- **Women experience industrial segregation** (under-represented in industries associated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
- **Women and lone parents experience occupational segregation** (underrepresented in higher-status occupations and overrepresented in lower status occupations)
- **Migrant workers, particularly those from Eastern European countries, are subject to industrial and occupational segregation**
- **Migrant workers and refugees face multiple barriers to employment** such as lack of recognition for qualifications, language proficiency and uncertainty among employers about migrant workers' "right to work"
- **Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation**
- **Prejudicial attitudes** are experienced by disabled people, women, Trans people, LGBTQ+ people, people from minority ethnic groups, migrant workers and those of different religious belief

Religion

The Labour Force Survey Religion Report 2017 considers data relating to the Belfast socio-economic territory (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics or NUTS 3).[3] It shows that 42 per cent of the working-age population of Belfast NUTS 3 was Protestant and 58 per cent, Catholic. **69 per cent of working-age Protestants and 66 per cent of Catholics were economically active.** While there were relatively small decreases in working-age Protestant economic activity since 1995, working-age Catholic economic activity increased from 53 per cent.

Among Protestants of working age in Belfast NUTS 3, the employment rate in 2017 was 67 per cent, and among Catholics, 62 per cent. This is a slight increase for Protestants since 1995, and a considerable increase from 44 per cent in 1995 for Catholics.[4]

Race

The 2011 Census showed that **59 per cent of people aged 16 to 74 from an ethnic minority background were employed, which was slightly higher than the whole population** (57.6 per cent) at that time. 69 per cent of people from the Traveller community were economically inactive.

In 2015, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities identified a number of **barriers to employment for people from ethnic minority groups**, including:

- Recognition of qualifications

[3] In 2018, the Executive Office published analysis of 2016 statistics at local government district level. This report is available at www.executiveoffice- ni.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-religion-report-2016-local-government-district- bulletin.

[4] There has also been a change in the percentage of the community who report as being Protestant (-14 per cent) and Catholic (+3 per cent) over the same period.

- Work experience and voluntary work overseas being discounted
- The importance placed on references from NI employers
- Language proficiency
- The reliance on job application forms (something that many people are unused to)
- Employment agencies have no capacity to translate documentation needed to support applications

Gender
According to the Labour Force Survey statistics for January to December 2018, **63.7 per cent of females and 65.8 per cent of men were in employment**. Over the same period, 34.7 per cent of females were economically inactive compared to 30.7 per cent of males.

Going against the trend in England, Scotland and Wales, hourly earnings (excluding overtime) from the (provisional) 2019 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) show the **gender pay gap for full-time employees in NI at 2.9 per cent in favour of females** – that is 37p more per hour for full-time females than full-time males (£13.13 compared to £12.76). 2019 was the tenth year where full-time females in NI earned at least as much as full-time males on average.

However, considering all employees, **regardless of working pattern, female hourly pay is below male pay on average** – £12.30 for males and £11.06 for females. **This is due to the higher proportion of females working part-time** – 30.1 per cent of females compared to 22.8 per cent of men according to Labour Force Survey statistics for January to March 2019.

ASHE data also show that **earnings are also differently impacted by age and gender**. Female earnings increase with age up to the 40 to 49 age group, while earnings for males increase with age until the 50 to 59 age group.

There are a number of frequently cited explanations for the gender differential in employment including:

- disproportionate responsibility for childcare and unpaid caring
- sectors predominated by female employees, such as retail and care, tend to be low paid
- part-time jobs are more likely to be low paid and on a casual or atypical contract
- choice. According to NISRA's Women in Northern Ireland 2018, almost three quarters (74 per cent) of female employees working part-time stated that the reason was because they "Didn't want full-time work". However, the reasons for not wanting a full-time job may be due to particular barriers to participation in the labour market that women face.
- perception that when female-generated income is being spent on childcare, paid work may not be seen as worthwhile

There is currently limited data in relation to employment among the transgender community. However, research points to prejudice and hostility in the workplace and trans people are less likely to be open about their gender identity, which may affect how people participate in and sustain employment.

Age

ECNI's analysis of historical Labour Force Survey in its Key Inequalities in Employment publication found that at nearly all time points, **young people aged 18 to 24 had the highest rates of unemployment**. Young men in particular experience higher unemployment. Youth unemployment can be associated with lifelong problems such as worklessness, poverty, lower average life satisfaction and ill health.

Older people aged 50 to 64 also experience age-related inequalities in relation to participation in employment. This age group is less likely to be in employment and more likely to be economically inactive than those aged 25 to 49. Economic inactivity may be linked to the rising retirement age, long-term sickness or the provision of unpaid care.

According to the latest Labour Force survey, between October and December 2018, 55.7 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 and 64.2 per cent of people aged 50 to 64 were in employment compared to 72.4 per cent across the whole NI population.

Disability

Disabled people are much less likely to be employed. According to the Labour Force Survey, between October and December 2019, 37.7 per cent of disabled people in NI were in employment and 60.9 per cent were economically inactive compared to 81.7 and 16.4 per cent of the non-disabled population.

Belfast's disability-related benefit claimant level has historically been above the NI average, and while changes to welfare reform make trend analysis more difficult, this is likely to continue. According to Department for Communities (DfC) experimental statistics, at November 2019, there were 32,000 Personal Independence Payment claims, accounting for 23 per cent of claims across NI.

Employment among disabled people is strikingly lower in Belfast and NI than in other parts of the UK. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) in 2018, 42 per cent of disabled people in Scotland, 47 per cent in Wales and 50 per cent in England were in employment. Furthermore, JRF reported that **27 per cent of disabled people in NI are in poverty compared to 19 per cent of non-disabled people.**

In 2016 Disability Action identified key challenges facing disabled people participating in and sustaining work including access to reasonable adjustments; fears over sickness absence; pressure to work beyond their capacity; poor communication with employers; and stress in the workplace.

Dependants

According to the Labour Force Survey for July to September 2018, **economic activity for women with and without dependent children varies with age.**

	Economic activity %	
Age of female	Dependent children	No dependent children
16-24	-	79.6
25-34	73.1	93.1
35-49	80.1	76.2
50-64	71.8	59.1
Total	76.1	67.5

According to the 2011 Census, in just over half (50.7 per cent) of lone parent households, the parent is not in employment; in 32.9 per cent, the parent works part-time; and in 16.3 per cent, full-time. **Lone parent households are considered at greater risk of economic disadvantage**, and affordable childcare is an important consideration to support women and lone parents' participation in employment.

Inclusive growth
The Inclusive Growth Strategy identifies four cohorts that will be targeted to benefit from inclusive growth activity. These are:

- Workless residents
- Residents with low skills levels
- In work, low earning individuals
- Young people not in education, employment and training

Many Section 75 groups are likely to be reflected in these cohorts. For example, women are more likely to be in part-time and lower-paid jobs than men, and disabled people are more likely to be economically inactive than the general population.

6.3 Health and wellbeing

According to NISRA's Life Expectancy at birth 2015–17 statistics, **Belfast has the lowest life expectancy in** NI for both males (75.6 years) and females (81.0 years). (The NI life expectancy for the same period is 78.5 for males and 82.3 for females.) The gap between male and female life expectancy is also largest in Belfast – 5.2 years in favour of females compared to 3.9 in favour of females across NI.

While, in general, **the population is living longer, this is often with long-term health conditions.** Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together estimates that by 2026, for the first time in NI there will be more over 65s than under 16s. NISRA projects that by 2041 in Belfast, 20.4 per cent of the population will be aged 65+, including 3.3 per cent "very elderly" aged 85+, an increase of 4,229 people or 58.2 per cent.

Not surprisingly, **older people are more likely to experience long-term health problems.** In Belfast on Census day 2011, 13.3 per cent of people aged 85 and over reported that no limiting health problems or disabilities compared to 92.7 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24.

	0-14 years	15-24	25-44	45-64	65-84	85+
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	2.1%	3.3%	7.5%	22.5 %	37.0 %	62.5 %
Day-to-day activities limited a little	3.7%	4.0%	6.3%	12.0 %	23.9 %	24.1 %
Day-to-day activities not limited	93.1%	92.7 %	86.2 %	65.5 %	39.0 %	13.3 %

Women are also more likely to experience long-term health problems. On Census day 2011, almost a quarter of women in Belfast, compared to 1 in 5 men, reported a disability or a long-term health problem that affects their day-to-day activities.

Across NI, **ethnic minority groups** including Asian (90 per cent), Black (90.4 per cent) or Mixed (92.6 per cent) **reported considerably higher rates of good or very good health** than the White population (79.3 per cent). The only exception was the Traveller ethnic group: only 66.3 per cent reported that they were in good or very good health.

It is generally excepted that factors causing certain diseases and ill health are more prevalent among certain ethnic groups. The Census also identified, for example, that diabetes is more prevalent in Asian and Black ethnic groups compared to the general NI population.

According to the Rainbow Project, **young LGBTQ+ people are 5 times more likely to be medicated for depression, 2.5 times more likely to self-harm and 3 times more likely to attempt suicide** than their heterosexual counterparts.

Loneliness
Belfast also has the second highest rate (after Ards and North Down) of older people aged 65+ living in alone: 12.0 per cent compared to 11.1 across NI. **Lone person households, in particular lone pensioner and lone parent households, are more likely to experience poverty.**

According to the Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018–21, one in five older people in Belfast do not have any close friends. This is higher for men (22 per cent compared to 16 per cent for women) and for those in the oldest age group. **Loneliness is a high risk factor for poor physical and mental health.**

Arts engagement
According to DfC, **87 per cent of adults and 96 per cent of children (aged 4 to 15) engaged with arts** in 2018/19. Overall, **engagement declines with age**, reducing to 72 per cent of those aged 65 and over engaging.

Women were slightly more likely to engage than men (90 per cent compared to 84 per cent).

People from no religious background (93 per cent) were more likely to engage than people from a Catholic (86 per cent) or Protestant (87 per cent) background.

Widowed people (68 per cent), disabled people (76 per cent) and people without dependants were all less likely to engage than the general population.

However, engagement varies substantially according to the type of activity. For example, literature and visual arts tend to attract an older audience while film and outdoor events attract younger audiences.

4.8 per cent of activity funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland targeted people from the LGBTQ+ community, although there is little data to demonstrate actual engagement.

Sports participation
According to DfC, **56 per cent of adults participated in sport in 2018/19. 87 per cent of children also participated in sport outside of school.**

Females aged 16 and over were less likely to have taken part in sport at least once within the last year (49 per cent) than males (62 per cent).

Disabled people are also less likely to participate in sport with 65 per cent of those aged 16 and over taking part at least once in the last year (35 per cent) compared to 64 per cent of non-disabled adults.

During the development of the Leisure Transformation Programme, Belfast City Council consulted with disabled people, who identified challenges including transport, cost, class structure, fear of taking part, lack of physical adaptions, staffing and staff awareness and lack of information.

Sport participation also declines with age among adults. Those aged 45 and over were less likely to have participated in any sport within the last year (41 per cent) than younger adults aged 16 to 44 years (71 per cent). Consultation with older people during the Leisure Transformation Programme identified challenges including lack of age-appropriate activity; staff training; facilities include private changing areas; cost; and marketing.

6.4 Positive relations

Between July and June 2019, the PSNI recorded **1,292 hate crimes and incidents** in NI comprising:

- 281 sectarian incidents and 190 sectarian crimes, an increase of 14 and 32 respectively on the previous 12 months
- 128 homophobic incidents and 83 homophobic crimes, an increase of 9 and 11 respectively on the previous 12 months
- 468 racist incidents, an increase of 2 on the previous 12 months
- 261 racist crimes, which was 13 fewer than the previous 12 months

The 2014 Belfast City Council residents' survey showed that **people aged over 60 felt more unsafe after dark in their local area** (15.7 per cent) than the general population (10.6 per cent). 22.7 per cent of residents over 60 also felt unsafe in the city centre after dark compared to 18.1 per cent of all residents.[5]

[5] Cited in the Belfast Agenda EQIA

According to the 2018 NI Life and Times:

- 83 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women never felt threatened or harassed
- 85 per cent of Catholics, 88 per cent of Protestants and 75 per cent of people with no religion never felt threatened or harassed.
- Young people aged 18 to 24 were the least likely never to feel threatened or harassed (69 per cent), and older people aged 65 and over, the most likely (94 per cent).

During the Belfast Conversation – engagement with citizens to design the Belfast Agenda – **good relations, including removal of interfaces, concerns around symbols and expressing cultural identity and more shared space, emerged as a top priority**.

According to the Belfast Interface Project, there are **97 interfaces in Belfast**, the highest in any NI local government district. Consultation with Belfast residents on the Good Relations Strategy and Belfast PEACE IV Plan indicated that residents living near interfaces should be a key target group for good relations and peace-building activities.

As Belfast has become more diverse, there are opportunities and challenges to ensuring that new communities are included and participate in economic, civic, social and cultural life.

According to the 2018 NI Life and Times, 82 per cent of adults aged 18 and over "always" "**respect others no matter what their sexual orientation**"; 13 per cent respect others "most of the time"; 3 per cent "sometimes"; and 1 per cent "none of the time".

According to Age-friendly Belfast, **a quarter of older people in Belfast feel that they are not treated with respect and dignity.**

6.6 Key emerging issues for Belfast City Council

This Audit of Inequalities has identified a range of emerging inequalities and issues. The Equality Action Plan identifies how we as a council will address these issues through our various departments, services and programmes. Some of these issues are addressed as a collaborative approach with other key city stakeholders. In utilising the data available we also acknowledge the data gaps in some areas of Council functions and we will also take action to address these gaps.

The Equality Action Plan is an approach to addressing the key inequalities identified. Covid 19 has impacted on our work considerably, due regard to the promotion of equality has been embedded in the initial response phase and this will continue through rebuild in to recovery. We have highlighted a number of inequalities we wish to address in this four year Equality Action plan. Please refer to the separate document *Equality Action Plan 2021-24* for our complete actions to address inequalities identified.

- Women with dependents, people with disabilities, people who may face multiple barriers (lack of childcare, qualifications, access to training, employment support) and are more likely to be unemployed and/or need new skills to remain or enter the workforce than the general working age population.
- Disabled people are much less likely to be employed
- Disabled people face barriers to communication and engagement processes

- Disabled people continue to face barriers to cultural activities
- Not all people value diversity
- Older people live in a safer environment that encourages walkability and active ageing, supports services and transport and provides for housing needs
- Older people are more socially, culturally and technologically isolated
- Older people face barriers to access a range of recreational services required to sustain their physical and mental health
- Older people are more financially insecure
- Older long term unemployed, NEETs and people with disabilities, lack qualifications and are more likely to be unemployed and need additional support to enter the workforce than the general working age population.
- To increase our understanding of the end user and outcome based on a geospatial data and ensure the council targets programme support at those most in need.
- Formulation of policy recommendations in programme delivery, which will have a positive impact on equality.
- To support young people most at risk of dropping out of school or not in education, employment and/or training.
- Address educational underachievement and reduce the attainment gap for young people in our schools.
- Individuals and groups such as females and the economically inactive have the lowest levels of engagement in business start-up activities.
- To tackle economic inactivity in the city's deprived geographical areas and for disadvantaged groups, by providing access to opportunities via enterprise routes.
- More effective partnership working between public, private and voluntary sectors to plan to develop an age-friendly city
- Older people live in a safer environment that encourages walkability and active ageing, supports services and transport and provides for housing needs
- Older people have barriers to access to a range of recreational services required to sustain their physical and mental health
- Older people are more financially insecure
- Many across our community provision do not have the technology or the skills to access our services online.

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Equality Action Plan 2021-24

We are committed to making sure that our services and information are available to all parts of the community. If you need this information in an alternative format or language, please contact us at:

Equality & Diversity Unit Legal & Civic Services Belfast City Council City Hall Belfast BT1 5GS

Telephone: 028 90270511 Freephone: 0800 0855 412 Text phone: 028 90270405

Email: equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

What is the Equality Action Plan?

This Equality Action Plan runs from 2021 until 2024, it is a corporate level document which outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. It also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

What other documents is the Equality Action Plan linked to?

1. The Equality Action Plan is developed from some of the information in the **Audit of Inequalities,** which is a systematic approach to identify inequalities, across the nine Section 75 categories (religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, people with dependants or without), which are relevant to a public authority's functions.

2. The Equality Action Plan contains some of the key priorities from our Corporate Plan, which will have the biggest impact on inequalities. Our Corporate Plan is a reflection of what people in Belfast have told us they want and the type of leadership they feel the city needs. It takes the priorities of the Belfast Agenda, the Community Plan, and sets out the ways in which the council will deliver these to grow a sustainable, inclusive economy and equitable society. To fulfil our responsibilities, our Corporate Plan not only ensures we deliver the day to day services which the people of Belfast rely upon; we stretch ourselves through a series of strategic priorities to ensure we positively affect the lives of everyone in Belfast

How are the actions in the Equality Action Plan categorised?

Actions are categorised according to the Corporate Plan priority they contribute to. Each action includes a timescale for delivery, a performance indicator and the name of the department responsible for delivery. We will report on these actions annually.

1. Growing an inclusive economy

We will work to create an inclusive, resilient economy through creating good, sustainable jobs.

A thriving urban economy is a key foundation to achieving many of the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda. Not only can a successful economy generate the wealth required to grow local businesses, generate jobs and offer routes out of poverty for struggling families, it is also the main source of revenue for the city's public services, programmes and interventions.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
1.1	Access to Employment work package - Deliver employment academies in sectors focused on workforce demand (Logistics, Social Care, Child Care, Public Sector), removing barriers to people furthest removed from the labour market to enter into or return to employment and/or advance in employment. (Annual programme)	2021-24	Percentage participating in Employment Academies. / Percentage into employment (NB reviewed at key checkpoints within the year as the state of play within the labour market becomes clearer)	Place & Economy
1.2	Support five training and skills development projects via the European Social Fund (in partnership with TEO), targeting those who are long-term unemployed, younger people not in education, employment or training and people with disabilities.	2021-24	No. of participants achieving positive outcomes	Place & Economy
1.3	Develop a GIS monitoring approach to systematically assist programme development to continue to tackle inequalities in access to the labour market.	2021-24	Effective monitoring mechanism established to better understand inequalities, and the needs of S75 groupings. / Improve quality and quantity of monitoring information to support policy making on Employability and Skills (retrospective measure)	Place & Economy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
1.4	Working with partners and stakeholders across the city to put in place an (enterprise framework) action plan which supports long term ambitions to increase the number of business start-ups, including targeting workless residents, females and young people - and any under-represented groups	2021-24	Increase in % participants from under-represented groups on enterprise awareness initiatives. / No. of business starts.	Place & Economy
1.5	Understand the barrier to employment to support employability skills and capacity building programme for disabled people and those from ethnic minority groups.	2021-22	Use insights to inform programme design	Place & Economy
1.6	Deliver the Access and Inclusion Programme of capital enhancement projects to encourage engagement with culture, arts and heritage experiences (subject to funding)	2021-24	Number of small capital enhancement projects delivered	Place & Economy
1.7	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people such as gig buddies	2021-24	No. of events supported by Gig Buddies	Place & Economy
1.8	Deliver A City Imagining projects targeting LGBTQ+ groups, ethnic minority and new comer communities, disabled people, older people, schools and multi-lingual communities	2021-24	No. of participants	Place & Economy
1.9	Development, publication and full public consultation of draft Social Value Policy	2021-22	Publication of finalised policy and guidance	Cross - departmental

2. Working and learning

BCC will work to ensure people are appropriately skilled for the jobs created in the city.

Education is the foundation for a better life, not only in facilitating future employment and providing access to a fulfilling adult life, but also as a major contributor to a person's wellbeing and to shaping lifelong health. Working with our partners, we will bring forward a work programme which supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council with a focus on addressing barriers to progression

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
2.1	Focus on young people by delivering the Youth Support Programme targeting young people between 14- 24 years at risk or disengaged from formal education or training/employment.	2021-24	Percentage participating in positive outcomes in education, training and employment	Place & Economy

3. Living here

Our city and neighbourhoods are vibrant, resilient and safe places where people choose to live, work and spend time being more healthy and active.

In our recent residents survey, 86% of respondents were satisfied with Belfast as a place to live. We want everyone to be satisfied. We want to deliver a high quality of life for everyone. In doing so, we must deliver and plan effective public spaces and conserve our natural environment so it can be accessed and enjoyed.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
3.1	Deliver the Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018-2021 assess achievements, identify challenges and develop a new Age-friendly Belfast plan 2022-2025	2021	Measure outcomes framework, consult with older people and stakeholder, review baseline information; 2022 develop new plan and begin to deliver	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.2	Finalise and implement the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy	2021	To be determined as part of the action plan development.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.3	Develop a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy	2021	To be determined as part of the action plan development.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.4	Implement the programme of development of playgrounds across the city to further improve accessibility (following consultation with disability groups in early 2021).	2021	To be determined following consultation with disability groups.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.5	Achieve Onus Safe City status and retain platinum-level status	2021	Re-accreditation of Onus Workplace Charter-Platinum level / Safe City Status Achieved	Cross - departmental

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
3.6	Review and implement the council's Toilet Provision Strategy to improve the accessibility of toilets and maintain and promote the Changing Places toilet facility	2021-24	Report on the review of existing process and the number of stakeholder organisations engaged for 19/20. Increase in choice of available Changing Places facilities across the city over the next 24 months.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.7	Development of the new crematorium and our intention to acquire additional burial land, particularly for the north and west of the city.	These are medium to long term projects and time scales will be determined as the projects are developed	To be determined as the projects develop.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.8	Develop a co-design approach to engage communities in Social & Community Recovery planning.	To be determined as the approach is developed	To be determined as the approach is developed.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.9	Cultural mapping and understanding barriers (research and engagement) to support the delivery of capacity building programme (with tailored strands inc S75)	2021-24	Publish research document	Place & Economy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
3.10	Create an Audience Panel that contains a range of voices including those underrepresented in cultural engagement (proactively recruit those whose voices are not heard as often)	2021-24	4 focus group meetings held with Audience Panel per annum	Place & Economy
3.11	To develop and deliver the next phases of the City Centre Connectivity Study (CCCS) ie to create a green, walkable, cyclable network of connected streets and places will improve the health and wellbeing for all, revitalise the city's economy and restore a sense of collective pride in the centre of Belfast among the communities within and around it.	2021-24	To be determined as part of the development of the next phases of the Study, which will include public consultation and Equality Screening exercise.	Place & Economy

4. Cross-cutting

Our cross-cutting priorities will have a multitude of social, economic and environmental benefits for the city.

These priorities include once in a lifetime opportunities to fundamentally change the city, culturally, physically and economically and help achieve the big ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.1	Design, implement and pilot an Inclusive Growth Decisions Making Framework	2021-24	The BCC inclusive growth decision-making framework is agreed and rolled out.	City & Organisational Strategy
4.2	Co-design an Inclusive Growth City Charter in collaboration with our city partners which encourages/ offers recognition for those organisations who adopt business practices as employers, procurers or in the delivery of services which have been proven to create more inclusive economic growth	2021-24	A draft charter is finalised and publicly consulted on by April 2021. / A final charter programme is launched and a range of businesses sign up by April 2022. / The charter actions/initiatives acknowledge the additional barriers many groups of citizens face in employment and are designed to mitigate against these barriers. / A number of city partners/employers adopt more inclusive growth business practices. / There is an increase of awareness around the benefits of inclusive growth business practices amongst employers across Belfast, with sharing of best practice. / Economic growth opportunities across the city are more accessible to all residents.	City & Organisational Strategy
4.3	Design and deliver the Shared Spaces programme	2022-23	Delivery of physical programme under the PIV Shared Spaces and Services Theme	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.4	Build relationships across communities to increase confidence using and developing shared spaces and services	2021-24	% increase in the no of participants who feel safe attending event, activities, and facilities in areas associated with a different background.	City & Neighbourhood Services

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.5	Help address issues of demarcation and division including flags, murals and other symbols	2021-24	Delivery of actions within BCC Good Relations Plan working towards a Shared City vision.	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.6	Design and deliver the Interfaces programme	2021-24	% increase in the no of participants who feel safe attending event, activities, and facilities in areas associated with a different background. / Contributions towards physical works and programming that encourage attitudinal change and an even greater sense of belonging and social value.	Cross - departmental
4.7	Encourage a re-imagining of the cultural significance of upcoming commemorations under the Decade of Centenaries	2022-23	Development of a Decade of Centenaries Programme based on the DOC principles on Shared perspectives. / % increase in the number of participants who feel comfortable socialising in a shared space they would not normally visit	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.8	Encourage cultural expression to be celebrated and undertaken within a culture of lawfulness	2021-24	% increase in the number of participants who think the culture and traditions of Catholics, Protestants and minority ethnic people add to the richness of and diversity of Northern Ireland society.	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.9	Development, publication and full public consultation of draft Local Policies Plan (LPP) [to include an Equality Impact Assessment, as well as a Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Appraisal and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment]	2021-23	Publication of finalised policies following independent examination	Place & Economy
4.10	Development, publication and full public consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) topic areas	2021-23	Publication of finalised range of SPG policies	Place & Economy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.11	Build the capacity of disengaged and marginalised citizens and community leaders and changemakers to engage	2021-23	No. of engagement projects undertaken in collaboration with pre-engagement through the VCSE panel	City & Organisational Strategy
4.12	Produce a consultation and engagement toolkit for officers and provide ongoing advice and capacity building	2021-24	% of residents who agree that council consults with and listens to the views of local residents (survey in 2021 and 2023	City & Organisational Strategy
4.13	Work with community planning partners to improve how data is accessed and utilised to ensure the Belfast Agenda process understands and takes action to address inequalities	2021-24	Belfast Agenda Dashboard updated. / Consultation and engagement gives all people equal opportunity to participate	
4.14	Promoting Inclusive Growth (IG) through the Belfast Region City Deal Action 1 (over 10 years) Develop clear and robust arrangements to monitor how well actions to promote IG through the BRCD are delivering. This will help us to report on progress at both a geographical and on a priority group basis to improve understanding of what types of interventions and policy changes work best in which circumstances and for which groups.	2021-24	Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements in place and communicated to partners	Finance & Resources
4.15	Promoting Inclusive Growth (IG) through the Belfast Region City Deal Action 2 (over 10 years) Deliver new and better jobs to the BRCD region and support the region's economic recovery efforts. This will be done in the context of IG and will include programmes and interventions to enable all groups, particularly those furthest from the labour market, to avail of the opportunities emerging through the capital investment.	2021-24	Establish an Employability and Skills programme to support the ambitions of the BRCD	Finance & Resources
4.16	Develop, roll out and deliver new physical programme: £8m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, through an open call process. The Fund will focus upon a number of key thematic areas and reflect the priorities agreed within the City Recovery Framework: environmental/sustainable projects, neighbourhood tourism and social enterprise.	2021-24	Number of projects completed, number of consultation exercises encompassing Section 75 groups	Physical Programmes

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.17	Delivery of Physical Programme including £180m Capital Programme for council assets. Also management, development and delivery of externally funded programmes such as the Executive Office's flagship good relations programme Urban Villages, approx £46m.	2021-24	Number of projects completed, number of consultation exercises encompassing Section 75 groups	Physical Programmes
4.18	Deliver Pandemic Recovery Plan	2021-23	Developed understanding of impact of Covid 19 on existing inequalities	Cross - departmental

5. Our organisational priorities

As our city becomes more ambitious so must we.

To do this, we can only succeed with the wholehearted support and enthusiastic contribution of our staff. To harness this energy they need to feel valued and understand how they contribute. As an organisation, if we want to perform these capabilities to the best of our abilities we must continuously look to improve how we do things. We have therefore agreed priorities that will help us improve our capability. For example, in order to provide the best customer experience possible we have developed a customer focus programme that will enhance the experience felt by all our customers.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.1	Ensure that the council communicates effectively with its citizens, using assistive technology and maintaining standards such as Plain English and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA standards	2021-24	Website to provide assistive technology and follow new and current Plain English and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA Standards.	Cross-departmental
5.2	Develop a new Customer Hub designed around customer needs	2021-24	New professional customer hub designed and implemented.Customer satisfaction with the HUB service.	Finance & Resources
5.3	Ensure that digital platforms benefit all customers and stakeholders, including through training and provision of computer facilities for public use	2021-24	Customers will have access to a point –of- service supported on-line resource within the hub and community centres. Number of customers moving to digital channels	Finance & Resources
5.4	Improve engagement with customers across all S75 categories	2021-24	% of issues understood impacting on different groups of people leading to a better-informed decision-making process and improved customer service	Cross-departmental
5.5	Provide accessible channels of communication to reflect diverse customers' needs	2021-24	Greater opportunities for two-way communication using a range of customer feedback tools and measures. An accessible online service Translated documents of interest available on request	Cross-departmental

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.6	Deliver Disability Action Plan 2019-22 updating actions and developing a new action plan utilising key learning in relation to 'Encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life' and 'Promoting positive attitudes towards Disabled People'	2021-22	Analyse feedback and develop an action plan to improve disability initiatives, where appropriate	Legal & Civic Services
5.7	Develop and deliver Gender, Disability, LGBTQ+ and Minority and Inclusion workforce diversity action plans	2021-24	Activity in plans agreed, resourced and delivered.	City & Organisational Strategy
5.8	Improve participation in employment among those furthest from the labour market through ring-fenced entry-level posts (where possible), pre-recruitment training programmes, work experience, guaranteed interview scheme and reasonable adjustments	2021-24	Job opportunities ring fenced to the long term unemployed and targeted pre recruitment and training	City & Organisational Strategy
5.9	Encourage participation of disabled people in the workforce, Sign Language Users Forum and Disability Staff Network (DA)	2021-24	Three disability staff network meetings held each year	City & Organisational Strategy
5.10	Encourage participation of LGBT+ people in the workforce and LGBT+ staff network 'Proud'	2021-24	Improved promotion of our commitment to equality and diversity both internally and externally	Cross-departmental
5.11	Encourage participation of all staff in the workplace	2021-24	Hold event/ workshop for both male/ female staff to jointly explore/ discuss diversity and gender issues and identify any areas/ issues to be addressed.	Cross-departmental
5.12	Review and amend workforce monitoring form	2021-24	Monitoring form reviewed and revised to capture additional information including: · reasonable adjustments required by applicants as part of the recruitment and selection process; Gender identity; Sexual orientation	City & Organisational Strategy
5.13	Carry out a voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff	2021-24	Voluntary monitoring exercise conducted and up to date information available	City & Organisational Strategy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.14	Work to achieve Diversity Charter Mark Silver Award	2021-24	Silver Diversity Charter Mark Achieved	City & Organisational Strategy
5.15	Develop opportunities for Equality and Diversity Champions both at SMT and Elected Member level	2021-24	Equality and Diversity Champions appointed	Cross-departmental
5.16	Continue to deliver a suite of equality and diversity awareness training to all staff including diversity, general disability awareness , targeted disability awareness , bi and trans awareness training (classroom based and on -line)	2021-24	No/ of sessions delivered; Training evaluation indicators: Quality of training; Increased understanding; Increase in skills levels	City & Organisational Strategy
5.17	Strategic Leaders and Elected members attend leadership equality training	2021-24	No/ of sessions delivered; Training evaluation indicators: Quality of training; Increased understanding; Increase in skills levels	Cross-departmental
5.18	Review participation in council's new engagement framework to identify participation gaps or areas for improvement	2021	Participation rates by gender, age, disability, race and community background. (Registrations on new platform). / Assess seldom heard or other s.75 participation rates as applicable. / Consultation and engagement gives all people equal opportunity to participate	City & Organisational Strategy
5.19	Research best practice and assess council's engagement and participation of young people and develop best practice guidance for council officers	2021	Production of guidance and case studies. / Evidence of improved or innovative approaches to engaging young people. / % of young people who agree that council consults with and listens to the views of local residents (survey in 2021 and 2023)	City & Organisational Strategy
5.20	Support platforms, networks and forums, such as the Older People's Forum, Disability Advisory Panel and Migrant Workers' Forum, that widen engagement, targeting in particular those most at risk of being "seldom heard"	2021-24	% attendance at each meeting from cross section of organisations/individuals; % of staff/members who understand purpose of these networks and forums and find it useful; Effective feedback mechanism established, and used by members	Cross-departmental

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.21	Use our engagement platform to encourage and build capacity within communities to engage with council using dialogue and qualitative mechanisms	2021-23	No. of standing panels. / No. of project specific panels and forums. / No. and type of panels involving targeted Section 75 or seldom heard groups (per year)	Cross-departmental
5.22	Deliver Equality Scheme Implementation Plan	2021-24	Annual compliance report to EDNS / No. of complaints	Legal & Civic Services
5.23	Deliver Rural Needs Action Plan	2021-24	Annual compliance report to EDNS / No. of complaints	Legal & Civic Services
5.24	Effective Leadership in S75 demonstrated through the Equality and Diversity Network	2021-24	At least 3 meetings of both Operational and Strategic levels of the Equality and Diversity Network. / Completed audit of S75 processes.	Legal & Civic Services
5.25	Explore development of baseline of equality related information for use by staff in all aspects of the council business	2022-24	Information of relevant equality data communicated to all staff available to all staff. / Access to equality data sets	Cross-departmental
5.26	Deliver Language Strategy 2019-23 and related action plans	2021-23	Analyse feedback and develop an action plans as appropriate	Legal & Civic Services

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Equality and Diversity: Quarterly Screening Report and Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report (2020-21)**
Date:	20 August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance & Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To provide the Committee with a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments from April - June 2021 and to submit for its approval the Council's Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for 2020-21.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • note the contents of the summary report; and • approve the Council's Annual Monitoring Return to DAERA for 2020 – 2021, on a holding basis, subject to approval by the Committee today and ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Background The Council is required under its Equality Scheme to carry out screening of new and revised policies. This allows any impacts related to equality of opportunity and / or good relations to be identified and addressed. In addition, the Council has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 (the "Act) to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions and is furthermore required under the Act to submit an annual report to DAERA. The rural population of Belfast is approximately 1,484 people comprising the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.
3.2	Key Issues **Quarterly Screening Outcome Report – Q1 20-21** The current Screening Outcome Report and also the rural needs assessments for April-June 2021 are attached in **Appendix 1**. As usual, this report will be brought to the next Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting for approval and published on the Council's website. **Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return** The requirement to monitor and report under the Act has applied to all Northern Ireland departments and district councils since 1st June 2017. Under Section 3(1) of the Act, the Council is required to: • Compile information on the exercise of its functions under section 1(1) of the Act; • Include that information in its annual report; and • Send that information to DAERA on the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return The Rural Needs Annual Monitoring return relating to the period April 2020 - March 2021 is set out in **Appendix 2.** The Council currently does not have an annual report. However, a copy of this return, together with the RNIAs mentioned therein will be published on the Council's website. Please note that, due to resource issues in the Equality and Diversity Unit, (which are now being resolved) this report was due to be submitted to DAERA at the end of June. DAERA is aware that the Council will be submitting a late report.
3.3	**Financial and Resource Implications** None.

3.4	**Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment** The actions outlined contribute to our legal compliance regarding the promotion of equality, good relations and rural needs.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Quarterly Screening Outcome Report for April-June 2021 **Appendix 2:** Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Return 2020 – 21

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Appendix 1

Belfast City Council

Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

April - June 2021

Introduction

Legislation – An Overview

Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regards to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the council must also have regards to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Council's Revised Equality Scheme was formally approved by the Equality Commission in March 2015. The revised Scheme outlines how we propose to fulfil our statutory duties under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the council gave a commitment to apply the screening methodology below to all new and revised policies and where necessary and appropriate to subject new policies to further equality impact assessment.

- What is the likely impact of equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy/proposal, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within Section 75 equality categories?

- To what extent is the policy/proposal likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

• Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

In keeping with the Council's commitments in its Equality Scheme, the Council has applied the above screening criteria to new policies and proposals. Screening identifies policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Screening identifies the impact of the policy/proposal as major, minor or none.

- If major – an Equality Impact Assessment may be carried out.
- If minor – consider mitigation or alternative policy and screen out.
- If none – screen out and give reasons.
- Ongoing screening – for strategies/policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages – screen at various stages during implementation.

The council also committed within its Revised Equality Scheme to prepare and publish for information regular reports on its screening exercises. This is screening report providing details on all screenings undertaken from the period April to June 2021.

Rural Needs Impact Assessments

The Council also has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions. The Council must therefore engage with rural stakeholders in relation to policy development when it is relevant and appropriate. The Equality and Diversity Unit is responsible for reporting to the Strategic, Policy and Resources Committee and for ensuring that annual reporting returns are submitted to DAERA.

To further promote openness and transparency, there is a link to each completed screening and rural needs impact assessment template on the Council's website. www.belfastcity.gov.uk

The templates details all policies screened over this period and includes decisions reached.

Consultation

The development of new policies and proposals will be supported by effective engagement processes to ensure that staff, service users and all interested parties are fully involved.

Planning for, and delivering safe and cost effective services requires close collaboration at many levels.

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in other languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

Bridgeen O'Neill
Equality and Diversity Unit
Belfast City Council
Room 117
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Direct Line (028) 9027 0511
or (028) 9032 0202 Ext 6315
email: equality@belfascity.gov.uk or oneillbridgeen@belfastcity.gov.uk

Screening Outcome

The screening outcomes are outlined in the table below. Three possible outcomes are recorded:

If **Major** – an Equality Impact Assessment may be carried out. **EQIA** - subject to further scrutiny under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 to determine the impact upon those directly affected, which in turn will require informal and formal consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

If **Minor** – consider mitigation or alternative policy and screen out.

If **None** – screen out and give reasons.

Screening Outcome Options

Major= In

Minor= Out with mitigation

None= Out without mitigation

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Options

Does the policy, plan, strategy or service design/delivery impact on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

Belfast City Council Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

This report includes published screenings and Rural Needs Impact Assessments for the period April to June 2020. Copies can be found at: http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/equality/eqia.aspx

Description of Policy/Proposal	**Rural Needs Impact Assessment**	**ECNI Screening Decision and Contact**
5Cs Public Realm Project	Included	Screened Out – no EQIA, no impacts Contact officer: Simon Rees

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Appendix 2 - Template for Information to be Compiled

Information to be compiled by Public Authorities under Section 3(1)(a) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

(To be completed and included in public authorities' own annual reports and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report).

Name of Public Authority: *Belfast City Council*

Reporting Period: **April 20** *20* **to March 20** *21*

The following information should be compiled in respect of each policy, strategy and plan which has been developed, adopted, implemented or revised and each public service which has been designed or delivered by the public authority during the reporting period.

Description of the activity undertaken by the public authority which is subject to section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016[1].	*The rural policy area(s) which the activity relates to[2].*	*Describe how the public authority has had due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising the policy, strategy or plan or when designing or delivering the public service[3].*
Covid-19 Micro Funding	An emergency fund to help communities and vulnerable people.	The social and economic needs of all residents of Belfast, including those living in rural areas have been considered
Household Recycling Centre Covid-19 Recovery Plan	The re-opening of Household Recycling Centres to provide an interim recycling and waste service for all residents of Belfast, both urban and rural.	Within the context of the Household Recycling Centre Recovery Plan, Belfast City Council aims to offer the same service to all residents of Belfast, irrespective of their geographical location within the city.
Licensing of Pavement Cafés	The introduction of pavement café licenses in urban	This strategy has considered the impacts on a range of existing and potential stakeholders. We do not consider this policy to have relevance to the social and economic

	Belfast city streetscape.	needs of persons in the rural areas.
Provision of emergency funding - Covid-19	An emergency fund to assist with getting citizens through the Covid-19 crisis.	The social and economic needs of all residents of Belfast, including those living in rural areas have been considered.
Springfield Dam Park Project	The redevelopment of this site was for those communities in the surrounding Springfield Road area.	This is not located in any of the rural areas identified for Belfast.
Good Relations Strategy	An overarching strategy setting out a vision for a shared city.	No specific rural needs emerged in the consultation exercise.
Inner North West – Northern Cluster Sites	This project has considered the impacts on a range of existing and potential stakeholders.	We do not consider this policy to have relevance to the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas.
PEACE IV Connecting Open Spaces Project	The objective of the programme was to promote positive community relations.	The geographic scope of this capital project is not located in any of the rural areas identified for Belfast
Report It App	The trial took place for a limited period and did not include work in rural areas.	Further consideration of the issues in relation to the social and economic needs of people on rural areas will take place once the trial is completed.
Strategic Sites Assessment (SSA)	This programme has considered the impacts on a range of existing and potential stakeholders.	We do not consider this policy to have relevance to the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas.
DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme	The focus of this Programme was to aid city centre businesses to safeguard businesses and jobs.	Research and engagement as part of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme has not identified any specific issues for people in rural areas.

Luminous City – A Lighting Strategy for Belfast	Developing a co-ordinated approach to lighting for the city's urban area.	This programme has considered the impacts on a range of existing and potential stakeholders. We do not consider this policy to have relevance to the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas.

NOTES

1. This information should normally be contained in section 1B of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.

2. This information should normally be contained in section 2D of the RNIA Template completed in respect of the activity.

3. The information contained in sections 3D, 4A & 5B of the RNIA Template should be considered when completing this section.

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan – Response to Translink**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of report or summary of main issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a response to Translink on the Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to: • note the consultation; and • approve the Council's response to Translink on a holding basis, subject to approval by the Committee today and ratification by the Council on 1st September.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**<u>Background</u>** Under the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo), trading as Translink, has carried

	out an equality impact assessment (EQIA) relating to the proposed development of the Weavers' Cross Integrated Transport Hub, and including associated works and projects, up to and including the final build stage of the project to be commenced in 2021. This draft EQIA report has been made available as part of the formal consultation stage of the EQIA and is set out in **Appendix 1**. As a consultee, we have been asked to make any comments on the EQIA and the preliminary recommendations with regard to measures to mitigate any potential future adverse impact and/or alternative policies.
3.2	**Key Issues** A draft response is set out in **Appendix 2.** This response welcomes the development as being in line with the Belfast Agenda and makes a technical correction in relation to a reference to the Local Development Plan.
3.6	**Financial and Resource Implications** No requirement.
3.7	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** The response is prepared in line with Translink's statutory Section 75 duties and we are responding as a named consultee.
4.0	**Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Belfast Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan Equality Impact Assessment Draft Consultation Report **Appendix 2:** Draft response

Appendix 1

Section 75 and Schedule 9

The Northern Ireland Act 1998

Belfast Transport Hub & Wider Masterplan

Equality Impact Assessment

Draft Consultation Report

30 April 2021

Belfast Transport Hub & Wider Masterplan
An Equality Impact Assessment

CONTENTS **PAGE**

1. Introduction 3

2. Belfast Transport Hub & Wider Masterplan 5

3. Consideration of Available Data and Research 9

4. Assessment of Impact 13

5. Consideration of Measures to Mitigate any Adverse Impact 15

6. Formal Consultation 16

7. Publication 17

8. *Appendices* *18*
   1: Sense Check Report *18*
   2: Data on Residents of Northern Ireland *23*
   3: Data on Residents of Belfast *26*

Belfast Transport Hub & Wider Masterplan

An Equality Impact Assessment

1: INTRODUCTION

Under the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo), trading as Translink, gave an undertaking to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA) on each policy or group of co-joined policies where screening had indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 categories.

This draft report has been made available as part of the formal consultation stage of the EQIA relating to the proposed development of the Weavers' Cross Integrated Transport Hub, and including associated works and projects, up to and including the final build stage of the project to be commenced in 2021.

At this time we would welcome any comments which you may have in terms of this EQIA and our preliminary recommendations with regard to measures to mitigate any potential future adverse impact and/or alternative policies.

Further copies of this EQIA consultation report are available on our website at:
belfasthub@translink.co.uk www.translink.co.uk NITHC Reports(Translink.co.uk)

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including large print, Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

Jennifer Carmichael
Belfast Transport Hub
Floor 5, 22 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BJ
Freephone: 028 90 258130
Textphone: 028 90 387505
E-mail: belfasthub@translink.co.uk
Write to Belfast Transport Hub as above
Deadline for comments will be 19 July 2021

Following consultation, the Final Report will be made available by 9 August 2021

SECTION 75 AND THE STATUTORY DUTIES

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires each public authority, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the public authority must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland approved the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) revised Equality Scheme on 27 February 2013. The Scheme outlines how NITHCo aspires to fulfil its statutory duties under Section 75. Following approval of the Scheme, existing policies were screened to assess impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the duty to promote good relations using the following criteria:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity between the relevant different groups, either by altering the policy, or by working with others in government or in the larger community, in the context of the policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of that type create problems specific to any relevant group?

In line with the statutory duties as outlined above, to date Translink has completed two Section 75 screening exercises on the project (see below).

NITHCo AND TRANSLINK

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) is a public corporation established under the Transport Act (NI) 1967 to oversee the provision of public transport in Northern Ireland. NITHCo is accountable to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) which develops transport strategies for Northern Ireland and determines public transport policy. NITHCo's responsibilities include holding and managing property assets and the oversight, in terms of support, control and supervision, of its private limited subsidiary companies. It is expected to operate commercially and has a duty to operate in line with Ministerial policy.

The NITHCo Board is responsible for approving the strategies of its subsidiary companies (see below) and the annual Corporate Plan and for their proper governance. It meets on a regular basis to review the implementation of policy objectives and to monitor financial performance. NITHCo also owns a portfolio of property investments that generate funds for capital investment throughout the Group.

Translink is a trading name used by any one or more of the companies under the ultimate ownership of NITHCo. The Group comprises NITHCo as the parent company which owns

Citybus Limited (which also trades as 'Metro') (NI009039), Flexibus Limited (NI006724), Ulsterbus Limited (NI006725), Translink (NI) Limited (NI006673), NIR Networks Limited (NI017638), Northern Ireland Railways Company Limited (NI006929) - each of which is registered in Northern Ireland and has its registered office at 22 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT2 7LX; and NIR Operations Limited (NI021091) - which is registered in Northern Ireland, with its registered office at Lanyon Place Station, 47 East Bridge Street, Belfast, BT1 3NR.

2: Belfast Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan

The Belfast Transport Hub (BTH), at Weavers Cross, is situated close to Belfast city centre. The eight hectare site will contain a modern high capacity transport hub (developed on the site of the existing Europa Bus centre and Great Victoria Street train station), together with impressive mixed-use developments for the local community. BTH is one of Europe's only fully integrated transport Hub which incorporates rail, bus, and coach modes of transport into a single location and under an unitary integrated management structure (Translink). This enables simplified and easier transitions between different modes of transport and facilitates easier transmission of travel information and choices, particularly for physically disabled or passengers with learning difficulties.

This flagship project has been prioritised by the NI Executive and developed in the context of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Regional Development Strategy 2035 along with the draft NI Executive Programme for Government. There is due recognition that public transport has a key role to play in developing competitive cities and regions and is important for a successful economy, promoting social inclusion, health, education and improving the environment.

The draft Programme for Government has identified a number of strategic outcomes which set out the ambition for Northern Ireland society. Providing a high quality public transport system impacts on many of the programme's outcomes and directly links to the outcome, 'We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure'. One of the key indicators for this outcome is to, 'Increase the use of public transport and active travel'.

The Belfast Transport Hub lies at the heart of this enterprise and will be a catalyst for the regeneration of the local area as an important gateway to Belfast, 'a modern, confident and progressive city, stimulating economic opportunities for the city and Northern Ireland'.

The proposed Belfast Transport Hub involves the redevelopment of the Europa Bus Centre, Great Victoria Street Railway Station and land (c. 20 acres) at Grosvenor Road. The integrated transport interchange will comprise: station concourse, 26 bus stands, eight railway platforms, bus maintenance and parking, car parking and a new public square. The remaining land is proposed as a phased commercial development to be known as Weavers Cross.

The wider Weavers Cross development is a transport led regeneration project supporting the Belfast City Council's Agenda, a new vision for Belfast in 2035, setting out the ambition to attract 50,000 new jobs and £1bn investment to regeneration projects in the city.

In line with best practice, Translink has endeavoured to ensure that Section 75 considerations have continued to be mainstreamed into the project at successive stages of implementation, and in particular with regard to disability.

By way of example, at the initial design stage of the Hub, all private sector companies that tendered for the project were required to indicate how Section 75 considerations had been integrated into their designs.

Translink invited submissions in July 2013 to prepare a masterplan for the whole site and to then take forward the preferred design solution. John McAslan + Partners, together with Arup, were duly appointed in July 2014 as the lead architect and designer, together with Juno Planning as the planning consultant and Kennedy Fitzgerald Architects as local supporting architects.

In partnership, these organisations then progressed options for The Hub, as outlined in the Stage Two Report (8/4/16). This outlined three preferred options for the Hub, and formed the basis for an extensive first round of public consultation that ended on December 2nd, 2016.

As part of the Transport Hub enabling works, John Tinnelly and Sons Ltd demolished the vacant warehouse buildings at Grosvenor Road during March – May 2016.

The Infrastructure Minister announced in January 2017 that when the planning application for the Transport Hub was submitted it would be processed by DfI and the final decision would rest with the Infrastructure Minister. Further to this announcement, Translink then hosted a public information event in February 2017[1].

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company submitted the Transport Hub planning application (LA04/2017/1388/F) in June 2017. The application proposed a, 'new integrated transport interchange comprising; station concourse, 26 bus stands, 8 railway platforms, bus maintenance and parking, track and signaling enhancements, bus access bridge, cycle and taxi provision, car parking, new public square, public realm improvements, highway improvements, infrastructure improvements, temporary structures for bus operations during construction and temporary site construction compounds'. The application was approved in March 2019.

Graham Construction was awarded the Transport Hub enabling works contract in November 2019. The works are scheduled to complete during early 2021. The main build phase is expected to commence in 2021 on completion of the enabling works.

Graham submitted a Noise Management Plan and Dust Management Plan in December 2019. The documents provide an overview of proposed activities and indicative dates:

Dec 2019 – June 2020: construction of temporary staff mess facilities.

Jan 2020 – Sept 2020: ground remediation works.

June 2020 – July 2020: demolition of two bus maintenance garages and a staff mess facility.

Aug 2020: demolition and replacement of an existing bridge over the railway.

May 2020 – Jan 2021: re-alignment of an existing culvert running through.

Further information on the Belfast Transport Hub and wider Weavers Cross development can be found at the official website www.translink.co.uk/bth

[1] Information presented at the event is available online at www.translink.co.uk/bth

Belfast Transport Hub and the Wider Masterplan, Section 75 and Public/Staff Engagement

Public Engagement

Overall, Section 75 issues have been fully integrated into public engagements through successive rounds of public consultation, during which time stakeholder groups, locally and regionally, have continued to show a healthy level of engagement with the project and continue to provide positive and constructive feedback. It is recognised and appreciated that full public engagement throughout the design and build phases of the project is in the best interests of all potential users and local communities, and has already helped to identify and mitigate a variety of potential adverse impacts from an early stage[2].

Social value /community objectives have been central to the project from the outset of its life-cycle, for example with community engagement commitments included as a requirement in the Project Brief and Scope of Services issued to the Integrated Design Team.

Ongoing dialogue and engagement with local communities has been taking place since 2014 with early discussions on the need to tie in training and employment opportunities with more general community benefits. These fledgling commitments to social value gained traction and substance during the design, development and planning approval process, with early ideas progressed further through three rounds of interactive pre-application community consultation, with feedback and formal commitments evident through the planning application process.

This commitment continues to be made manifest in various tangible ways and including the following:

• A commitment to some form of ‘buy social’ approach – embedded into the Enabling Works Contract and within the contractor procurement process. This has evolved into a joint Belfast City Council/Translink Construction Employment Academy. (This work has been ongoing throughout the project life-cycle.)

• A commitment to provide a dedicated Translink resource for community engagement – delivered through the appointment of a BTH Community Engagement Manager in March 2017. (This position is active and ongoing.)

• A commitment to work with local schools and young people. This has included ‘on the ground’ practical help for local nursery and primary schools and support of community family fun day events. (This work has been ongoing throughout the project life-cycle.)

• A commitment to improve public open space. This has involved working collaboratively with local residents and business community to develop the extension of BTH public realm improvements along Sandy Row and Grosvenor Road. One example is the introduction of a pedestrian colonnade supported by an Arts and Heritage programme through the design development and planning process. In partnership with Belfast City Council it is also proposed to deliver plans for Blythefield Park following community consultation. (This work is ongoing.)

[2] For further details go to https://weaverscross.co.uk/neighbourhood/community-connections/

Staff Engagement

From 2017 onwards, a series of 'Operational Workshops' have been held with operational staff (not only senior managers) who have been engaged in the day to day, public facing delivery of different aspects of service delivery to passengers.

At these workshops, individuals have been encouraged to articulate their views of the type of facilities that they feel are required to deliver a seamless passenger experience and to identify possible barriers to successful delivery. This has enabled the design team to access the views of expert practitioners, as opposed to academic theorists, and has been an invaluable asset in the design process.

Section 75 Screening

In line with statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and a Section 75 strategy for the hub as originally drafted in 2018, two Section 75 screening exercises have been completed to date.

The first, entitled, 'Proposed Development of Integrated Belfast Transport Hub (Weavers Cross)'[3], reflected the work up to that time (2018). Based on available data, the screening report concluded:

> 'Translink remains confident that its significant investment in public consultation and engagement has ensured that issues relating to Section 75 have already been mainstreamed into the project design, and that those tasked with bringing the project forward have good awareness of responsibilities under Section 75, including private sector contractors.
>
> A number of mitigating measures have already been introduced as a result of public engagement, and this work will continue to inform the project through to full implementation. As the project continues to evolve so due consideration will continue to be paid to the need to carry out an EQIA, and to screen particular elements of the project as and when necessary.
>
> At this, the Stage 2 design phase, the need for an EQIA is not immediately apparent and in particular given that the specifics of the Hub design have yet to be finalised. **Instead, it is proposed that an EQIA will be scheduled during completion of the enabling works for the Hub (e.g. site clearance and ground works) and prior to the commencement of the main works on the buildings themselves, and this is likely to be in the second half of 2018.'**

In June 2018, a Sense Check Report was produced summarsing the information included in the screening exercise and also including reference to a Disability Audit undertaken at that time (see Appendix One).

From 2018 significant delays relating primarily to planning permission have impacted on the progression of the project and while site clearance and ground works continue, the procurement stage of the final build phase of the hub is only now underway.

[3] A copy of the initial project screening report is available at belfast-hub-project-screening.pdf (azureedge.net)

During 2018 it was also identified that arrangements in and around the site during construction would impact on city-wide access for local residents in particular, and hence a further screening was carried out ('Integrated Belfast Transport Hub (Weavers Cross): Transition Arrangements 2018 – 2021'[4]). This screening report concluded:

> 'Translink remains confident that its significant investment in public consultation and engagement, together with professional experience of related projects, has ensured that issues relating to Section 75 have already been mainstreamed into the transition phase of the project, and that those tasked with bringing the project forward have a clear understanding of responsibilities under Section 75, and this extends to private sector contractors.
>
> A number of mitigating measures have already been considered during the transition phase of the project in order to minimise disruption and inconvenience to staff and the public alike, and this work will continue to inform the project through to full implementation. '
>
> **'At this time, it is not anticipated that a further screening (of transition arrangements) will be required. However, if the phases and stages of the construction programme change significantly then this decision will be reviewed.'**

AIM

The overall purpose of the masterplan is to create an accessible, safe, comfortable and attractive environment for the Hub's customers, visitors and employees alike that is functional and practical to operate, cost-effective to maintain, commercially attractive, efficient and sustainable. This includes the commercial development of adjoining lands in partnership with local businesses and government agencies.

The primary function of the Hub is to enable circulation of passengers with diverse needs safely around the concourse, to pay fares, board buses or trains with ease and equally to alight services and exit safely through the proposed masterplan area in comfort and with convenience.

In combination, the intended aim is:
Operating within available resources and working in partnership with both public and private sector bodies, to provide a state-of-the-art integrated transport hub for Belfast and the wider community in Northern Ireland that meets the diverse needs of all travelers, that offers facilities which are welcoming and accessible to all, that is sensitive to the history of the area, and that enhances local business, the environment and community.

3: CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

In order to carry out this Equality Impact Assessment, various sources of information have been relied upon, including those already referenced in the two Section 75 screening exercises (see above).

Population Data

[4] A copy of the transition arrangements screening report is available at belfasthubprojectscreeningq2.pdf (azureedge.net)

Statistical profiles by Section 75 grounds of Northern Ireland (Appendix Two) and Belfast (Appendix Three) give some indication of the wide diversity of potential users of the hub, and in turn highlights the need to accommodate these various identities and their accompanying needs and priorities at the design and build stage of the project.

The Hub adjoins Blackstaff Ward, which at the time of the last census (2011) comprised 91.4% Protestant, 4.2% Roman Catholic and 4.4% Other/None.

In June 2015, it was estimated that of the 4,107 people living in the Ward, 2,134 (52%) were male and 1973 (48%) were female. This was made up of:

- 771 children aged 0-15 years;
- 1,865 people aged 16-39 years;
- 1,067 people aged 40-64 years; and
- 405 people 65 years and older.

Between 2005 and 2015 the population of Blackstaff Ward increased by 277 people or 7.2%.

Preliminary Consultation (2016)

In an earlier round of consultation (November – December 2016), 1,845 responses were obtained, and including a questionnaire. Four questions in particular were asked which are of specific relevance to Section 75:

- Do you have any personal need, access issue or priority concern in relation to the Belfast Hub proposals? If so, please specify.
- Do you envisage the Belfast Hub proposal having any positive or negative impact on certain user groups: age, gender, religion, political opinion, marital status, dependent status, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation?
- Do you have any evidence or information to support your views? If so, please specify.
- What changes to the Hub proposals would you suggest, if any? (Consider alternatives or enhancements that would ensure the Belfast Hub promotes equality for all, fairness and good relations)

In summary, the consultation highlighted:

- The importance of pedestrian connections to the city centre (both routes and signage);
- Preference for the station to be located as close to the city centre as possible, and concern regarding any additional walking distance;
- Appropriate provision for people with mobility issues both to and within the hub;
- Appropriate provision for people with visual and hearing impairments both to and within the hub;
- Access points designed to accommodate large flows of people safely and efficiently;
- Requirement for adequate seating provision – sheltered seating areas, quiet seating areas;
- Include child friendly spaces and family areas;
- Desire for building to be designed for hearing and visually impaired individuals;
- Desire for building to be designed for people with dementia;
- Desire for building to be designed for the elderly;
- Desire for the inclusion of sensory features and quiet areas;
- Desire for inclusion of covered areas and child friendly spaces;
- Desire for public realm to be designed for the visually impaired;

- Desire to retain the Boyne Bridge in situ;
- Suggestions for multilingual signage for tourists;
- Request for the design to promote the design which addresses safety and security.

Public Engagement

A significant commitment has been made to public engagement throughout the duration of the project (see p.7 above). This work has been supported by a full-time designated Community Liaison and Communications Manager within Translink, who continues to co-ordinate a wide range of engagement activities[5]. For example, as of January 2020,

- Nine community projects have been supported;
- Over 50 community events have been attended or hosted;
- Over £9,000 has been donated to local projects;
- 1,250 hours have been volunteered for local community and schools' projects;
- Over 2,000 local people have been directly engaged with the project;
- Over £25,000 of social value has been generated for the local community.[6]

Arts and Heritage Project

The Hub's Arts and Heritage programme began in December 2019[7], and has since been completely reconfigured to address the challenges posed by Covid-19, including online delivery, via digital platforms etc. The consultancy firm, Haller Clarke (HC), with the assistance of the Hub team, has worked innovatively to address issues such as the digital divide and to ensure that as many people as practically possible could be included within the engagement process. To date the consultation process has involved;

- 56 one-to-one consultations with stakeholders from across society (Community, Business, etc,), delivered over 150 consultation hours;
- Five online focus groups (representing cross community and intergenerational sectors) delivered over 30 consultation hours;
- An online Survey;
- A Media 'Call for Stories' using traditional media routes;
- Digital Engagement via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter request a 'Call for Stories' and 'Digital Photobooth Exhibition';
- 2,000 Community Activity Packs, designed to capture young people's stories distributed to addresses within the Shaftsbury & Blackstaff Super Output Area (SOA's) in an effort to access households that may not be digitally connected;
- Community Committee members acted as 'Envoys' to gather additional community stories;

[5] For further details go to https://weaverscross.co.uk/neighbourhood/community-connections/
[6] For further details go to https://weaverscross.co.uk/neighbourhood/connecting-people-with-place/
[7] For further details go to https://weaverscross.co.uk/news-items/translink-calls-for-stories-to-celebrate-local-heritage-as-part-of-the-belfast-transport-hub-plans/

- Translink undertook internal consultations with staff members to ascertain their own stories and historical recollections.

A draft report strategy outlining emerging themes, art recommendations and an arts programme to Translink has been developed by HC, who are recommending that a further round of consultation and community engagement is undertaken with the Community Committee and local stakeholders on draft strategy key issues. The additional consultation phase of the Arts & Heritage process will be integral in ensuring that local communities and stakeholders remain engaged in the evolving Arts & Heritage process, ensuring that social and local cultural value continues to be embedded in the process.

Community Committee

Central to embedding social value in the community engagement process was the convening of a 'Community Committee.' The primary role of the 'Community Committee' has been to ensure that community heritage is represented and aligned with the outputs and themes identified by the Arts and Heritage Strategy facilitators (HC), the Advisory Panel and the communities themselves.

Community Committee participants have been encouraged to fulfill the role of critical friend and were encouraged to take part in debate and discussion in the design of the Arts and Heritage (Placemaking) strategy. All members signed up to 'Community Committee' terms of reference with a stated ambition that participants should engage in process, reviewing and offering advice on community participation and feedback. The members also committed to act as ambassadors and advocate for the BTH Arts and Heritage strategy process and undertook a role as project envoys to gather additional stories from their local communities.

The Community Committee is cross community, inter-generational with representatives from the business and cultural and arts sector in Belfast. The Committee is comprised of representatives from;

- NOW group;
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum;
- Prince's Trust;
- Translink • Forward South;
- QUB PhD Student, Planner;
- Grosvenor Rd resident;
- Linen Quarter BID;
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust;
- Belfast South Community Resources;
- Sandy Row resident;
- Greater Falls Neighbourhood;
- Arts Ekta • Belfast Exposed;
- West Belfast Partnership Board.

The Community Committee has met on a monthly basis throughout the process.

Disability Issues and IMTAC

From 2017 onwards there has been a series of regular face-to-face meetings with staff and members of the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)[8]. These meetings have been invaluable in ensuring that the design of the Hub accommodates the needs of those with all forms of disability (see *Consideration of Adverse Impact: Disability* below).

As one recent example of this type of engagement, on 3 June 2020, an online Zoom meeting was attended by various representatives of the design team and Translink, together with staff and members of.

The initial presentation by members of the design team provided detailed information on the proposed design and related features, including the following:

- The hub will provide a level, step free 150m concourse, with easy access to both bus zones and train platforms;
- The first floor will accommodate various food outlets and will be accessible by both stairs and lifts;
- Information will be provided via 12m x 2.25m display boards, 6m from ground level;
- Universal images/signage will be used wherever possible;
- Bluetooth beacons will be positioned throughout the hub;
- Freestanding emergency help points will be located at strategic points within the hub;
- Platform surfacing will include appropriate texturing and contrast toning/shading;
- An open access ticket/travel office will be located close to the entrance to the hub, together with a manned information point;
- Ticket vending machines will be designed to accommodate those with different sensory needs;
- Benches and rest areas will be located throughout the hub.

Following the presentation, consultees highlighted a number of issues for further consideration including the following:

- Appropriate staffing deployment levels to aid direction and to offer porterage;
- Wheelchair assistance to be available within the hub
- Access to the hub, as well as within, including taxis and car parking, must be afforded due consideration;
- Use of appropriate types of tactile flooring to aid movement to and within the hub;
- Provision of accessible support dog spend areas;
- Contrasting tones to be incorporated into the final design;
- Catering facilities to be available at ground level;
- Responsiveness to Covid-19 considerations, e.g. distancing.

The Boyne Bridge

Development of the hub will involve the removal of the existing Boyne Bridge, Durham Street, BT12 5AB. Although the current road bridge was built in 1936, the brick structure incorporates two arches from an earlier bridge known as Saltwater Bridge, with historical

[8] https://www.imtac.org.uk/

links going back over 400 years. In 2017 a local campaign was started to 'Save the Boyne Bridge'[9], together with a petition that has been signed by 1.039 people[10] to date.

While an application for listed status at that time was unsuccessful, Translink maintains a commitment to, 'Preserve the remains of the older Saltwater Bridge' and intends to 'reuse and integrate elements of the Boyne Bridge into the contemporary design'.

4: CONSIDERATION OF ADVERSE IMPACT

Each of the policy areas was examined in the light of information obtained to assess whether or not there was an adverse impact on any of the nine Section 75 categories, and to determine if action could be taken to further promote good relations.

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

The project should generally have a positive impact on the area through a range of social and physical initiatives, in the short, medium and longer term. For example, bi-social clauses will guarantee at least 116 construction jobs locally, and the overwhelming majority of local residents have shown positive engagement to date. The new hub will be marginally closer to West Belfast (which is predominantly Roman Catholic) than the existing stations, but slightly further from the city centre, which is mixed. The future status of the Boyne Bridge within the scope of the project continues to generate concern among some local residents.

POLITICAL OPINION

The project should generally have a positive impact on the area through a range of social and physical initiatives, in the short, medium and longer term. For example, bi-social clauses will guarantee at least 116 construction jobs locally, and the overwhelming majority of local residents have shown positive engagement to date. The new hub will be marginally closer to West Belfast (which is predominantly nationalist/republican) than the existing stations, but slightly further from the city centre, which is mixed. The future status of the Boyne Bridge within the scope of the project continues to generate concern among some local residents.

RACIAL / ETHNIC GROUP

Signage should be universally accessible to address the needs of those accessing the hub whose first language may not be written English. The design should consider the adoption of universal pictorial signage and alternative language formats as and where appropriate.

AGE

Easy access is necessary to and within the hub for those older people with mobility issues, and in particular access and egress routes to bus zones and train platforms. Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors that can accommodate wheelchairs.

[9] http://www.boynebridge.co.uk/

[10] https://www.change.org/p/iain-greenway-to-have-the-oldest-existing-bridge-in-belfast-the-historic-site-listed?recruiter=979274020&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&recruited_by_id=fe2cf240-992c-11e9-b895-5318054af170

MARITAL STATUS

Those who are married are more likely to have dependants (see below).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Safety in public spaces is often cited as a priority for those from the LGB community. The facility should provide 24 hour safety within the Hub and its environs. The design of the building and its surrounding must take public safety into account, for example with regard to lighting, security and monitoring.

MEN & WOMEN GENERALLY

Separate male and female toilets, shower & changing facilities are currently proposed, along with gender-neutral accessible facilities.

Re: Transgender Community:

It is not always easy for transgender people to use the gender toilet they feel comfortable with, depending on their stage in the process of transitioning. A gender-neutral toilet could be used by anyone, and would stop transgender people from feeling isolated and stressed about going to the bathroom.

However, 'mixed' gender-neutral facilities are not always ideal: it can increase waiting time/queues for female users; and there are issues for some women of certain faiths using mixed bathrooms.

Single, self-contained gender-neutral cubicles would address this issue, and would also not be detrimental to women's safety. Alternatively, consider providing a separate gender-neutral toilet alongside existing gendered toilet facilities. People such as carers looking after someone of the opposite gender would also benefit from gender-neutral space.

DISABILITY

Engagement with IMTAC and sector representatives generally has been invaluable in helping to inform the design process to date. By way of example, this has highlighted the need to:

- consider the layout of 'changing places' facilities;
- include the provision of 'fire lifts' that enable the safe evacuation of disabled staff and passengers in the event of a fire (as opposed to 'disabled refuges');
- modify Customer Information Screen' to automatically display evacuation messages for those with hearing loss in the event of an emergency;
- slope platforms inwards to prevent wheelchairs and buggies rolling on to the track;
- design and locate Customer Information Points to enable passengers with learning difficulties and dementia to obtain -face-to-face travel information from an easily identifiable and accessible point (where wheelchair assistance may be obtained);
- incorporate taxi ranks immediately adjacent to the main station entrance/exit with level access;
- ensure that the bus waiting area seating can accommodate those with a range of disabilities (e.g. differing heights and furniture).

More generally,

- trained staff will be available for immediate advice and support;
- appropriate general staff training will support the proper use of all available adaptations;

- level access will be provided where appropriate, and lifts operating to upper floors that are able to accommodate all types of wheelchair;
- signage will represent current best practice and be universally accessible to address the needs of the blind and visually impaired, along with those with literacy concerns;
- visual contrast recommendations will be adhered to when choosing final finishes/colours;
- obvious access routes, clear signage, suitable colours and contrasts, and acoustic measures, will all assist in achieving a calm environment that users will feel confident to explore.

In addition to these measures a recent review of the Hub design has been undertaken in order to accommodate issues arising from the recent Covid-19 epidemic. The review is ongoing and has already identified a number of design features for further consideration and adoption (e.g. automatic doors to avoid the need for touching; numerous hand sanitising stations; accessible ticket machines to minimise face-to-face interaction).

DEPENDANTS

For those with caring responsibilities for either young children, older people or those with a disability, accessing the hub, using its facilities and boarding/disembarking transport safely and easily will be of critical importance.
Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors to accommodate prams, buggies etc.
Sufficient seating should be provided throughout the concourse for visitors to rest.

5: MEASURES TO MITIGATE / ALTERNATIVE POLICIES

As the project moves towards the final build stage, the specific comments and general feedback provided by consultees will continue to inform the hub's design, along with continued engagement with various representative groups (e.g. IMTAC).

The development of a modern, integrated transport hub must take cognisance of the diverse needs of those who may choose to use the hub, and travel to and from the hub. Many of these issues relate to mobility and access, for example in relation to disability and age, while others could involve caring responsibilities, for example, children and older people.

Over time, consultees have prioritised a number of concerns (see above), and these are summarised below.

- Internal and external signage must recognise that written English may not be accessible to all users, for example those of different nationality, those with visual impairment or those with literacy problems more generally. Various Section 75 grounds can relate to these issues.
- Travel information will be immediately available in a format that accommodates the diverse needs of potential users, and this will extend to appropriate staffing deployment levels and training.
- At some time in the future it is likely that the hub may be in use 24 hours each day, the issue of safety for those who are vulnerable will be given due consideration at that time (e.g. lighting, CCTV, alarms). In the meanwhile, the opening of a small section of the hub as a safe area for those waiting for 'night buses' is being given due consideration.
- Facilities (e.g. catering, toilets) that are available within the hub will be designed and located mindful of the diverse needs of potential users.

- Surface design features (e.g. texture, colour, tone, shade) will aspire to accommodate the needs of all potential users, including those with sensory and motor disabilities.
- When replacing the existing bus and train stations at Great Victoria Street, the hub will increase the distance to the city centre by approximately 150 metres. While this may be unavoidable due to logistical and planning constraints, easy access to and from the hub will be afforded ongoing attention to ensure that it is seen as welcoming to all those of different identities.
- The historical status of the site of the Boyne Bridge within the project will continue to be afforded due and proportionate regard; ongoing engagement with the local community will aim to ensure that good relations are maintained and enhanced.
- Design features will take into account the long term impact of Covid-19 (e.g. safe distancing).
- Contractual obligations written into tendering documentation will ensure that Section 75 continues to be afforded due regard by all relevant parties (and including private sector contractors) at all stages of development.

These measures, when implemented, should further equality of opportunity generally, in compliance with the NITHCo's obligations included in its Equality Scheme and with its obligations generally under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The masterplan will be regularly monitored to ensure that no adverse impact occurs and where it is identified then appropriate remedial action will be taken.

6: FORMAL CONSULTATION

We wish to consult as widely as possible on the findings included in this EQIA together with the preliminary recommendations offered above. With this in mind we propose to take the following actions:

- a press release will be prepared and submitted to various media outlets;
- prominent advertisements inviting the public to comment on this matter will be placed in the main newspapers in Northern Ireland, in accordance with normal practice;
- this report will be issued to all of the consultees listed in our Equality Scheme and to any member of the public on request;
- a copy of this report will be posted on the website;
- individual consultation meetings will be arranged with representatives of particular interest groups on request;
- consultation meetings for the general public will be arranged at suitable, accessible venues in the city;
- publicity material will be available at each operational location;
- the report will be made available, on request, in alternative formats including Braille, disk and audiocassette and in minority languages for those who are not fluent in English.

The arrangements for consultation are being co-coordinated by the Equality Officer, to whom all enquiries should be made.

The closing date for responses is 9 July 2021.

7: PUBLICATION

Following the end of the twelve week consultation period, all feedback will be collated and will be used to inform the Final Decision Report which will be made publicly available via hard copy, in the press and also on the website at www.translink.co.uk/bth
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PUBLIC SECTOR DUTIES

SECTION 75 OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998 (the Act)

The Act, which brought the Equality Commission into being, also introduced new equality duties on public authorities – the aim of which is to ensure that equality of opportunity and good relations are central to policy making and service delivery.

These duties apply to designated public authorities: *including government departments & agencies, local councils, health trusts, housing associations, colleges & universities and education & library boards*.

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) that owns TRANSLINK, is one of these designated public authorities.

Such designated public authorities are subject to the statutory duties set out in Section 75 (1) and (2) of the Act to have:

- Due regard to the need to promote **equality of opportunity** in relation to the nine equality categories, and
- To have regard to the desirability of promoting **good relations** between persons of different religious belief; political opinion; and racial group.

Section 75 requires public authorities to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- Men and women generally
- Persons with a disability and persons without
- Persons with dependants and persons without

The promotion of equality of opportunity entails *more than the elimination of discrimination*. It requires *proactive action to promote equality* of opportunity and encourages public authorities to take action to address inequality among the groups listed above.

A public authority's 'Equality Scheme' outlines the procedural arrangements that the authority proposes to follow to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ("DDA") Section 49A requires designated public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, and to the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. This duty is supported by an obligation to have a Disability Action Plan*.

Section 49A and Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the 'DDA 1995'), (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006).

A public authority's 'Disability Action Plan' outlines the procedural arrangements that the authority proposes to follow to fulfil the Section 49A statutory duties.

SECTION 75 and DISABILITY ACCESS AUDIT

PURPOSE

To create an accessible, safe comfortable and attractive environment for customers, visitors and employees alike, that is functional and practical to operate.

FUNCTION OF HUB

To enable circulation of passengers with diverse needs safely around the concourse, to pay fares, board buses or trains with ease and equally to alight services and exit safely through the proposed masterplan area in comfort and with convenience.

POLICY SCOPING

Screening is one of the key tools to enable public authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations and mainstream the Section 75 equality and good relations duties into policy development.

The scoping process helps prepare the background and context, and set out the aims & objectives for the policy being screened. This identifies potential constraints as well as opportunities to inform the policy maker.

TRANSLINK has endeavoured to ensure that Section 75 considerations have already been mainstreamed into the development of the project at successive stages of implementation to date, including during the consultation process carried out between November & December 2016. Positive and constructive feedback was received.

TRANSLINK'S Section 75 Policy Screening Form provides the following information.

Internal and external stakeholders *(actual or potential)* considered:

- **Staff**
  Staff at the existing bus and rail stations, together with Translink employees generally, will be affected by the new Hub.
- **Service Users**
  All those who use the new facilities will be impacted on.
- **Other public sector organisations**
  The relevant partners (e.g. DfI, SIB, Belfast City Council)
- **Voluntary/community/trade unions**

Staff associations and trade unions; local community groups; Section 75 representative bodies
Public consultation and engagement – evidence gathered revealed:

- Importance of pedestrian connections to the city centre (routes and signage)
- Preference for the station to be located closer to the city centre and concern regarding additional walking distance
- Appropriate provision for people with mobility issues
- Appropriate provision for people with visual and hearing impairments
- Access points designed to accommodate large flows of people
- Requirement for adequate seating provision – sheltered seating areas, quiet seating areas
- Include child friendly spaces and family areas
- Desire for building to be designed for hearing and visually impaired individuals
- Desire for building to be designed for people with dementia
- Desire for building to be designed for the elderly
- Desire for the inclusion of sensory features and quiet areas
- Desire for inclusion of covered areas and child friendly spaces
- Desire for public realm to be designed for the visually impaired
- Desire to retain the Boyne Bridge in situ
- Suggestions for multilingual signage for tourists
- Request for a design which addresses safety and security

Needs, experiences and priorities of the Section 75 categories:
The development of a modern, integrated transport hub must take cognisance of the diverse needs of those who may choose to use the hub, and travel to and from the hub. Many of these issues relate to mobility and access, for example in relation to disability and age, while others could involve caring responsibilities, for example, children and older people.

Signage must recognise that written English may not be accessible to all users, for example those of different nationality, or those with literacy problems more generally. Various Section 75 grounds can relate to these issues.

As the Hub is likely to be in use 24 hours each day, the issue of safety for those who are vulnerable must be given due consideration.

Facilities that are available within the hub must likewise be designed mindful of the diverse needs of potential users.

The Hub will replace the existing bus and train stations at Great Victoria Street, and will increase the distance to the city centre by approximately 150m. This issue has been raised by a number of consultees.

Screening Questions:
The 'Screening Questions' within the Policy Screening Form detail the likely impact on equality of opportunity for stakeholders for each of the Section 75 grounds; discuss opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within any of the Section 75 categories; and establish likely impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. A number of mitigating measures have already been introduced as a result of public engagement.

DRAWING REVIEW
The architectural drawing package has been reviewed in relation to impact upon staff and service users, with consideration given to evidence gathered through public consultation and engagement, particularly in relation to: mobility & access / caring responsibilities / language / safety / and distance.

Comments on whether the different needs and priorities of the Section 75 categories (as identified in the Policy Screening Form) have been addressed, may be summarised as follows:

1 – RELIGIOUS BELIEF
- Construction jobs available; enhanced proximity to local communities.

2 – POLITICAL OPINION
- Construction jobs available; enhanced proximity to local communities.

3 – RACIAL / ETHNIC GROUP

- Signage should be universally accessible to address the needs of the blind and visually impaired. We understand the design will also consider alternative language formats.
- *As no signage proposals have been provided within the Works Information, no further comment can be made.*

4 – AGE

- Easy access for those with mobility problems; access & egress routes to buses and trains.
- Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors.
- *Comments in greater detail may be found within the DDA Compliance section of this report.*

5 – MARITAL STATUS

- Those who are married are more likely to have dependants *(see below).*

6 – SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- Safety in public spaces is a priority. We understand the facility will provide 24 hour safety within the Hub and its environs. M&E Engineers to comment on the proposals with regard to lighting, security & monitoring.

7 – MEN & WOMEN GENERALLY

- Separate male & female toilet, shower & changing facilities are currently proposed, with unisex accessible facilities. *Comments in greater detail may be found within the DDA Compliance section of this report, specific to those with a physical disability.*
- Re: Transgender Community:

  It is not always easy for transgender people to use the gender toilet they feel comfortable with, depending on their stage in the process of transitioning. A gender-neutral toilet could be used by anyone, and would stop transgender people from feeling isolated and stressed about going to the bathroom.
  However, 'mixed' gender-neutral facilities are not always ideal: it can increase waiting time/queues for female users; and there are issues for some women of certain faiths using mixed bathrooms.
  Single, self-contained gender-neutral cubicles would address this issue, and also not be detrimental to women's safety. Alternatively, consider providing a separate gender-neutral toilet alongside existing gendered toilet facilities. People such as carers looking after someone of the opposite gender would also benefit from gender-neutral space.

8 – DISABILITY

- *Comments in greater detail may be found within the DDA Compliance section of this report, specific to those with a physical disability.*
- M&E Engineers to comment on the proposals with regard to safety alerts e.g. fire alarm alert for deaf visitors to the Hub.
- We understand appropriate staff training will be given to support the proper use of all available adaptions.
- Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors.
- Signage should be universally accessible to address the needs of the blind and visually impaired.
- Visual contrast recommendations should be adhered to when choosing final finishes/colours.
- A mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in **thinking, perception and behaviour**. These disturbances significantly impair a person's ability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines. With the proper care and treatment, a person can recover and resume normal activities. Many mental illnesses are believed to have biological causes, just like cancer, diabetes and heart disease, but some mental disorders are *caused by a person's environment and experiences*.
- Mental disability or illness falls into five major categories:
  - Anxiety disorders (phobias, panic disorders, OCD)
  - Mood disorders (e.g. depression, bipolar disorder)
  - Schizophrenia (a serious disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels & acts)
  - Dementias (e.g. Alzheimer's; loss of mental functions, including memory loss and a decline in intellectual and physical skills)
  - Eating disorders (e.g. anorexia nervosa and bulimia)

  We understand appropriate staff training will be given to support the proper use of all available adaptions. Obvious access routes, clear signage, suitable colours and contrasts, and acoustic measures, will all assist in achieving a calm environment that users will feel confident to explore.

9 – DEPENDANTS

- For those with caring responsibilities for either young children, older people or those with a disability, accessing the hub, using its facilities and boarding/disembarking transport will be key.
- Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors.
- Sufficient seating should be provided throughout the concourse for visitors to rest.
- *Comments in greater detail may be found within the DDA Compliance section of this report, specific to those with a physical disability or reduced mobility.*

SUMMARY

Subject to comments in this section of the Sense Check Report, and the encompassment of recommendations made elsewhere in this document *(e.g. DDA Compliance),* we conclude that the transport hub will meet the diverse needs of all travellers and offer facilities which are welcoming and accessible to all.

* * * * *

APPENDIX TWO
Data on Residents of Northern Ireland[11]

Totals

	2001	2011
All residents	1,685,267	1,810,863
All residents aged 16+	1,287,211	1,431,540
Number of households	626,718	703,275

Religious belief (religion or religion brought up in)

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Catholic	737,473	43.76	817,385	45.14
Protestant & other Christian (including Christian related)	895,382	53.13	875,717	48.36
Other religion	6,573	0.39	16,592	0.92
None	45,839	2.72	101,169	5.59

Ethnic group

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
White	1,670,988	99.15	1,778,449	98.21
Chinese	4,145	0.25	6,303	0.35
Irish Traveller	1,710	0.10	1,301	0.07
Indian	1,567	0.09	6,198	0.34
Pakistani	666	0.04	1,091	0.06
Bangladeshi	252	0.01	540	0.03
Other Asian	194	0.01	4,998	0.28
Black Caribbean	255	0.02	372	0.02
Black African	494	0.03	2,345	0.13
Black Other	387	0.02	899	0.05
Mixed	3,319	0.20	6,014	0.33
Other	1,290	0.08	2,353	0.13

[11] Data from Northern Ireland Census (unless otherwise indicated)

Country of birth

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Northern Ireland	1,534,268	91.04	1,608,853	88.84
Great Britain	81,389	4.83	82,724	4.56
Republic of Ireland	39,051	2.32	37,833	2.09
Other EU prior to 2004 expansion	N/A	N/A	9,703	0.54
Other EU after 2004 expansion	N/A	N/A	35,704	1.97
Other	30,559	1.81	36,046	1.99

Note: Eight countries joined the European Union in May 2004: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Age

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Under 16	398,061	23.62	379,323	20.95
16-24	211,501	12.55	227,634	12.57
25-44	489,256	29.03	498,046	27.50
45-64	363,343	21.56	442,140	24.42
65-84	200,041	11.87	232,324	12.83
85+	23,426	1.39	31,396	1.73

Marital and civil partnership status

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Single	426,195	33.11	517,393	36.14
Married	658,023	51.12	680,831	47.56
In a civil partnership	N/A	N/A	1,243	0.09
Separated	49,429	3.84	56,911	3.98
Divorced /civil partnership dissolved	53,033	4.12	78,074	5.45
Widowed/ surviving partner of civil partnership	100,531	7.81	97,088	6.78

Gender

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	821,399	48.74	887,323	49.00
Female	863,868	51.26	923,540	51.00

Disability

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Disability / long term health problem	343,120	20.36	374,646	20.69
No disability / long term health problem	1,342,147	79.64	1,436,217	79.31

Dependents

	2001		2011	
	No.	%	No.	%
Households with dependent children	262,076	36.47	238,094	33.86
Lone parent households with dependent children			63,921	9.09
People providing unpaid care	185,066	10.98	213,980	11.82

Political opinion

The elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly in May 2011 indicated the following voting pattern:

	DUP	UUP	Alliance	Others	SDLP	SF
Seats won	38	16	8	3	14	29
Change from 2007	+2	+2	-1	=	-2	-1
Vote share	30.0%	13.2%	7.7%	7.9%	14.2%	26.9%
Change from 2007	-0.1	+1.7	+2.5	-0.1	-1.0	+0.7

Source: Economic & Social Research Council (www.ark.ac.uk/elections)

Sexual Orientation

The Rainbow Project estimates that, on the basis of national and international research, 1 in 10 people in Northern Ireland would not identify as being heterosexual.

4.0 Equality Considerations

4.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial
- group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependents and persons without.

4.2 In addition, without prejudice to the above obligations, public authorities are required to have regard to the need to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

4.3 The principle of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people must be a key objective behind the plan and will be a central theme of the sustainability assessment. In land use planning terms, this means ensuring everyone benefits from quality housing, employment, and access to public services and recreation facilities. These themes will be addressed in more detail in later papers. However, this paper begins the process of identifying issues and needs facing different groups within the area over and above the general population, so that these can be considered at every stage of the plan making process. If an aim of the plan is also to help build a cohesive society then it must also be recognised that this can only be achieved by "sharing space" and "accessing opportunities".

(A) Age Structure

4.4 The age structure of a population has obvious implications for planning. A growing young population will impact on the demand for and provision of childcare facilities, nursery, primary and secondary schools. A growing working age population would necessitate that planning provides adequate housing especially for those entering the housing market and employment opportunities. For a growing elderly population, adequate services and housing to meet their specific needs must also be considered.

Figure 9: Age Structure of Population 2014

District	All Persons	Persons: 0-15 years	Persons: 16-39 years	Persons: 40-64 years	Persons: 65+ years
Northern Ireland	1,851,621	385,200 (20.80%)	583,116 (31.49%)	591,481 (31.94%)	291,824 (15.76%)
Belfast LGD 2014	338,907	66,581 (19.65%)	122,942 (36.28%)	100,076 (29.53%)	49,308 (14.55%)

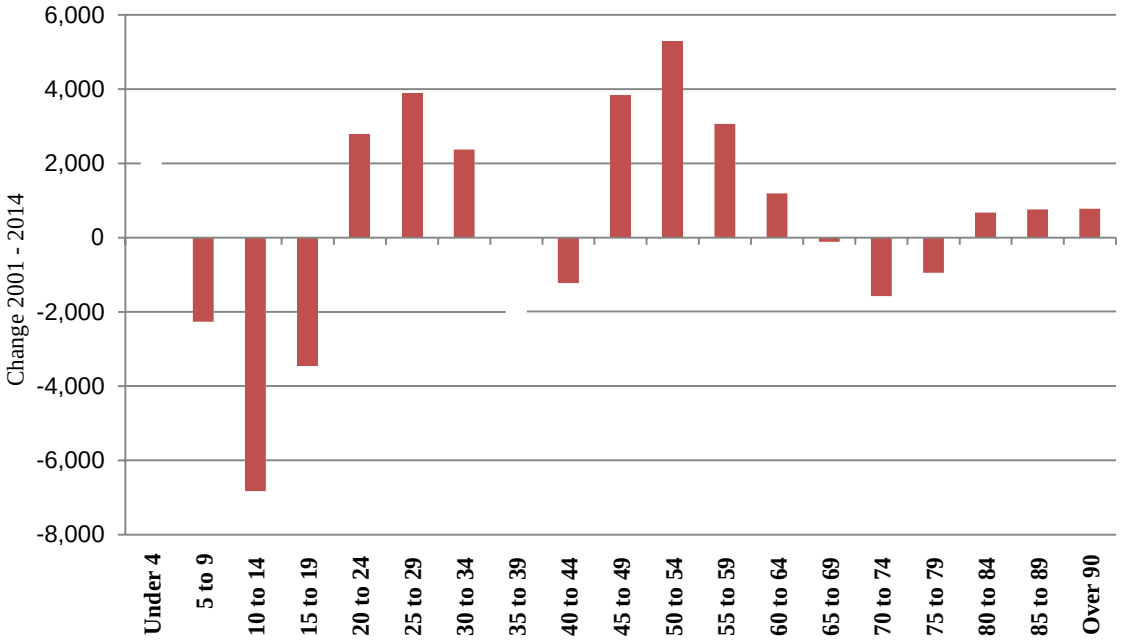
Source: *NISRA Population Estimates Broad Age Bands 2014 (Administrative Geographies)*

4.5 On Census day 2011, the median age of those living in Belfast in 2011 was 35 years,

which is lower than the Northern Ireland average (37 years) (BCC City Profile 2015). NISRA estimate that in 2015, 19.65% of the Belfast population were children aged 0-15 years, lower than the Northern Ireland average of 20.8%. Older persons (i.e. 65 years and over) made up 14.55% of the Belfast population, again lower than the Northern Ireland average of 15.76%.

4.6 Over the decade 2014-2024[2] the population of Northern Ireland is projected to increase by 5.3 per cent (i.e. 98,217 people), reaching 1,938,715 people in 2024. While the overall population of Belfast increased between 2001 and 2014, several age groups declined in size during this period. This includes younger people aged 5 to 19, residents aged 35 to 44 and those aged 65 to 79 years old. The strongest growth occurred in those aged 50 to 54 over this period, but comparatively strong growth was also seen in the those age groups around this cohort (45 to 64) and the younger working age population (20 to 34).

Figure 10: Change in the Age Profile of Belfast 2001 – 2014



Source: *NISRA, Turley 2016*[1]

4.7 Population growth is expected for each of the 11 new local government districts over the decade, ranging from 1.4 per cent (Derry and Strabane) to 10.4 per cent (Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon). Based on these projections, Belfast's growth of 3.3 per cent is the fifth highest out of the 11 Local Government Districts.

4.8 In Belfast, the number of people of working age (as defined in April 2010, consists of the male population aged 16-64 and the female population aged 16-59) is projected to increase marginally from 94,357 people in 2014 to a projected 96,453 people in 2024 (2.2% increase). In contrast the number of people of pensionable age (Pensioners as defined in

[2] ***NB.*** *The Belfast City Population and Housing Growth Study completed on behalf of the Council in*

October 2016 is based on the 2014 population estimates and 2014-based population projections, being the most recent data available at the time.

April 2010 (males aged 65 and over and females aged 60 and over) is projected to increase from 33,779 in 2010 to 36,647 in 2025, an increase of 8.4%.

4.9 Closer examination of the Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the new council area indicates that some have slightly older populations than the district average and some have much younger populations. A higher proportion of children under 16 years can be found in areas such as Whiterock 1, Cliftonville 1, Legoniel 1, Ardoyne 3, Ballymacarrett 2, Falls 2 and Shankill 1, which all have children as over a quarter of their populations, whilst a significant proportion of the SOAs around Queen's University in Stranmillis and Botanic have under 10% of their populations as Children. In contrast, the proportion of population aged 65 and over is significantly higher than district level in areas including Upper Malone 1, Cherry Valley 1, Crumlin 1, Stormont 1, Fortwilliam 1 and Andersonstown 1 & 2, which are all over a quarter over 65. These areas are contrastable with the SOAs near Queen's University with SOAs at Botanic (1-5), Windsor (2, 3 & 4) and Stranmillis (2 & 3) all having less than 7% over 65s.

4.10 These variations between areas will require more targeted responses with regard to the type of services needed. The growing number of elderly people is a key factor in declining average household size. This has been taken into account by DRD when formulating the Regional Development Strategy 2035 Housing Growth Indicators. A Local Development Plan has a role in providing development land to meet these indicators (which will be discussed in the housing paper) and facilitate housing units to meet the needs of the elderly, particularly nursing homes, sheltered accommodation and smaller sized units. It also has a role in ensuring such units are accessible. The Development Plan housing zonings need to ensure that all housing, including for the elderly, is sited where it is accessible to local services and transportation. These services include health and other community facilities together with recreation and shops. A rising elderly population will also increase demand for health and community services, the development of which will also need to be accommodated.

4.11 In 2011, around one fifth of the population was under 16. Children are also a vulnerable group. In 2014/2015, approximately 109,500 children (25%) in Northern Ireland were in relative poverty before housing costs. This is two percentage points higher than 2013/2014 and 5 percentage points higher than 2012/2013. Young people can be particularly vulnerable to the vehicular traffic; therefore, safe and sustainable access to community and recreation facilities, including play parks and sports grounds, must remain high on the agenda.

(B) Gender and Life Expectancy

4.12 The usually resident population in Northern Ireland and the Belfast LGD is broadly split on a 50/50 basis between men and women with slightly more females in 2014 in both.

Figure 11: Gender balance of Belfast Population- 2011

Sex	Belfast LGD (%)	N.Ireland (%)
Male	48.2	49
Female	51.8	51

Source: *NISRA Population Totals (LGD2014)*

4.13 Life expectancy continues to improve for both males and females. Between 2000 and 2010, life expectancy for males improved at a slightly faster rate than for females, reducing the gender gap to females. Belfast continues to have a life expectancy of slightly more than two years less than the NI average. Belfast has a larger differential between male and female life expectancy than the NI average with females having a life expectancy of five years more than men born in the same year do.

4.14 In the UK, life expectancy at birth is expected to increase by around five years between 2012 and 2037 (Office of National Statistics, 2013) for both men and women and it is therefore anticipated that life expectancy will similarly increase in Belfast.

Figure 12: Life Expectancy by Gender at Birth in Belfast - 2000 & 2010

	2000		2010		% Change	% Change
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
NI	75.25	80.17	77.82	82.28	3.42%	2.63%
Old Belfast LGD	73.20	78.80	75.20	80.60	2.73%	2.28%

Source: *NISRA Demography Life Expectancy at Birth*

(C) Marital Status

4.15 The marital status of the population influences the composition of households and therefore the demand for housing. Since 2001, there has been an increase in the percentage of divorced people, a decrease in the percentage of people married and an increase in the proportion of single people in N. Ireland. In the new Belfast City Council Area, The 2011 census data shows that in the new Belfast Council Area there is higher proportion of single people, 45.32% of over 16s, than the Northern Ireland (NI) average (36.14%). A lower proportion of the adult population is married (35.57% compared with a NI average of 47.56%) and a marginally higher proportion are divorced (6.17% compared with the regional average of 5.45%).

Figure 13: Marital Status- 2011

	All People ≥ 16	Single (never married) %	Married [3] %	Divorced %	Widowed[4] %
NI	1,431,540	36.14	47.56	5.45	6.78
Old Belfast LGD	269,654	45.32	35.57	6.17	7.46

Source: *NISRA Census 2011*

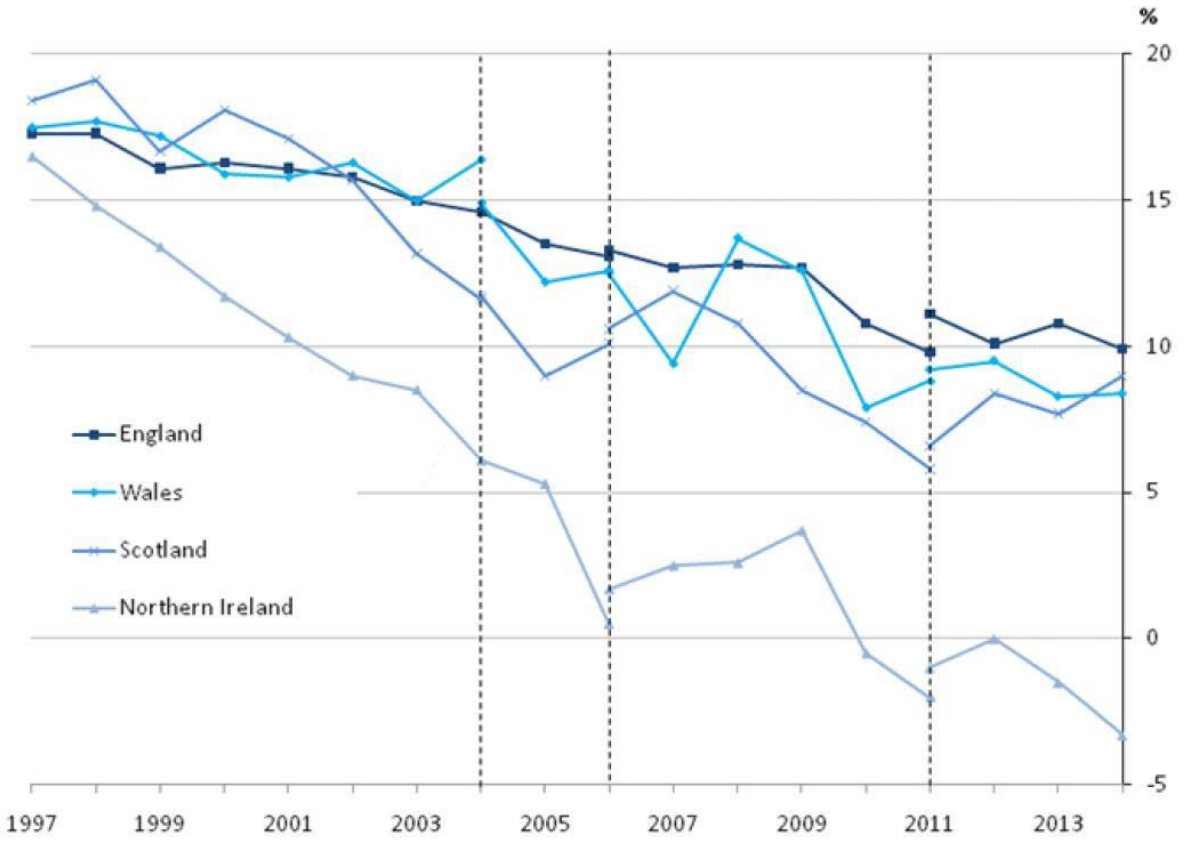
[3] *Married – This includes people who were remarried; those who are separated but still legally married; and those in a same-sex civil partnership.*

[4] *Widowed includes surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership.*

4.16 The role for planning is to adequately provide for appropriate housing to meet the needs of the population. There will need to be units provided for single people. It is reasonable to assume that many single wage earners will not have the same purchase power of a double income household. Single people also have different social needs to those who are married and have families. Young, single people are key to the economy of any town centers, providing a significant part of the market for pubs, clubs and restaurants. However, this can mask the feeling of social exclusion experienced by many single people, particularly the elderly, disabled and single parents. Single parents remain one of the most disadvantaged groups with over half falling within low income groups and over half of lone parent families not having access to a car (Poverty site, 2010).

4.17 There are key differences between the sexes in that women tend to take on the role of carer whether it be for children or aging relatives. The traditional gender pay gap (i.e. the difference between men's and women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings) based on median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time employees has reversed in Northern Ireland as women are now higher earners than men are. This is, in part, due to a higher proportion of public sector jobs here than in the rest of the UK. There are more women employed in this sector than men and these jobs tend to be higher paid, in general, than in the private sector (Op Cit).

Figure 14: Gender Pay Gap 1997-2014



Source: *Office of National Statistics 2014*

4.18 This figure is based on full time work. It therefore masks the fact that in NI there are more women in part-time work (167,000 women compared with 64,000 men). DETI's 2014

Annual Survey of Hours and Earning by contrast shows that the median gross annual pay for women is almost 2/3 of what men are paid (£14,871 compared with £22,327). This is exacerbated by a decrease in the median figure for females of 0.9% when male median wages increased by 2.4%.

Figure 15: Gross Annual Pay (£) for all Employees (who had been in the same job for 1+ years), NI/UK 2014

	Northern Ireland		United Kingdom	
Description	Median (£s)	Annual percentage change 2013-14	Median (£s)	Annual percentage change 2013-14
All	18,764	1.6	22,044	0.9
Male	22,327	2.4	27,162	0.0
Female	14,871	-0.9	17,103	0.8
Full-time	24,020	0.3	27,195	0.7
Part-time	8,624	4.7	9,000	1.6
Public Sector All	23,105	2.1	24,302	1.2
Private Sector All	16,375	3.5	21,259	0.9
Public Sector Full-time	29,658	3.6	29,785	1.0
Private Sector Full-time	21,345	3.7	26,000	0.8

a Employees on adult rates whose pay for the survey pay-period was not affected by absence.

Source: *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS*

(D) Households with or without dependent children

4.19 A "dependent child" is defined as 0-15 or aged 16-18 who is a full- time student and living in a family with his or her parent(s) or grandparent(s) (Census 2011). In both Northern Ireland and Belfast, the proportion of households (including lone parent households) with dependent children has declined since 1981.

Figure 16: Percentage of Households with Dependent Children– 1981 & 2011

Households	N. Ireland	Belfast
% with dependent children 1981	45.98%	37.30%
% with dependent children 2011	33.85%	29.74%

Source: *Census 1981, 2011*

4.20 A closer examination of the Super Output Areas within each district reveals that many have much higher proportions of households with children than the district level including Whiterock 1, Glencolin 1, Cliftonville 1, Upper Springfield 2 and Legoneil 1. At the opposite end of the scale, other SOAs around Queen's University (Botanic 1, 2, 3 & 4 and Windsor 2, 3 & 4) are those with the lowest proportion of households with dependent children as all are less than one in eight households.

(E) Racial Group and Ethnicity

4.21 The 2011 census data showed that 96.69% of the population of the new Belfast Council Area are white. Whilst this represents the vast majority of the population, Belfast is also the

most ethnically diverse council in Northern Ireland. The main minority ethnic groups in Belfast are Chinese (0.71%), Indian (0.70%), Other Asian (0.61%), Mixed (0.48%), Black African (0.32%), Irish Travelers (0.08%) and Pakistani (0.08%).

4.22 In the new Belfast City Council Area (from Census 2011), 5.97% of the resident population were born either in the European Union (EU) (2.58% - 0.67% pre-2004 accession states and 1.91% post-2004 accession states) or outside the EU (3.39%). It is unlikely that the Local Development Plan will have a particular impact on these groups; however, it is important to monitor changes over time as this may have implications particularly in relation to equality of access to homes and jobs. The housing needs assessment undertaken by the NIHE addresses the distinct needs in terms of Irish Travelers.

(F) Sexual Orientation

4.23 Sexual orientation is the only equality strand on which the UK census does not collect information[5]. However, several UK and NI based studies have attempted to quantify the number of people who identify as LGB. Estimates for LGB population range from 0.3-10% using different sources. A commonly used estimate of LGB people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is approximately 5-7% of the population.[6]

4.24 A growing body of research indicates that LGB young people are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience bullying, exclusion and intimidation in the educational institution. This can lead to higher rates of depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm and other risk-taking behaviours amongst LGB&/T young people[7]. Young LGB people are 5 times more likely to be medicated for depression, 2.5 times more likely to self-harm and 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. Further to this 28.6% of young same sex attracted men showed signs of a mental health problem compared to 10.2% of those who were attracted to the opposite sex.[8]

4.25 One of the key issues for LGB people is the promotion of community safety across the city to reduce both homophobic hate crime incidents and fear of crime. Research by the Rainbow Project in 2009 found that 21% of gay and bisexual males and 18% of LGB females had been victim of one or more homophobic hate crimes or incidents in the previous three years and 30% of these incidents resulted in physical injury. In addition, 13% of LGB people felt that harassment/attacks on people because of their sexual orientation in their neighbourhood was a problem.[9]

4.26 The PSNI Annual Bulletin "Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police" shows that in 2014/ 15 there 126 incidents with a homophobic motivation recorded in Belfast, an increase of 11 incidents (9.6% increase) from the previous year. This

[5] *http://www.ark.ac.uk/pdfs/policybriefs/pbso.pdf*

[6] *Through Our Eyes, The Housing and Homeless Experience of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people in Northern Ireland, NIHE, 2015*

[7] *Outstanding in your field: Exploring the needs of LGB&T people in rural Northern Ireland, The Rainbow Project, 2016*

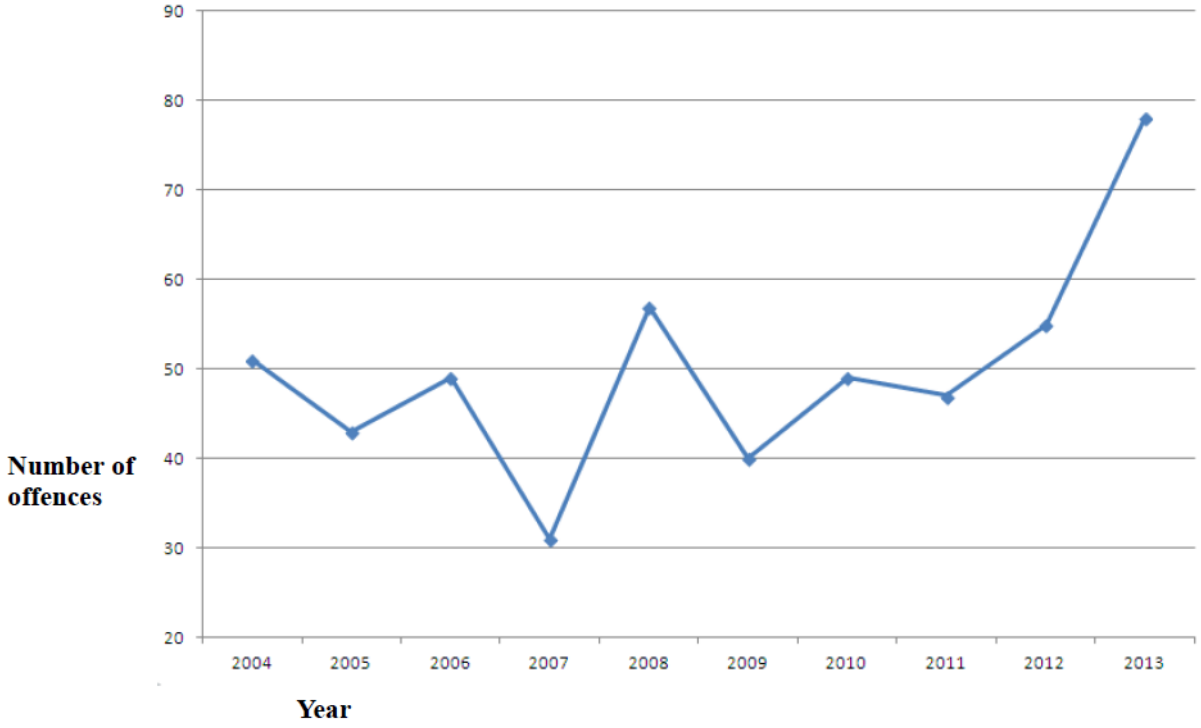
[8] *Inequalities in Health: A Strategy for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Rainbow Project, 2010*

[9] *Through Our Eyes: Perceptions and Experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People towards Homophobic Hate Crime and Policing in Northern Ireland, The Rainbow Project, 2009*

represents 37.7% of all incidents with a homophobic motivation recorded in N Ireland in 2014/ 15 (334). The Bulletin also reports that there were 82 recorded crimes with a homophobic motivation in Belfast, an increase of 9 recorded crimes (or 12%) from the previous year. This represents 39.2% of all recorded crimes with a homophobic motivation across N Ireland in 2014/ 15 (209 recorded crimes in NI with a homophobic motivation).[10]

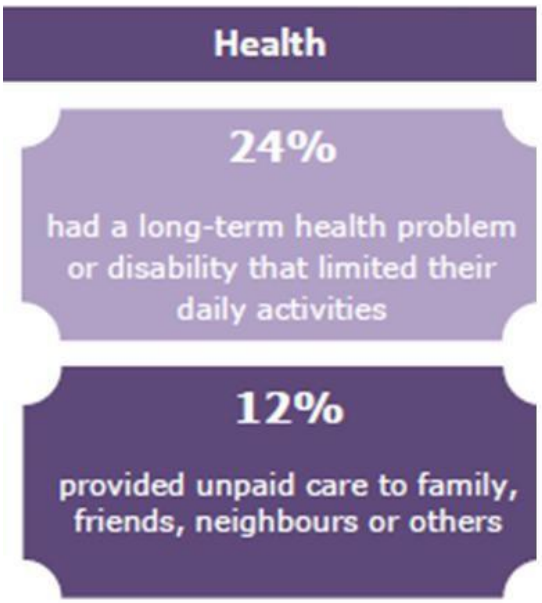
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Figure 17: Hate Crimes Offences Recorded with a Homophobic Motivation



Source: *NISRA*

4.28 Whilst the plan is unlikely to bring forward specific proposals and policies for this group, it is anticipated that many of the measures in a Local Development Plan aimed at providing a range of house types, creating employment and accessible services as well as improving safety and security will benefit this group.



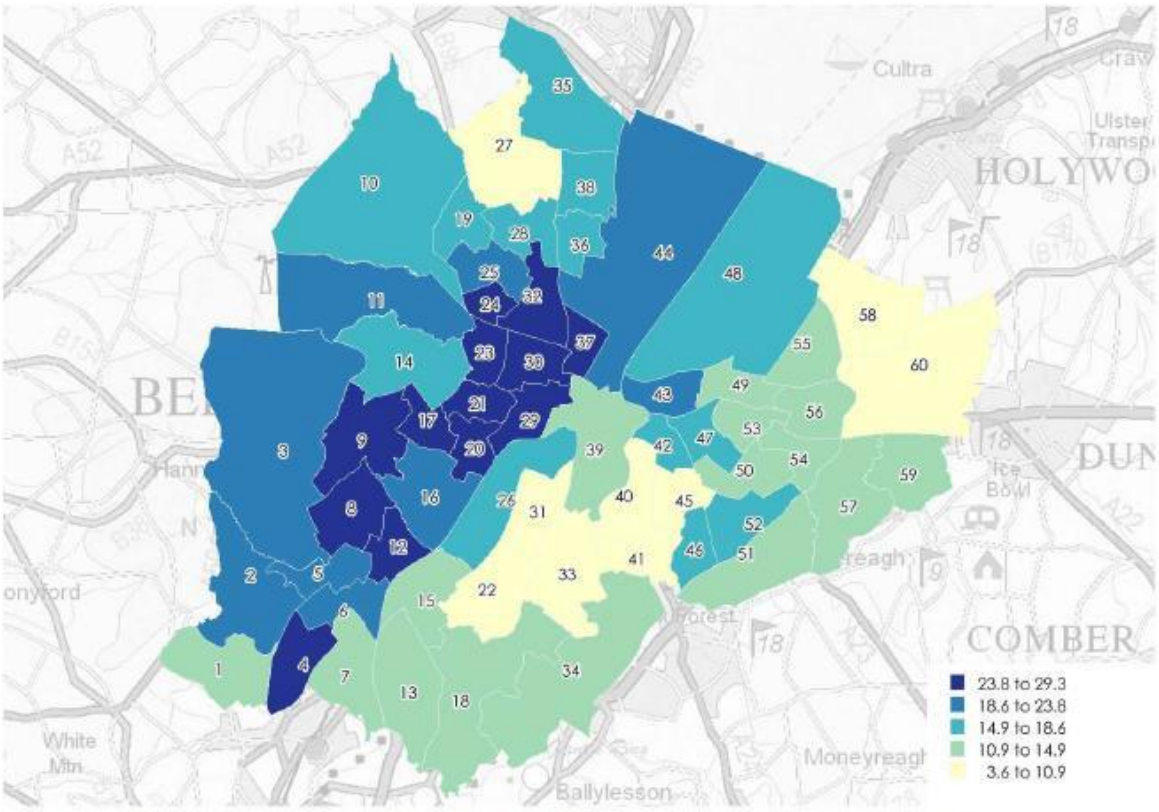
(G) Disability and Health

4.29 In February 2014, there were 55,480 people, or 16.6% of all residents, in receipt of at least one disability-related benefit in Belfast. Belfast had the second highest proportion of disability-related benefit recipients (Belfast Profile 2015).

[10] *PSNI Annual Bulletin "Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police" , August 2015*

Belfast's disability-related benefit claimant level is above the Northern Ireland average of 13.9%. The highest concentrations of disability related benefits claimants are located in areas of North and West Belfast. This is to be contrasted with some areas in the South and East, which have some of the lowest levels of disability related benefits in Northern Ireland (see map below).

Figure 18: Proportion of People in Receipt of at Least on Disability-related Benefit at Ward Level, February 2014



1	Lagmore	23	Woodvale	45	Ravenhill
2	Poleglass	24	Ardoyne	46	Cregagh
3	Collin Glen	25	Cliftonville	47	Beersbridge
4	Twinbrook	26	Blackstaff	48	Sydenham
5	Stewartstown	27	Cavehill	49	Connswater
6	Ladybrook	28	Chichester Park	50	Orangefield
7	Dunmurry	29	Falls	51	Hillfoot
8	Shaw'S Road	30	Shankill	52	Merok
9	Turf Lodge	31	Windsor	53	Bloomfield
10	Legoniel	32	Water Works	54	Sandown
11	Forth River	33	Stranmillis	55	Belmont
12	Andersonstown	34	Belvoir	56	Knock
13	Finaghy	35	Bellevue	57	Shandon
14	Ballygomartin	36	Fortwilliam	58	Garnerville
15	Musgrave	37	New Lodge	59	Gilnahirk
16	Falls Park	38	Innisfayle	60	Stormont
17	Ballymurphy	39	Central		
18	Upper Malone	40	Ormeau		
19	Ballysillan	41	Rosetta		
20	Beechmount	42	Woodstock		
21	Clonard	43	Ballymacarrett		
22	Malone	44	Duncairn		

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Appendix 2

Belfast City Council response to Translink on the Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan

Background

Translink has opened a period of public consultation on an Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan. An extension to the consultation period was agreed to allow for approval of our response at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 20 August 2021, with the response then to be submitted subject to Council approval in September 2021.

Introduction

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Equality Impact Assessment for the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan. It should be noted that the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee is scheduled to receive a presentation on the Transport Hub/Weavers Cross development in August 2021 which will also provide an opportunity for discussion on the development.

We have given due consideration to this EQIA given the synergies between the aims of the Transport Hub and Associated Masterplan, and its potential to contribute to the ongoing transformation of Belfast. Comments were sought from across the council for inclusion in the response and we welcome any opportunity for further dialogue on any of the areas noted.

Contributing to the Belfast Agenda

As noted in the EQIA, the Transport Hub, is a key transport-led regeneration project that will contribute to Belfast's community plan (the Belfast Agenda) ambitions and vision for the city in 2035 that *Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well-connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free form the legacy of conflict*.' As a key city infrastructure development it will contribute to our shared city outcome that by 2035:

- Belfast is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.

The Transport Hub is also identified as a transformational intervention for the city centre in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) which recognises the pivotal role of the city centre for the success of the city and for the region. This sets out the Council's ambition for the continuing growth and regeneration of the city core and its

surrounding area up to 2030 and has been adopted by the Department for Communities as the policy framework for the city centre.

BCCRIS identifies the South Centre of the city centre as the primary focus for Belfast's office sector, at the centre of NI's knowledge economy and an essential driver of the region's economic growth. The Transport Hub and associated masterplan will be a major improvement in convenience and connectivity as well as promoting sustainable and active travel, catering for over 14 million passengers per year; the impact of its reach will extend well beyond Belfast city centre. However, it is more than a multi-modal transport facility, the development will redefine a key gateway to the city centre as well as offering significant regeneration potential.

The Transport Hub will also have a key role in contributing to the Bolder Vision for Belfast, a shared vision with commitment to further collaboration from Belfast City Council, Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. As a key gateway to the city for employment, social-life and tourism the Transport Hub will contribute to the Bolder Vision's key principles of prioritising integrated walking, cycling and public transport as well as providing inclusive, shared spaces and improving access for all communities to the city centre.

Serving our communities

Inclusion and accessibility need to be at the centre of the Transport Hub for its success, and travel to and from the hub. We welcome recognition of the ongoing need to take cognisance of the diverse needs of those who may choose to use the hub. Given demographic changes and as the Covid-19 recovery is felt in the tourism industry and the broader economy, it is likely that there will be increasing diversity in needs as the development progresses and is operational. We note the mitigating measures that have been prioritised along with the ongoing engagement with stakeholders such as IMTAC. We would also encourage engagement with stakeholders from all of the Section 75 protected characteristics groups.

The Council has received several representations from local business and residents' groups in relation to the development of the Transport Hub/Weavers Cross. We would therefore emphasise the importance of ongoing, meaningful community engagement as the Transport Hub and associated masterplan progresses to ensure that the economic and connectivity benefits of this development are felt by local communities and businesses.

As referenced in the EQIA, the establishment of a Community Committee and the commitment of the dedicated community engagement manager for the Belfast Transport Hub since 2017 are welcomed, given the significance of this development. These are vital resources in recognising the needs and maintaining dialogue with all communities of interest; particularly

in catalysing the regeneration in the surrounding areas and maximising the benefits for the local communities.

The partnership working to date between the Community Engagement Manager, Belfast City Council and the contractor has resulted in a bespoke 'Belfast Transport Hub Construction Employment Academy' to offer employment opportunities for local people, who had been out of employment. 24.9% of the working age population in Belfast are employment deprived (compared to a regional figure of 20.6%) and 38.1% of the working age adults have no or low levels of qualification (compared to 35.6% regionally) [1] and The Transport Hub has highlighted the role that flagship developments in the city centre can play in delivering on inclusive growth and social value commitments through measures such as this. While not specifically identified as a Section 75 group, the cumulative impact of multiple sources of disadvantage – low incomes, benefit dependency, low skills levels and qualifications – are likely to combine together to impact on an individual's opportunity and capacity to participate in employability programmes. The impact of Covid-19 has also served to accelerate the inequalities in society emphasising the need for an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

The first Employment Academy in 2020 saw 101 people signing up through 6 sign-up events, including two dedicated sign-up events in Sandy Row and Grosvenor Rd to promote access to employment for the adjoining communities. Of those who met the criteria, 16 participants were selected for the Belfast Transport Hub Construction Employment Academy, which resulted in 9 job outcomes relating to the Enabling Works.

Plans for the Construction Employment Academies for the Main Works are already in place with Social Value job opportunities due to come online from January 2022.

This commitment to inclusive growth and social value of the Transport Hub has been recognised through the achievement of two National Social Value Awards in 2021 for its delivery, in partnership with Belfast City Council and the contractor, working with the local community.

We welcome the continued engagement and commitment of the Transport Hub to inclusive growth and the development of the Inclusive Growth city charter.

Good relations

We welcome cognisance of the historical status of the site of the Boyne Bridge within the project and that it will continue to be afforded due and proportionate regard through ongoing engagement with the local community. The aim of such engagement is to ensure that good

[1] NISRA (2018) NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

relations are maintained and enhanced, this is key to the diversity of our city as outlined in our Good Relations Strategy, agreed by all the political parties on Council in September 2019.

While much of the current focus is on the construction phase, it may be worth considering at this stage, the ultimate potential of the new Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan to be a new Shared Space for people from all backgrounds. The Good Relations Strategy details shared space principles and how they fit with the strategic vision for the city. When we use the term Shared Space we are describing space that is welcoming, accessible, good quality and safe.

- Welcoming
  • Shared Space should be welcoming, where people feel safe to visit and to take part in activity within that space, increasing an overall sense of shared experience and community
  • Activities within the public spaces will respect diversity and promote inclusion

- Accessible
  • There will be equality of opportunity afforded to all those using public spaces and accessing goods, facilities and services
  • In a Shared City, public expressions of identity will be respected and respectful
  • Shared Spaces should reflect the values of diversity and inclusion

- Good quality
  • Shared Space should be good quality, with attractive, high quality services and well-designed buildings and spaces

  Safe
- • Shared Space should be safe for all

We welcome the stated purpose of the purpose of the Masterplan as being: ‘to create an accessible, safe, comfortable and attractive environment for the Hub’s customers, visitors and employees alike that is functional and practical to operate, cost-effective to maintain, commercially attractive, efficient and sustainable’. There is also potential for the project to contribute to an additional outcome of our Good Relations Strategy, focused on shared services. Through this aim we will:

- Focus on inclusion and social innovation
- Improve our use of data and evidence-based planning
- Evidence and articulate where division exacerbate social and economic issues

- Co-design and co-create new solutions to challenging issues
- Promote integrated planning
- Encourage projects that build the capacity of organisations and communities to be confident to access services throughout the city
- Encourage attitudinal and behavioural change.

Use of datasets in EQIA Appendix 3

We welcome Translink's research and the inclusion of supporting datasets within the EQIA. One such dataset presented is contained in Appendix 3 of the draft EQIA which outlines Data on Residents of Belfast. This is an e*xtract from the Belfast Local Government Plan Topic Paper 17: Population, 2017.* It should be noted that this topic paper is a supporting document in relation to the Belfast Local Development Plan *draft* Plan Strategy 2035.

The *draft* Plan Strategy is still in draft form and we are currently awaiting the Planning Appeals Commission's report following the Independent Examination earlier this year. It is therefore potentially subject to modification, adoption or withdrawal once the final report is. The policies in the *draft* Plan Strategy cannot be used until such time as the Plan is adopted. It is therefore possible that the Weavers Cross proposal will be considered under the current planning policy framework. We trust that as a public authority, Translink is however willing to commit to the proposals identified within Appendix 3 without necessarily being planning policy driven.

Therefore, we would ask for the following changes:

a. Removal of the reference to "In land use planning terms" at para 4.3, as this relates to the *draft* Plan Strategy and is not current land use planning policy. We would suggest the revised paragraph should read as follows:

'The principle of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people' must be a key objective behind the plan and will be a central theme of the sustainability assessment. This means ensuring everyone benefits from quality housing, employment, and access to public services and recreation facilities. These themes will be addressed in more detail in later papers. However, this paper begins the process of identifying issues and needs facing different groups within the area over and above the general population, so that these can be considered at every stage of the plan making process. If an aim of the plan is also to help build a cohesive society then it must also be recognised that this can only be achieved by "sharing space" and "accessing opportunities".'

b. Removal of the reference to “that planning provides” at para 4.4, as this relates to the *draft* Plan Strategy and is not current land use planning policy. We would suggest the revised paragraph should read as follows:

‘The age structure of a population has obvious implications for planning. A growing young population will impact on the demand for and provision of childcare facilities, nursery, primary and secondary schools. A growing working age population would necessitate adequate housing especially for those entering the housing market and employment opportunities. For a growing elderly population, adequate services and housing to meet their specific needs must also be considered.’

The Council reiterates its broad welcome for the proposals set out in respect of the Transport Hub and asks that the contents of this response are considered going forward.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership**
Date:	20th August 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 9h August 2021.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the minutes of the Shared City Partnership meeting of 9th August, including the recommendations to: • invite CYP2 Delivery Partner Active Communities Network to present to a future meeting.

	• invite Mediation NI to present the Shared History Narratives for the Shared Space to the Partnership in September 2021. • approve a reallocation of budget to enable the funding awarded to NBIN/TASCIT for the Challenging Conversations project under BCC 8 Our Safe Community be increased from £5k to £6,565 • note that the Dean Clarke Foundation has been allocated £1,940 towards a diversionary programme of activity for the Tigers Bay/Mountcollyer area under delegated authority under the Strategic Intervention Programme.
3.0	**Main Report**
	Key Issues
3.1	The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.
3.2	The key issues on the agenda at the June meeting were: • Presentation by the consultant's consortium appointed by SEUB on PEACE PLUS • PEACE IV ➢ Update on PEACE IV Secretariat ➢ Update on PEACE IV CYP Theme ➢ Update on PEACE IV SSS Theme ➢ Update on PEACE IV BPR Theme • Update on Good Relations Action Plan 21/22 • Upcoming Events
3.3	More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the attached minutes of the meeting.
3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** All financial implications are covered through existing budgets
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Minutes of the Shared City Partnership meeting of 9th August.

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY 9th AUGUST, 2021

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillor Magennis.

External Members: Mr. C. Gardner, Good Relations, TEO;
Mr. S. Hamilton, Chief Executive of the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Rev. K. Jardine, Faith Sector;
Ms. G. Mornhinweg, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. I. McLaughlin, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector.

In attendance: Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. S. Lavery, Programme Manager;
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE IV Programme Manager;
Mrs. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors M. Kelly and M. O'Hara and Ms. B. Arthurs, Miss. G Duggan, Mrs. J. Hawthorne, Mr. P. Mackel, Mr. M. O'Donnell, Superintendent. Pollock and Ms. A. M. White.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th June, 2021 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were recorded.

Update on Membership

The Chairperson welcomed Rev. K. Jardine, representing the Faith Sector, Ms. G. Mornhinweg, representing the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and Ms. A. Roberts, representing the Community and Voluntary Sector (East) to their first meeting and on behalf of the Partnership conveyed thanks to the outgoing representatives for their commitment and dedication to the Partnership.

Peace Plus Programme - Presentation from Blu Zebra, Locus and Venture International

The Chairperson commenced by providing the Members with a brief overview of the Peace Plus Programme. He advised that representatives from the consultants appointed by the SEUPB (led by Blu Zebra, Locus and Venture International) were in attendance to present to the Partnership and, accordingly, Ms. Therese Hogg, Mr. Bruce Hogg, Ms. Bridget Enslin (Blu Zebra) and Mr. Ciaran Boylan were welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Therese Hogg commenced by providing a summary of the emerging Peace Plus Programme. She advised that they were keen to seek the Partnership's views regarding the current structures and how they might align with the Council's current processes and initiatives already in place.

She drew the Members' attention to the six thematic areas, along with the investment areas and the proposed expenditure for each, as follows:

- Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities;
- Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation;
- Empowering and Investing in Young People;
- Healthy and Inclusive Communities;
- Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future; and
- Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration.

The Partnership was advised that the consultants' consortium was currently gathering information for the SEUPB in relation to Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities – Co-designed Local Community PEACE Actions Plans. Specifically point 1.1: to enable and empower local community partnerships, led by the local authorities to select and deliver priority projects on a cross community basis. She detailed that the plans would be centred around three core themes, as follows:

- Local community regeneration and transformation;
- Thriving and peaceful communities; and
- Building respect for all cultural identities.

In summary, views were being sought on the following key areas:

- The preparation of 17 overarching PEACE PLUS Action Plans;
- The creation of PEACE PLUS Local Community Partnerships for designated cluster areas (which collectively comprise all areas within each local authority);
- The development of a Co-designed Action Plans by each PEACE PLUS Local Community Partnership to include activities such as:

    - youth development programmes;
    - health and wellbeing initiatives;
    - community regeneration projects;
    - redevelopment and reimaging of existing community facilities for shared usage;
    - initiatives to build positive relations;
    - social innovation;
    - social enterprise and education and skills development programmes; and

- will address issues of racism and sectarianism, increase social inclusion and promote civil leadership.

- Resources to assist with the implementation of projects.

The Consultants' consortium advised that they were seeking to obtain information to identify feasible options for a PEACE PLUS Local Action Plan Model and Governance Structure in the Belfast City Council area local authority area. This aimed to ensure a consistent approach was adopted throughout and continuity between the model used to develop the PEACE PLUS Action Plans and other local authority processes, initiatives and structures in the Belfast area.

In terms of this, the Members were then asked to consider the following specific questions (which had been circulated in advance of the meeting):

- *What would a community planning approach to PEACE Plus look like?*

- *What would be the benefits and challenges of such an approach?*

- *How could it work in our local authority area?*

- *How does the Local Authority ensure local community engagement and participation in the co-design, co-delivery of the plan? (e.g. at DEA/ Area based level)*

- *What have been the main successes, challenges, opportunities for PEACE PLUS to build upon from PEACE IV?*

The Programme Manager updated the Members on the current work of the Council, advising that the development of the local action plans was only just commencing. Council officers were working with the consultants to gather more detail around the process for developing the local action plans and to seek clarity on issues such as timeframes, allocations and governance.

He advised the Members that the current priority was to raise awareness within areas such as the SCP, Community Planning and other structures to help ensure that the right governance was achieved to align with the requirements of the SEUPB but also to avoid duplication and links with the existing structures.

During discussion the following points were raised/highlighted:

- The need to ensure that people from a 'working class' background were educated in regard to the ethos of community planning to ensure that the people being targeted did not miss out on the opportunity;
- Further discussion required in regard to the vision, structure and final destination;
- A detailed audit required of what structures and plans currently existed within the Council, with a view to consolidating these into one plan which would be clearer for both the funders and applicants;
- Need to see overall picture (not just local) to ensure a broader spectrum;
- Ensure that any consultation with stakeholders was meaningful and that the responses were used to shape Action Plans, also important that the original consultees were consulted again following the initial consultation;

- Action Plans for the four areas needed to be more cohesive rather than just looking at each area individually, however, it was noted that whilst this might be preferable it was important to ensure that there was adequate resources available for such;
- Highlighted need for Group/Organisations to work together so there was an awareness as to who was applying for what; and
- Have a mix of Local/Citywide and Thematic. Possibly look at both Citywide and City Regional Projects.

The representatives undertook to further consider the points raised, following which the Chairperson thanked them for the update provided and they left the meeting.

Peace IV Update Reports

Update on Secretariat

The PEACE IV Programme Manager provided the Members with an update in respect of the Secretariat activity associated with the implementation of the Peace IV Local Action Plan.

The Partnership noted that with the relaxation of Health Protection Restrictions, project activity was gradually progressing with the introduction of some face to face activity. Projects were experiencing lower levels of participation to ensure compliance with government restrictions by the delivery partners.

The officer reported that, following submission of the PEACE IV Business Recovery Plan to the SEUPB, the formal modification process had commenced. Revised Letters of Offer (LoO) to extend the SSS Theme to 31st December 2022 had been received and accepted by the Council on 14th June 2021 and the BPR LoO for the inclusion of the BPR6 St Comgall's project into the BPR theme had also been received and accepted by the Council on 24th June 2021.

She reported that further modification requests to extend the delivery timeframe for the BPR and CYP themes to 31st December 2022 had also been submitted to the SEUPB and were being progressed with revised Letters of Offer received on 4 August 2021 On receipt of formal Letters of Offer the relevant contract addendums would be issued to Delivery Partners.

Regarding implementation, the delivery partners were continuing to request modifications as necessary to enable project delivery. She reminded the Members that they had previously agreed that the Programme Board should consider mitigations required by the delivery partners and she drew the Member's attention to the modifications as considered and approved, included below as Appendix 1. She reported that it was anticipated that project activity would further progress as recovery increased. In addition, she reported that the delivery partners would be asked to submit revised implementation plans to ensure the achievement of targets and outcomes.

The Programme Manager advised that, during June, two virtual events had taken place, both had been well attended with 28 people joining the Chinese Culture Café and 34 people engaging with the Media's Role in Peace Building Online Conference. Planning for the next phase of events, scheduled to commence in September 2021, was currently underway with events scheduled to coincide with International Day of Peace and Good Relations Week.

She reported that a recruitment exercise was currently underway to appoint the vacant post of Building Positive Relations Thematic Project Manager.

The Partnership was informed that the SEUPB had reimbursed all claims up to and including Period 25 claims.

Period 26 claims for all themes totalling £546.456.67 had been submitted to SEUPB at the end of May 2021. The SEUPB had advised that the verification process was ongoing and that the turnaround timeframe was likely to be extended due to the resource impacts.

Preparation for Claim Period 27 was to be submitted by end of August 2021 and this was currently being progressed.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

APPENDIX I

PEACE IV Project Modifications – June / July 2021

Programme Board Approval - Requested 8 July 2021

No	Project	Delivery Partner	Proposal	Recommendation to Board
1	BPR2: Creative Communities	Internal-TCAH	Change request- Moving a thematic cluster based around School Art with Malone Integrated College to an area based cluster, namely Ardoyne due to school no longer able to commit because of implications around 'class bubbles'. The area based cluster proposes to work with borderline NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training), males and females between the ages of 16 and 19 who are based at BCT NI.	Recommend approval to change from thematic to area cluster, subject to confirmation of cross community involvement and SEUPB approval.
2	BPR3: Transform for Change	NICVA	Request to run a cross-Belfast TLP course in the Autumn starting in Sept (in place of an area-specific one-Village/Westlink). The course would be specifically for a cross-community group of key people actively in local interface areas across Belfast who are keen and prepared to come together and learn together on the Transformative Leadership Programme.	Recommend approval to delivery a citywide TLP course in place of an area specific TLP, starting September'21.

3	BPR1: Cross Community Area Networks	NIHE	BPR1 Southwest Belfast Network are working with three partners, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (predominantly CNR community background), Suffolk Events Circle (predominantly PUL community background), and Finaghy Community Association (predominantly PUL community background). NIHE have highlighted the need for some initial preparatory work to develop confidence of participants and capacity building on an individual group level to prepare them to move to cross community work that will inevitably ensure the success of this network. Proposed number of preparatory hours: 8 hrs	Recommend approval to conduct 8 hours of preparatory work with groups, subject to SEUPB approval.
4	CYP5 and BPR1: Cross Community Area Networks	NIHE	As NIHE continue to mobilise the project multiple minor modification requests, such as amending type of participant (Core/Peer) and adding new locations into the Cluster. Given that both NIHE projects are significantly behind schedule, the Secretariat is requesting that the Programme Board agreed to delegate authority to the BPR Chair, PIV Programme Manager and CYP TPM to consider minor modifications to the projects. All decisions will be taken in line with programme rules and will be subject to SEUPB approval where applicable. This request will enable prompt decision making to enable the project progress without any delay	Recommend Programme Board agreed delegated authority to BPR Chair, PIV Programme Manager and CYP TPM to consider urgent modifications up to 31 August 2021, subject to adherence with PIV Programme Rules and SEUPB approval, as required.
5	CYP1 Lot 3: Tech Connects	BELFAST MET	Belfast Met, have advised of challenges engaging 17-24 year old participants. To address this they have suggested taking the project mobile into target areas, however, they have also recommended including 16 year olds in the project to enable young people transitioning from school at 16 to get involved in the project. This will also enable the delivery partner to draw on a wider pool of participants	Recommend Programme Board agree the inclusion of 16-year olds in the target age group for Tech Connects, Lot 3.

6	CYP4 Young Advocates	Cooperation Ireland	Cooperation Ireland are finding it difficult to secure a residential centre due to post Covid demands on this sector. The delivery agent has therefore suggested if necessary that they can revert to day activity to deliver their condensed course. All objectives will remain the same, albeit the overnight aspect will be removed.	Recommend Programme Board approve the request for CYP4 to be delivered in a condensed format via day activity, as opposed to a residential, if suitable accommodation is not available.
7	SSS	BCC	A recent procurement strategy proposed increasing the number of art pieces along Forth Meadow Community Greenway from 3 pieces (1 major and 2 smaller artworks) to a minimum of 6 pieces (1 major and a minimum of 5 smaller artworks). This is to provide a trail element that will help to encourage people to move along the Greenway. The artworks will be delivered within the assigned £200k budget.	Recommend Programme Board approve the request to increase the number of artworks to a minimum of 6 along the Greenway

PEACE IV Project Modifications – Programme Board Approval - Requested 24 June 2021

No	Project	Delivery Partner	Proposal	Recommendation to Board
1	CYP2: Playing Our Part in the City	Active Communities Network	Condensing 5 sessions of contact hours into 15-hour overnight residential for one cohort 40 young people, (Ledley Hall Boys & Girls Club, paired with Ardoyne YC) comprising of 20 CNR & 20 PUL to engage in overnight residential in order to meet programme objectives. The required number of contact hours will be achieved	Recommend approval to change delivery approach, condensing contact hours into 15-hour residential for one cohort, subject to SEUPB approval
2	CYP5: Local Area Networks	NIHE	To amend CYP5 East Belfast network to include participants from Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group (LORAG) following withdrawal of all youth groups in Short Strand. All avenues have now been exhausted to secure participation in the core network with CNR Groups from the Short Strand.	Recommend approval to add participants from LORAG to CYP5 East Belfast network to allow programming activity to continue

			Whilst LORAG is technically in South Belfast, they are in close proximity with the group in Lagan Village and inclusion of LORAG enables the CNR profile for the Network to be achieved Short Strand has indicated they may be able to participate in the future as peer participants.	
3	BPR3 TFC	NICVA	The Programme Board previously agreed to explore revised payment terms with NICVA and these are currently being refined. As part of this request NICVA has also requested an extension to delivery to June 2022 This will enable NICVA to deliver a further 8 cluster courses and achieve a minimum of 120 participants	Recommend approval to extent project delivery to May 2022 as an interim On confirmation from SEUPB of BPR extension / LoO to further extend delivery for BPR3 TFC to June 2022
4	CYP3 Sports CYP3 Personal Change CYP4 Young Advocates CYP5: Local Area Networks BPR1 Cross Community Area Networks BPR2 Creative Communities	BCC Leisure Extern Cooperation Ireland NIHE NIHE BCC TCAH	Blanket Approval for all projects that comprise of residential activity. Proposal to replace cross-border residential activity with day activity within NI, for as long as Covid restrictions are in place, in order to meet project target hours and comply with Public Health Guidance	Recommend approval to replace cross-border residential activity with day activity within NI, for as long as Covid restrictions are in place, subject to agreement by the relevant Thematic Project Manager, PIV Manager and SEUPB approval

Children and Young People (CYP) Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Children and Young People's (CYP) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report and agree to invite Active Communities Network to present at a future SCP meeting.

3.0 Main report

Project Updates

3.1 CYP 1 – Tech Connects

GIGA Training (Afterschool's & Digital Arts Academies (Tech Camps)

Digital Summer camps are progressing with the following for each age group:

	6-11 yr olds	12-16 yr olds	Total
Completed	35	12	47
Recruited & Participating	176	82	258
Total	211	94	305

Content includes Minecraft, Digital Arts & DJ Skills/ Production with a Virtual Reality activity to replace the trip to W5 as per modification request previously approved by members. Sessions will take place in Girdwood Community Hub & the Black Box, Belfast. Morrow Communications will attend sessions across the summer to capture anecdotal evidence & feedback from the young people. Programme delivery will continue until end of August and plans for Halloween camp recruitment will progress. All of these programmes are risk assessed and social distancing measures will continue due to these age groups not being eligible for the COVID vaccination. Within these age groups, cases of Covid are on the rise and these measures are precautionary to minimise community transmission.

Belfast Metropolitan College (Digital Insights Programme) (17-24 yr. olds)

BMC have explored options to make the programme mobile and deliver locally within a community group setting. Planning for the

remainder of 2021 is ongoing with BYTES Project and other project partners to ensure progress towards the target of 160 is achieved.

A group from North / West Belfast will be completing an information session in early August. Then the group will progress to full delivery sessions and completion of registration forms etc. Belfast Metropolitan College are advising of challenges engaging 17-24-year-old participants. To address this, the delivery partner is taking the project in mobile form into the target areas, however they also believe that including 16-year olds in the project would significantly help attract participants. This would enable young people who are transitioning from school at 16 to get involved in the project. Members are asked to note this potential modification which will be considered by the Programme Board.

3.2 <u>CYP 2 - Playing our Part in the City</u>

Year 3 activity is progressing for Active Communities Network with Lagmore & Aspire groups completing the programme. Filming of the event was shared on the BCC social media platforms.

Over 190 participants and 32 parents are engaging in this summer programme, with Year 4 participants being recruited to also begin sessions in July/August 21.

Two group pairings require additional time for delivery into August due to COVID positive tests/ isolation periods delaying programming and scheduling of parents/ young people to attend.

Members are asked to note that participants within the Ardoyne & Ledley Hall and Walkway groups also are isolating and as such face to face will recommence 26 July and roll into August.

Despite challenges in delivery, the delivery partner is accelerating activity and is scheduled to complete in December 2021 and it is proposed that members invite Active Communities Network to present at a future SCP meeting.

3.3 <u>CYP3 – On the Right Track – Sports and Personal Change elements</u>

A new lead officer was successfully recruited and took up post on 28 June 2021. Handover has been completed with new pairings being progressed to encourage additional registrations.

The CYP TPM progressed activity during the recruitment period which resulted in 47 young people from St Galls & Church of Ireland Hockey completing the OCN in Inclusion & Diversity. This resulted in nearly fully achieving the required contact time via joint sports sessions and team building days. Groups have to nominate the young champions from each club, to progress to the sports leaders training with Active Communities Network. An additional 19 young people from Tullycarnet & Willlowbank FC have fully achieved their cross-community contact time. As this was such a

successful partnership, they would like to put forward another age group to take part in the programme.

Like the other Children & Young People programmes, members are reminded that Cross Border Residentials are being replaced with day activities within NI. This is only on a temporary basis whilst there is a cross border travel ban due to COVID.

Recruitment of remaining participants remains high risk, with the current number recruited at 597. From a target of 1800, a balance of 1203 young people would be required to complete the programme by 31 Oct 2022. This would require 86 young people per month to complete programme, which presents a huge challenge.

3.4 <u>Personal Change</u>

From a target of 42, 29 young people have completed the programme to date – with a balance of 13 to achieve in the final cohort. Members are reminded that the final cohort of 19 young people have registered and are attending ongoing Mentoring sessions and group work / day activities. Extern have facilitated discussions in a safe environment around diversity, racism, sectarianism and to increase knowledge and awareness around different communities and cultures within our society. The young people have completed prejudice and discrimination OCN. 2 Residentials took place in May 2021 and 4 Educational visits also took place in May. Sporting Activities are being planned for August onwards.

Members are advised that the recognition event for the previous cohort is to take place 4th August 2021 at the MAC Belfast with the SCP Chair in attendance to present certificates of achievement.

3.5 <u>CYP 4 – Cooperation Ireland (Young Advocates)</u>

A change of delivery was approved by programme board members and SEUPB with Cooperation Ireland commencing delivery from May/June 21 through to December 2021. However due to staffing changes in the project, an additional delay in delivery is likely. This delay will have no impact to the 60 hours cross community contact hours required or to the 32 participants remaining to be recruited. Delivery agent has approval now to deliver training primarily through residential based work. This decision was based on the feedback from the current partner organisations across Belfast. Partners consulted included R City, Saints & Holy Trinity YC, and East Belfast Alternatives. SEUPB have also permitted Cooperation Ireland to deliver a small percentage of preparatory work to develop confidence of participants and capacity building on an individual group level to prepare them to move to cross community work. The only impact of the delays was the delivery agent requesting an extension of 3 – 5 months into April 22, which is within the current CYP Letter of Offer and will not require SEUPB approval. This was approved by programme board members via

written procedure. Delivery will be monitored, and a potential modification request may follow.

3.6 CYP 5 – NIHE Local Area Network Partner Delivery

NIHE continues to experience difficulties in engaging participant groups and limited activity to offer to participants, due to the procurement challenges and delays directly impacted by COVID. Due to delay from registration, to scheduling delivery sessions and securing delivery agents, NIHE is currently reviewing their participant groups who had previous committed to the project but have zero hours of attendance. It is expected that the number of participants that have been recruited and participating in the project will be significantly reduced.

Members should note requests made by NIHE:

(i) to add participants in the North Belfast CCAN, namely, Ligoniel and Ballysillian.
(ii) To add Resolve Community group and Diamond Resident's Group to the East Belfast CCAN.
(iii) Include a small number of hours (8 hrs) preparatory work to develop confidence of participant and capacity building on an individual group level to prepare them to move to cross community work. This is applicable to several groups including the South West Belfast Network (Colin, Suffolk, Finaghy).

All these requests were approved via written procedure in order to drive and encourage recruitment.

Members are also asked to note the change within the South Belfast networks and that it is proceeding albeit with groups assigned to different categories (Peer & Core). The geographic location of the network remains unchanged and approval to include Foster Carers Association participants had been previously agreed.

Financial and Resource Implications

To date all PEACE IV costs for the CYP Theme up to Period 25 have been fully reimbursed by SEUPB. The Period 26 totalling £147,494 is currently being verified by SEUPB. Claims for the claim Period 27 (1 May – 31 Jul 21) are currently being progressed.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020."

A Member enquired about measures to enable delivery of CYP3 and CYP5 projects. The Programme Manager advised that an extended delivery timeframe would help to achieve targets. Members were also advised that discussions with NIHE were being progressed.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agreed to invite representatives from Active Communities Network to present to a future meeting.

Shared Spaces and Services (SSS) Update

The Programme Manager provided an update on the progress made to date in respect of the SSS theme, within the Peace IV Local Action Plan. She advised that, as with the other projects, the easing of COVID restrictions was contributing towards enabling the progress of both elements with implementation of the capital and programming elements progressing, although Government restrictions continued to have some impact specifically on the delivery of programme elements.

She referred to several capital projects which were being undertaken as part of the initiative, including:

Capital Works – Forth Meadow Community Greenway - Springfield Dam – the Social Value Clause supported Bio-Diversity projects with 3 local Primary Schools (Naiscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh, Springfield Primary School and Blackmountain Primary School) having completed at the end of June, with all schools providing evaluation reports and photos. As reported previously, the Council had agreed to the naming of the new bridge in Springfield Dam. The process would be the same as that undertaken for Colin Park, in that a shortlist of names would be agreed, via community engagement through a cross community panel before going to a final public vote. As a result of other naming processes that were currently ongoing, it had been decided to delay the panel meeting until the end of August / start of September 2021. Subject to Health Protection Restrictions, the panel would either meet virtually or face to face.

PEACE IV Network Scheme – Capital Works – the contractor had commenced works on Section 1 (Glencairn / Clarendon) on 14th June. Works were progressing well, with completion of Section 1 programmed for 7th January 2022. The estimated dates for planning decisions for Sections 2 (Invest NI site) and Section 3 (Whiterock and Falls Road) being August 2021. Assuming planning was granted in August 2021, works were scheduled to commence in Section 2 in September and Section 3 in October. The estimated dates for planning decisions for Section 4 (Bog Meadows) and Section 5 (Broadway / Transport Hub) being October 2021, with work expected to commence on Section 4 in January 2022, and on Section 5 in February 2022. Works to be completed in both Sections 4 and 5 in September 2022.

Engagement with key stakeholders and the wider community to provide regular updates was being prioritised, with a presentation made to TACIT on 6th July and a further presentation scheduled with GVRT, Glencairn Residents and Greater Falls Neighbourhood Partnership. The Management and Maintenance Working Group continued to meet on a regular basis toreview whole life costs and long-term maintenance arrangements for the FMCG.

Regarding programming, the Partnership was informed that all aspects of programming were progressing where possible.

In regard to the other Programmes:

- **Shared History, Heritage and Identity Content / Narratives for Shared Space**

With the easing of COVID restrictions, the project lead had established 12 discussion groups, engaged with 69 individuals, and submitted 32 draft narratives for initial review, panels in Sections 1, 2 and 3. A SSS internal sub-group had met on 19th July to review the narratives for Section 1, with no issues or concerns. A report was currently being prepared for consideration by the Programme Board with a proposed presentation on the narratives to the Partnership in September 2021.

- **Shared Space Volunteer Training**

  The recent process had been successful with a contract having been awarded to Volunteer Now to support the delivery of the Volunteer Local Ambassadors project. A signed contract had been returned and an initiation meeting facilitated. The programme had been unable to approve a suitable provider for the Volunteer Nature and History Guides. Following the SEUPB approval, a quotation approach had been taken for each of these themes and quotation documentation had been issued to 6 providers per theme, the closing date for this being 12th August at 3:00 p.m.

  The easing of restrictions had enabled Sustrans to facilitate on-site, face-to-face training for both the Cycle and Walking leads projects. She reported that Sustrans were using Farset International for some of the desk-based elements of the training. Recruitment of the second group was ongoing with15 individuals having registered an interest, 6 of which had completed applications, with 2 having been fully processed.

- **Dialogue and Engagement Project (young people, residents and BME groups)**

  Phase 1 of the dialogue and engagement work (initial bilateral calls with stakeholders) was now complete. In total, MDL had spoken with 13 individuals and had gathered the insights from the discussions. A resident's survey had been developed, using Mentimeter, this would be available soon via BCC's EHQ platform. The survey would be promoted for residents along the Greenway to complete and would be open for comments until 27th September.

  In addition, an outline plan of the next steps (phase 2) was being finalised. Phase 2 would commence in September, with presentations to The Disability Advisory Panel and Migrant Forum, along with a site visit to Belfast and online workshops, before completing in December 2021.

- **Governance / Management Model**

  A contract initiation meeting had been held with the successful applicant, Viatic Limited, on 24th June. Due to delays and ongoing restrictions, Viatic had asked for the delivery timeframe to be revised to enable the project to run into early 2022. Key stakeholders were currently being identified, along with the different sections and levels of involvement of stakeholders based on their current experience around levels of community governance. Viatic was scheduling a visit to Belfast from 23rd – 24th September 2021 to meet with key stakeholders.

- **Youth Engagement and Civic Education**

  The public tender call had closed with no applications received. Feed-back had been sought from those organisations who had initially registered an interest and included comments such as the targets being too high and unachievable within the specified

timeframe, and the budget not being adequate to support the required engagement work. An engagement and feedback session had been held on 27th July with key youth providers from the communities, along FMCG giving input to the development of a remodelled ITT, ahead of the project being readvertised.

- **Springfield Dam activities**

  The Men's Shed had commenced at the Springfield Dam site on 22nd July, with a 10-week Hedge Chair project involving a cross community group of 8 men. Unfortunately, several participants tested positive for COVID and a number of others had to self-isolate which resulted in the full group not being able to attend. A review would be undertaken to determine the impact or potential delay of the project.

  In addition, activities involving children from local summer schemes had been scheduled for early to Mid-August.

- **Modular Building**

  Following approval by DMT of the recommendations of the updated options report, Community Services will manage the Springfield Dam Park Modular Building as an unmanned building with bookings being administered through OSAL in line with the processes and procedures for booking a Park Pavilion.

  The Partnership were advised that up to and including claim 25 the SEUPB had now fully reimbursed £1,589,170 in relation to this theme. The claim and reporting for Period 26, totalling £50,171, was currently being verified by the SEUPB.

Members asked for an update on the Social Value Clause associated with Forth Meadow Community Greenway regarding the approach, value and activity to be delivered. The Programme Manager advised the Social Value Clause for Springfield Dam was utilised to address Anti Social Behaviour around the site and also for Schools related diversity projects. A small amount of the clause is to be allocated. The Programme Manager advised that the Physical Programme Unit was managing the Social Value Clause for the wider Greenway and that further details will be requested and circulated to members in due course.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agreed to invite Mediation NI to present the Shared History Narratives to the Partnership in September 2021.

Building Positive Relations (BPR) Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Building Positive Relations (BPR) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report and related appendices.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Face-to -face activity across all BPR projects is gaining momentum as easement of restrictions continues. Appendix I provides detail on Project progress through the RAG report as at July 2021.

3.1 BPR1 – Cross Community Area Networks

CCANs across the City have re-engaged following a period of disengagement due to recent community unrest. Approval from SEUPB has been granted for some single identity work in West Belfast 1 to encourage participation onto the wider programme. It is envisaged that the Good Relations Programme in some CCANs will commence in August.

Modifications to include Ligoniel and Ballysillan in North Belfast and adding the Resolve Community group and Diamond Resident's Group to the East Belfast CCAN has been agreed.

The Place Shaping tender closed on 15th July, with a scoring panel arranged to progress appointment of a suitable contractor.

Following the departure of two GRO's, NIHE have successfully conducted internal recruitment exercises to replace Officers. Both have commenced post.

3.2 BPR2 – Creative Communities Project

The Artist/Heritage residency programme has resumed face-to-face delivery with Woodvale/Ardoyne, Clonard/Mid-Shankill, Divis/Lower Shankill and Football clusters. A quotation is being progressed internally for the appointment of Artist in Residence for the Inner East cluster. LGBTQ+ is yet to be mobilised and conversations with key individuals are ongoing.

Due to difficulties in committing to the programme, the Malone Integrated School cluster group a request has been submitted to replace this activity with a cluster based in Ardoyne comprising of young NEET adults.

The artist in residence appointed to work with the Carlisle Cluster has highlighted issues in completing the delivery of the contract. Officers are meeting with the artist to determine a way forward and future planning for the Cluster is underway.

3.3 BPR3 – Transform for Change Project

Transformative Leadership Programme: Summer cohorts (April – July 2021) have now completed the Leadership Training element with 86 learners (subject to approval). The delivery agent is now focusing their efforts on recruitment for Autumn cohorts with 7 TLP courses planned for this period. Local project development continues across the City and include Community Gardens, Branding and Identity, Intergenerational events and Multi-Cultural festivals. A project development workshop session is taking place 28 July for all participants who have been part of the programme and have not taken up the opportunity to develop a project in their area.

Plans are underway, following easement of COVID restrictions, to convene the organisation of local community engagement events and local study visits.

3.4 BPR4 – Belfast and the World (BATW)

Both the Ligoniel and Ballynafeigh cohorts have now completed the programme with the open online cohort due to complete mid-August. The Delivery Agent is on target to complete the year 3 target with 96% completion rate.

Recruitment is underway for the final year cohorts and activity is expected to commence late August/September.

The delivery of the EU Study trips remains on hold as some travel restrictions to EU countries persist. Consideration of alternative trips across NI and ROI continue to be explored with the Delivery Agent and their Steering Committee.

3.5 BPR5 – Supporting Connected Communities - LINCS Projects

Cultural workshops have re-commenced across the 4 Neighbourhood Participatory Forums The delivery agent is planning Cultural Day in C.S Lewis Square on 24th September and another cultural day in North Belfast in October at the Waterworks. South, West and East groups have been participating in away days to beaches, the most recent being Crawfordsburn, where 95 adults and children attended.

BPR5 – Traveller Project - Supporting Connected Communities

Following nil responses for the Traveller Support Hub tender, a pre-market engagement session was held on 21 July 21. The tender will be re-advertised on 30 July 21 with a closing date of 10 September 21.

In an effort to engage the Traveller Community, a 'Lets do Lunch' event is being held on 6 August as part of the West Belfast Féile an Phobail. This event will enable Travellers and host communities to interact and share cultural experiences. With the

easement of COVID restrictions engagement plans are underway to meet key individuals from the Traveller community and promote the programme further. On the back of these introductions and trust building meetings, it is anticipated that the Culture and Heritage workshops will commence in early Autumn.

BPR5 – Roma Project - Supporting Connected Communities

The Roma Support Programme launched successfully online on 15th June and the advice clinic has been operational for the past 2 weeks with 14 appointments. The Building Positive Relations programme is commencing on 26 July with face-to-face sessions and will continue throughout the summer period.

The delivery agent has advised *that d*elivery of the OCN element of the programme is no longer available and a modification to amend this element is being progressing. Potential options include an unaccredited conversational English course. This modification will be considered by the Programme Board to ensure it meets the same outcomes.

3.6 BPR6 – St. Comgalls

The project launched successfully on 2 July 21 with a photocall and tour of the St Comgall's Building. Workshops for young people have commenced with 5 sessions completed to date. Adult cohorts will commence activity in September and plans for a networking event and seminar are underway.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

All BPR project delivery partners are regularly reviewing delivery methods and contractual deliverables which will determine the level and impact of COVID 19 crisis.

To date all PEACE IV costs for the BPR Theme, up to Period 25 totalling £1,215,673 have been fully eligible and reimbursed by SEUPB. The Period 26 Claim for £348,790.55 is currently being verified by SEUPB

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020."

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Update on Good Relations Action Plan

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To update the SCP on delivery of the District Council Good Relations Plan (DCGRP) 2021/22.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the updates to the DCGRP Action Plan 21/22 contained in Appendix 1.

Members are asked to approve that the budget to NBIN/TASCIT for the Challenging Conversations project under BCC 8 Our Safe Community be increased from £5k to £6,565 noting that this can be accommodated within the allocation to that Programme with no impact on other projects.

Members are asked to note that the Dean Clarke Foundation has been allocated £1,940 towards a diversionary programme of activity for the Tigers Bay/Mountcollyer area under delegated authority under the Strategic Intervention Programme.

Main report – Project Details

3.1 Members will be aware that the Council submits an annual action plan to the Executive Office (TEO) every year in order to draw down funding for the good relations work of the council. The draft Action Plan 21/22 was approved by Council via the Partnership in February 21 and was submitted by the deadline of 22 February 2021.

3.2 A Letter of Offer for the District Council Good Relations Programme 21/22 was subsequently received in awarding an amount of £571,893.27 with the Council required to provide match funding of at least £190, 631.09. From the funding supplied by TEO, £374,205 must be allocated towards Programme costs.

3.3 Given that the Action Plan was submitted in February 2021, a small number of revisions are required, and these have been listed below for Member's approval. Partnership is being asked to approve these.

3.4 A copy of the Action Plan with a brief update on progress is attached for Members' information.

3.5 Decisions for Members

A number of Letters of Offer have been issued to groups for projects which have been named within the GR Action Plan 2/22 and approved by Council. The majority of these are contained within the BCC8 Programme 'Our Safe Community'

These include:

- **New Lodge Arts: £2,500 contribution to the annual North Belfast Lantern Parade;**
- **Belfast Interface Project: £10,000 contribution towards the further development of the Shared Futures programme.**
- **NBIN/TASCIT - £2500 contribution towards annual cross community Christmas event.**

3.6 The Partnership is also asked to approve the re-profiling of the DCGRP budget allocation towards the Challenging Conversations Programme which was originally £5,000 under projects to North Belfast Interface Network (NBIN)/TASCIT for a programme of cross-interface engagement. Having codesigned the programme with the group, an additional £1,565 is required for the programme to take place. This is due to increased costs since initial draft budget was forwarded to Officers in November 2020 to allow for inclusion in the Action Plan which was submitted in February 2021.

3.7 The Partnership is also asked to note that the Upper North Belfast Confidence Building Programme will be focussed on work with Women on a cross community basis. £9k had been allocated to this programme but the revised budget for this programme is only £5,325.

Therefore, there is scope to realign the budget under this theme without reducing any other project's costs.

<u>Strategic Intervention Fund</u>

3.8 Members will also recall that in the Action Plan 21/22 a new targeted Strategic Intervention programme had been introduced with the funds being directed to a distributed on an area basis.

3.9 This was to ensure that the approach could be targeted, strategic and proactive and could include work at interface areas or on good relations issues impacting the specific area. Work can take place all year round and not just at certain times of the year. 15k has been allocated to each area with the condition that any project must address good relations issues and one of the T:BUC priorities. This allocation is discussed at Area Team level meaning there is complementarity and a coordination of resources. The projects are agreed by the relevant Good Relations Officer, Neighbourhood Integration Manager and Neighbourhood Services Area Manager, the latter of which SCP agreed could be granted delegated authority.

3.10 Members are asked to note that under the theme of the DCGRP BCC 10 Strategic Intervention Programme, the following has been allocated:

- **Dean Clarke Foundation: £1,940 towards a diversionary programme of activity for the Tigers Bay/Mountcollyer area. This is to address the sectarian behaviours in and around**

Alexandra Park and promote the park as a safe and shared space.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.11 All costs can be covered through the District Council Good Relations Action Plan budget 21/22.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

3.12 All the projects/programmes have been approved in the DCGRP 2021/22."

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it adopt the recommendations as outlined in 2.0 of the report.

Upcoming Events

The Programme Manager advised the Members of the following proposed events which they were welcome to attend. She further advised the Members to contact the officer/organisation responsible for the event should they require any additional information.

Event	Date	Contact	How to register
Online workshop: Strategies for addressing Anti-Muslim Hostility **Delivered over 3 days**	23rd September 30th September 7th October 11am-12.30pm Commitment is to attend all three sessions	Leish Dolan Ext 6028	goodrelations@belfastcity.gov.uk or telephone 02890 270663
Online workshops: with Pivot UK, exploring Black history and heritage and the rich diversity of cultures within the African and Caribbean Communities in Belfast	During GR Week – details to be confirmed	Leish Dolan Ext 6028	goodrelations@belfastcity.gov.uk or telephone 02890 270663
International Day of Peace – PEACE IV Theme: Recovering Better for an Equitable and Peaceful World **Content: involves school children / youth groups, interfaith perspectives and renowned guest speaker.**	Tuesday, 21st September 2021	Megan Kearney	peace@belfastcity.gov.uk or via ND Events

Italian Culture Café - PEACE IV	During GR Week – details to be confirmed	Megan Kearney	peace@belfastcity.gov.uk or via ND Events

Noted.

Good Relations Week – September 2021

Ms. J. Irwin advised that Good Relations Week was scheduled to be held from Monday, 20th - Sunday, 26th September. The theme was 'Brighter Days Ahead' which aimed to celebrate and spotlight the range of projects young people were involved in to break down barriers, unite communities and act as a catalyst for meaningful change in society. She explained that it was predominantly but not exclusively aimed at exploring many of the issues affecting the youth of today and how society could better meet those needs.

The Partnership was advised that, as in previous years, Councils and other organisations had been invited to stage events to highlight and promote the work being done to promote Good Relations.

Noted.

Update – Future Agenda Items

The Chairperson advised the Members that the Education Authority would present at the next Partnership meeting in respect of the support available for young people and also advised that a report on the Covid Research, which was being reviewed by the Living Here Board, would be submitted to the Partnership in due course.

Noted.

Chairperson

Minutes of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum
12th August 2021

Attendance

Members:
Councillor Áine Groogan (Chair)
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Nuala McAlister
Councillor Brian Heading (for Councillor Lyons)
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Alderman Brian Kingston (Cllr Pankhurst joined the meeting for Ald Kingston)
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Michael Donnelly (for Councillor Beattie)

Apologies: Councillor Fiona Ferguson

Officers:
Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Paul Gribben, Head of Digital Services (for Item 2)
Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes (for Item 4)
John Greer, Director of Economic Development (for Item 5)
Alistair Reid, Director of Place and Economy (for Items 6 & 8)
Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner (for Item 7)
Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

Introductions:

The Chief Executive introduced to Party Leaders, Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control and Cathy Matthews, Director Resources and Fleet both of whom have recently been appointed. Members welcomed the new Directors and wished them well in their new roles.

1. Finance

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance outlined for Members details of the council's financial position for Quarter 1 2020/21 and Members discussed the key drivers for the forecasted underspend. In relation to an issue raised, Members also discussed the impact on Capital Financing due to the current market volatility and increased prices for contractors, that could not have been foreseen**.** The Director of Physical Programmes advised that Officers are working closely with council appointed contractors on a case by case basis and that any potential impacts/issues identified will be bought to committee for Members consideration.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance advised that work is due to commence on estimates for 2022/23 and an initial report outlining the 2022/23 rate setting process will be presented to the August SP&R committee. He outlined that the report would be recommending that the same district rate increase will be levied on domestic and non domestic properties. A report on the Quarter 1 financial position will also be presented to August SP&R committee.

2. Cyber Security Update

The Head of Digital Services presented to Members a detailed proposed cyber programme of work for the protection of Council networks, data and services. He discussed the importance of this programme of work and outlined the fundamental challenges involved with cyber security and the key decisions that Members would need to make. Members noted that a report will be brought to August SP&R committee for consideration.

3. NI Protocol

The Chief Executive provided an update for Members on recent discussions in relation to the NI Protocol and the Command Paper presented by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in July, a copy of which was previously circulated. Members noted that an update report was due to be considered by the Brexit Committee this month. It was agreed a copy of this report would be circulated to Party Leaders.

Members also discussed the issues and challenges faced particularly in relation to the Port of Belfast, as a result of Brexit and noted that work has been progressing on the key areas of concern with DAERA and FSA. Members had previously discussed issuing pre-action protocol letters to DAERA, etc. outlining these concerns, however Members agreed that given that work was now progressing this would not be required at present. Further updates will be provided.

4. Leisure Update

The Director of Physical Programmes updated the Forum on the development and implementation of the leisure assets capital programme. Members had a detailed discussion and some issues were raised in relation to some of the older leisure facilities that require maintenance which need to be addressed.

The Director advised that the report to August committee will be an update only and that Members would not be asked to make any decisions at this stage in relation to the leisure

assets capital programme. Members also noted that the report to August Committee would be recommending that a special SP and R be held to consider the findings from the review undertaken by Space and Place Architects. It was agreed that party group briefings would also be arranged at Members request. Once the date of the special SP and R committee has been agreed, the Director will, where possible schedule the briefings in advance of the committee meeting.

5. The Belfast Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission 'Reset for Growth' report – BCC Response

The Director for Place and Economy presented to Members the final recommendations stemming from within the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission, `Reset for Growth' report and outlined the proposed Belfast City Council response. The Chief Executive advised a report would be presented to August Committee outlining the proposed response and recommending the committee endorse the contents of the `Reset for Growth' report.

Following detailed discussion on the housing retrofit programme element Members asked that consideration is given to fuel poverty for the most vulnerable households in the city and how this might be addressed. It was requested that fuel poverty and the links to climate change be discussed at a future meeting. In relation to a query raised by a Member on the development of green skills to carry out the housing retrofit programme the Director advised that work in this area is underway.

6. Update on City Region Growth Deal

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance provided an update on the Belfast Region City Deal. He advised that further to the update to the Forum in June work has continued at pace on the draft Deal document. He also advised that as part of the Deal, partners led by Belfast City Council have been developing a programme business case for the £125m BRCD digital innovation programme, which sets out the strategic areas of intervention under the Digital pillar. A report will be brought to August SP&R committee which will include an update on the digital innovation programme business case and will also outline the role of Belfast City Council as the Accountable body for the Deal.

The Director of Place and Economy updated Members on the Outline Business Case for the Destination Hub. He advised that work is progressing at pace on both the commercial and management cases and an update will be brought to a future meeting of the SP&R committee.

7. COP 26 - United Nations Climate Change Conference

The Climate Commissioner provided a detailed update for Members on COP 26, the next annual UN climate change conference taking place from 31 October to 12 November in Glasgow. She outlined key areas of work that Belfast would be involved in during the lead up to the conference including key awareness rising initiatives. Members raised a query in relation to delegates from Belfast and the Commissioner will follow up and advise Members accordingly. A report will be brought to a future SP&R committee in advance of the conference.

Members also noted a report would go to August SP&R committee seeking approval for an engagement and capacity building programme for young people focused on COP 26.

8. Planning Update

The Director of Place and Economy updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning committee in August.

9. AOB

Standards and Business Committee

The Chief Executive provided an update on the decisions which have been previously agreed. Members noted a report will be brought to August SP and R committee outlining the actions needed to establish the Committee.

Belfast Bikes – Call in

Members noted an update on a Call in made in relation to Belfast Bikes. Counsel opinion which determine that the Call in has merit will be considered by Council at the September meeting.

Cleansing

Members discussed a number of issues in relation to cleansing services and street cleansing. The Chief Executive to follow up with the Directors in City and Neigbourhood Services. It was also agreed that the process for communications is kept under review for when bin

collection issues arise. Members noted that a report on street cleansing, specifically in the City Centre would be brought to a future SP&R committee for consideration.

Pest Control

Alderman Copeland raised an issue in relation to recent media on the issue of Pest Control. Members noted that a report would be submitted to September P&C Committee in relation to this matter. Members agreed that it would be useful to arrange a future meeting with the relevant housing bodies to discuss ongoing concerns.

Roselawn Cemetery

In relation to a query raised by Alderman Copeland Members noted an update report on maintenance at Roselawn Cemetery would be bought to a future meeting of the P&C Committee.

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Social Policy Working Group

Wednesday, 30th June, 2021

MEETING OF THE SOCIAL POLICY WORKING GROUP

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor O'Hara (Chairperson);
Alderman Dorrian; and
Councillors Hanvey, Heading, Kyle and McLaughlin.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. C. Robinson, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. N. Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of HR
Ms. L. Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development
Mr. D. Logan, Project Manager;
Ms. S. ORegan, Economic Development Manager
Ms. C. Hutchinson, Policy and Performance Analyst;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

It was proposed by Councillor Heading, seconded by Councillor Kyle and agreed that, Councillor O'Hara be reappointed as the Chairperson of the Social Policy Working Group from June, 2021 to May, 2022.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th May were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Actions Update

Living Wage Accreditation

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that staff had met with the Living Wage Foundation and work was ongoing to develop a Low Pay Action Report which had been broken down into 3 strands:

- Corporate Commitments, as they relate to Pay and Contracts;
- Corporate Commitments, as they relate to Procurement; and
- City Leadership Issues – Actions to be picked up within Charter and driven by anchor institutions.

She added that a toolkit which outlined the process, and provided examples of cities and towns that had begun this work, would be circulated for information.

The Head of HR outlined the steps within the Human Resources strand that were being actioned as the Council worked towards achieving Living Wage Accreditation, which included:

- Assessment of the current living wage payment, looking at both employees within the Council, but also, companies which were owned by the Council;
- Benchmarking with other Local Authorities who had gone through the process;
- Consideration of how payment of the living wage, and annual increases, would have the potential to impact on the Council's agreed approach to job evaluation, points to grading and post relativity;
- A review of the Single Status Agreement to ensure fair and equal payment for all NJC employees;
- Consideration of what the impact would be on higher grades, on the estimates process, and any additional resources that would be required to process this; and
- A review of the requirements alongside the current Trade Union pay claim which was currently seeking a reduction in the working week;

She added that a cross departmental working group had been established to progress with these actions, and that the Living Wage Foundation was also available to assist with the work.

In response to a query as to what the timeline for implementation was, the Head of HR confirmed that staff were actively working on the outlined key steps and financial modelling would be done, taking into account previous annual increases, so as to estimate the financial implications. She noted that these were significant pieces of work, and that she would have a better idea of the timescales once the benchmarking exercise had been completed, with reports brought back to the Working Group.

At the request of a Member, the Head of HR agreed to include a review of apprenticeship payments within the benchmarking exercise.

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services advised that she had also met with the Living Wage Foundation and the Central Procurement Directorate within the Department of Finance to understand how the NI Civil Service were rolling this out, given the impact on contractors and the Council's supply chain. She advised that regular staff on site (as per the Living Wage Foundation definition), all contracts, and those in the pipeline, were being reviewed to understand what contracts would be effected, and the financial implications where it was believed that the Living Wage was not being paid. As with the HR strand, she confirmed that an action plan of work was in place and a report would be brought back to the Working Group as work progressed.

The Working Group noted the updates provided.

BCC/CLES: CLES Communities of Practice Nominee

The Members were reminded of the Council's bespoke membership of CLES and the CLES Members Workshop that was held on 27th April.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that CLES had extended an invitation to the Council to participate in its Communities of Practice networks, which operated at two levels: political (Leaders Network); and officer level (Officer Network). She explained that these would provide the opportunity to network with community wealth builders and to share practical experience and good practice.

The Working Group agreed that the Chairperson of the Social Policy Working Group would be the Council representative to the Leaders Network and that an appropriate officer would be nominated to attend the officer Network, both of which were expected to meet on a quarterly basis.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty agreed to obtain and circulate a list of the existing participants following the meeting.

Procurement and Commissioning Group

The Members were advised that work was progressing with the Anchor Institution Network to look at how they procure and commission goods and services across the City.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised that CLES was engaging directly with the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts, given the impact of their procurement, and that the anchors had signed up to participate in spend analysis training in early July.

In response a to query about the other anchors, she confirmed that both Universities, the NI Housing Executive, PSNI, Libraries NI, the Public Health Agency and representatives from the community and voluntary sector had participated in the first meeting. She also confirmed that the Belfast Area Partnerships and the Chair of the Voluntary Sector Panel had been invited.

A Member welcomed to involvement of the community and voluntary sector and it was agreed that the information should be shared with NICVA.

New Consultancy Framework – Capital Projects

The Director of Physical Programmes advised that a new consultancy framework was being developed to replace the existing framework which had now expired. She explained that KPMG had been appointed to help with its development and that Corporate Procurement Services had been involved at all stages.

The Project Manager presented information on the tender for a new 4-year Consultancy Framework to provide the design advice and cost management required to deliver Belfast City Council's investment programme, as well as other externally funded capital projects.

He explained that, following a review of the previous approach taken, and the Council's requirements, alongside external consultants and stakeholders, the new

framework would allow for some lots to be procured under a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), as used by central government, which would allow greater flexibility and encourage submissions from local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

DPS Lots:

Lot	Description
1	Integrated Consultancy Team (projects with a capital value up to £1m)
4a	Building Cost Management Services (works projects up to £1m)
6	Feasibility Studies, Economic Appraisals and Business Cases

Framework Lots:

Lot	Description
2	Integrated Consultancy Team (projects with a capital value £1m - £4.5m)
3	Integrated Consultancy Team (projects with a capital value of £4.5m and over)
4b	Building Cost Management Services (works projects above £1m)
5	Landscape Architecture Services
7	Planning Services

He added that this approach would provide the Council with a pre-approved list of consultants after which project specifics could be developed and, throughout, the Council would be able to promote social values through social clauses.

The Working Group was advised that social values would be promoted within the framework, as follows:

- Contract clauses – utilisation of the Council's identified targets and values as a baseline using the Social Value toolkit in the selection criteria;
- Secondary Competition Assessment – for suitable projects, tenderers could provide targets and goals beyond the baseline, assessed using the Social Value toolkit during the award stage;
- Specific KPIs – reporting tools for contract clauses to ensure contractors were working towards the targets, with substantial penalties if not achieved;
- Utilisation of DPS to promote local SMEs – providing greater flexibility for both Tenderers and Clients to utilise the local market;
- Adhering to Economic Development Social Value requirements and objectives at all stages of procurement, competition and design, providing increased flexibility;
- Utilisation of individual projects and wider programmes to achieve Social Value.

The Project Manager explained that these measures were to be seen as a starting point for projects, and that social values would be carried through into the construction stage, with the opportunity to build on initial design values and/or targets. He added that the Department would keep this under review and update it as required.

The Director of Physical Programmes added that the market was aware that the Framework was coming forward and that pre-engagement had been involved in its development. She also advised that construction works for projects would be tendered separately and that these would also include social value clauses/targets.

A Member queried how the emergence of a Social Value Strategy from the Department of Finance, the possibility of a Social Value Act and changes in legislation, would impact the Framework.

The Project Manager confirmed that the Framework was designed to remain flexible within procurement legislation.

The Social Policy Working Group noted the approach to the new Consultancy Framework and that the approach had been based upon legal feedback received and had been signed off by Corporate Procurement Services. The Working Group also noted the opportunities for social value which had been built into the Framework and noted that these would be kept under review.

City Charter Branding

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised the Working Group that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had approved the next steps of delivery of the Charter, including brand development and progression to the formal consultation and engagement stage.

She explained that the Council's Internal Communications Team, alongside some external advice, had recently developed 4 branding concepts to replace the 'City Charter' name:

- Making a Better Belfast – For Business, For Employees, For Everyone
- Belfast Commitment – A City For Everyone / Shaping Our City For Everyone
- Belfast Business Promise – A Better City For Everyone
- Belfast People's Promise - A Better City For Everyone

She advised that initial thoughts from both staff and businesses was that the 'Business Promise' was the most suitable option as it clearly demonstrated the purpose of the work. She added that further testing would be undertaken with the internal working group and small businesses, and welcomed views from the Working Group on each of the options.

A number of the Members stated that, while branding was not their area of expertise, they did not see the 'Business Promise' as the best fit, but saw merit in the 'Belfast Commitment' and 'People's Promise' options. An additional option was also suggested, 'Belfast's Social Promise/Commitment'. It was also suggested that a brief on the Charter be circulated again to remind the Working Group of the proposed outcomes.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty thanked the Members for their comments and advised that the aims, benefits and overall unique selling points (USP) were currently being worked on by the Council's Communications Team and would soon be available for circulation.

Noted.

Social Value Procurement Policy

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty thanked the Members for their input into the development of the Social Value Framework Policy, which once approved by the Council, would move on to the consultation and engagement stage.

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services advised that her team were currently devising questions for the consultation document, both for the public and for potential suppliers. She confirmed that the questions would cover a number of topics, including the objectives of the policy, the social value weightings, the phased approach, minimum thresholds, the award criteria and monitoring. Once feedback had been received, she advised that the information would be brought back to the Working Group and then to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September or October.

Noted.

Forward Work Plan

The Members agreed that the following agenda items would be considered for inclusion at future meetings of the Social Policy Working Group:

August

- An update on Living Wage Accreditation (to remain a standing agenda item);
- A paper on minimising the Council's use of employment agencies, as per the Notice of Motion;
- Staff analysis – high level data regarding the percentage of staff residing in Belfast;
- An update regarding the request for changes to be made to the Procurement 1992 Order;
- Consideration of the Council's role in launching the City Charter and the early adopters who would be involved.

September

- An update on the City Charter consultation and engagement work;
- An update on the Social Value Framework Policy consultation and engagement work, to include spend analysis information;
- A presentation from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), if the timing was appropriate.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that the next meeting would be held on a date, as yet to be agreed, in late August.

As this was her last meeting before leaving the Council, the Members of the Working Group thanked the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty for her dedication and ambition over recent years and wished her well in her future endeavours.

Chairperson

Working Group on the Climate Crisis

Wednesday, 23rd June, 2021

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Members present: Alderman Copeland;
Councillors de Faoite, Hutchinson and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. C. McKeown, Sustainable Development Manager;
Mr. R. McLernon, Resilience Co-ordinator;
Mr. J. McKearney, Project Support Officer; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Election of Chairperson

Nominations were sought to fill the vacant position of Chairperson and it was:

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Hutchinson and

Resolved – That Councillor Smyth be appointed to the position of Chairperson for the period ending June, 2022.

(Councillor Smyth in the Chair.)

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Baker, Bunting and Ferguson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th March, 2021 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

BCC Climate Plan

The Resilience Co-ordinator reminded the Working Group that the Council had agreed to develop a Climate Plan for the city by the end of 2021. He stated that, in order to develop effective adaptation and mitigation measures, as part of the Climate Plan, the Council had engaged with Climate N.I. and K.P.M.G. to assist with that process. The Members were informed that K.P.M.G. was working on an environmental sustainability review on behalf of the Council which had prioritised three key areas, namely, greenhouse gas emissions, resource efficiency and procurement.

The Climate Commissioner reported that the work, associated with an evidence based approach, would assist in the development of the Council's climate plan in the identification of climate risk and mitigation measures. She stated further that a climate risk assessment would be undertaken, in conjunction with a baseline emissions survey, in order to estimate the Council's current emissions and associated carbon footprint. She stated that those two tranches of work were critical in the identification of areas where specific action was required to address both current and future climate risks and reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

The Commissioner highlighted the importance of undertaking collaborative work, with relevant stakeholders, in the development of a science-based target to achieve a reduction of carbon emissions, which would be aligned to the Climate Bill and the Council's energy strategy. The Members were informed that, for each action area identified, it would be necessary for the Council to develop a strategic approach to deal with the areas requiring climate action and mitigation. She referred also to the need to develop a number of strategic goals to tackle the climate issues identified and map out how those goals could be realised. As part of the Climate Plan, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of regular monitoring of progress against the climate emission targets and of the need to formalise reporting mechanisms on progress made.

The Working Group stated that the work on the Climate Plan, including the strategies and policies to support the plan, would be ongoing. In response to a question on how Belfast might progress its emission targets ahead of the U.K. target of zero emissions by 2050, the Commissioner stated that a report, published by the N.I. Climate Change Committee, had suggested that Northern Ireland should endeavour to achieve an 82% reduction on emissions by 2050, given its high levels of dependence on both fossil fuels and agriculture.

A Member of the Working Group requested clarification of the progress which had been made in regard to those targets which were not under the control of the Council and referred specifically to transportation as an example. In response, the Director stated that the Council had an important role as an influencer on government policy and that work had commenced with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to incentivise alternative forms of transport including, adjustment to bus routes as a means to reduce emissions and improve the use of public transportation.

BCC Skills Report

The Sustainable Development Manager provided an update on the potential benefits of the Council's skills report which had been commissioned in 2020/2221 by the Council's Economic Development Unit, in partnership with the Climate Commission. The report outlined, in particular, the benefits of upskilling the workforce to meet the challenges associated with pursuing a future green economy. She stated that, as part of the draft Programme for Government, it was stipulated that the economy should be competitive globally, regional balanced and carbon neutral. She referred to a number of infrastructure improvements to assist with the new green economy, including, amongst other things, improvements to broadband, transportation and retro-fit of housing comprising energy transition and distributio

The Sustainable Development Manager referred to the needs of the new green economy, including vehicle design and sustainable building technologies. She stated also that it was important that the new skills were developed to meet the needs of the emerging technologies.

In response to a question in respect of the timeframe for the retro-fit of houses, the Director stated that he would check on the information requested by the Member and would report back to him in the matter. The Sustainable Development Manager stated further that the skills required by the new emerging technologies were being addressed currently by the

skills academy. A Member requested information on the infrastructure required in respect to anticipating the number of public charging points to meet anticipated demand. The Sustainable Development Manager stated that the question was relevant and that accessibility to local E.V. charging points was vital, if the transition to electric vehicles was to be effective. She reported that the current VPACH project was working to assess the demonstrable demand in the city in order to identify the locations where the charging points were required.

Councillor de Faoite Motion – Environmental Implications of Decision Making

A Member highlighted the importance attached to local politicians being provided with the necessary information, associated with the environmental repercussions, of their decision making process. The Director stated that engagement with Camden Borough Council had taken place and that it was anticipated that an officer meeting, between Belfast and Camden Councils, would be taking place in the near future, at which Members of the Working Group would be invited to participate in the discussions.

The Climate Commissioner referred to the work undertaken by K.P.M.G. in regard to the Council's procurement policy and how it could be adapted to meet the Council's emission targets. The Director stated that it was important that the Climate/Environmental policy was embedded into the Council's procurement strategy. He stated also that a low carbon powered fleet was imperative for the Council to meet its climate targets and of the need to monitor continuously the Council's policies and decision-making in terms of its climate obligations.

Update on One Million Tree's Project

The Resilience Co-ordinator provided the Working Group with an overview of the progress which had been made, over the previous eighteen months, in respect of the one million trees project. He provided the Members with information associated with the project, which included the establishment of a Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the project. The Working Group was presented with an outline of the steps involved with the tree planting site identification process and were informed of the close working relationship between the Council and its delivery partners, which included the Woodland Trust and the Conservation Volunteers.

The Working Group was informed of recent developments in regard to the urban tree planting programme and the steps taken to incorporate tree planting within the city centre, which included the creation of an urban forest by 2023. The Members were advised that approximately 40,000 trees had been planted in the first year of the project and that the Council had been successful in securing £289,000, over a three year period, from the Woodland Trust Tree Fund.

The Members were apprised of plans to develop a tree nursery facility, within Belfast, given the current E.U. restrictions on imported plants from countries outside the E.U. The Resilience Co-ordinator highlighted the link between the one million trees project and the Council's climate plan for the city. The Working Group was provided with information on the efforts made to ensure the maintenance of the existing woodland and the importance of public engagement, including the active involvement of younger people in the project.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and thanked the Resilience Co-ordinator for the detailed update and commended the work which had been completed in the planting of 40,000 trees in year one of the project.

Update on COP 26

The Climate Commissioner referred to the co-ordinating role played by the Council in advance of the COP 26 conference to be held in Glasgow in November, 2021. She stated that a sub-group had been created for that purpose through the Climate Plan Programme Board and that a hub would be created to galvanise the various projects being undertaken by both the Council and its partner organisations. She referred to the efforts being made to engage with the public, including the creation of an events hub and a COP 26 web page, as part of a public engagement process. She highlighted the number of applications submitted by Belfast to participate in the COP 26 event, at which, five had been short-listed for discussion.

The Working Group was informed that BEIS were supporting Planetmark to host an Electric Carbon bus tour throughout the U.K. to promote the Race to Zero and COP 26 events. The Sustainable Development Manager reported that a visit to Belfast was being arranged in partnership with Planetmark, Translink and Wright Bus. She stated that a series of business and community events would be planned around the bus tour to showcase climate actions. She stated also that it was hoped that the carbon bus would visit Belfast at the end of September and would be beneficial in increasing public awareness of the current climate emergency.

The Climate Commissioner provided an update on the Race to Zero campaign and on the request to produce an emissions baseline, prior to Belfast being part of that campaign. She stated that it was hoped that the required data on its emissions would be available in the near future and would allow the City to participate in the Race to Zero campaignThe Working Group requested that the issue of climate engagement by older people be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Reference Group on Older People.

Noted.

Update on VPACH 2 Electric Vehicle Project

The Sustainable Development Manager provided the Working Group with an update on the VPACH Electric Vehicle project. She stated that it was the Council's intention to work with Virgin Media and other external partners to explore the provision of a range of E.V. charging points in its car parks which could be utilised by the community. She stated that the project had been funded by Innovate U.K., with the objective of repurposing Virgin Media telecommunications infrastructure to provide on-street E.V. charging in residential areas.

The Working Group was advised that M.R.P. restrictions had now been removed, which had prevented access to the market and that commercial interest in the proposal had now been re-established. As a result of this commercial decision, it was reported that an offer of £300,000 had been made to develop new infrastructure, by installing thirty charging points, in Council-owned car parks, within the next six months. The Sustainable Manager referred to a number of legal barriers which required to be dealt with, prior to the necessary infrastructure work being undertaken. She stated further that it was anticipated that future funding streams would be available. The Members were informed that work had commenced in mapping demand including the identification street locations across the city in respect of the installation of E.V. charging points.

The Sustainable Development Manager referred to a number of legal issues which required to be addressed if the necessary infrastructure was to be put in place, within the allocated time-frame, to draw down the available funding. The Members were informed of the need for the Council to enter into commercial partnership with the private sector to build the necessary infrastructure. She stated that an internal team had been created to consider the development of E.V. charging across Council owned land. The Members were informed that

the internal team included the Estates Management team, Legal Services, Procurement and the Council's Planning section. The Sustainable Development Manager stated that it was hoped that this collaborative exercise would place the Council in a favourable position to bid for future funding allocations.

Noted

Update on Assembly All-Party Group on Climate Change - 28th May 2021

The Sustainable Development Manager informed the Working Group that Minister Mallon had been in attendance at the All-Party Group on Climate Change at the N.I. Assembly and that she had given her support to examine the opportunity for N.I.C.S. staff to continue to work remotely following the pandemic. She stated that the Minister was aware of the level of vehicular emissions created by the daily commute to and from the workplace and saw the creation of rural hubs as a means to mitigate many of the adverse impacts of vehicular emissions caused by commuter journeys. She stated that the integration of climate policy was an important element within the Council's Local Development Plan and highlighted the need to manage water resources, in a sustainable way, including urban drainage and improved home insulation.

The Working Group was advised that at the next scheduled meeting of the All-Party Group on Climate Change the Circular Economy had been placed on the agenda for discussion. It was reported that the meetings to date had been well attended and were open for members of the public.

The Working Group noted the information provided by the Sustainable Development Manager.

Update on NI Energy Strategy Consultation

The Sustainable Development Manager emphasised the importance of the N.I. Government Energy Options paper, both to the corporate body and the city as a whole. She stated that the document contained seventy-five questions and provided a route-map for future de-carbonisation of the city. She highlighted a number of issues contained within the document, which were both relevant and could inform the Council's approach to energy efficiency, fuel poverty, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including the role of the Planning Service in delivering on the climate agenda. She emphasised how the draft energy strategy would contribute to the economic growth of the city and how many Council departments were assisting in that process. She agreed also that a copy of the consultation document would be made available to the Members of the Working Group upon request.

Noted.

Chairperson

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ACTIVE BELFAST LIMITED BOARD

Monday, 9th August, 2021

MEETING OF ACTIVE BELFAST LIMITED BOARD

(Held remotely via Microsoft Teams)

Attendees

Directors: Mr. J. McGuigan (Chairperson)
Councillor Carson
Councillor Corr
Councillor McLaughlin
Councillor Newton
Mr. P. Boyle
Mr. K. Ellison and
Mrs. K. McCullough.

Officers: Mr. N. Munnis, Partnership Manager; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

GLL: Mr. J. Michael, Business Manager; and
Ms. J. Pope, Head of Service.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Mr. K. O'Doherty.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th June were approved, with no matters arising.

Director Attendance Statement

The Partnership Manager informed the Board that he had been informed by a Director that he had been unable to attend a number of recent meetings due to injury and difficulties in accessing IT equipment. He confirmed that the Director had stated that he intended to remain on the Board and that work was underway to ensure that he could participate in future meetings.

The Board noted the information which had been provided.

Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

The Board noted that it would, later in the meeting, be required to decide, in the context of the forthcoming review of the leisure operating model/governance

arrangements, if it wished to proceed with the open forum session which was planned for 6th September.

Director Resignations/Review of Active Belfast Limited Companies House Returns

The Partnership Manager reported that Mr. Conrad Kirkwood had resigned from the Board on 19th July and that the Chairperson had forwarded to him a letter acknowledging the receipt of his resignation and recognising the contribution which he had made since his appointment in December, 2016. Companies House had been informed of his resignation and all submissions relating to the Active Belfast Limited Board were up to date at that time.

He reported further that he had, on 8th August, been informed by Mr. Gerard Walls that he too would be resigning from the Board, with immediate effect. Companies House would, in due course, be informed of his resignation.

He pointed out that the aforementioned resignations had reduced the number of active Directors to nine and informed the Board that it would, later in the meeting, be presented with a report on the forthcoming review of the leisure operating model/governance arrangements, which would include a recommendation that a previously agreed recruitment campaign to appoint what would now be up to a maximum of six new Directors be delayed until such time as the review had been completed.

The Board formally accepted Mr. Kirkwood's and Mr. Walls' resignations and noted that the Chairperson would write to Mr. Walls to thank him for the contribution which he had made since being appointed in December, 2015.

Review of Leisure Operating Model/Governance Arrangements

The Partnership Manager submitted for the Board's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update the Board on the review of the leisure operating model, as communicated on 7th June.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Board considers and makes comment to the draft terms of reference as detailed within this report;

2.2 That the board notes that the final terms of reference will be subject to consideration and agreement by the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;

2.3 That the board further delays the planned director recruitment campaign until the review has been concluded.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 On 11th January, the Partnership Manager reported that the Council had approved a review of the operating model including the membership and governance arrangements of the ABL board. The update to the Board stated that:

'the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 20th November, had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the Council's governance arrangements, in relation to the delivery of its leisure service'

The minute from the SP and R Committee meeting of 20th November states that:

'The Committee noted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the Active Belfast Limited Board, including its membership and governance arrangements.'

3.2 It was further reported on 7th June that, subject to Council approval, the terms of reference and review timeline would be reported to the ABL board on 9th August.

3.3 Draft Terms of Reference

Introduction / Purpose

Belfast City Council intends to conduct a review of the tri-partite operating model currently in place to govern the delivery of its leisure service with particular reference to the role, membership and governance arrangements of the Active Belfast Ltd board.

Specifically, the objective of the exercise is to:

a) undertake a review of the overall performance of the ABL board against the Council's original objectives.

b) review the ABL governance arrangements including the board's role in monitoring contract compliance and the performance of the strategic operating partner (GLL).

c) review the level of control delegated to the ABL Board.

d) Provide a commentary on the overall status of the partnership and governance, between the three parties to the contract.

e) Make recommendations in terms of how governance arrangements could be amended/improved going forward.

It is recommended that the work undertaken will include the following:

f) Review the existing tri-partite contractual arrangements. Any review of contractual arrangements will also need to take into consideration input and advice from legal services.

g) High level assessment of the ABL governance arrangements including a review of performance.

h) Review membership of the ABL Board.

i) Engage with members of the ABL Board for their views – including Council Officers, GLL, current Board members, and where possible previous Board members (up to 3-year period of notification of termination of membership).

j) Review the level of added value provided by ABL within the current tri-partite Arrangements.

k) Consideration of how contractual and governance arrangements could be improved based on review findings and engagement with Board members.

l) Regular progress meetings with, and reports to, the agreed project manager or management team.

m) Presentation of a final report with recommendations to the committee.

Expected Outcomes

Based on the above activities, the following outcomes are expected:

n) A report on the membership and governance arrangements of the ABL Board.

o) An options paper with recommendations for how governance arrangements for the Council's leisure service should operate in the future.

3.4 Proposed Timeline

Agree Terms of Reference	**CMT** **Active Belfast Ltd** **SP and R**	**June 2021** **9th August 2021** **20th August 2021**
Appointment of independent contractor	**CNS**	**October 2021**
Commence review		**October/November 2021**
Draft report and findings	**CMT** **SP and R** **Active Belfast Ltd**	**January/February 2022**

3.5 As the planned review will include membership of the Board, the ongoing delay continues to impact on the ABL Director recruitment programme previously scheduled for 2020/21. Subject to the outcome of the review process, it is anticipated that the recruitment campaign could commence early in 2022."

After discussion, the Board agreed:

i that Directors should forward any comments on the draft Terms of Reference to the Partnership Manager by 12 noon on Friday, 13th August;

ii that the recruitment campaign to appoint up to a maximum of six new Directors be delayed until the review of the leisure operating model/governance arrangements had concluded; and

iii that, in light of the ongoing review of the leisure operating model/governance arrangements, the open forum session which had been due to take place on Monday, 6th September be cancelled.

(Mr. Michael and Ms. Pope and were admitted to the meeting at this point.)

Covid-19 Restrictions – Service Update

The Board noted the contents of a report which provided information on the immediate actions which had been taken by GLL in response to the three Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020 and on income generation, sales/usage and business recovery.

Pricing of New Products

The Board considered the following report which had been prepared by GLL:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek Board approval for new product pricing for a range of new products to reflect services changes in place or due to be introduced following recent Covid-19 lockdowns and the reopening of the centres.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Board is requested to approve the pricing proposal set out below.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 An annual pricing review proposal is normally presented to the Board for approval in October with implementation intended to apply from the following April. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the pricing review was delayed until December 2020, at which point the proposed increases were rejected resulting in prices being frozen for the 2021/22 financial year. This decision was subsequently noted by the SP and R committee and by the full Council.

3.2 When new products are launched 'in year' and after approval of the annual pricing schedule, pricing for the new products requires Board approval.

3.3 Three amendments to new product pricing are proposed, namely:

- **Hurling Wall**
- **Aqua Splash**
- **Sensory Pool**

3.4 The proposed pricing and rationale for the above products is as follows:

NEW PRODUCT PRICING PROPOSAL

1.0 Introduction

GLL along with Belfast City Council Leisure Services follow pricing for memberships, activities and courses, as laid out in the schedule of charges and pricing matrix. As Better continue to offer a greater variety of leisure services coming out of the pandemic in becomes apparent that certain prices have not been included within the schedule of charges as either an oversight from GLL and Belfast City Council or through the evolving nature of products in response to Covid conditions.

The following paper highlights the current gaps in the schedule of charges and GLL requests that these be approved

in order to operate these service during the summer months. All prices would then be included in the next review of pricing when presented in October.

1.0 Hurling Wall

Brook Leisure Centre's outdoor sports provision includes a hurling wall which can now open for the first time. Currently, no price exists for the hurling wall for either individual or group bookings. GLL proposes that the prices for the hurling wall follow those currently approved for racket sports and handball, namely:

Handball/Squash/Racquetball non resident / non member	Per person	£6.40
Handball/Squash/Racquetball resident / pay and play member	Per person	£4.95
Concession: Handball/Squash/Racquetball resident	Per person	£2.45
Badminton non resident / non member	Per person	£6.40
Badminton resident / pay and play member	Per person	£4.95
Concession: Badminton resident	Per person	£2.45

In addition to individual use, the hurling wall can be utilised by groups/clubs as part of their training. This feature of the wall would then make the space comparable to half of a 'baseline' four court multi sports hall. Sports halls are currently charged on a four-court hall baseline of £45.50 per hour with hall size variations charged on a pro rata basis. GLL would therefore purpose that the hurling wall is charged at £20 per hour for group bookings, just below half of the baseline multi sports hall rate.

2.1 Aqua Splash

Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre is set to launch a wet inflatable product known as 'Aqua Splash'. This product can be set up in multiple formats with a slide that extends from the 3m diving board in the diving pool and an obstacle course in the main pool utilizing between four and eight swimming lanes depending on the combination of sections.

A list of prices is currently in place for this product within the schedule of charges and a distinction in price has been made between the product in its full format (H + slide) and reduced format (I). Please see below:

Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Adult – Non member / non resident		£10.40
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Adult – Member / resident		£8.00

Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Junior – Non member / non resident		£6.50
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Junior – Member / resident		£5.00
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Family Pass – Non member / non resident	Additional child £5.10. U5's free	£31.20
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Family Pass – Member / resident	Additional child £5.10. U5's free	£24.00
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (includes slide) Group Pass	10 participants. Add adult/child £8.00/£5.00	£60.00
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Adult - Non member / non resident		£5.20
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Adult - Member / resident		£4.00
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Junior - Non member / non resident		£3.25
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Junior - Member / resident		£2.50
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Family Pass - Non member / non resident	Additional child £2.55. U5's free	£15.60
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Family Pass - Member / resident	Additional child £2.55. U5's free	£12.00
Aqua Splash 'I' Set up (excludes slide) Group Pass	10 participants. Add adult/child £4.00/£2.50	£30.00

Pool programming in Lisnasharragh is a challenge for the centre team in managing the requirements of members, the general public and swimming / water polo clubs along with offering swimming lessons and aqua aerobics classes. In programming the Aqua Splash product the centre team have identified that the ability to sell the H structure without the slide option would free space in the diving pool to facilitate other programming but also provide a Swim for All or Swim for Fitness space for those participants that do not wish to use the Aqua Splash product. GLL are therefore proposing an addition to the schedule of charges for this product which is as follows:

Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Adult – Non member / non resident		£9.00
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Adult – Member / resident		£7.00
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Junior – Non member / non resident		£5.70
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Junior – Member / resident		£4.40
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Family Pass – Non member / non resident	Additional child £4.45. U5's free	£27.30
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Family Pass – Member / resident	Additional child £4.45. U5's free	£21.00
Aqua Splash 'H' Set up (excludes slide) Group Pass	10 participants. Add adult/child £7.00/£4.40	£52.50

2.2 Sensory Pool

Brook Leisure Centre has been able to re-open the pool in July 2021 and can now welcome back participants to sensory sessions. These sessions are particularly used by children with learning disabilities and autism. Current pricing for this session is linked to a general family price for a swim which is £10.40 for non-members/non-residents and £8.00 for members/residents. This price covers two adults and two children.

Participants who use the sensory sessions are more typically one adult and one child and, if another adult attend,s they would be a carer. GLL is, therefore, proposing a £5.20 for non-members/non-residents and £4.00 for members/residents price for sensory sessions only to accommodate this demand for one adult and one child.

After discussion, the Board approved the pricing proposals for the hurling wall and the sensory pool at Brook Leisure Centre and the Aqua Splash at Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre and agreed that the prices be reviewed six months after being introduced.

Healthwise and Physical Activity Referral Scheme – Six-Monthly Update

The Board considered the following report which had been prepared by GLL:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Board with a six-monthly progress update on the exercise and health referral programmes managed by GLL in Belfast.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Board is requested to note the information provided below.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

1. **GLL currently delivers the following health related contracts and services:**

   Healthwise/PARS

   A 12-week exercise referral programme – Commissioned by Public Health Agency via Belfast City Council. Annual rolling contract value of £80K (£80,648.34)

   Cardiac Rehabilitation

   A 12-week cardiac rehab programme – Commissioned by Belfast Health Development Unit via Belfast City Council. Annual contract value of £35K (£35,273.33)

   Cancer Rehabilitation

   A 12-week cancer rehab programme – Commissioned by Belfast Health Development Unit via Belfast City Council. Annual contract value of £20K (£20,716.66)

   ***Normal amount of £149,069. Total from BHDU £137,568.33 taking account furlough payments for staff between March to 1st May 2020. 2020/21 contract ended 31st March 2021. Contract has been extended for 2021-2022 back to full funding amount of £149,069.**

   Move More Belfast

   Commissioned by MacMillan Cancer. Three-year contract value of £118K. Two-year extension £56K from MacMillan, supported by GLL will come to an end December 2021

2. **Programmes provide a 12-week physical activity programme, which adheres to regional standards and guidelines.**

3. **A team of dedicated health related exercise professionals delivers the above programmes. All staff are qualified to a minimum of Level III exercise referral. GLL currently employs eight dedicated Health staff including the Health Referral Manager who is directly managed the by the Regional Business Manager.**

4. **All chronic conditions (cardiac and cancer) pathways are delivered by dedicated staff qualified to Level IV in the relevant chronic condition.**

5. **The aim is to promote and increase long-term adherence to physical activity and lifestyle changes designed to improve the physical and mental health of clients who are inactive or sedentary and who are otherwise healthy or who have an existing health condition or other risk factors for disease.**

6. **Staff supports clients in meeting the Chief Medical Officer physical activity recommendations for adults and older people.**

7. **Strategic partnerships and working groups established around chronic conditions pathways to ensure collaboration with key organisations such as Public Health Agency, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and charitable partners.**

8. **Due to Covid-19 full funding for the 2021-2020 contract was issued due to the work carried out by GLL's Health team. This included establishing the hybrid model with the Public Health Agency and the interactions recorded for each referral. This year 2021-22 the regional model was to be target based with payments for service delivery and contractual compliance. The payment per client was confirmed by the Public Health Agency as £130 per client completed for PARS. For cardiac rehabilitation the payment was £150 per client completed and cancer rehabilitation as £150 per client completed.**

9. **All GLL centres were closed from 25th December 2020 until 30th April. GLL re-instated their re opening plan, until the health team were able to go back into the centres they offered the hybrid model approach offering virtual/remote delivery. The health team started face to face appointments on the 30th April 2021.**

YTD update on all targets, referrals, progress and completions

3.2 Table 1 Healthwise KPIs 20/21 – 21/22

PROGRAMME	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE	ANNUAL TARGET	PROGRESS TO DATE				Total
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
			20-21	21-22			
Healthwise (Physical Activity referral scheme)	Total number of patients completing the programme (12-week programme)	677 *interactions recorded for referrals during covid	2402*	55			

3.2.1. The support and work carried out by GLL to referrals during Q4 of the 2020-21 contract has been welcomed by BHDU and they have agreed to release the final quarter fund. As mentioned above it was based on interactions are recorded as telephone call, motivational text message, email, home workout and video classes/sessions.

3.3 Table 2 Cardiac Rehabilitation KPIs 2020/21 – 2021/22

PROGRAMME	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE	ANNUAL TARGET	PROGRESS TO DATE				Total
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
			20-21	2021-22			
Cardiac rehab Level IV	Delivery of Cardiac Rehabilitation Phase IV for clients (12-week programme) completing the programme	256 *interactions recorded for referrals during covid	1615*	1523*			

3.3.1 Due to the pandemic, cardiac nurses have been redeployed in the health service resulting in the phase III rehabilitation referrals been suspended since March 2020. Similar to PARs the work carried out by GLL to existing referrals has been welcomed by the BHDU and the agreed to release the final quarter payment for the contract. Based on the interactions that are recorded as telephone call, motivational text message, email, home workout and video classes/sessions.

3.3.2 For the 2021-22 contracts, it has been agreed by GLL and BHDU to keep the target the same as last year for cardiac. However, allowing GLL to top up the target achieved with referrals that complete the Covid-19 intervention pilot. This pilot is in partnership with GLL, Active Belfast and the Belfast Trust. Referrals that complete this programme will be added to GLLs total at the end of the contractual year.

3.3.3 Due to Covid-19 and restrictions, the cardiac programme started their face-to-face classes and appointments from 24th May 2021.

3.4 Table 3 Cancer Rehabilitation KPIs 20/21 – 2021/22

PROGRAMME	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE	ANNUAL TARGET	PROGRESS TO DATE				Total
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
			20-21	2021-22			
Cancer rehab Level IV	Delivery of Cancer Rehabilitation Phase IV for clients (12-week programme) completing the programme	150 *interactions recorded for referrals during covid	696*	N/A in Q1			

3.4.1 The cancer rehab programme referrals are made through the Move More Belfast pathway to the cancer rehab physical activity programme. The support and work carried out by GLL to referrals during the last quarter months justifies the release of funds from BHDU. 2021-2022 contract referral target of 150 remains the same as previous years.

3.4.2 Due to Covid-19 and restrictions, GLL's cancer rehab programme started back face to face on the 24th May 2021. With group exercise classes resuming 21st June 2021.

3.4.3 GLL is in partnership with the South Eastern Trust delivering a pilot pre-habilitation programme for 3 tumour sites. This is a pilot scheme running for the 2021-2022 contract year where referrals will be counted towards the existing KPI of 150 and referrals will be made through the Move More Belfast pathway.

3.5 Table 4 'Move More' Belfast KPIs 2020/21 – 2021/22

PROGRAMME	MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE	ANNUAL TARGET	PROGRESS TO DATE				Total
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
			20-21	2021-22			
'Move More' Belfast MacMillan Cancer	Total number of patients completing the programme including brief intervention	125 *interactions recorded for referrals during covid	23 *number of interactions – 2,578	31 * number of interactions – 2,921			

3.6 Year-end projections

- **The Covid-19 pandemic is still having a significant affect on the ability to deliver on the KPIs that have been set for 2021-22. Especially with restrictions not easing fully in Northern Ireland and the increased self isolations due to the track and trace app.**

- **It is still affecting the number of referrals that are coming onto the programme from GPs/health care professionals etc. which can have a delayed impact to deliver the KPIs that have been set. The reason for lower number of referrals coming onto the programme is as followed:**

  - **Phase III nurses being redeployed into other areas**
  - **Cancer treatments being suspended**
  - **Less people going to GPs to not overwhelm the NHS (as broadcasted on news outlets)**
  - **GPs main concern at present is rolling out the Covid-19 vaccines**

- **Monthly review and performance management meetings are in place to ensure that performance is closely monitored and the required outputs delivered.**

- **As per contract compliance, monthly and quarterly returns are completed for all commissioners.**

3.7 <u>Regional Model</u>

- **Public Health Agency has developed a new regional exercise referral model for Level III Healthwise programmes. Emphasis remains on shift to providing group based classes, to increase volume and social interaction.**

- **Currently, GLL has programmed 32 health referral specific classes across the city including a mixture of virtual, walking and centre based classes. As well as a menu of step down options for referrals post 12 weeks. These classes include low intensity circuits, swimming, walking, yoga and Boccia.**

3.8 Issues impacting on delivery/performance

- **Currently all contracts commissioned by Belfast Health Development Unit are based on one year rolling contracts. This creates challenges around staff recruitment and retention. It is anticipated that this will be addressed in the new regional model with longer-term contracts providing improved job security and stability of service.**

- **Redeployment of cardiac phase III nurses and the phase III rehabilitation classes that are currently not being delivered. Therefore, no new referrals for phase IV programme.**

- **Waiting list due to honouring referrals membership when lockdown commenced and delay in hybrid model creation.**

- **Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions."**

Mr. Michael provided a brief overview of the report and pointed out, in response to a suggestion which had been made at a previous meeting, that GLL had been involved in the delivery of a pilot rehabilitation programme for those people affected by long Covid. The Belfast Health Development Unit was now examining the potential for rolling out funding for the programme in the longer term.

During discussion, it was suggested that GLL should discuss with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Education Authority the potential for making the sensory pool at Brook Leisure Centre available for young people with special needs, particularly during school term, when it was being underutilised. It was suggested also

that the views of Marie Curie, Action Cancer and other related charities be sought on the effectiveness of the Cancer Rehabilitation and Move More Belfast programmes, in the context of their experiences/requirements, and that GLL should seek to identify ways to encourage those nurses, doctors etc. who had been at the forefront of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic to avail of its facilities.

In response, Mr. Michael confirmed that GLL would engage with local special needs schools around the use of the sensory pool at Brook Leisure Centre and highlighted the fact that the Swimming Buddies group, which worked with young people with autism, had been using the pool prior to the first lockdown. He undertook to raise the additional suggestions which had been made with the Healthwise team.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

3G Pitch Utilisation and Business Performance – Six-Monthly Update

The Board considered the following report which had been prepared by GLL:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Board with a Q4 2020/21 progress update on the 3G pitch utilisation and business performance managed by GLL in Belfast, since last reported on 5th August 2019. Q1 2021/22 will follow in the next Board meeting, as this information is being currently collated.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Board is requested to note the information provided in this report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 There is no information to provide on occupancy and income figures for each individual centre 3G pitch managed by GLL in Belfast, as all facilities were closed due to the pandemic in the period of January to March 2021.

3.2 Peak/Off peak flows – learning for Q1 2021/2022

3.2.1 The restrictions during the pandemic have resulted in reduced capacities for participants and also a reduction in certain types of activity. This has resulted in a reduction in occupancy uptake and income.

3.2.2 3G pitch utilisation is seasonal based on demands from sports clubs.

3.2.3 Association Football is the main sport utilising 3G pitch services, through clubs, leagues, schools and casual usage. Gaelic Sports and Rugby are also played on 3G pitches but not with the same demand as Association Football.

3.2.4 Peak usage is from 6 - 9pm across all pitches.

3.2.5 Daytime usage is dependent on centre location as well as school and business links and proximity.

3.3 User Groups – learning for Q1 2021/2022

Our user groups are represented through the following categories:

- **Sports Clubs**
- **Leagues**
- **National Governing Bodies**
- **Casual**
- **Schools (including the Football Management Company)**
- **Community groups**
- **Casuals**
- **Belfast City Council**

3.4 Action to maximise occupancy - Q1 2021/2022

3.4.1 All centres have built their 2021 and 2022 budget books and have developed action and outreach plans, to drive utilisation and income.

3.4.2 Regular meetings with the Irish Football Association have been ongoing since February 2018. This summer this has resulted in Summer Camps at Olympia and Ballysillan, Futsal usage at Shankill and girls only sessions delivered at Brook, Ballysillan, Lisnasharragh and Olympia. Coach education programmes have also been delivered in centres. Further progress will be made with the anticipated opening of Avoniel in the Autumn of 2021.

3.4.3 Although meetings have not been possible throughout the pandemic, GLL is represented on Belfast City Council and Irish Football Association Stadium benefits working group linked to the National Stadium at Windsor Park.

3.4.4 Targets for each centre have been developed to increase occupancy and income in line with 2021 business planning process.

3.4.5 Target markets include local schools and businesses to drive daytime occupancy and off-peak usage. This will become more possible from September 2021 onwards.

3.4.6 Adult casual participation leagues (5 and 7 a side) have been successfully delivered in other partnerships operated by GLL through 'Play Football' who run and manage the leagues through an agreed contract. Now that restrictions are lifted on

casual use a similar model and business plan is to be explored for Belfast in line with the Leisure Transformation programme.

3.4.7 Further development meetings with other NGB's such as GAA and Ulster Rugby to develop partnership programmes."

The Board noted the contents of the report.

Underrepresented Target Groups – Six-Monthly Update

The Board considered the following report which had been prepared by GLL:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Board with a progress update on the participation of underrepresented target groups in centres managed by GLL in Belfast.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Board is requested to consider and formally record receipt of the information presented below.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 GLL is a leading social enterprise. One of the core priorities of GLL is to ensure full access for all members of the community and encourage regular participation amongst under-represented target groups.

3.2 GLL have employed a Regional Business Manager, whose key focus is to drive participation and usage, ensuring more people from every background are regularly and meaningfully engaged and taking part in sport and physical activity. To continue on progress made, GLL have a team of three that focus on participation and another staff member with a focus on group exercise.

3.3 Before the pandemic, GLL had set targets for centres to increase usage by 2% per year. As more normal operation becomes possible in time these targets will be reinstated. GLL continue to report on usage figures and utilisation to ABL and BCC.

3.4 The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in leisure facilities across Belfast being closed for periods between March and July 2020 and December 2020 to April 2021. These closures and subsequent restrictions to participation have resulted in a decrease in programme opportunities in the past six to twelve months. This is something GLL will seek to further develop as we come out of restrictions and more normal operating practices can resume.

3.5 **GLL is committed to support community access offering varied opportunities delivered in centres that are accessible, affordable and not inhibiting.**

3.6 **GLL re-invests through the GLL Foundations (Sport and Communities) that provide and sustain support for community cohesion and talented individuals.**

3.7 **GLL sustain a positive contribution to the local economy through investment in a workforce that is diverse, passionate, trained and skilled operating in well-managed, maintained and resourced centres.**

3.8 **53% of Belfast GLL members benefit from concessionary charges thereby helping to remove affordability as a barrier to participation.**

3.9 **<u>People with disabilities</u>**

- **GLL continues to partner with 'Menshed' by offering Girdwood Community Hub and Whiterock where the focus is on improving mental health for men.**

- **GLL Healthy Living Manager has recently submitted a funding application to deliver a mental health programme in partnership with Action Mental Health with the aim of having a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of 50 programme participants across the city.**

- **GLL has supported the social enterprise NOW group in the delivery of a 'Lets Get Fit Now' programme which has taken place in Falls Leisure Centre over 10 weeks. Offering participants with a learning disability to participate in tailored fitness classes and gym inductions.**

- **GLL has maintained a working relationships with focus groups and organisations that support disabled access and provision in NI throughout the pandemic. The Disability Hub is still available at Girdwood Community Hub.**

- **This dedicated disability sports hub caters for a range of wheelchair-based sports and activities including Wheelchair Basketball, Powerchair Football, Boccia and New Age Curling**

- **The GLL Sport Foundation in Belfast currently supports 3 disabled and Paralympic athletes. Athletes benefit from financial awards of up to £1,250 which will contribute to their individual coaching, travel, competition and equipment costs**

- **In recent years, the GSF programme has supported athletes that have competed at Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games. Paralympic middle-distance athlete Dr. Michael McKillop is the Ambassador of the programme in Northern Ireland. Michael has successfully won four Paralympic Gold medals and is a role model to all our locally supported athletes.**

- **Brook Leisure Centre has a swimming pool specifically designed to cater for those with sensory needs and those with wide range of disabilities. The centre pool has reopened again in July and runs weekly quiet swims currently attracting approximately 20 to 30 participants in each session.**

- **GLL has a partnership with Swim Buddies to deliver swimming lessons to those with Autism but it has not been possible to deliver these sessions during the pandemic due to the requirement for coaches to be in the water with participants**

3.10 <u>Women and Girls</u>

- **47.4% of current Belfast members are female (15,065)**

- **GLL has developed working relationships with Female Sport Forum and Women in Sport & Physical Activity and organisations that support female access and participation.**

- **In partnership with Irish FA, GLL provides female only football sessions at four centre sites across the city through the Shooting Stars Programme**

- **Brook, Girdwood and Olympia have supported Netball NI in the delivery of holiday camps Staff during the Halloween and Summer periods.**

- **GLL supports 88 female athletes through the GSF programme (58.3%) to enable them to compete at national and international level in their respective sports**

3.11 <u>Older People</u>

- **16.2% of all current Belfast members are aged 60+**

- **Free access for over 60's before 11am Monday to Friday.**

- **GLL is delivering the annual Club Games Festival for Belfast in October**

- **GLL has a daily programme of activity targeted at and suitable for older people**

- **GLL delivers chronic disease (Cancer and Cardiac) rehabilitation programmes, whilst also supporting and hosting Diabetes and Strength & Balance programmes. Many of the referrals for these interventions are older people.**

- **GLL is planning a launch of 'lite' physical activity programming designed to target referrals coming off the rehabilitation programmes and is also suitable for all members for a lower level/low impact workout. In addition to this walking groups have become part of the mainstream group exercise offering so can be accessed by the wider membership and not just those on PARS.**

- **Strategic partnerships and working groups established around chronic conditions pathways to ensure collaboration with key organisations such as Public Health Agency, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and charitable partners.**

- **30 people aged 60+ were referred to and supported by Move More Belfast following a cancer diagnosis in 2020. (compared to 60 in 2019, lower number reflects fewer overall referrals received in 2020 due to Covid)**

3.12 <u>Families</u>

- **GLL has created a balanced programme of activities across all centres allowing families to participate. Junior group exercise class are still to return but will be reintroduced to the programme in August 2021.**

- **New junior and family products has been launched in the past six months – water slides, Surf Belfast and the Aqua Play at Andersonstown, Air Venture at Brook and Aqua Splash at Lisnasharragh. These products a meeting the demands of families, particularly over the summer months as more stay at home in 2021.**

- **Although GLL has not been able to offer a summer scheme this year they have still been able to offer a varied programme during school holidays to engage and support families. This includes the new products mentioned above along with supporting NGB holiday camps with Irish FA, Ulster Boxing and NI Netball. Community and youth group initiatives have also been**

supported at Girdwood. In addition to this GLL have delivered a 6 week tennis camp at Ozone, a four week multi sports camp at Grove and introductory sports sessions at Olympia throughout the summer.

- **Birthday parties have been restricted throughout the pandemic but GLL is now permitted to offer a wide range of provision for birthday parties including bouncy castles, climbing wall, sports (indoor and outdoor) along with the new products mentioned above.**

- **GLL piloted 'Family membership' at Olympia in 2019 and is now in position to relaunch this offer for all centres in August 2021. It is proposed that this membership will be piloted for a six month period to test popularity and utilisation.**

After discussion, the Board noted the contents of the report and agreed that it should, in future, include information on areas of multiple deprivation, including trends, given that some of those displayed the worst health outcomes within the City. It agreed also that GLL would submit to its next meeting a report providing a breakdown of admissions to each leisure centre, in terms of:

i. Prepaid Memberships;

ii. Pay and Play (both junior and senior); and

iii. Non-residents.

(Mr. Michael and Ms. Pope left the meeting at this point.)

Review of Aquatics Strategy Action Plan

The Partnership Manager submitted for the Board's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the annual review of progress in relation to the Aquatics Strategy action plan.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Board is requested to note the update on the action plan.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 'An Aquatics Strategy for Belfast 2019-2030' was officially launched in August 2019. Following the launch, the Board developed and approved an action plan to track strategic outputs and development progress. The action plan was approved by the board on 9th December 2019.

3.2 **Within the strategic document, under 'what we want to achieve' the development of an action plan is referenced. Specifically, that the partners should: 'Develop a detailed action plan within three months of the launch of our strategy' and 'Ensure that the action plan includes annual performance reports and key strategic review points.**

3.3 **The action plan is structured in line with the four themes set out in the strategic document under 'Strategic objectives and priorities' (Pages 8 – 11), namely:**

- **What we want to do;**
- **How we want to do things;**
- **Who we want to do it for, and;**
- **What we want to achieve**

3.4 **Within the four themes above, the action plan identifies 12 key objectives each with a set of more focused outputs.**

3.5 **The first annual review of the strategy was due to be considered in April 2020 but, due to Covid-19 restrictions, Board meetings were suspended after the meeting of 11th March and did not resume until 9th November 2020. Further restrictions resulted in Board meetings again being suspected between January 2021 and June 2021.**

3.6 **Delivery of the aquatics strategy was similarly impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions. All leisure centres were closed throughout April, May and June 2020 with only partial opening allowed from mid-July followed by the re-opening of some swimming pools in August 2020.**

3.7 **Since August 2020, most Council pools have remained open. Although they have remained open, pools have been required to operate under very different and restricted 'Covid safe' operating protocols. Club and group aquatics activities were only permitted to resume in June 2021.**

3.8 **All BCC leisure centres (except Loughside RC), including pools, are now operating on normal pre Covid opening hours but with ongoing operating restrictions.**

3.9 **Given the exceptional operating conditions imposed since March 2020 there is limited value in reviewing specifics outputs as set out in the action plan at this point. However, the Aquatics Strategy is very much a 'live document' influencing decisions and operations relating to LTP capital delivery, pool programming, customer communications and pricing reviews. In particular:**

- **The application of a citywide approach to local pool availability for different activities and user groups.**

This has been useful in ensuring that convenient options are available, on an area basis, to serve the needs of different user groups.

- **Planning for the integration of new pool products into the service and related pricing proposals. Examples include; competitive swimming and water polo at Lisnasharragh, leisure water (at Andersonstown), surf air, aqua splash and diving.**

- **The development of consistent operating protocols and related customer communications.**

- **The development of fair and equitable programming principles to serve the needs of a large number of user groups with varying demands. This has been particularly challenging in recent months as we have moved steadily towards a return to normal service delivery. With renewed public demand for pool space from numerous and diverse user groups, the Aquatics Strategy has been invaluable in providing a reference point for operational decisions.**

- **New centres at Andersonstown, Brook and Lisnasharragh are now open. The significant increase in pool space now available has made it possible to apply the principles embedded with the Aquatics Strategy. Citywide we are now delivering the area-based programming strategy in North, South and West Belfast. Challenges in East Belfast, with unprecedented demand at Lisnasharragh, remain as programming options are constrained due the fact that we only have one wet centre. Work at Templemore is on schedule for the centre to reopen in the Autumn of 2022. This will provide two more pools in inner East. The introduction of nine additional programmable lanes in East Belfast will alleviate some of the pressures on Lisnasharragh and enable us to implement the Aquatics Strategy equitably across the whole city.**

- **The development of a pricing matrix to sit alongside the approved annual schedule of charges. The matrix is designed to serve as a much needed reference document for centre managers and front line staff in the application of approved pricing.**

- **Planning for the programming of pools at Lisnasharragh within the context of the City's main centre for competitive aquatic sports and activities.**

- **Liaison with Swim Ulster and affiliated aquatics clubs**

3.10 There may be some cause for optimism around a return towards 'normal service' throughout the remainder of 2021.

The next annual aquatics strategy action plan review will be presented August 2022 at which time, subject to service conditions between now and then, a more detailed progress report on each specific action plan output will be presented."

The Board noted the contents of the report.

Other Business

The Partnership Manager agreed, at the request of a Director, to submit to the Board meeting on 25th October a report on the future plans for Loughside Recreation Centre.

Chairperson

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Requests for Use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality**
Date:	12th August, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
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**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	This report, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function rooms received up to 9th August, which, in the view of the Function Management Unit, comply with the criteria previously established by the Committee and are recommended for approval.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 9th August, as set out in the attached appendix.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Background Information
3.1	Members will be aware that the Committee, at its meeting of 6th January 2017, agreed to modify the criteria governing access to the City Hall function rooms for external organisations.
3.2	The Committee also agreed to the implementation of room-hire charges for some categories of function, and also revised the approach to the provision of civic hospitality for functions on foot of the agreed efficiency programme. Some further modifications to this approach were agreed at the Committee's meetings of 24th March and 23rd June 2017, 23rd June 2019 and 25th October 2019.
	Key Issues
3.3	The existing revised criteria and scale of charges have been applied to the various requests received and the recommendations herein are offered to the Committee on this basis for approval.
3.4	The attached schedule covers three applications for functions, scheduled for 2021, 2022 and 2023 however approval is linked to City Hall recovery and functions will be planned in due course in line with NI Executive guidance.
	COVID implications
3.5	In managing and delivering future functions, liaison with and guidance for organisers will be provided by officers to ensure compliance with any relevant social distancing guidelines at the time of their function. Committee approval for their function to take place in City Hall is recommended on the basis of their compliance to this caveat and what is permissible and feasible in City Hall function rooms.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.6	The implementation of charging for external functions has commenced, in line with the Committee's decisions in the matter.
	Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications
3.7	There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.
4.0	**Document Attached**
	Schedule of Function requests received up to 9th August.

AUGUST 2021 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Royal British Legion	26 September 2021	**Celebration to mark Centenary of the Royal British Legion** - Reception and service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. We would then be leaving City Hall to march to Belfast Cathedral for a service'**.** Numbers attending – 120 ** Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.*	C	No (charity)	Yes, Tea/ Coffee Reception as centenary	Approve No charge Yes, hospitality
University of Atypical	1 October 2021	**Launch of Bounce Festival –** annual arts festival that showcases outstanding new work by deaf and disabled writers, producers, actors, dancers, musicians, and directors. Numbers attending – 12 ** Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.*	D	No (charity)	No Hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality
Belfast Trust	18 November 2021	**Launch of Men's Health Week** to showcase support available for men locally to get connected. Numbers attending – 35 ** Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.*	A & D	Yes - £115 (Government Dept)	No Hospitality	Approve Yes charge No hospitality
2022 EVENTS						
Ulster Hockey	21 January 2022	**Celebration dinner for 125th Anniversary of Ulster Hockey**	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as	Approve No charge Wine Reception

AUGUST 2021 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

		Numbers attending – 300 ** Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.*			significant anniversary	
British Transplant Society	3 March 2022	**Celebration dinner for 50th Anniversary of British Transplant Society** BTS will be holding their Congress in ICC for 400 delegates, City Hall will be the conference welcome and anniversary dinner Numbers attending – 250 - ** Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.*	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception
Catholic Chaplaincy, Queens University	10 June 2022	**Golden Jubilee Ball to celebrate 50 years of Catholic Chaplaincy at the Elmwood Avenue.** Numbers attending – 400 ** Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.*	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception
2023 EVENTS						
International Society for the Study of Individual Differences	20 July 2023	**Conference Welcome Reception and Dinner** to four-day conference taking place at Queen's University Belfast. Numbers attending – 250	A & B	No *£825 waived due to links with Visit Belfast*	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality