

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



**Belfast
City Council**

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in person, in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Wednesday, 13th September, 2023 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Update on DfI funded projects: Active Travel Enablers and Grey to Green Demonstrator Project (Pages 1 - 10)
- (b) Housing Led Regeneration Programme Update (Pages 11 - 46)
- (c) Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2023/24 (Pages 47 - 56)
- (d) Quarter 1 Performance Zoo Update (Pages 57 - 62)
- (e) Quarter 1 Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme (Pages 63 - 72)

3. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**
 - (a) All Island Strategic Rail Review (Pages 73 - 84)
 - (b) Response from Department for Communities on Rent Controls (Pages 85 - 96)
4. **Positioning the City to Compete**
 - (a) Update on Music Strategy - NI Music Prize (Pages 97 - 100)
5. **Strategic and Operational Issues**
 - (a) Committee Plan 2023-24 and End of Year Report (22-23) (Pages 101 - 134)

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Subject:	All-Island Strategic Rail Review
Date:	13 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager Callie Persic, Development Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the draft report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR) currently out for consultation and to agree the draft response to be submitted from Belfast City Council.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<p>I. Note the content of this report in relation to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review that is currently out for consultation.</p> <p>II. Approve the Council's draft consultation response to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department of Transport's on the AISRR and associated environmental documents as enclosed with this report in Appendix 2, noting that in line with the consultation closing date of 29 September, that this will be submitted as draft and will be subject to ratification by Council on 2 October and any further comments or amends at Council will be forwarded to the Department.</p>
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR) (Appendix 1) was launched jointly in 2021 by the Minister for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and the Minister for Transport in Ireland. DfI, in conjunction with the DfT, are now seeking opinions on the Review's draft report, and on the reports accompanying the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.
3.2	The AISRR is the first All-Island Strategic Review of this nature. It will inform investment in the rail sector in both jurisdictions to 2050, with the aim of supporting de-carbonisation of the transport sector in line with both governments' net-zero commitments.
3.3	This paper provides background on the report, its recommendations, and the outcomes for the island if the recommendations were all to be carried out. It also provides an overview of Council's draft consultation response (Appendix 2).
3.4	<u>Context</u> The Review was launched in April 2021 by Eamon Ryan, Minister for Transport Ireland, and Nichola Mallon, then Minister at the Department for Infrastructure, Northern Ireland. It has now been published alongside the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment for consultation and is expected to be finalised by the end of this year.
3.5	As part of the preparation of the AISRR, and in accordance with statutory requirements, it was necessary for the Departments to carry out a screening exercise to establish whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process was applicable to the AISRR. The Screening Report determined that an environmental assessment was required to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the AISRR, and reasonable alternatives, taking account of the objectives and the geographical

	scope of the AISRR. Consultation on the AISRR and associated environmental documents opened on Tuesday 25 July and will run until Friday 29 September 2023.
3.6	The Review sets out thirty recommendations for developing a rail network that could significantly benefit commuters, communities, businesses, the environment and economies, both north and south. If the recommendations are implemented in full it could transform the rail system in the coming decades with electrification, faster speeds and greatly improved frequency, opening a number of new routes particularly across the West and North of the island, and widening accessibility and connectivity across the island.
3.7	The AISRR focuses on how the rail network across the island could contribute to the decarbonisation of its transport systems, promote sustainable connectivity into and between major cities, enhance regional accessibility and support balanced regional development. Thirty recommendations have been put forward to achieve these goals. To implement the recommendations of the AISRR, a range of projects/schemes would be required and each of these will be subject to appropriate feasibility, options, funding and environmental assessments at project level, where required.
3.8	The draft review was commissioned and overseen by both Departments and carried out by engineering firm Arup. Recommendations which are based around six goals (Contributing to decarbonisation, improving All-Ireland connectivity between major cities, enhancing regional and rural accessibility, encouraging sustainable mobility, fostering economic activity and achieving economic and financial feasibility), are proposed to be delivered over the coming 25 years, aligning with net-zero commitments in both jurisdictions. Among the key recommendations are:
3.9	<p>Decarbonisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decarbonise the rail network, including an electrified intercity network as well as hybrid, hydrogen and electric rolling stock.
3.10	<p>Intercity Speed and Frequency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade the core intercity railway network (Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford) to top speeds of 200km/h ensuring that train journeys are faster than the car.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade the cross-country rail network to a dual-track railway (and four-track in places) and increase intercity service frequencies to hourly between the main city pairs.
3.11	<p>New Regional Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase regional and rural lines speeds to at least 120 km/h. • Reinstate the Western Rail Corridor between Claremorris and Athenry. • Extend the railway into Tyrone (from Portadown to Dungannon, Omagh, Strabane) Derry- Londonderry, and onto Donegal (Letterkenny) • Reinstate the South Wexford Railway, connecting to Waterford • Develop the railway to boost connectivity in the North Midlands, from Mullingar to Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh and Portadown
3.12	<p>Sustainable Cities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect Dublin, Belfast International and Shannon Airport to the railway and improve existing rail-airport connections. • Segregate long-distance and fast services from stopping services, ensuring quicker times on city approaches
3.13	<p>Transforming Freight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen rail connectivity to the island's busiest ports and reduce Track Access Charges for freight. • Develop first-mile-last-mile rail access for Dublin Port
3.14	<p>Prioritising Customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve service quality, provide on-board catering, 'clock-face' timetable, better integration with other transport options, and cross-border structures to streamline travel north and south.
3.15	<p>If the review's recommendations are implemented in full across the coming decades, the capital cost is estimated to be €36.8bn / £30.7bn based on 2023 cost estimates. If all the recommendations in this Review were delivered it is envisioned that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rail network would be decarbonised • 700,000 more people would live within 5km of a railway station • Rail journey times between some major cities could be halved

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services on busiest intercity routes could run every 30 minutes in some cases • Rail passenger numbers could double • 90% of aviation passengers could travel to the airport by rail • Two thirds of freight tonnage would pass through ports served by rail • The island's economy could be boosted by €20 billion
3.16	The Review's recommendations provide policy makers and Ministers in both jurisdictions with an evidence-based framework to inform future investment decisions. More detailed work will be needed to test the feasibility and affordability of many of the recommendations to inform decision making.
3.17	<p><u>Belfast City Council Draft Consultation Response</u></p> <p>Members are asked to consider and provide comment on the Council's draft consultation response prior to approving submission to the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Transport's consultants on the AISRR and associated environmental documents, enclosed with this report at Appendix 2. Members will note that in line with the consultation closing date of 29 September, that this will be submitted as draft and will be subject to ratification by Council on 2 October and any further comments or amends at Council will be forwarded to the Department.</p>
3.18	The draft response sets out the Council's general support for the ambitions and recommendations made in the AISRR. It notes that the AISRR will make a contribution to meeting the targets set out for the city in the NI Climate Action Plan 2022, the Belfast Agenda, Local Development Plan (LDP), Bolder Vision and the Net Zero Carbon Roadmap. Whilst the response is supportive, it outlines that consideration should be given to ensure any development is in line with the requirements set out within DfI's new Eastern Transport Plan, the LDP and should align with the ambitions of A Bolder Vision. Specifically, it notes that the implementation of future rail infrastructure should ensure that it does not create physical barriers between communities but instead improve the connectivity between each other and the city centre.
3.19	In recognition of a potential future population of between 8.5-10 million people on the island by 2050 there is a need to develop and connect urban areas and provide infrastructure fit to serve a growing and diverse population. Consideration of the costs and delivery of enabling infrastructure requirements such as bridges, tunnels, additional tracks, Overhead Line Equipment and hydrogen production and storage locations as well as building in sustainable

	multi-modal options for first and last mile journeys such as active travel routes should be considered at this early stage.
3.20	Taking a Transit Oriented Development approach could provide population densification in strategic locations and contribute to economic, social and environmental benefits, not least the increase of housing in these areas and corridors and support the potential clustering of employment opportunities. Efficient rail links between urban centres will bring added benefits in terms of spreading economic and population growth, support additional FDI and support indigenous investment and new supply chains to emerge, drive tourism and leisure opportunities and ultimately support sustainability goals and reduced emissions.
3.21	It is perhaps somewhat disappointing that the potential contribution of rail freight has largely been discounted when it comes to the Port of Belfast. Despite being the second largest port* on the island the review considers that any options to improve linkages to the Port of Belfast would be very costly and disruptive and would encourage freight traffic to use parts of the railway that are already quite congested.
3.22	This approach would seem contradict Recommendation 23 of the report which looks to “strengthen rail connectivity to the island’s busiest ports” and misses an opportunity to contribute towards the decarbonisation of the island’s transport system as well as reducing congestion both locally and regionally (Some sources suggest that one freight train can remove up to 76 HGVs from the road).
3.23	With a current baseline of having no regular rail freight operations it would seem that with the necessary governments’ commitment and investment there are clear economic and environmental benefits that could be delivered through improved rail freight linkages beyond what is currently proposed in the draft Report.
3.24	Additionally, it is felt that the AISRR should increase its ambitions in terms of journey times which will bring added advantages and enhance the quality of life for residents which brings benefits in terms of health and well-being, access to public services, reduced congestion, and connectivity to leisure opportunities including the unrivalled natural heritage of the island. Such an approach creates the conditions that could also support ‘returners’ to the island and drive inward migration and support sustainable lifestyles in line with the Net Zero targets.
3.25	<u>Next Steps</u>

	Subject to approval at this committee, Belfast City Council will formally submit its draft response (Appendix 2) to Arup as the agent for the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Transport's consideration. Officers will highlight that in line with the consultation closing date of 29 September, that the submission is a draft response which will be subject to ratification by Council on 2 October and any further comments or amends at Council will be forwarded to the Department.
3.26	Following the consultation period, the Minister for Transport and Government in Ireland as well as Minister for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, will be asked to approve the final Review incorporating any changes as a result of the SEA consultation process. It is anticipated, subject to those approvals, that the final Review will be published in the Winter of 2023. Should there continue to be an absence of Ministers in the NI Executive, approval will be considered taking into account the relevant legislation in place at the time.
3.27	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.28	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The implications of the Equality or Goods Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessments will need to be undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Transport in line with their own policy positions and prior to undertaking implementation.
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Department of Transport and Department for Infrastructure, All-Island Strategic Rail Review Draft Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation 25 July 2023. All-Island Strategic Rail Review - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Draft Report Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)</p> <p>Appendix 2: All-Island Strategic Rail Review Draft Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation: Belfast City Council draft response submission.</p>

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Belfast City Council Draft Response on All-Island Strategic Rail Review - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Draft Report

Belfast City Council welcomes this opportunity to respond to the consultation on the All-Island Strategic Rail Review. The Council is generally supportive of the vision and the ambitions set out in the draft report. The recommendations set out in the report to decarbonise the rail network, improve the speed and frequency of services and to improve and create additional rail connections, will support the city to achieve the targets set out in The Belfast Agenda, the city's Community Plan, the NI Climate Change Act 2022 and the Net Zero Carbon Roadmap. Consideration should be given to ensure that the proposals are in line with the requirements set out within Department for Infrastructure's new Eastern Transport Plan

Specifically, the recommendations would contribute to realising the vision for Belfast as set out in the Agenda, to be 'beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant and being a sustainable city, shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict.' In addition to assisting in meeting the Agenda's targets to 'reduce the city's carbon emissions by 80%' and for 'the economy to support 46,000 additional jobs by 2035.

As a partner in the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) we also recognise the role this review, and its outputs can play in the development of the wider corridor region and its economy. The DBEC strategy includes a vision to become a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative R&D, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. 'Improved cross-border infrastructure is a key objective of the strategy to strengthen connectivity and access to markets and labour' as well as 'promoting sustainable and climate conscious growth along the corridor'.

To support the Belfast Agenda, the council has adopted the Local Development Plan (LDP), Plan Strategy, which will guide future investment and development decisions to enable the sustainable spatial growth of the city up to 2035. The draft Rail Review supports the LDP's vision for Belfast to be, 'a globally successful, smart regional city that is environmentally resilient with a vibrant economic and social heart' and to create 'thriving socially inclusive well-connected neighbourhoods, that encourage a healthy active lifestyle.'

The LDP recognises the opportunity for areas in the vicinity of rail stations, halts and connections to accommodate for a higher density of development given the improved accessibility afforded by the presence of the rail. When implementing the recommendations set out in the draft report, consideration should however be given to development being delivered sensitively to ensure it is in keeping with the local context, particularly for smaller rail halts within a suburban context.

Population projections for the island in 2050 stand at approximately 8.5 to 10 million people and the delivering of high-quality infrastructure will be critical to supporting this growth. We would encourage that the IASRR is also cognisant of the refresh of the National Planning Framework and wider social and unique economic opportunities that exist.

Taking a Transit Oriented Development would provide population densification in strategic locations and contribute to economic, social and environmental benefits, not least the increase of housing in these locations and potential clustering of employment opportunities. Ensuring efficient rail links between urban centres will bring added benefits in terms of spreading economic and population growth, across the island, support additional FDI and support indigenous investment and new supply chains to emerge, drive tourism and leisure opportunities and ultimately support sustainability goals and reduced emissions.

It is perhaps somewhat disappointing that the potential contribution of rail freight has largely been discounted when it comes to the Port of Belfast. Despite being the second largest port* on the island the review considers that any options to improve linkages to the Port of Belfast would be very costly and disruptive and would encourage freight traffic to use parts of the railway that are already quite congested.

This approach would seem contradict Recommendation 23 of the report which looks to “strengthen rail connectivity to the island’s busiest ports” and misses an opportunity to contribute towards the decarbonisation of the island’s transport system as well as reducing congestion both locally and regionally (Some [sources](#) suggest that one freight train can remove up to 76 HGVs from the road).

With a current baseline of having no regular rail freight operations it would seem that with the necessary governments' commitment and investment there are clear economic and environmental benefits that could be delivered through improved rail freight linkages beyond what is currently proposed in the draft Report.

*In 2022 the Port of Belfast handled 18,372,000 tonnes of goods¹, second only to Dublin at 25,635,000 tonnes² (28% less than Dublin). The next busiest port on the island was Shannon Foynes² with 9,819,000 tonnes (just over half (53%) of that handled by Belfast).

¹ NISRA Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic January to March 2023 data tables – [Table 1: Tonnage of Goods Through the Principal Ports in Northern Ireland, Quarter 1 2009 to Quarter 1 2023](#)

² CSO [Statistics of Port Traffic Q4 and Year 2022](#) – Table 5A: Total tonnage of goods handled classified by port and region of trade, 2022

Strong, future-proofed rail infrastructure combined with sustainable multi-modal options for first and last mile journeys also supports net zero choices and could enhance the quality of life for residents which brings benefits in terms of health and well-being, access to public services, reduced congestion, and connectivity to leisure opportunities and the unrivalled natural heritage of the island. Such an approach creates the condition that could support 'returners' to the island and drive inward migration and support sustainable lifestyles in line with the Net Zero targets.

A Bolder Vision is an ambitious blueprint for Belfast to explore a shared approach to creating a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city, developed jointly by Belfast City Council, Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. The draft Rail Review will help to support the strategy's vision to 'fundamentally change the centre of Belfast to prioritise integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car.'

Other key aspects of the vision are to 'remove severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities to improve access for all' and the ambition for multi-modal transport hubs in the city. The Council would ask that due consideration is given in the Rail Review to ensure that these ambitions are supported in Belfast

and that future connections or halts do not create physical barriers between communities but instead improve the connectivity between each other and the city centre.

The Council is working with partners to support the development of the Belfast-Dublin Transport Corridor and is therefore pleased to note the Strategic Rail Review's recommendations to 'upgrade the cross-country rail network to a dual-track railway and increase commuter and intercity service frequencies,' and to 'build new higher speed railways.' However, the recommendations need to be more ambitious, in particular, the proposed speeds between regional and rural lines and core intercity locations are only provide a modest increase whereas an ambitious target would aim to link Belfast and Cork in an hour and a half.

Further consideration needs to be given to the enabling infrastructure required to deliver the network includes, tunnels, bridges, additional tracks, Overhead Line Equipment, hydrogen production and storage locations and the wider electrical grid. In addition to this the Council welcomes the proposed recommendation to 'complete the electrification and decarbonisation of the railways.' This will contribute to the delivery of the Net-Zero roadmap for Belfast and the city's commitment to work towards being carbon neutral by 2050.

In conclusion, Belfast City Council is supportive of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review but requests that the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Transport take into consideration when finalising the report and during the implementation of the recommendations, the matters raised by Council in this response.

The Council would highlight that this response is being submitted as draft, given the deadline for submissions, it is subject to Council ratification on 4 October 2023. Following the meeting of full Council on 4 October, the Council will follow up to confirm if this response should be treated as final or if there are further addendums which Elected Members have requested.



Subject:	Response from Department for Communities on Rent Controls
Date:	13 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the response received from the Department for Communities in relation to correspondence issued from the CG&R Committee regarding Rent Controls.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to note;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the correspondence received from the Department for Communities in response to a letter from the Committee regarding rent controls; that the Department for Communities commissioned a report, undertaken by the Chartered Institute for Housing, to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and that this report was laid to the Assembly and published on the Departments website; that the Department for Communities state that '<i>any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister</i>', and '<i>that bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly</i>'
3.0	Background
3.1	<p>At the special meeting of the CG&R Committee in February 2023, it was agreed that a letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities, and the Head of the Civil Service to engage with the Council and other key stakeholders concerning rent controls in Belfast; and to support local community organisations and advocacy groups in their efforts to campaign for the introduction of rent controls and to ensure that the voices of renters and those affected by the housing affordability crisis were heard.</p>
4.0	Main Report
	Key Issues
4.1	<p>A letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Department Communities and the Head of the Civil Service on 24th March 2023 outlining the concerns raised by the members of the Committee at its special meeting in February 2023 (attached as appendix 1).</p>
4.2	<p>The letter outlined that the cost of privately renting a home in Belfast has risen significantly in recent years, making it increasingly unaffordable for many people, particularly those on low incomes and young families. The letter further commented that the Committee would like to see costs for renters reduced; Members recognise that legislation is required to protect renters from unfair rents, improve housing standards and end unfair letting fees; Members further recognise the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. Furthermore, the Executive needs to be back up and running and a Minister in place to progress this.</p>

4.3	<p>A response has been received from Mr. David Polley, Director of Housing Supply Policy (attached as appendix 2). In his correspondence the Director advises that Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 placed a duty on the Department to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and to lay a report before the Assembly.</p>
4.4	<p>The Director further commented that the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was subsequently commissioned by the Department to research and consult on these implications and the ensuing Report was laid in the Assembly and published on the Department's website. While a summary of the key findings of the CIH report is included within this Committee report, Members should note that the report is multi-faceted covering a number of complex issues and findings. A copy of the full report for Members review can be found at the link below:</p> <p>https://www.cih.org/media/n50no3ps/dfc-rent-regulation-in-the-private-sector-in-northern-ireland.pdf</p>
4.5	<p>Finally, the Director stated that, as already noted by the Committee, any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister. Moreover, bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly.</p>
4.6	<p>The final research report from the Chartered Institute of Housing for the Department for Communities as referenced in the response from DfC highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what existing evidence tells us about rent regulation • a baseline of current rent affordability and trends; plus the potential impact of rent control/regulation in Northern Ireland, and • the consultation feedback from landlords and tenants, their representative groups and district councils. • The report refers to research on the topology of rent control and that there are currently three 'generations' of rent control: • first generation rent regulation measures seek to impose a control on existing rent levels; they are typically called 'hard rent controls' or 'rent freezes' • second generation regulation governs rent increases within and between tenancies; an example is setting the very first rent at market levels with subsequent increases and rents for new tenancies being controlled, and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> third generation measures refer to restricting the increase of rent within the tenancy e.g. restricting the amount or frequency of increases for a current tenant.
4.7	<p>The report concludes that the rent control approach contained under Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 gives the Department the power to freeze or cut rents by up to ten per cent for a period of up to four years. These rent controls are argued to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve initial affordability of rents reduce real rents if rents cannot be adjusted to account for increased landlord costs develop incentives for landlords to sell properties and leave the sector, especially at times of high house prices and strong property markets reduce incentives for landlords to repair and renovate properties, and incentivise 'shadow' or illegal rental markets or incentivise renters to stay in the property even if their needs change.
4.8	<p>The report found that the rent control powers contained within Section 7 if enacted could have the following implications:</p>
4.9	<p>Improve affordability for some tenants</p> <p>The report highlights that affordability issues for low-income households have been driven less by rent inflation, and more through punitive aspects of the social security system, such as freezes in local housing allowance rates and the use of the shared-accommodation rate for younger single people in one-bedroom homes.</p>
4.10	<p>The report comments that freezing and reducing rents to protect those in the lowest incomes is a very unpredictable and inefficient policy tool.</p>
4.11	<p>The report goes on to say that overall a rent freeze or reduction would largely benefit existing tenants who remain in their homes and whose landlords do not sell or repurpose their properties. However, because such a freeze or reduction would also reduce the size of the sector, other tenants would be evicted. Prospective tenants and people looking for new private rented accommodation would be faced with a further shortage of suitable housing options in an already tight housing market.</p>
4.12	<p>Between 41% and 60% of landlords would seek to exit the private rental market</p> <p>Over half of landlord respondents reported that they would seek to decrease the number of properties they let out across the sector and the report research indicates that between 41%</p>

	<p>and 60% of landlords would seek to exit the private rental market.. Some of these properties may be sold to landlords, keeping the property within the sector, However, some landlords may seek to withdraw and provide the property on the short-term holiday let / Airbnb market, where they are able to attract substantially higher rents.</p>
4.13	<p>Concern was raised about the impact of rent cuts on buy-to-let mortgages and the resulting supply of private rented accommodation. A decrease in rent levels would make more of these mortgages unaffordable for prospective landlords. Higher interest rates are already placing pressure on mortgage affordability and high inflation is increasing the cost of property maintenance and upkeep.</p>
4.14	<p>Other issues for consideration within the report</p> <p>For tenants who have their rent covered in full by local housing allowance, a rent cut would not improve the tenant's affordability but would instead result in a reduction in annually managed expenditure on welfare. However, there could be increased public expenditure elsewhere on rising homelessness levels resulting from the change. There is also risk of further adverse impact on homelessness through diminished ability to discharge the homelessness duty into the Private Rented Sector, in the context of rising levels of unmet need for social housing. There would also need to be a step-change in resourcing councils for effective enforcement of the policy.</p> <p>Alternative approaches to improve affordability were included in the conclusion of the report as outlined below.</p>
4.15	<p>Welfare control</p> <p>The report noted that a simpler and accurately targeted way to improve housing affordability is topping up Local Housing Allowance (LHA) claimants with a shortfall to the real 30th percentile rent through discretionary housing payments (DHPs) or welfare supplementary payments. Cuts to the LHA rates for tenants and adverse changes to the tax system for landlords have adversely affected the Private Rental Sector. The report notes that fiscal measures are an important tool to incentivise property improvements, which is crucial for progressing housing quality and for de-carbonising housing stock.</p>
4.16	<p>Enhancing rent control</p> <p>The report highlights that Northern Ireland now has a new system of third generation rent control that limits the frequency of rent increases to once a year and which has the broad support of</p>

4.17	<p>stakeholders tested through consultation; it would make sense to monitor and evaluate this new law as part of the normal policy making process</p> <p>If greater rent control is desirable, an additional option within the third generation is limiting increases during a tenancy to CPI or a similar indexing measure and allowing rents to reset to market levels at the end of a tenancy. Limiting increases during a tenancy in this way would seek to address the substantially large increases that occur in a minority of the NI market. Allowing rents to reset to market levels at the end of a tenancy would provide landlords with some assurance that increases in costs would be accommodated in rental prices.</p> <p>Supply</p> <p>The report highlights that the best way of relieving pressure on prices is by having enough housing supply. A variety of housing tenures and products are needed to meet people's diverse requirements. Social housing, co-ownership, intermediate rent, private rent including from institutional investors, and owner-occupation all have a role to play in providing a home that is appropriate for people's needs. There is a shortage of private rented accommodation at present; data from PropertyPal shows that the average stock of properties for rent on the website during June 2022 was 1,647 – a 57 per cent decrease from June 2019. At the same time there is increased demand for it, as the economic consequences of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has made saving for a deposit more difficult, placing home ownership out of reach for more people. Another long-standing factor driving the demand of private rented accommodation is the shortage of social housing. The report acknowledges existing work through the Housing Supply Strategy that aims to boost social housebuilding and address the deeprooted barriers to increasing supply, including infrastructure, funding, skills and capacity constraints.</p> <p>Committee should note that as yet a response has not been received from the Head of the Civil Service.</p>
4.18	
4.19	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.20	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
5.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Letter from Belfast City Council dated 24th March 2023</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Response from Department for Communities dated 29th March 2023</p>

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Ms Eilish McGoldrick

Our reference EMcG240322RCDfC

Email democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date 24th March, 2023

Colum Boyle
Department for Communities
Permanent Secretary
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Rent Controls

At its special meeting in February, Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee passed the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor Duffy:

"The Committee notes the cost of privately renting a home in Belfast has risen significantly in recent years, making it increasingly unaffordable for many people, particularly those on low incomes and young families. The Committee: Wants to see costs for renters reduced; Acknowledges that legislation is required to protect renters from unfair rents, improve housing standards and end unfair letting fees; Recognises the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. Furthermore, the Executive needs to be back up and running and a Minister in place to progress this."

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to write to you, as Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities, and the Head of the Civil Service to engage with the Council and other key stakeholders concerning rent controls in Belfast; and to support local community organisations and advocacy groups in their efforts to campaign for the

introduction of rent controls and to ensure that the voices of renters and those affected by the housing affordability crisis were heard.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eilish McGoldrick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer

CC: *Dr. J. Brady, Head of the Civil Service*



From: David Polley
Housing Supply Policy

Level 3
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 515286
E-mail: David.Polley@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our Ref: STOF-0201-2023
Date: 28 March 2023

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

Via email: McGoldrickE@belfastcity.gov.uk

Dear Eilish

RENT CONTROLS

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 March 2023, addressed to the Permanent Secretary and Head of the Civil Service. As director for Housing Supply Policy, I have been asked to respond on your behalf.

You detail that the Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee have noted the rising cost of private renting in Belfast. You advise that the Committee wants to see the cost for renters reduced and considers that the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. You add that the Committee recognises that any decisions to progress this action would depend on the Executive being up and running and a Minister being in place.

As stated in a previous response your colleague (Sara Steele) on 16 February, Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 placed a duty on the Department to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and to lay a report before the Assembly. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was subsequently commissioned by the Department to research and consult on these implications and the ensuing Report was laid in the Assembly and published on the Department's website. However, as already noted by your Committee, any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister. Moreover, bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly.

I trust you find my response helpful.



Yours sincerely,

David Polley
Director of Housing Supply Policy



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Subject:	Update on Music Strategy – NI Music Prize
Date:	13 th September 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture Development Manager

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the allocation of funding to the NI Music Prize alongside a strategic review of these events to deliver on objectives of the music strategy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the allocation of £30,000 to the NI Music Prize - Agree the allocation of £15,000 for an independent Strategic Review and Roadmap for Development for the NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>NI Music Prize</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Music Prize honors and celebrates the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music and is a key music event for the city of Belfast and its</p>

	<p>UNESCO City of Music status. It is an annual awards night organised by the Oh Yeah Music Centre and takes place in the Ulster Hall during Sound of Belfast Festival every year. The prize is a high-profile celebration of music from Northern Ireland. Five main awards are available, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPL Album of The Year • Single of The Year • BBC ATL Artist of The Year (BBC Introducing award) • Live Act of The Year • YouTube Video of The Year <p>There is also two special awards, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding Contribution to Music presented by PRS • Oh Yeah Legend Award
3.2	<p>Over 100 music industry professionals are invited to take part in the nomination process of the awards. The general public are invited to vote for the winner of Single, Live and BBC Introducing Award whilst an invited industry panel selects the winning video and the winning album. All genres are eligible and a diverse mix of acts are invited to perform each year to showcase the wealth and variety of music Belfast has to offer including Trad, Folk, Indie, Rock, Electronica, Punk, Singer Songwriters, Pop, Hip Hop, Soul and R&B. Supporters include Arts Council of Northern Ireland, PPL, PRS Foundation, Help Musicians, BBC Introducing, Arts and Business, Music Venues Trust, IMRO, Shine, Music Video Marketplace and Destination CQ.</p>
3.3	<p>The NI Music Prize was established to support the growth and build the profile of NI Music and reflect similar work and recognition of regional music in other parts of the UK and Ireland. It is a significant event and key milestone for Belfast as the regional driver for the music industry in Northern Ireland.</p>
3.4	<p>The 2023 Music Prize will host an audience of 1,000 people including music industry guests from all over the UK and Ireland, Europe and the USA, as well as musicians, artists and music fans. The event will be broadcast live on BBC Radio Ulster and is filmed by a production company for YouTube. Many key industry professionals that attend are also involved in presenting and running panels at the Sound of Belfast conference earlier that day, including 200 young emerging artists who attend these panels which are streamed live on YouTube.</p>
3.5	<p>This is an important event for music in Belfast and to complement and strengthen the initiatives and ambitions laid out in the UNESCO City of Music. It will be an investment in our world class and strong emerging diverse talent and is also an opportunity to showcase our local talent through extensive online reach and will demonstrate that Council is committed to supporting and investing in music long term.</p>

3.6	<p>Sound of Belfast</p> <p>Sound of Belfast is a festival that showcases the Belfast music scene and sector with gigs, panels, talks, workshops, discussions, exhibitions, showcases and special events at various venues across Belfast. The event traces its roots to a previous programme from Belfast City Council entitled Belfast Music Week, which ran 2010 to 2013.</p>
3.7	<p>The event is a unique offering in the cultural landscape, with a sole focus of turning up the spotlight on our world-class talent by promoting Belfast as music city by celebrating the artists, venues, promoters, studios, performances spaces and record stores of the city. 2023 will be the tenth year of the festival and the plan is to host a 10th Anniversary festival in 2024 to align with Belfast 2024.</p>
3.8	<p>The programme includes a community focus that leans into encouraging people from all backgrounds to enjoy the music of the city. So far 26 venues are on board for Sound of Belfast with around 50 events – showcasing the capability of places and spaces of the city for live music across the grassroots venues, arts centres, pubs and cafes as well as the palm house, Titanic distillery a library, cinema, church and hotel. The event will feature venues in every part of the City – North, South, East and West.</p>
3.9	<p>The programme will also feature a series of storytelling events called “Echoes of a Music City”, involving people with stories to tell in each community on different genres and scenes that made an impact on Belfast. They will take place all over the city and cover everything from Trad to Electronica – across cafes, in shops, arts centres and other key spaces. Belfast City Council has supported the NI Music Prize since its formation, with funding ranging from £15,000 to £30,000. The loss of Tourism NI National Events Fund has had a detrimental impact on the delivery of both the Sound of Belfast programme and the headline event, the NI Music Prize.</p>
3.10	<p>To ensure success of these events in 2023 and to build towards 2024, it is proposed to allocate £30,000 toward the NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast for the November 2023 programme.</p>
3.11	<p>Strategic Review and Roadmap for Development</p> <p>The NI Music Prize has been supported annually via Committee approval due to their wider impact on the music industry and the city. However, there is a desire amongst organisers and council officers to explore longer-term approaches to ensure this event can continue to grow and achieve its full potential.</p>
3.12	<p>With the continuing implementation of recommendations from the Music Strategy, these events have the potential to play a central role in the delivery of objectives within the music</p>

3.13	<p>strategy. Similar to Belfast City Councils support of the Output Conference, which takes place in the springtime, it is hoped that the development of both Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize will provide a key touchpoint in the year for wider music initiatives and opportunities.</p>
	<p>With a view to maximising the impact of the event, it is proposed to conduct an independent review of the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast. This independent review will consider alignment to music strategy and role that it can play in achieving objectives through a longer-term strategic partnership and the value that it would take to achieve this. It will involve consultation with peers including benchmarking against similar events both nationally and internationally and produce a series of 'recommendations' or 'next steps' as part of a roadmap for development.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The financial support requested from Belfast City Council is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast - £30,000 • Strategic Review and Roadmap for Development - £15,000 • These costs are to be met from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development.
3.15	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Officers will work with event organisers to ensure that a wide range of groups and artists across the city are engaged with. There are no Rural Needs implications.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>



Subject:	CG&R End of Year Report (23-23) and CG&R Committee Plan (23-24)
Date:	13 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	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	To provide an end of year progress update (Appendix 1) on the key actions contained in the 2022-23 City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee Plan, as agreed by this Committee in June 2021.
1.2	To present to Committee the draft City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan for 2023-24 (Appendix 2).

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the content of the end of year report; • Approve the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2023-24; and • Agree to hold a committee workshop as part of the development of a new Corporate Plan 2024-28 during October 2023.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The 2022-23 Committee Plan End of Year Report (EOYR) and draft CG&R Committee Plan for 2023-24 were originally presented to, and agreed at the April 2023 meeting of the CG&R Committee. However due to a procedural error, they were referred back to Committee for further consideration and approval. The procedural error related to the roles and responsibilities of the Committee included within the introduction of the draft plan (attached at appendix 1). The functions have been updated to ensure they are consistent with Appendix 3 (Standing Orders) of the Council's Constituion.</p>
3.2	<p>The draft CG&R Committee Plan for 2023-24 has been developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-24 and the draft refreshed Belfast Agenda. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan, as agreed at August SP&R, and which fall under the duties of this Committee, and deliverables that have been agreed by CG&R Committee throughout the 22/23 period and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The Plan sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee is overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.3	<p>The 2022-23 Committee Plan End of Year Report (EOYR) and the draft Plan for 2023-24 were both developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and the draft refreshed Belfast Agenda. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan (agreed at the August meeting of SP&R and endorsed at the September council meeting), which fall under the duties of this Committee, and deliverables that have been agreed by CG&R Committee throughout the 22/23 period and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The Plan sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee is overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Progress Reports</u></p> <p>Following agreement of the draft Committee Plan, officers will bring a six-monthly progress report against all commitments in the Committee Plan in November 2023 and a further end of year report in April 2024.</p>

3.5	<p><u>New Corporate Plan 2024-28</u></p> <p>At the SP&R meeting on 18 August 2023, the Committee approved the proposed approach and timeline for the development of the 2024 –28 Corporate Plan and accompanying Committee and Departmental Plans for 2024-25. The proposed timeline identified that committee planning workshops should be held in October 2023, with a view to producing a draft plan by February 2024.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The draft Committee Plan 2023/24 and the subsequent annual programmes of work are aligned with the budget agreed by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 20 January 2023, namely a cash limit for the City Growth & Regeneration Committee of £20.45 million as set out in Appendix 2.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Strategies, programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Officers and subject to appropriate equality, good relations and rural needs assessment.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 1 – CG&R Committee Plan 2022-23 – End of Year Report</p> <p>Appendix 2 – draft CG&R Committee Plan 2023-24</p>

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CG&R Committee Plan 2022-23 – End of Year Report

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
Cultural Strategy Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the 'A City Imagining Plan' • Consult on, then launch, the Music Strategy • Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO 	<p>Belfast 2024 Year of Cultural Celebration for Belfast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2022's CG&R committee noted the principles, concept and work related to the development of a year of culture and Belfast Imagining. • Public consultation completed and the full Music Strategy was agreed in December 2022. • An OBC was developed in partnership with Grant Thornton to support the case for Belfast 2024's ambitious year of cultural activity. Engagement programmes are currently underway to pilot Co-Design Framework with various communities to develop projects for 2024. The official launch of Belfast 2024 is on hold until later in 2023 in consultation with BCC Marcomms. • Commissioning for Anchor Programmes is underway with key Signature Partners, Eden Project, Little Amal, Oona Doherty and BBC/ City of Music collaboration on dance music with Ulster Orchestra. • An Open Call Design Contest for Belfast 2024, a 4-stage process with a R&D phase was launched in December 2022. Full commissions coming from this scheme will be contracted by June 2023. • BCC became the first council in the UK to directly support individual artists on a non-project basis when it completed Year 1 of the Creative Bursary Scheme in August 2022. The Creative Bursary Scheme Year 2 opened for applications in January 2023 (closing March 2023) – 13 bursaries are available and particular target for creatives identifying with/working in Irish language, new migrant communities and LGBTQIA+ sector. • Belfast 2024 Brand Identity and Guidelines were developed in partnership with McCadden. <p>Festival 2022/UNBOXED – celebration of STEAM creative industries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MarComms and Education regional working groups were formed to advise on and support the delivery of Festival 22 across NI. • Supported the delivery of Dreamachine, Storytrails, Green Space and Dark Skies regional projects.

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseen and delivered Our Place In Space (OPIS) on behalf of SOLACE at Derry, Belfast, Cambridge, Liverpool, Cultra, including pivoting to incorporate a 5th site at Liverpool as the opportunity arose. Highlights included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 1M live visitors to the site App downloaded in 150 Countries 28,000 students and 2,200 teachers directly engaged with 5 new learning resources 1 new Minecraft world 1 World Record smashed! Note: above figures accurate at end of 4th site, the project is ongoing at 5th site, Ulster Transport Museum. The trail is gifted to NMNI to be displayed at the Ulster Transport Museum
<p>City Recovery, Reopening the City and support for businesses</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revitalisation Fund: Physical interventions 	<p>Delivery of a DfC funded Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme. A Mid-Term Covid recovery revitalisation programme Evaluation Report was presented to the August CG&R committee. A final report is currently under development and due to be complete by 31 March reporting into CGR Committee in June 2023. This will provide an annual review of all funded projects within the programme. An extension of time, subject to sign off has been granted in relation to Entries Phase 2 and Castle Place Kiosk until end of September 2023.</p> <p>We have also supported the 'Vibrant Business Destinations' scheme across the city, securing resources for and working with local business associations outside of the city centre.</p> <p>The Vacant to Vibrant Pilot Grant scheme was launched and is currently 8 months into a 24-month pilot timeline. Over 200 application packs were issued, and officers are currently working with a number of applicants, providing support to develop their proposals. A total of 6 applications have been approved (1 subject to Council ratification in April 2023), a further 26 applicants are actively engaging with officers to finalise their applications with an expectation that these will be submitted by Summer 2023.</p>
<p>City Development and Investment</p> <p>Senior Responsible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regeneration Programme Framework City Centre Investment Fund Institutional investment partner Provide Council input and strategic direction to major regeneration and development projects 	<p>Work is underway in relation to the commissioning of a Lobby & Advocacy Paper for Place Based Regeneration Funding and the development of a Regeneration Framework and Project Prioritisation Process. A wider engagement plan has been developed including Party Group Leaders, MPs, Permanent Secretaries and other stakeholders. This is aligned to the ongoing work via City & Organisational Strategy to develop a project pipeline for Council aligned to funding opportunities and city priorities.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to progress city wide strategic opportunities relating to the use of BCC assets • Progress the future use options for 2 Royal Avenue • Continue to promote the Sixth • Complete assembly of optimal site for development of Belfast Stories project • UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum 	<p>An Expression of Interest was launched mid-March 2023 to attract an Institutional Investment / Development partner in respect of Council lands for housing-led regeneration as part of the ongoing concept regeneration plans (including PADS).</p> <p>Officers continued to actively engage on major private sector led regeneration schemes through the established Project Reference Groups.</p> <p>While an application to the Levelling Up Fund (Round 2) was unsuccessful for 2 Royal Avenue, formal feedback was received, and work continues on the proposal of its long-term use including a focused piece on end user models and identifying potential funding. Work on the Sixth was also progressed via the BelTel LLP. The council continued to lead the UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum, including its transition in line with the opening of the Belfast campus.</p> <p>The council continued to work with DfI and DfC on the finalisation of the Bolder Vision Strategy with the emerging draft Strategy approved by the CG&R Committee in August 2022. Departments were engaged, in the absence of Ministers through the oversight and steering groups involving the CX and Perm Secs from DfC and DfI. DfI accelerated the Belfast city centre element of the BMTP to the Climate Action Plan to model options for the provision of the strategic transportation network and to help inform the emerging capital project list.</p> <p>Strategic Site Assessment for Council lands have been undertaken on a city-wide basis with an initial assessment for housing-led regeneration purposes. A similar exercise was undertaken (as part of a Housing-Led Regeneration Group with NIHE and DfC) in respect of other public sector lands. Proposals and next steps to be brought to a Members' Workshop.</p>
<p>Increase tourism spend through sustainable tourism products</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start delivery of the 10-year Tourism recovery plan "Make Yourself at Home" including: • Positioning Belfast • Sustainable Tourism • Deliver the Annual Events programme 	<p>We have delivered a number on initiatives to help Grow tourism sustainably in Belfast. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An Accessible Tourism Programme to improve the visitor experience and value of the 'purple pound'. ▪ Implementation of Food and Drink Tourism plan to increase associated spend and improve the experience, while strengthening Belfast's position as a food and drink destination. ▪ Ongoing scoping of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme to extend tourism's economic benefits to communities beyond the city centre. ▪ Working to improve our Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI). Belfast is now rated 8th in the world among 65 other destinations. ▪ Promoting the Green Tourism Certification, which has resulted in 80% of hotel rooms; and ensuring that sustainability is fully integrated in all tourism / event planning.

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<div>Page 108</div>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery of Conference Subvention Programme to assist in winning conferences and business events for Belfast. Belfast was named the world's best conference destination for a second consecutive year this year. ▪ Working to Position Belfast as an attraction tourist destination with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland. This ensures Belfast is positioned as a Gateway to Northern Ireland and a must-see urban destination. ▪ Tourism & Belfast Stories teams working together to support Neighbourhood Tourism organisations to tell the key stories of the city. ▪ Securing Tourism NI product development funding to support new products such as Ceili at the Castle, Music Tours and music workshops. ▪ Mapping Council-owned and existing tourism assets against the city's 'Belfast brand' and Tourism NI 'Embrace the Giant Spirit' brand to deliver on experiential tourism in Belfast. ▪ Further development of the Neighbourhood Tourism Framework to bring to Committee in June 2023 for consideration. ▪ Catalyst 2: Make Yourself at Home ▪ Strategic and operational planning is ongoing for the delivery of the One Young World event in October 2023. ▪ Other major bid-for events have been progressed during the year including the Fleadh Cheoil (in partnership with the Ards Comhaltas) and the European Football Championships in 2028 (decision due Sept. 2023). ▪ Christmas 2022 was successfully delivered. The analysis, learning and future actions from the St Patrick's Event pilot, were agreed by June's CG&R committee, and the 2023 event is imminent. ▪ The Maritime Festival development continues, in consultation with partners, with the next edition planned for September 2023. The funding process for local sports events has recently concluded.
Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth Senior Responsible Officer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 'Starting a Business' services • Support social enterprises and co-operatives • Provide 'Growing a Business' services 	<p>Officers have engaged councils to progress the enhanced approach to business start-up and growth support. Since the update to Committee in October, the DLUHC committed up to £17m for an 11-council Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS), over 2 years from April 2023. Council will be lead council.</p> <p>We engaged 755 individuals, supporting them to progress to start a business. We continue to extend our reach to engage individuals who are under-represented including: people with disabilities, the economically inactive, females and young people. Additionally, 40 students and graduates also accessed support. We also enabled 31 test trading opportunities at St George's Market.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
John Greer		<p>Business start-up activity engaged 503 individuals, with 476 developing a business plan through 'Go For It', supporting the creation of 299 jobs. 70 had additional 1-1 mentoring and financial support to help kick start their business.</p> <p>Direct support for 60 Social Enterprises and Co-operatives included one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance. Four of these were new co-operatives. Overall Social Enterprise and Co-operative Support included 25 events/workshops with over 300 attendees. To increase awareness of the sector, we also targeted 50 young people in community settings. Our focused engagement with co-operative organisations also continued, this included 10 events, with 42 attendees.</p> <p>The £50,000 Social Economy Incentive Fund launched in September 2022 to support social economy businesses business growth plans. In recognition of these efforts, Belfast City Council won 'Council of the Year' at the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland Awards in October 2022.</p> <p>Through our business growth support, we have assigned mentors to over 246 businesses and delivered 20 workshops with over 265 attendees. Helped has bene provided for growth strategies, increasing resilient, enhance digital and online presence, improve tendering skills and accessing specialist support for businesses with high growth potential.</p> <p>We also delivered a large-scale Opportunity Export event with over 70 attendees and speakers from Invest NI, DIT and Intertrade Ireland. We also launched the Digital Surge programme with the other councils to help businesses with innovation and digital transformation. 22 Belfast-based companies have benefitted.</p> <p>In January 2022, we launched the Vibrant Business Destinations programme in partnership with DfC. This aims to drive footfall and create vibrancy in areas outside of the city centre. Four associations have now been supported to develop area-based action plans.</p> <p>The Innovation Factory is now at 77% occupancy (yearly average) and the operator has ambitious plans to increase those numbers in 2023/2024 with interest from sectors including TV/film, digital, engineering, and green tech. Over the year, 78 businesses engaged in masterclasses and events at the centre, 38 work placements were facilitated, and a series of school engagement activities took place involving 223 young people.</p> <p>The Way to Scale programme supported 40 individuals to transform their businesses and grow to turnover of more than £3million. 10 were supported to participate in a one week residential at MIT and access a peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst. We also put in place support for businesses in creative and digital industries and financial services sectors to build capacity and access opportunities for finance to support the growth and development of their businesses. 90 new companies will be supported through these services.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
Promote and market the city internationally Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning the City to Compete Provide the Investing in Belfast service 	<p>Delivery of a public private Renewed Ambition Programme is on-going across the 5 pillared structure of activity aimed at marketing the city locally, nationally and internationally across events, engagement & advocacy, communications and repository.</p> <p>An Invest in Belfast website has been set up with information on Belfast, the key growth sectors and specific investment and development opportunities. A Marketing Prospectus of key public and private investment opportunities across the BRCD region has been prepared.</p> <p>A 'Building Impact' report on the social, environmental and wider economic impact of the built environment was completed and was presented to the Social Policy Working Group in August 2022. Work is on-going to develop an internal action plan to address the report recommendations relevant to BCC.</p> <p>Monitoring and analysis of valid planning applications to inform the City Development Tracker continues on an ongoing basis. Work has progressed on integrating the city investment narrative into the Invest in Belfast website to align the messaging with wider Council led initiatives and other stands of work. The new CRM system was completed and is currently being rolled out.</p> <p>Through our investor support activity, we continued to provide advice and connections to potential investors.</p>
Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue development work with our seven partners arising from Dublin-Belfast corridor programme. 	<p>The strategy and action plan have been finalised. The partnership members have agreed to jointly fund two staff resources to drive delivery against priority actions in 2023.</p> <p>€150,000 funding was secured from the Shared Island Fund to conduct a feasibility study on regional Innovation Hubs. This was complemented by a successful joint application with Dublin City Council to the Shared Island Fund for a €250,000 award to conduct a feasibility study on circular economy facilities in both cities.</p>
Future City Centre Programme and Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy Senior Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to progress the Future City Centre Programme and priority areas under the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy Regeneration Projects Developer Contributions 	<p>We have developed Future City Centre Programme priority actions across the 6 pillars of Regeneration & Connectivity (including city centre living and Bolder Vision); Business & Investment; Positioning the City to Compete; Vibrancy & Culture; Innovation & Digital; Clean, Green, Inclusive & Safe.</p> <p>We have continued to work with city stakeholders through the Community Planning Partnership's City Development Board and relevant sub-structures. This included ongoing engagement with partner organisations and co-chairing the Community Campus Regeneration Forum (CCRF), including its transition in line with the opening of the Belfast campus.</p> <p>We established new City Centre Governance structures and continue to meet and progress priorities and address issues. This has included initial work to develop appropriate metrics and measurements for the overall Future City Centre programme. A cross-department was delivered to facilitate officer engagement</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>		<p>on the scoping of this workstream to further scope and refine the pillars of the FCC programme and objectives.</p> <p>Externally the Future City Centre Leadership Group has considered the draft emerging action plan in respect of the FCC as part of the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and has agreed leads for delivery of associated actions.</p> <p>A number of priorities and projects identified within Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy continue to be progressed via BCC and other private /public sector partners. The 2022/23 regeneration tracker was presented to the CG&R Committee in March 2023.</p> <p>The Joint Regeneration Group (BCC, DfC, DfI, NIHE) met on a monthly basis to co-ordinate the public sector approach to Housing-Led Regeneration, A Bolder Vision, public realm projects and the FCC programme. DfI have provided Council with a Letter of Offer to fund the “Grey to Green” programme in March 2023 (subject to capital approvals), awaiting LoO in respect of Active Travel Enabling funding proposal and as reported to March 2023 CGR Committee the South West Quarter Revitalisation proposal has received a LoO (£250k) from DfC this project and subject to final approval works will commence shortly, along with the opportunities within the BCCG fund and proposals within the Linen Quarter BID 5 year business plan further investment is planned in the area, noting that the proposal Council submitted to DfI under the Blue and Green Fund has been withdrawn due to the information outline at Committee in March 2023.</p> <p>The council continued to lead the Community Planning Partnership’s City Development Board with a focus on the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated emerging draft action plans aligned to the newly identified priorities of the City Development Board, ie, Housing Led Regeneration; Future City Centre Programme and Citywide Regeneration; Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel.</p> <p>Developer Contributions (historical contributions) continue to be monitored and scheme proposals utilising the contributions are being progressed. This includes progressing the 5Cs public realm developer contributions catalyst project with DfC (with additional funding of £162k for a 5C’s Revitalisation Project underway), progressing to RIBA Stage 3 for Little York Street / Little Patrick Street for the utilisation of developer contributions, working with DfC on a proposal for a catalyst Blackstaff Square Public Realm project and progressing delivery of contributions aligned to the Great Victoria St/Shafsbury Sq Project.</p>
<p>City Infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take forward the findings from the Belfast Infrastructure Study 	<p>Ongoing work to finalise the Belfast Infrastructure Study. Continue to provide civic leadership and strategic input to the major city infrastructure projects and represent Council on citywide boards, enabling, facilitating, and influencing major infrastructure development and investment.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to champion the Council's preferred position for major infrastructure projects and Continue to represent Council and play a key role on city wide boards 	
Belfast Hills and North Foreshore Senior Responsible Officer: John Walsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast Hills (and Zoo) 	<p>A full restricted update was taken to CG&R committee in February 2023. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of Q3 the zoo had welcomed 184k visitors. This is 14k higher than the five-year average. The summer welcomed above average footfall, although September to November experienced lower footfall than expected. The current cost of living and fuel crisis may have contributed to lower footfall during off-peak season. The Zoo was open to the public as normal throughout Q3 and re-launched its Junior Keeper experience in November. Several zoo initiatives, including interactive animal experiences, unfortunately, continue to remain unavailable. In this quarter the zoo friend's community group celebrated their 25th anniversary and received charity status from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.
Belfast Stories Senior Responsible Officer: Wendy Langham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete OBC 1 Departmental Review Progress the acquisition of the 2 additional smaller properties Procurement and appointment of IDT / EDT to progress the concept design Progress the collection of Belfast stories Continue stakeholder and community engagement including consultation and EQIA Deliver 2022-23 communication programme Progress OBC 2 / RIBA 2 and Establish Benefits Framework and monitoring and evaluation system. 	<p>The assembly of the two remaining properties has been completed. Council is in ownership of all properties at the site. The next key step is to complete the abandonment of the adopted alleyway off Kent Street (which is in progress).</p> <p>The procurements for the professional services teams (Integrated Design Team (IDT), Interpretative Planning and Exhibition Design Team (IPEDT) and Project Management and Design Assurance Team PMDAT) are underway, with the prequalification stage now completed. Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage is to commence in March with appointments of the teams expected summer 2023.</p> <p>A city-wide Stories Audit is underway and due for completion in May 2023. An update will be provided to key stakeholders, including elected members, on the audit findings.</p> <p>A 14-week public consultation exercise has been completed with the findings and recommendations, including feedback on the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Assessment, currently under review. A summary report will be prepared for and brought to CGR Committee in June 2023.</p> <p>An engagement plan and communications plan has been developed and updated in line with consultation feedback. The plan will include consultation and engagement activities in 2023/24.</p> <p>Belfast Stories social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) support ongoing online engagement.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
		An action plan for 2023 to support Inclusive Growth has been developed to ensure this area of work is considered at the project development stage.
Access, Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Travel and Connectivity • A Bolder Vision for Belfast • City Transport Plan • Belfast Urban Greenways (BUG) • Sustainable Travel Initiatives • Belfast Bikes • Car Parking Strategy • Access to the Hills/ Connectivity Programme 	<p>An update on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable travel was presented to the CG&R Committee in February 2023. This included the ongoing work across Council and with stakeholders in respect of the Committee's strategic priority of Access, Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel as set out in the CGR Committee Plan, and alignment into the Corporate Plan and refresh of the Belfast Agenda including the new Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel subgroup. Work is underway to arrange an All Party Round Table regarding Connectivity, Active and Sustainable travel as agreed by the Committee.</p> <p>We have continued to engage with DfI on the development of the BMTP.</p> <p>Ongoing delivery of the DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation funded covered city-wide cycle stands, 21/22 DfI B&G funded Active Travel Enablers including the launch of secured cycle parking at CastleCourt in October 2022, and proposals submitted on Active Travel Enablers for DfI B&G 22/23 funding. The Active Travel Hub at QUB has been delivered and is now operating successfully. The Cathedral Quarter Active Travel Hub has been delivered and was launched in October 2022.</p> <p>The Sustainable Travel E- Cargo Pilot launched in the first half the year, with the operator presenting to Committee in September 2022.</p> <p>As agreed by CG&R Committee in June 2022 the refresh of the Car Parking Strategy is deferred pending the finalisation of the LDP & BMTP.</p> <p>BCC continues to work with DfI and DfC on finalisation of the Bolder Vision Strategy with the emerging draft Strategy approved by CG&R Committee in August 2022. Ongoing engagement with departments, in the absence of Ministers through the oversight and steering groups involving the CX, and Perm Secs from DfC and DfI. DfI have accelerated the Belfast city centre element of the BMTP to the Climate Action Plan to model options for the provision of the strategic transportation network and to help inform the emerging capital project list. Updates will be provided to CG&R as this work progresses.</p> <p>Council Officers continue to develop a pipeline of projects aligned to A Bolder Vision to identify, prioritise and work up catalyst connectivity projects to attract external funding.</p> <p>Belfast Bikes - Three new stations were introduced at Lisnasharragh and Olympia Leisure Centres and the Kennedy Centre. Work continues to install a new station at the Waterworks and develop additional stations in line with the directions from CGR and SP&R in June 2021.</p> <p>Final end of year figures will not be available until early in the new financial year, but there were 76,565 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q3. 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) remained the most</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
		<p>popular form of membership, accounting for 88% of users.</p> <p>Officers continue to engage with DfI on the delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network and the BMTP with regular updates provided to the CG&R Committee, and at the proposed All-Party Connectivity & Active Travel Workshop.</p>
Educational underachievement Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage in development work with partners/providers to refine support for those young people, most at need, to progress through education and into employment. Provide a Youth Support programme to assist young people to build confidence and develop capabilities to enter and progress on a career pathway. Continue to deliver our GCSE support programme to increase the % attaining grade C and above in English and Maths and Work with the Department for Education and the Education Authority to explore how the Fair Start report's recommendations can be implemented in Belfast. 	<p>Since September, our GCSE support programme has engaged 281 young people who had been identified as being unlikely to achieve at least Grade C in GCSE English and Maths without support. Through the entire 2022/23 academic year, this programme is expected to support 365 young people.</p> <p>We also supported 170 young people through our Youth Support Programme. These participants either already have or are at risk of dropping out of the education system, employment or training. So far, 87 have completed accredited training and 65 are undertaking essential skills qualifications. This programme is due to complete in summer 2024 with an expected 55% achieving a positive destination, either into training, education or employment.</p>
Access to employment Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Employment Academies in priority sectors Provide match-funding for ESF projects Deliver Enterprise Pathway with intensive, person-centred support for those further back in the labour market and Support job brokerage and career events. 	<p>Since April 2022, we have had over 700 places on Employment Academies, utilising Council's and additional resources through the Labour Market Partnership, Learning & Work Institute's New Futures programme and the Community Renewal Fund. On average, 93% of those who started an Employment Academy successfully completed, and for those, we achieved an into-work rate of 75%.</p> <p>The most attended academies were in logistics, education, construction and upskilling academies for people in traditionally low-paid sectors.</p>
Upskilling opportunities Senior	Strategic Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the Belfast Employability and Skills Action Plan as part of the Belfast LMP, including: 	<p>The Gateway to Choices Service is being co-designed with key stakeholders such as the JBO Network, Careers Service, VCSE sector etc. Engagement with the LMP partners identified the need for independent advice and guidance outside of mainstream JBO support for those who are out of work and non-job ready</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quickly back to work: for those who have been or are risk of being made unemployed, especially as a consequence of the pandemic ○ Increasing Opportunities: Empowering those furthest from the labour market to succeed through quality support, especially those who will be considered long-term unemployed ○ No-one Left Behind: Targeting of those disadvantaged groups ○ Catching Up: Supporting access to careers pathways, re-skilling and upskilling for those unemployed as well as those on low incomes ▪ Implement a labour market observatory to review the impact of interventions and inform future investment. ▪ Build on the 'test and learn' career pathway work for those furthest from labour market in digital and green sectors in support of BRCD and the wider 10x economic vision. ▪ Deliver the Digital Badges project to help recognise the non-accredited skills of individuals and support employers to think about how to broaden the talent pool by including those individuals ▪ Continue to ensure employability and skills issues are properly integrated into the Belfast Business Promise, Developer Contributions, Social Value Policy and the BRCD. 	<p>such as long-term unemployed and the economically inactive. The Gateway will support up to 1,200 people in the coming year. Participants will engage on a voluntary basis and delivery will commence in April 2023.</p> <p>Officers have now completed the scoping and preparatory work and secured additional resources from DfC to establish the Labour Market Observatory.</p> <p>All Employment Academies are now digitally badged as an alternative validation of achievement, with 779 badges issued to participants. In addition to this, the Council is working with 6 organisations in the city to use Digital Badging for their own participants/employees.</p> <p>Following December Committee's approval, indicative funding awards have been issued to 6 providers to pilot Bridges to Progression schemes. These are for young people, aged 16-17 years who are at risk of disengaging from Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work due to their personal circumstances.</p>

COMMUNITY RECOVERY

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
Maximising housing development and regeneration opportunities Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCC Housing Led Regeneration Programme • City wide strategic opportunities • Strategic City Centre Cluster Sites • City Centre Living Vision 	<p>Detailed work has been completed on several city centre cluster sites (from the Strategic Site Assessment work) including Concept Regeneration Plans for each of the cluster sites; ongoing engagement with other public and private sector neighbouring landowners; the adoption of a placemaking approach to development and progress through the planning process through Pre-Application Discussions (PADs), as well as site and title due diligence. This forms part of the overarching Institutional Investor / Development Partner approach and the launch of the Expression of Interest in mid-March 2023.</p> <p>Work on the city-wide strategic site assessments was progressed via the agreed mechanism under the Housing Led Regeneration Group (established under the Community Planning Partnership's City Development Board). To date, BCC, NIHE and DfC lands have been mapped via LPS and these have been overlaid with records from the Urban Capacity Study and Housing Monitor to identify those with housing potential. A number of these sites have been assessed at both organisational level (including Council assets) and via the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) subgroup to consider operational requirements, planning, title, etc and consideration as to how lands can best be assembled (including adjoining private sector ownerships). A Member's Workshop is to take place to consider potential for identified BCC sites (and other public lands as appropriate). A similar mechanism for mapping of other public sector lands has also been progressed via the Housing Led Regeneration Group.</p> <p>This Eol process is seeking an institutional investor / development partner to fund, develop and manage as appropriate housing led regeneration schemes at scale, (including affordable /social) working in partnership with Council and with a placemaking approach.</p> <p>The City Centre Living Vision has been completed. This followed extensive consultation and ongoing engagement, and with recommendations and next steps to be brought back to CGR Committee shortly. Ongoing engagement with the private sector, NIHE, Housing Associations and BCC Planning Service to identify challenges to development, especially city centre residential development and consideration of options to address such challenges.</p>



City Growth and Regeneration

Committee Plan 2023- 2024



Belfast
City Council

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Introduction

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

Its specific functions, as outlined within the Belfast City Council Constitution Appendix 3 – Standing Orders, include:

- Influencing and contributing to regional regeneration and growth strategies and activities
- Developing and implementing city-wide economic strategies and policies
- Managing and maximising the impact of major physical developments in the city
- Coordinating and promoting major city-wide events
- Sourcing and providing support to attract and utilise European and other grants which contribute to the growth of the city
- Providing support for economic development initiatives
- Supporting the development of culture, heritage and the arts
- Working with other agencies to promote Belfast as a key investment and tourism opportunity
- Developing programmes and actions to support local businesses and attract inward investment
- Managing the Council's markets and maximising their benefit to the city
- Influencing and contributing to strategies and policies affecting skills, employability, transportation and energy in the City
- Overseeing the delivery of the following services:
 - Economic Development;
 - Tourism;
 - Culture and Arts;
 - European and International Relations;
 - City Markets;
 - City Events;
 - Belfast Castle;
 - Malone House;
 - Belfast Zoo;
 - City Centre Development; and
 - The transferring car parks.

Committee Members



Councillor Clíodhna Nic Bhranair (Chair)
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Collin



Councillor Matt Garrett
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Collin



Councillor Andrew McCormick
Party: DUP
DEA: Ormiston



Alderman Ron McDowell (Deputy Chair)
Party: TUV
DEA: Court



Councillor John Gormley
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Botanic



Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown Gormley
Party: Alliance Party
Ward: Botanic



Councillor Sarah Bunting
Party: DUP
DEA: Balmoral



Alderman James Lawlor
Party: DUP
DEA: Ormiston



Councillor Ian McLaughlin
Party: DUP
DEA: Court



Councillor Claire Canavan
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Court



Councillor Donal Lyons
Party: SDLP
DEA: Balmoral



Councillor Ross McMullan
Party: Alliance Party
DEA: Ormiston



Councillor Sammy Douglas
Party: DUP
DEA: Titanic



Councillor Conor Maskey
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Castle



Councillor Micky Murray
Party: Alliance Party
DEA: Balmoral



Councillor Joe Duffy
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Collin



Councillor Fiona McAteer
Party: Alliance Party
DEA: Titanic



Councillor Séanna Walsh
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Collin



Councillor Anthony Flynn
Party: Green Party
DEA: Ormiston



Councillor Áine McCabe
Party: Sinn Fein
DEA: Black Mountain

Belfast City Council Priorities

The [Belfast Agenda](#) has shaped and will continue to shape the plans of council and those of our partners. Our corporate plan, which is aligned to the Belfast Agenda, sets out the work we will do to contribute to the shared city's commitments and what we will do as an organisation to continually improve and develop and focus on continuing to deliver excellent services.

In addition to the Belfast Agenda related priorities, our corporate plan also contains several organisational priorities designed to create the type of organisation we need to be to support the ambitions in the Corporate Plan and Belfast Agenda. This includes work to: develop and build the capacity of our people and Elected Members; manage our assets, data and finance; enhance partnership working and drive equality; and work to improve our services and customer care.

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2023-24, which is aligned to the Corporate Plan, outlines the key areas of work that this committee will be responsible for delivering. These are set out on the following pages, under the strategic objectives:

- 1) Inclusive Economic Recovery; and
- 2) Community Recovery.



Key Programmes of work

1. Inclusive Economic Recovery

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
Cultural Strategy Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<p><u>Progress the 'A City Imagining Plan' and:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver year 4 of cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG) to deliver an annual programme of activities • Provide grant support to organisations through 8 different grant streams • Deliver a programme of sectoral development and strategic partnerships to develop the sector • Develop a heritage audit and roadmap for development • Progress cultural animations activities including Belfast Canvass, City as a Gallery, and city centre spaces. • Design and deliver wraparound support programmes including leading sector forums for festivals, visual arts and sustainability • Design launch and deliver a range of capacity building initiatives for the sector including initiatives designed to increase accessibility and cultural participation • Complete review of strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast and provide support to these organisations • Develop report on the impact of culture and cultural participation <p><u>Implementation of "Music Matters" Music Strategy and:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the UNESCO City of Music actions • Deliver actions within the Music Strategy 4 strands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theme 1: Place artists at the heart ○ Theme 2: Nurture the Sector ○ Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience ○ Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UN <p><u>Belfast 2024 Year of Cultural Celebration for Belfast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To continue to develop and deliver this ambitious programme the Belfast 2024 team will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launch and deliver the Governance Model ○ Commission and contract Anchor Signature Partners ○ Finalise Open Call Design Contest and commission up to 30 local projects. ○ Deliver Engagement Plan ○ Develop and Deliver Evaluation Plan ▪ Support 10 Artists through the competitive bursary programme
City Recovery, reopening the city and support for businesses Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<p><u>Revitalisation Fund: Physical interventions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver the remaining projects under the DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme. ▪ Deliver ongoing support for the business and community sectors via projects under: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the Sustaining Vibrant Business Destinations,

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vacant to Vibrant Pilot Capital Grant Scheme, ○ Future City Centre Programme, ○ Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy ○ City Development and Investment, including facilitation of the FCC Leadership Group and ○ Positioning the City for Investment
<p>City Development and Investment</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take forward the Regeneration Framework for the prioritised city project business cases to attract necessary investment to enable the delivery of the city's regeneration and development priorities. ▪ Take forward the recommendations within the Lobby paper seeking to secure Belfast's additional investment and funding to realise the city and Region's growth ambitions. ▪ Undertake a review and purpose of the City Centre Investment Fund to align with delivery of city development aspirations. ▪ Continue to progress the Expression of Interest process to attract an institutional investor / development partner to bring forward investment at scale for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration, including the inclusion of identified Council property assets – "seed sites". ▪ Provide Council input and strategic direction to major regeneration and development projects. ▪ Continue to progress citywide strategic opportunities relating to the strategic use of BCC assets including housing led regeneration. ▪ Progress the future use options for 2 Royal Avenue in line with objectives of the Future City Centre Programme. ▪ Promote the Sixth investment & development opportunity. ▪ Management of the Regeneration Assets in line with the objectives of the City Centre Investment Fund. ▪ Chair and drive forward the transitioning of the Ulster University Community Campus Regeneration Forum. ▪ Take a civic lead on A Bolder Vision for Belfast aimed at a significant transformation of the city centre streets and places, including leading on supporting governance strands, identifying BCC led projects and scoping innovative funding mechanisms.
<p>Increase tourism spend through sustainable tourism products</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<p>Delivery year 2 of the 10-year Tourism recovery plan "Make Yourself at Home" including:</p> <p><u>Experience Belfast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme. ▪ Developing Council Assets. ▪ Accessible Tourism. ▪ Food Tourism. ▪ Visitor Pass. <p><u>Research and development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit of Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing. ▪ Develop a prioritised plan for enhancing the visitor experience.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
	<p><u>Positioning Belfast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Tourism - Conference Subvention. ▪ Positioning of Belfast in national and international Markets and Gateway role of Belfast for Visitors with partners. ▪ Strategic Oversight / Implementation Group. <p><u>Encouraging Sustainable Tourism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Global Destination Sustainability Index & Actions for Sustainable Tourism work including certification. ▪ Working with the supply chain to incentivise change programmes, raise awareness and pilot projects. <p><u>Delivering the Annual Events programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building on the developmental work which started with Christmas 2021/2022 & St Patrick's 2022. ▪ Maritime / Made in Belfast ▪ Lord Mayors Day ▪ International Events - working with partners to plan & develop bids. <p><u>Small Grants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing to provide grants for community-based sporting events.
<p>Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<p><u>Provide 'Starting a Business' services by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivering the 'Go For It' programme to support new businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives across the city to September, then; ▪ with the other councils, launching the new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) in September 2023. <p><u>Support social enterprises and co-operatives by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalising the refresh of our social economy action plan based on research and engagement with sector partners such as SENI, Cooperative Alternatives and Trademark. ▪ Introducing a new financial incentive (with Community Finance Ireland CFI) to improve the financial management skills of new and growing social enterprises. ▪ Provide a range of additional support interventions including mentoring, workshops and event. <p><u>Provide 'Growing a Business' services by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using the previously mentioned new Entrepreneurship Support Service to also help existing businesses. ▪ Pending the introduction of the new service, continuing to provide mentoring and guidance support to Belfast based businesses. ▪ Delivering a series of workshops and events on issues such as Website and SEO basics, E-commerce essentials, Sales and Marketing, Investment Readiness, Writing a Winning bid, Strategy and Business Planning and Introduction to Innovation. ▪ Providing a range of support services to advice small businesses on critical issues such as environmental sustainability and cyber awareness. ▪ Working with InterTrade Ireland and Invest NI to increase the number of businesses engaging in export activity.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
	<p><u>Scaling Support and Innovation by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focusing on the priority sectors as identified in the Economic Strategy (Fintech and Financial Services, Creative and Digital, Life and Health Sciences, and Advanced Manufacturing, and opportunities through green transition and a drive for more sustainable investment). ▪ Working with the City Innovation Team to build capacity among local businesses, with a particular focus on helping them to access challenge funds and alternative funding sources, including those coming from the Belfast Region City Deal. ▪ Working with key partners including Digital Catapult, Ulster University, Queen's University, Catalyst and Invest NI to increase the number of innovation driven enterprises and scaling businesses. <p><u>Progress the Belfast-Dublin Corridor by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting delivery of key interventions within the strategy and plan. ▪ Supporting the completion of the feasibility studies on innovation and circular economy that have been funded through the Shared Island Unit.
<p>Support City Markets</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<p><u>Enhance St George's Market by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertaking a development and investment plan to support the sustainability of the market in the future – this will include additional activities such as Twilight Markets and externally-organised events in order to drive additional revenue to support investment in new equipment and facilities. We will also invest in additional visitor insights in order to improve the customer experience at the market. <p><u>Deliver Continental Market by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting the delivery of the annual Christmas Continental Market at City Hall and will explore opportunities for additional markets, with a particular focus on alignment with other events and activities taking place in the city. <p><u>Support external markets by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing to encourage and support other markets taking place across the city, particularly where these align with and support wider cultural, animation and tourism activity.
<p>Promote and market the city internationally</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<p><u>Positioning the City to Compete, by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Playing a lead role in the Renewed Ambition Programme public/private partnership, participating in a programme of events, active engagement and advocacy to promote inclusive real estate development and investment and addressing barriers to investment. ▪ Facilitating investment and development related visits aimed at positioning the city to compete and promote inclusive growth and development for the city. ▪ Implementation of the Building Impact Report, which examines the role the built environment /real estate plays in delivering Social, Economic and Environmental benefits to Belfast and the wider Belfast City Region, including the development of a targeted action plan. ▪ Collating and monitoring the City Development Tracker and market intelligence. ▪ Maintaining and developing the Invest in Belfast website.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing management of the CRM system to manage the database of investment and development contacts.
<p>Future City Centre Programme and Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<p>Continue to progress the Future City Centre Programme and priority areas under the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership working and engagement with city stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors to include the Community Planning Partnership: City Development Board, Future City Centre Leadership Group, UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum the High Street Task Force and relevant developer led fora ▪ Oversee the delivery of the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme six pillars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regeneration and connectivity - including City centre living, Bolder Vision; maximising major developments reimagining public realm connectivity and active travel; tactical regeneration etc and continue to deliver physical regeneration and environmental improvements e.g. the Entries Programme, Cathedral Gardens redevelopment and others. Progress the city centre Vacant to Vibrant Capital Grant pilot to address vacancies; ○ Business and Investment; ○ City Centre Vibrancy; ○ Position the city to compete; ○ Digital & Innovation; and ○ Clean, green, inclusive and safe. ▪ Undertaking a refresh of the overall FCC programme based on ongoing work across the pillars to ensure that the programme takes account of changing local and global situations. Considering the vision, objectives of the programme and pillars, refreshed data / performance metrics <p><u>Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to progress (with partners) projects and interventions identified within BCCRIS and undertake a review of the priorities within the BCCRIS Action Plan. <p><u>Regeneration Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead the Joint Regeneration Group with other partners to prioritise and drive key regeneration initiatives ▪ Provide strategic input as appropriate with private and public sector developments via established Regeneration Project Reference Groups ▪ Delivery of the Tactical Regeneration programme including Grey to Green, Active Travel Enablers, 5C's Revitalisation Programme and Entries Phase 2 programme. ▪ Lead the Community Planning Partnership and City Development Board on the identified priorities of housing led regeneration; connectivity, active and sustainable travel; Future City Centre; and City-wide regeneration & investment. ▪ Continue to develop the Cathedral Gardens physical project by creating a multi-use civic space in the city centre and ▪ Deliver Phase 2 of the Belfast Entries project comprising environmental enhancements in the city centre.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
	<u>Developer Contributions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and analyse valid planning applications to bring forward projects and infrastructure proposals utilising developer contributions.
City Infrastructure Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to champion the Council's preferred position for major infrastructure projects. Continue to represent Council and play a key role on city wide boards facilitating, enabling and influencing major infrastructure development and investment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> York Street Interchange; BRT Phase 2; Belfast Streets Ahead; and Weaver's Cross.
Committee Assets Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<u>Continue to operate and seek ways to improve the main assets associated with this committee, including:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast Zoo; Belfast Bike Scheme Malone House; and Belfast Castle.
Belfast Stories Senior Responsible Officer: Wendy Langham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the abandonment of adopted alleyway at the site. Appointment of the professional services teams (Integrated Design Team (IDT), Interpretative Planning and Exhibition Design Team (IPEDT) and Project Management and Design Assurance Team PMDAT). Complete Belfast Stories Audit. Deliver Stories collection trial project. Draft RIBA 2 design and commence RIBA 2 design consultation. Deliver 2023/24 Engagement and Communications Plan, including further stakeholder and community consultation. Complete Consumer testing of RIBA 2 design proposals. Draft OBC 2 / RIBA 2 agreed by BCC for approval.
Access, Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<u>Active Travel and Connectivity</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an overarching programme, including feasibility stages to coordinate our approach to access, active and sustainable travel and connectivity aligned to corporate priorities across policy, project delivery, programming and partnership working (including the Belfast Agenda City Development Board) and the Bolder Vision for Belfast, development of greenways, Access to the Hills and other initiatives. <u>A Bolder Vision for Belfast</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of strategy, SEA consultation and Action plan Focused work with partners in terms of mitigating the risk around alignment on the Vision for the Civic Spine within the Client / Translink Team – outworking of the BMTP and Climate Risk Action Plan Belfast Urban Greenway (BUG): Complete the BUG study, ensuring engagement with internal and external stakeholders to agree the next steps around feasibility and delivery.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the delivery / integration of the joint working approach with DfC/DfI for delivering key projects. Identifying priority projects to bring to business case and identify funding opportunities including a focus on Embracing the River and connecting to the Civic Spine. Work with delivery partners to develop and deliver Bolder Visions projects. <p><u>Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the Horizon Europe UP2030 including research, training and policy development to create a framework for a net zero district <p><u>Waterfront Proposition – Belfast Waterfront Promenade</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Proposition in conjunction with the Waterfront Task Group <p><u>Belfast – Cork Harbour Cities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support on the feasibility around a joint bid for investment with Cork City Council under the Shared Island fund focused on Waterfront area aligned to A Bolder Vision “Embrace the River” <p><u>Sustainable Travel Initiatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement the various active travel projects currently underway and further pending award of funding <p><u>Belfast Bikes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of the Belfast Bikes scheme network. <p><u>Car Parking Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor and review the implementation of the city centre Car Parking Strategy in conjunction with DfI and other stakeholders. <p><u>Access to the Hills/ Connectivity Programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the Hills – Develop a plan for enhanced access to the Hills including exploring the creation of further access points into the Hills and Continue to create a more connected city by using existing and new greenways, urban greenways and existing and enhanced green spaces connecting the North, South, East and West of the city as well as the city centre.
Educational underachievement Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver our GCSE support programme. Deliver the Youth Support programme for those most at risk of disengaging from formal education. Work with the Partnership Boards and the Education Inequalities sub-group to secure longer-term options to support young people.
Access to employment	<p><u>Deliver Employment academies in areas such as:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical sectors such as logistics, construction, utilities, fibre. Professional services such as administration, business and tech.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2023-24 we will
Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Care and education sectors including classroom assistants, health and social care, childcare and playwork. ▪ Customer service sectors such as leisure and tourism. <p><u>Improving demand side support by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with public sector bodies and key employers in priority sectors to increase the use of academies to match jobs to people
Upskilling opportunities Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer	<p><u>Progress the Belfast Labour Market Partnership (LMP)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gateway to Choices to support 1200 individuals to move into training or employment. ▪ Development work to be undertaken to progress the Labour Market Observatory. ▪ Extension of the Digital Badging initiative to an additional 20 organisations/employers. ▪ Bridges to Progression to support 180 young people engaging on Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work.

2. Community Recovery

Key 2022/23 deliverables

The following list of deliverables will be reported on a six-monthly basis to Committee to demonstrate progress and explain if progress has been delayed.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2022-23 we will:)
Maximising housing development and regeneration opportunities Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<p><u>BCC Housing Led Regeneration Programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to bring forward regeneration, and development options for BCC assets in conjunction with wider public and private sectors, to include the ongoing strategic site assessment of BCC lands for regeneration purposes including housing. Work with city wide partners to maximise residential development opportunities jointly working to overcome obstacles to increasing residential development including city centre living. Identify and progress as appropriate potential external funding opportunities to help facilitate housing led regeneration schemes. <p><u>Citywide strategic opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work through the Community Planning Partnership Housing Led Regeneration Group to collate public sector land data and undertaking an analysis of public sector lands utilising the LDP Urban Capacity Study and Housing Monitor to identify public sector land opportunities for housing. Progress next steps for development of each of the identified sites, including Member engagement planning and site appraisals, feasibility and progress development options as appropriate for identified BCC sites. Continue working with relevant public and private sector bodies to identify wider potential housing development opportunities and identify and help unblock challenges to delivery via Housing Led Regeneration. <p><u>Strategic City Centre Cluster Sites</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the Development Brief marketing and development process for the INW Northern Cluster Continue to progress development options for each of the cluster sites (inc placemaking concept plans, planning etc) at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INW (Southern); Exchange St/Corporation Street; Ormeau Avenue; Dunbar; Gloucester Street; and Ravenhill. Progress next steps, following the launch of the EOI process for an Institutional investor / development partner, , including potential delivery vehicle opportunities for the identified housing led and mixed-use regeneration sites.

Strategic Priority	In Year Deliverables (In 2022-23 we will:)
	<p data-bbox="528 293 791 322"><u>City Centre Living Vision</u></p> <ul data-bbox="528 327 1398 432" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="528 327 1398 432">▪ Alignment of finalised Vision with the implementation of the LDP, including next steps / recommendations / engagement / Outward document and comms.

Key Expenditure

The expenditure for the 2023-24 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan is based on a total planned investment of £20.45 million, as agreed at the Strategic Policy & Resources committee meeting on 20 January 2023, as follows:

Service	Budget (£) 2023 - 24
Off-Street Car Parking	-989,113
City Regeneration	1,852,268
Place and Economy Directorate	2,214,726
Economic Development	17,367,473
Total	20,445,354



Belfast
City Council

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