

Public Document Pack

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

HYBRID MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
-ADDITIONAL ITEM & REPORTS TO FOLLOW

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item(s) will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 5.15 pm on Wednesday, 9th August, 2023.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN WALSH

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

5. **Growing Business and the Economy**

(c) Eurocities Update (Pages 1 - 4)

6. **Positioning the City to Compete**

(a) Festive Lighting Scheme and Future Christmas Programming (Pages 5 - 10)

(c) Major Events Update (Pages 11 - 18)

7. **Strategic and Operational Issues**

(a) Response to Government Departments EQIA consultations (Pages 19 - 30)

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Subject:	Eurocities Membership proposal
Date:	9 August 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, International Relations Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for renewal of the council's membership of the Eurocities network, at a cost of €16,300 per calendar year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the renewal of Belfast City Council's membership of the Eurocities network, at a cost of €16,300 for one year.

3.0	Key issues
3.1	Members will be aware that Belfast has been a member of the EUROCITIES network for almost 30 years. EUROCITIES is a network of more than 200 major European cities, across 38 countries. It is made up of the elected local and municipal governments of the major cities. The activity of the network is structured through a number of thematic working areas including Cultural Development, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Placemaking and Sustainability. Belfast has participated in a number of the groups, based on particular areas of need or interest to the council and the city at that time. We have also shared learning on a range of topics and has availed of the network to engage with the key EU institutions in order to influence policy.
3.2	Whilst the city has limited access to the transnational funds due to its withdrawal from the EU, this network is still nevertheless important in positioning the city and building strong networks to support shared learning and collaboration.
3.3	<p>Within Belfast City Council, there are a number of areas in which officers have been engaged and which remain priority areas of focus. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an innovative city – link to the Smart Belfast agenda and the work on the Innovation District • Transitioning to a net zero and greener economy – link to the work on resilience and climate change, with a focus on developing collaborative activity and accessing new research and insights • Internationalising Belfast’s cultural proposition – learning from FDI and city positioning work, particularly in post-Covid world • Cultural development and city animation – exploring the role of culture as a driver for city development – including both capital infrastructure and innovative programming.
3.4	Looking ahead to 2024, Belfast is to hold the annual meeting of the Eurocities Culture Forum in September that year. Our bid to hold the event recognises the value of Belfast as a cultural capital and will present another opportunity to position and promote the city during this year of cultural celebration. Belfast last hosted the Eurocities Culture Forum meeting in March 2014. During that event, more than 70 representatives from 58 cities attended to find out more about Belfast’s work in this space. It presented a great opportunity to shine a light on the city itself but also on the rich cultural and artistic talent that we have in this place.

3.5	<p>Taking account of the planned event in 2024 and the wider learning and opportunities presented by our engagement in the Eurocities network, it is proposed that Belfast renews our annual membership of the network for this year.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with these activities.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The cost of annual membership is €16,300. This has been set aside within the International Relations budget for this year.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
4.1	<p>None</p>

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Subject:	Festive Lighting Scheme / Future Christmas Programming
Date:	9 th August 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley Ann O Donnell, Senior Manager, Tourism and Culture Kerry Mc Mullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	At this committee in June 2023 members were presented with options relating to the Belfast Christmas light switch on and potential follow-on activity across the city. During discussion at that meeting members directed officers to submit a report to a future meeting regarding the potential for Christmas events and lighting on arterial routes across the city. This report provides information in relation to that request from elected members.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	It is recommended that Members note the following,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The provision of festive lighting and animation on arterial routes would require additional investment and lead time, and therefore it is not possible to provide this additional programme for Christmas 2023 - Future Christmas event programming on arterial routes could be supported via an existing Council funding scheme such as the Community Festivals Fund, or Vibrant Business Destinations may be the most suitable. - The increase in costs outlined at 3.2 coupled with council's static budget is likely to mean that the current city centre festive lighting scheme will need to be scaled back for 2023.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At March Committee, Members were advised that Christmas Lighting Scheme in 2022 was year 3 of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme. Feedback on the scheme was positive, however, there were additional requests to consider an extension of the scheme to include arterial routes. Further discussion took place at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee held on 14th June 2023. Officers were asked to consider further the feasibility of such an extension.
3.2	The installation, storage and maintenance of our festive lighting scheme is managed through a third party that was appointed via a public procurement process. This contract is currently due for renewal and the supplier has indicated that they have seen significant cost increases relating to insurance, energy costs and labour costs. The budget for the Christmas Festive Lighting Scheme has remained unchanged in the last five years and the Economic Development division have no additional budget available to fund the expansion of the lighting scheme. In addition, we have previously had access to an additional non-recurrent budget, given council's financial pressures this has not been allocated this financial year.
3.3	In previous years additional funding was allocated via council non-recurrent budget that allowed additional features to be added to our lighting scheme. We also previously received funding from DfC revitalisation funding that allowed us to distribute monies via a funding programme to business clusters on arterial routes for them to produce some Christmas related activity.
3.4	Given councils current financial pressures and reduced levels of budget within Executive Department budgets it is not currently possible for officers to secure the additional budget that would be required for any additional activity on arterial routes.
3.5	The aforementioned increase in costs coupled with council's static budget is likely to mean that the current city centre scheme will need to be scaled back by as much as half. This will involve a concentration of lights within the central business district.
3.6	<p>Logistical/Operational/Financial Constraints – Lighting on Arterial Routes</p> <p>To have impact along the arterial routes, it is anticipated the level of additional investment for lighting would be significant. To install lighting schemes suitable mounting infrastructure and power must be secured from building owners, agents, or managers via a wayleave agreement. The cost and the lead time required to secure the wayleave agreements, and</p>

	<p>install the mounting infrastructure is significant, and it would not be possible for council or individual business clusters/associations to have the agreements and infrastructure in place for Christmas 2023.</p>
3.7	<p>Lights are typically purchased or leased, Belfast City Council leases its lights which allows the lighting scheme to be updated with new features, deploy more energy efficient lights, and avoid the costs relating to ownership that are,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase - Storage - Maintenance - Depreciation (typically festive lighting schemes have a useful life of 3-5 years)
3.8	<p>It is very unlikely that constituted associations in arterial routes would have the capacity or resources to manage a 'local' festive lighting scheme – there is evidence of this from the Vibrant Business Destination fund and it is a busy period for retailers - therefore any extension of this nature would almost certainly be implemented as part of the council's contractor remit. In addition, in respect of the Revitalisation Scheme, it was reported to be challenging to secure contractors for lighting installations.</p>
3.9	<p>In considering the information contained above members should note that given the logistical and financial challenges, and significant lead time to negotiate and secure wayleaves, access agreements and purchase or lease lighting infrastructure any expansion would not be possible until at least 2024. It should also be noted that is council were to be responsible for developing, implementing, and managing Christmas lights and animations along arterial routes additional finance and human resources would be required to recognise the significant work this would involve from several council services.</p>
4.0	<p>Animation on Arterial Routes</p> <p>At CG&R in June, Members agreed on the approach/format to Christmas 2023 - namely a combination of a Switch-on event and city-centre wide programme of animation and entertainment as per 2021 & 2022 with an allocation for subsequent weekends. Members are asked to note that planning for this event has started, with expenditure incurred. However, it was also requested that a future report be submitted regarding the potential for Christmas events on arterial routes across the city.</p>
4.1	<p>Members should note that the budget allocation for Christmas 2023 is £123,000 as presented at the June CG&R Committee. Within this budget, there was no allocation for Christmas event programming along arterial routes. Officers have considered the implications of resourcing programming and have concluded that significant additional resource would be required – or alternatively the current allocation for the city centre programming be used for arterial programming in future years. Based on knowledge and experience, officers have estimated that up to £10,000-£15,000 (per location) would be required for an impactful Christmas event programme; to cover elements such as staging, a parade, PA stewarding, event management and traffic management. This is on the assumption that the content is local performance.</p>

4.2	<p>Existing Funding Mechanisms</p> <p>Members should note there is a pre-existing mechanism for groups to secure funding to programme activity during the festive period. The ‘Community Festivals Fund’ is administered via Culture and the Central Grants Unit. This funding scheme is accessible by community groups but not council. Those groups can apply for funding between £2,500 - £10,000, and this is for arts and heritage activities and/or other cultural events that contribute to the cultural identity of an area or group and celebrates the uniqueness of that area or group. The current scheme is closed. Any festival must take place between November and March. Council receives applications from a range of community groups and arts organisations.</p>
4.3	<p>At this committee in October 2021 members agreed the Vibrant Business Destination programme which provided over £500,000 including £475,000 of funding from the department for Communities to increase the footfall and vibrancy of business destinations across the city. The funding provided allowed group to form constituted associations and develop and deliver actions plans for their specific areas. The programme aims to fund 10 action plans along the arterial routes. Christmas events and lighting are eligible investments within the programme conditions.</p>
4.4	<p>Summary</p> <p>Members are asked to note the following salient points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of festive lighting and animation on arterial routes would require additional investment and lead time, and therefore it is not possible to provide this additional programme for Christmas 2023 • The Council’s Christmas Events Programme based on members agreement in June 2023 to have a Combination of a Switch-on event and city-centre wide programme of animation and entertainment as per 2021 & 2022 (as per March Committee report), with an allocation for activity during subsequent weekends is well underway. Members will receive a report detailing those plans at Octobers Committee. • Future Christmas event programming on arterial routes could be supported via an existing Council funding scheme and the Community Festivals Fund is the most suitable. • If members direct officers to develop a programme of lighting and animation for arterial routes for 2024 this would need to be considered through the estimates process recognising the need for additional investment. • The increase in costs outlined at 3.2 coupled with council’s static budget is likely to mean that the current city centre festive lighting scheme will need to be scaled back for 2023.
4.0	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p>
4.1	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The current budget for Christmas lighting and animation was agreed by Committee in March 2023. There are no additional financial implications contained within this report.</p>

	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<i>None</i>

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Subject:	Major Events
Date:	9th August 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lesley Ann O Donnell, Senior Manager Culture and Tourism Kerry Mc Mullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Major Events programme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Maritime Festival • St Patrick’s Day 2024-2026 Tender • One Young World • an update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil na h’Eireann • an update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antrim Coast & Belfast - Northern Ireland Official Bid - World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026 • Approve officers working with DfC to understand the requirements of a future bid for the Oireachtas na Samhna festival in 2025/26. With future reports coming back to this committee prior to any binding bid being submitted.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update on the Belfast Maritime Festival. • Note the contents of the update on St Patrick’s Day including the procurement approach for 2024-2026 • Note the update on One Young World • Note and approve support for One Young World Delegates under the 2024 programme development strand. • Note the update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil, • Note the update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028 • Note the request for support for the World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026 and the proposal for officers to provide a non-binding letter indicating a road closure application will be submitted if the bid is successful
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Belfast Maritime Festival</p> <p>This year’s ‘Belfast Maritime Festival’ will be held on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2023, 11am – 6pm, in the Titanic Quarter with a programme that stretches from Queens Quay to HMS Caroline/Titanic Distillers. The aim is to create an inclusive event that appeals to all demographics celebrating all that is good and creative about Belfast, at an accessible location in the city highlighting our current tourism, heritage, culture, and maritime offering and showcasing our existing landmarks.</p> <p>The event is coordinated and implemented under a governance structure with key working groups reporting to the Programme Board, which consists of senior representatives from Council, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Maritime Belfast Trust.</p>
3.1.1	<p>The draft programme includes:</p>

- An interactive kid's zone at the front of the SSE, adjacent to Queens Quay which will host several visiting vessels including Granuaile, the Grace O'Malley, and both the Royal Navy and Irish Navy
- Street Theatre in the Arc, with further visiting vessels within Abercorn Marina
- The area around Hamilton Dock (the Nomadic) will host traditional shipbuilding displays and a large-scale community co-design photography project, delivered in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust.
- The Titanic Slipways will be a hive of activity, hosting the Belfast Bazaar - food and craft markets – and the unique 'Science Street' curated for the festival by NI Science Festival
- Music is a core element of the festival, and the Slipways will be the location for the main stage, hosting a full day of artists. This will be supplemented by other stages at Hamilton Dock and the Soundyard
- Due to major infrastructure programmes, the event footprint on the Co. Antrim side of the river is unfortunately limited, but Sailortown have been engaged to programme activity including within St Joseph's.
- Waterfront Neighbourhood Groups in and around the Lagan will be engaged to participate in the Photography Co-design Project via Maritime Belfast Trust.

3.1.2

Visit Belfast and BCC Corporate Communications have developed a regional and out of state campaign in as per the terms and conditions of TNI's Letter of Offer. The festival press launched on 24 July 2023 with all paid activity commencing 31 July until the 10th of September 2023. The Campaign will consist of outdoor, digital, radio, social media across NI and ROI.

3.2

St Patrick's Day 2024-2026 Tender

The purpose of this part of the report is to provide Members with a brief update on the recent tender exercise. At the April Committee, the Tourism and Events Workplan was presented, and members approved the allocation of £300,000 to St Patricks Day 2024. Furthermore, in June, members were provided with information on the tender exercise required for engaging the creative sector to deliver elements of future St. Patrick's Celebrations. This tender has now been posted, with submissions expected at the end of August. The tender will be for a period of three years (1 + 1+ 1) to allow for product development. However, projects will be evaluated on an annual basis. Successful organisations would be expected to co-ordinate activity in support of each other.

One Young World

3.3

3.3.1

Members will be aware that Belfast is hosting the One Young World Global Summit in Belfast from 2-5 October 2023. A global summit with a mission to create a world where leaders are empowered to build a fair, sustainable future for all through identifying, promoting, and connecting the world's most impactful young leaders. Previous host cities include Manchester, Dublin, London, Bogota, Ottawa, and Munich, with Belfast handing on the baton to Montreal for 2024. The Summit provides a global forum for young leaders to experience four days of speeches, panels, networking, and workshops, partnering with 190+ global businesses and educational institutions. It traditionally attracts delegates from 190+ countries, which sees some 2,000 + young delegates visit the host city for four nights, generating an estimated economic impact of £3.4m. As well as the young delegates, the summit attracts some 40+ global leaders, 100+ international journalists and 100's of leading global companies. One Young World will give Belfast global exposure as a young, vibrant, welcoming city as well as providing a legacy for the city on top of an economic return.

The Summit programme for the four days is summarised below:

3.3.2

Monday 2nd October 2023	
Arrival & Registration, Exhibition & Side Stage Open	ICC Belfast
Opening Ceremony	SSE Arena
Delegate Dinner	St George's Market/ICC Belfast
Tuesday 3rd October 2023	
Summit Sessions	ICC Belfast
Cathedral Quarter Takeover	Cathedral Quarter
Counsellor Dinner	City Hall
Wednesday 4th October 2023	
Summit Sessions	ICC Belfast
Community Dine-Around	Various venues. The Mac, Queens University, and 2 Royal Avenue
Thursday 4th October 2023	
Summit Sessions	ICC Belfast
Closing Ceremony	ICC Belfast
Delegate Dinner & After Party	Titanic Belfast / Titanic Quarter

<p>3.3.3</p>	<p>Attendance opportunities for Council officials and members across the week are currently being considered, with invites and briefings being issued in coming weeks.</p> <p>BCC is currently seeking budget approval that corresponds to sponsorship opportunities for 20 delegates to attend the event, with a total value of £63,000. This budget is intended to be sourced from existing departmental funds and will be synchronized with the programme development of Belfast 2024. The intent is to ensure that the leadership qualities, knowledge, and ambassadorial roles of the delegates would be incorporated into the development and outreach aspects of the year's programming.</p> <p>Additionally, the budget includes an initiative to establish a Youth Panel/Forum. This new platform would serve for engagement and culture alongside the advocacy board. The board would also offer a means for other sponsored delegates, supported by organisation such as the Education Authority, SEUPB, HLF, and Deloitte, to maintain an ongoing relationship with the city.</p>
<p>3.4</p> <p>3.4.1</p> <p>3.4.2</p>	<p>All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil Na h'Eireann</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to provide Members with further information on the status of Belfast's bid to host the Fleadh Cheoil Na h'Eireann.</p> <p>At CG&R in June, Members were briefed on the Lessons Learned from Belfast's bid. The Belfast bid received very positive feedback from all sources. In June, members agreed to commit to supporting the Ards Branch in attendance at several crucial events. In addition, members were furnished with financial information on the bid, including costs associated with Council staff attending Mullingar.</p> <p>A Belfast delegation will be attending the Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar from Wednesday 9 - Saturday 12 August 2023, which includes representatives from Belfast City Council and Ards CCÉ. Representation from Belfast is expected at this event to show commitment to the bidding process and to garner votes. The Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of Economic Development will attend the Ard Ollamh Gala Awards dinner on 9 August along with members of Ards CCÉ. The Chief Executive and 2 senior Council officers will also attend the Overseas Reception on 10 August with Ards CCÉ. Three Council officers will also attend the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra event on the 11 August with Ards CCÉ, one of the main Comhaltas events of the week and a key opportunity for networking and lobbying. Lastly, Belfast City Council's contracted Health & Safety advisor for the Events Team will also attend the event on 10 August for a one-day operational site visit.</p>

3.5	<p>Bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028</p> <p>Officers are working closely with key bid stakeholders (Tourism NI, IFA, Central Bid Team, and UK Sport) in the interim period before the official bid announcement in the Autumn. It was anticipated that preliminary feedback from UEFA on the UK and Ireland bid would require some additional clarifications, but this was managed by the Central Bid Team</p> <p>A Host City briefing from the Central Bid Team will take place early August. Members will be furnished with regular updates on the bid as and when further information is available.</p>
3.6	<p>Antrim Coast & Belfast - Northern Ireland Official Bid - World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026</p> <p>Belfast City Council are being asked to support a bid by the organisers of the Antrim Half Marathon to host the World Road Running Championships in 2025/26. The event consists of several road races,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A mass participation ½ marathon to take place outside of Belfast - A 5km elite to take place in Belfast City Centre - A 1-mile elite race in Belfast City Centre
3.7	<p>It is expected that the event would cost circa £1.5m to host. At this juncture the organisers have not received a commitment of support from Tourism Northern Ireland or another agency in support of the bid.</p>
3.8	<p>The specific support sought from Council at this stage is a course guarantee which in essence,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irrevocably undertakes, guarantee, and shall ensure that: The competition course will be made available to the MF to organise and stage the WAS event and shall give access to the MF and its guests in order to conduct visits. - There is no restriction in respect to WORLD ATHLETICS and / or DENTSU on installing commercial adverting in the Competition Course.
3.9	<p>Officers have reviewed the course guarantee and believe that given Councils power for road closures it would not have the relevant statutory powers to provide such a guarantee. Any event road closure is subject to consultation and cannot therefore not be guaranteed.</p>

4.0	<p>Instead, and in consultation with the bidding party, officers are suggesting providing a non-binding letter stating that if the bid is successful Belfast City Council will apply for the required road closures. But that application is subject to the standard process, including consultation, and cannot be guaranteed, and nor can any other form of support from Belfast City Council at this juncture.</p>
4.1	<p>Officers have been approached by officials from the Department of Communities to begin exploring a potential bid to host Oireachtas na Samhna festival in 2025/26. This is the longest running Arts festival in Ireland and is a celebration of the original Oireachtas – or congregation of authorities – which was first established in the 7th century. This Irish speaking event welcomes people of all ages and descriptions from singers, dancers, poets, writers, storytellers, actors, impersonators, and musical composers.</p>
4.2	<p>The event which typically takes place during the first week of November would be expected to take place in several cultural venues across the city and bring as many as 50,000 visitors to the city.</p>
4.3	<p>At this juncture the resource requirements, or precise role for Belfast City Council is yet to be established, and when this is understood it will be brought back to this committee for consideration. At this stage officers are seeking permission to continue working with DfC to understand the requirements of any future bid and will revert to committee to seek approval from members prior to any bid being submitted that might commit Council to a role or resources.</p>
4.0	Financial & Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All expenditure agreed in respect of the the Belfast Maritime Festival, St Patrick’s Celebrations, and respective Fleadh and UEFA bids are within existing departmental budgets and approvals.</p> <p>There is a request for approval of £63,000 to sponsor the attendance of delegates at OYW through existing departmental funds of programme development for Belfast 2024</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None.</p>

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Response to Government Departments EQIA consultations
Date:	9th August 2023
Reporting Officers:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the draft Council responses to the Department for the Economy and Department for Infrastructure’s Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) consultation on their 2023-24 budget.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft responses and approve their formal submission, subject to any comments or amendments provided at the Committee meeting.

3.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	DfE launched an EQIA consultation on its draft budget for 2023-24 on 7 th June with a closing date of 30 th August 2023. DfI launched theirs on 15 th May with a closing date of 7 th August (though they also asked for initial responses to be submitted as soon as possible).
3.2	To meet the early deadline for DfI, council officers submitted a draft response for the DfI consultation on 12 th June (as attached at Appendix 2) stating that the submission was subject to approval by the CG&R Committee and ratification by the Council. DfI was informed that, should any changes be made at the Committee or Council meeting, it would be provided with an updated submission. This draft was also circulated to PGLs in June via email, with no requests for changes being received.
3.3	The DfE consultation response has not yet been submitted. It will be submitted following feedback and approval of this committee, again with the proviso of full approval or further changes following Council on 4 th September.
3.4	DfI state that their budget will be reduced by 0.4% when compared to their 2022-23 budget. However, they state that, in real terms, the reductions represent a 14% cut in its resource budget, which will require £167m of savings.
3.5	<p>DfI proposed a number of options to help meet the new budget pressures. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in public transport provision; • Water and wastewater services impacted; • Road maintenance and flood risk management operational activities are reduced to emergency-only services; • Community transport is not funded; • Streetlights are switched off; • No road gritting service is provided this winter.
3.6	The draft response in Appendix 2, comments on these specific proposals and also answers the general areas where DfI requested feedback.
3.7	In contrast, DfE have only provided an overview of their proposed budget reductions. The draft response (attached at Appendix 1) therefore focuses on the general areas where DfE requested feedback.

3.8	In terms of the reductions, DfE state that their budget will be cut by 1.3% against their 2022/23 year-end position. However, they claim that their overall resource spending power is reduced by £130 million, or 16%.
3.9	DfE's largest proposed cuts are to HEI Postgraduate funding £17m, Reduction in Funding to Higher Education £14m, Invest NI in year reduction 22/23 £14m and Invest NI R&D funding £12m. Despite these changes, skills and education remains the largest part of the budget totalling £550m or 74% of the total.
3.10	In terms of % change to funding, a 33% Reduction in Funding to Tourism NI (equivalent to £9m) is the largest reduction.
3.11	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> There are no direct implications associated with this report.
3.12	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no direct implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Draft response to DfE EQIA Consultation 2023 Appendix 2 – Draft response to DfI EQIA Consultation 2023

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BCC Draft Response to DfE Resource Budget 2023 – 24 EQIA

Link to DfE Consultation: [Budget 2023-24 Equality Impact Assessment](#)

Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree that DfE has gathered the necessary data to inform its decisions around the allocation of its budget? If not, what other sources of data should the Department consider?

Response: No. While we note your comments in relation to similar concerns raised in the ‘Initial Period Consultation Response’, we feel that the EQIA may have been limited in two other important ways.

Firstly, while we agree that such extensive cuts will impact all members of society, we do not agree with your fundamental assumption that with “the impact being felt across all section 75 (s75) groups, therefore, as no one section is disproportionately impacted at the expense of another.” This thinking appears to be more in line with providing ‘equal treatment’ rather than ‘equality of opportunity.’ Our approach to EQIA is to determine if cuts will have a disproportionate impact on any s75 group (or multiple identities) based on the differences in need of those groups. To give a very basic example, people with disabilities are statistically more likely to be unemployed. The 2021 Labour Force Survey reports that there is a 41-percentage point disability employment gap within Belfast (37.2% of people with a disability are employed compared with 78.1% of people with no disability who are employed). To cut services that help people into employment will affect all s75 categories as you have assumed. However, while all people will experience an ‘*equal treatment*’ in that the programme will be cut; proportionally more people with disabilities are in need of the ‘*opportunities*’ provided by these programmes and hence there will be a ‘*bigger proportional impact*’ on people with disabilities.

Secondly, the sources of data that you have listed, appear to focus primarily on people (and hence s75 breakdowns) who are currently using the service. While that is understandable, it does not seem to be a thorough means of assessing the *potential* impact of cuts.

We suggest that there should also have been more reference to the s75 breakdown of people who are in need of the services, funding, and arm’s length support of your funded organisations. For example, two of your main work areas (Skills for the 10x economy, and TourismNI) are of significance to the unemployed, long-term unemployed, and low skilled people who are trying to get onto the employment ladder. Statistically young people, people from ethnic minorities (especially Travellers), people with disabilities, and those with caring responsibilities are more likely to need help finding employment, being retrained or to be helped starting a business. Therefore, cuts in these areas are more likely to have a more adverse impact on their ‘equality of opportunity.’

It may be that our understanding is incorrect and that your EQIA did attempt to consider this data via detailed reviews of the census, employment statistics, Business Register and Employment Survey, etc. However, as others highlighted in the ‘Initial Period Consultation Response’ you did not provide the specific data that was used. Therefore, we can’t suggest additional data for you to consider, as

you may have already done so. Instead, we would like to highlight a few of the types of statistics that we hope have been considered in this EQIA.

- Employment rate of people with disabilities - 37.3%
- Employment rate of people without disabilities - 79.6%
- Economically inactive rate of people with disabilities - 59.2%
- Economically inactive rate of people without disabilities - 17.8%
- Economically inactive rate aged 16 to 24 - 50.7%
- Economically inactive rate aged 25 to 34 - 15.9%
- Economically inactive rate aged 35 to 49 - 14.1%
- Economically inactive rate aged 50 to 64 - 34.1%

It is also difficult to understand why the largest cuts being to education providers did not register as having a disproportionate impact on the S75 age category, where the majority of those affected will be young people.

2. Do you agree with DfE's assessment of the proposals for budget reductions? If not, what other areas of the Department's spend should be considered?

Response: No. While we understand that the unprecedented requirement means that difficult choices need to be made, we would still like to highlight some areas.

Firstly, the 33% cut to Tourism NI seems especially severe when the sector was one of the most affected by the Covid pandemic. The sector is also one of the areas of potential growth that also allows access to employment for those who may find employment in other sectors difficult due to lack of qualifications, experience etc. As highlighted in our other responses, this sector is likely to be disproportionately represented by s75 groups including ethnic minorities, young people, and those with disabilities.

The proposed cuts to Invest NI also seem proportionally high. From the limited financial information available, they appear to also amount to about a quarter of the budget being cut (£73m left after £26m reduction). It would be useful to know what guidance the Department will give to Invest NI in terms of instructing its future priorities. In particular, will the focus be in supporting local investment or attracting FDI?

3. Do you agree with DfE's assessment of equality impacts of the options considered for budget reductions? If not, what other equality impacts does the Department need to take account of?

Response: No. As already alluded to, there is insufficient information to know exactly what consideration the department has made when reaching its conclusions and recommendations. There is also insufficient information about how the cuts will be directed. The information provided in your papers is very top level.

So, to repeat the point in our response to Q1) we feel there is a potential impact on multiple s75 categories with these reductions. As a top-level summary: anything impacting on future skills development, job/employment creation, business starts or support for sectors with lower qualification requirements; is likely to have a disproportionate impact dependant on racial group, age, disability, people with dependants and potentially gender, and religious backgrounds.

4. Do you agree that DfE has correctly identified all relevant mitigations that could help reduce the adverse equality impacts of the budget reductions? If not, what additional mitigation measures should the Department consider?

Response: No. Considering our previous responses, we do not believe that all potential impacts have been identified and hence it is not possible to develop all relevant mitigations. The consultation also does not provide any significant information on proposed mitigations other than the draft revised budget.

We would add that it is disappointing that no mention is made of potential means to raise additional revenue to offset some of the proposed cuts. We have not had the time to undertake a particular review of what those potential revenues may look like, but examples from elsewhere include: increased monetising of HE research; efforts to attract scholarships through philanthropists and also directly from major FDI; an increase in international students; potential loan based partial payback of certain education or business programmes; tourism tax, etc. Please note, we are not suggesting that any of these ideas are fully appropriate, we just quote them as examples of ways that additional income may be generated.

5. Do you agree with DfE's overall assessment of the business areas where the proposed budget reductions will need to be made? If not, which areas of the Department's business would be better able to withstand reductions?

Response: see the response to question 2.

6. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about this consultation – yes or no?

Response: We fully agree with the points raised in the 'Other consideration section.' In particular, we agree with the additional risk to NI, which is already behind other competitor regions, and is therefore ill-placed to endure further reduction in its efforts to increase its competitiveness.

Going forward, these budget reductions are going to increase the importance of the various departments, arm's length bodies, independent bodies, councils, major stakeholders, and the third sector working even more closely together. We hope to be able to enhance our cooperation with all our partners to maximise the resources, experience and knowledge we all have, to minimise these impacts as much as possible.

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BCC Draft Response to Dfl Resource Budget 2023 – 24 EQIA.

Link to Dfl Consultation:

[Budget 2023-24 Equality Impact Assessment](#)

Draft BCC Responses

Overarching points BCC would like to raise/ emphasise in covering letter to consultation response:

Belfast City Council is not in support of any of the measures that have been proposed in the Department's Resource Budget 2023-24 to mitigate the funding gap. The Belfast Agenda, our city's first community plan, sets out how multiple statutory, community and third sector partners have committed to making Belfast a safe, fair and inclusive place for all. In our view the proposed cost-saving measures run contrary to The Belfast Agenda since they will compromise the safety of all who live in, visit or use the city and especially the most vulnerable and those who experience the highest levels of economic and social deprivation.

A reduction in public transport provision:

The Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) is aimed at reducing air polluting emissions (NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) associated with road transportation, by promoting the use of sustainable transportation options such as cycling and encouraging a shift towards greater use of public transport which reduces vehicle usage across the road network. DFI is a key partner in delivering that AQAP together with Translink. Therefore, any proposed reduction in public transport provision is concerning as there will be less choice for commuters who will not be encouraged to switch from their vehicles to using public transport. Therefore, any reduction in service provision may lead to an increase in vehicles on our road infrastructure which will in turn contribute to increased traffic congestion and air pollution in the city. This will impact on the successful delivery of the AQAP and the Council, together with its key partners DFI and Translink, will not be able to deliver on its key objectives for improving air quality standards in the city.

Furthermore, this will have a disproportionate impact on those already facing the highest levels of social inequality and economic deprivation, as they are less likely to own a private car or have access to private transport and are therefore more reliant on public transport to reach their place of work, or to access other social infrastructure of services including schools, nurseries, GP surgeries, leisure centres etc.

We are actively encouraging staff to use public transport and have seen an increase in the number of staff returning to the office following the pandemic. Will any reduction in public transport provision be designed to minimise the impact around the times when most of the workforce would be travelling to and from work?

Water and wastewater services impacted:

Maintenance of our sewerage system is an essential element in controlling the impact of the rat population on residential and commercial premises. Will the impact on rodent control be considered if waste and wastewater services are impacted?

The city is in need of investment within its wastewater capacity to deliver development, employment and housing. Currently there are some 11,000 people in housing stress within the Belfast area and any reduction in water and wastewater provision will directly impact those in greatest need of housing relief. In addition to this any further delay in delivering on the Living With Water Programme will have a direct impact on the provision of employment opportunities, reducing our ability to provide inclusive growth and to reduce the barriers to employment.

No road gritting service is provided this winter:

A reduction in road gritting services will also directly impact the most vulnerable in our society, increasing the risk of injury through slips and falls and potentially creating greater isolation of the elderly and mobility impaired.

Increased accidents will lead to congestion on our road network, directly impact public transportation provision and access to services across our community but particularly to the Section 75 groups who rely on these services most.

Our frontline services are required to travel to all locations within the council boundary throughout the winter. If no road gritting was undertaken there would be parts of the city that we may not be able to provide our dog warden, pest control, animal welfare and enforcement services to, as well other frontline services. Significantly, it would negatively impact our ability to collect waste, a statutory duty. If a decision is made not to grit roads, will it take account of the impact on Council frontline services?

Road maintenance and flood risk management operational activities are reduced to emergency-only services:

Maintenance of flood risk management operational activities are vital to reduce the likelihood and severity of flooding in Belfast which is an Area of Significant Flood Risk. Existing infrastructure requires investment and improvement as outlined in the Living With Water Programme (LWWP). Maintenance of the existing infrastructure is vital to reduce impacts from flooding, any reduction in routine maintenance such a grill and gulley clearance will have a detrimental impact increasing the likelihood of flood damage to homes and businesses with large clean-up costs and resource implications for statutory agencies.

Community transport is not funded:

Loneliness and isolation persists especially among the older and less mobile cohorts in society and therefore the provision of community transport is a lifeline. While we appreciate there are a number of factors that have combined to impact on the sustainability of this service, not least changes to work patterns, increasing costs of fuel etc. the termination of this service will be most keenly felt in the most poorly connected communities especially where a regular bus service is absent.

Streetlights are switched off:

Streetlights are vital to protecting the safety of all road users and pedestrians and the proposed switch off would threaten the safety and security of everyone, especially the most vulnerable including children and older adults, people with visual impairments or reduced mobility, and women.

Furthermore, those most likely to be impacted by the proposed measure are people who walk, run or cycle short journeys and therefore this will only serve to reduce the inclination towards active and sustainable travel modes. The highest level of conflict between the myriad road users and pedestrians is at peak commuting times of the day and therefore as a safeguarding measure it will be critical to guarantee the operation of streetlights during peak travel times.

Active School Travel programme:

Deciding not to fund the Active School Travel programme from July 2023 is likely to discriminate against young people and people with dependants. Taking a view via Sustrans, one of the partners on the Air Quality Steering Board we concur with the view that cutting this programme will contribute only 0.2% of the departments' budgetary shortfall and the impact on children across Northern Ireland will be greater. Consider the fact that climate change will have the biggest effect on the younger generation and the Department for Infrastructure has a legal obligation to reduce carbon emissions including investing 10% of the transport budget on active travel (it currently invests just 2%). There are many future implications of failing to encourage active travel from a young age, further entrenching car dependency and inactivity.

Furthermore, given the timeframes associated with this Budget Consultation this draft response has not yet been subject to our formal governance oversight and should be treated as draft pending formal ratification at the next meeting of the Full Council on the 3rd July 2023.

Specific points from EQIA that BCC departments would like to respond to:

DfI Budget 2023-24	Draft Departmental Response
1. Are there any data needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in Section 5 and 6 of the EQIA consultation document? If so, what are they? Please provide details?	Not to our knowledge however it will be critically important to undertake comprehensive stakeholder engagement especially targeted at the Section 75 equality categories.
2. Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in section 6 of the EQIA Consultation document? If so, what are they?	Yes. It is our view that all of the Section 75 equality groups will be adversely impacted to a varying but nonetheless high degree of adversity by the proposed budget savings. While there may be a lack of available datasets to determine the level of impact on specific protected characteristics it will be important to undertake comprehensive stakeholder engagement with Section 75 equality groups to ascertain how the proposed measures are likely to impact them.

	<p>It is our view that the proposed cuts represent a neglect of duty to have due regard for the need to promote equality of opportunity within and between the respective protected characteristics. We believe a number of the proposed budget saving measures will be especially harmful on the basis of gender and age including the proposed switch off of street lighting. It is clear that personal crime and physical assault persists especially along gender lines and it has long been reported that women in particular feel unsafe going out at night. This measure will serve to further reduce the inclination of women to make journeys on foot and instead choose to travel by private car.</p> <p>Our position is that, when evaluating savings options, the emphasis needs to be on protecting the needs of the most vulnerable in our society and seeking to maintain the services that they rely upon.</p>
<p>3. Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts in seeking to manage the Department's resource budget?</p>	<p>It is our view that the Department needs to consider more carefully and thoroughly areas where resource budget savings can be made that will have reduced impact on the most vulnerable in society and avoid 'quick fix' measures such as the Active Schools budget saving which are short-sighted, run contrary to policy designed to encourage and facilitate more sustainable travel and improve mental and physical health outcomes.</p> <p>Our position is that the Department must seek to retain the services, to an adequate standard, that the most vulnerable in our society rely upon.</p>
<p>4. Are there any other comments you would like to make in regard to the consultation process generally?</p>	<p>The areas of savings identified throughout the consultation report appear to be unfairly targeted at some of the most vulnerable groupings. We would encourage minimal impact economically on those most vulnerable in society given the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing economic uncertainty.</p>