

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



**Belfast  
City Council**

**MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Wednesday, 7th August, 2024 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

**AGENDA:**

1. **Routine Matters**

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

2. **Restricted Items**

- (a) Housing Led Regeneration Update (Pages 1 - 6)
- (b) 2 Royal Avenue Update (Pages 7 - 22)
- (c) 2023/24 Year End Finance update (Pages 23 - 28)
- (d) Rural Business Development Grant Scheme - 2024-2025 (Pages 29 - 32)
- (e) Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024-2025 (Pages 33 - 42)

3. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**
  - (a) DfI Correspondence - Translink Night time services (Pages 43 - 48)
4. **Positioning Belfast to compete**
  - (a) Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update (Pages 49 - 58)
  - (b) Music Strategy and UNESCO City of Music update (Pages 59 - 76)
  - (c) Update on Belfast 2024 (Presentation to follow)
5. **Growing Business and the Economy**
  - (a) Enterprise Support Service Update (Pages 77 - 82)
  - (b) Sub Regional Economic Development - Update (Pages 83 - 86)

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024-2025
Date:	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture Development Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024-2025 and seek approval for the recommended grants
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• note the contents of this report and agree the recommendations for artist studio grants, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2022, members agreed to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations

to provide financial and development support for this sector. In May 2024, members agreed to continue this support for the third consecutive year and £100,000 has been allocated to support Artist Studios Organisational Grants in 2024/25.

3.2 **Background and context**

The ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, committed to a broader investment model that considered the diversity of the city's cultural landscape. In response to detailed consultation with the sector, Committee agreed in February 2022 to bring forward a specific funding programme for studios and artist-led organisations, with the latest audit identifying 17 studios/ artist-led organisations in Belfast directly supporting an estimated 450 artists. This in part is due to the value of artist-led spaces not being effectively captured through traditional metrics such as income generated through ticket sales or audience figures and it was agreed that an alternative form of funding would be developed for artist-led spaces. Belfast City Council's current support programmes do not include any of these organisations as annual or multi-annual clients.

3.3 **Organisational funding**

The "*Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25*" programme was opened on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and closed on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The purpose of this strand of work is to provide financial and developmental support to organisations similar to the support offered under cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG).

3.4 The Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25 scheme was advertised widely. The information and application details were emailed directly to a GDPR compliant mailing list representing over 370 organisations from across the cultural and creative sectors alongside associated social media marketing. An online information session was held in advance of the deadline, as well as organisations availing of one to one support sessions with the Culture Development team.

3.5 Criteria for Decision making

The criteria and guidance for Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25 applicants are included in Appendices 1 and 2. Assessments were made, and scoring applied under four key areas of criteria:

- Fit with our investment aims, & themes 3 & 4, of cultural strategy "A City Imagining"
- Need and potential impact
- Value for money



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality organisational development plan</li> </ul> <p>Assessments were made only based on information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This included the application form and supporting documentation such as business plans and strategies.</p>
3.6	Organisations or groups operating artist studios were able to apply for up to £10,000 to use towards specified developmental needs within a 12-month period. Grants up to £20,000 were available for organisations that accommodate at least 25 active members, and which meet additional eligibility criteria and supply a suitable business case.
3.7	<p><b><u>Assessment</u></b></p> <p>A summary of recommended grants and proposed grant recipients is included at Appendix 1. A summary of award descriptions is included in Appendix 2. The unit received 12 applications for Artist Studios Organisational Grants, requesting a total of £147,976. Percentage of funding allocated is based on scoring percentage. The recommendation is that we fund 11 organisations, with support of £100,000.</p>
3.8	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>An allocation of £100,000 is recommended to “<i>Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25</i>”. These activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2024/25 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals.</p>
3.9	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>Appendix 1: <i>Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25 - Recommended Awards</i></p> <p>Appendix 2: <i>Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25 - Award Descriptions</i></p>

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<b>Subject:</b>	Correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure - Translink Night-Time Provision of Services
<b>Date:</b>	7th August, 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance Coordinator

<b>Restricted Reports</b>									
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
<p><b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b></p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>									
<p><b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
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After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider the correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure in response to the Council's letter in relation to Translink Night-Time Provision of Services.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report and to consider if any further action is necessary.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
3.2	At its meeting in April, Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee was provided with an update in relation to two motions which had called for the provision of public transport night-time services.
3.3	It was reported to the Committee that, as part of the process to refresh the Belfast Agenda, Translink and DfI had engaged through the Community Planning structures to advocate an extension of the night-time provision of its Metro and Glider bus services. The recently launched Belfast Agenda action plans included an agreed action to: "Expand the timetable with a greater service in the evenings and funding for the provision of night-time services."
3.4	In October 2023, the Committee had also previously received an update on the Motions in relation to extending night-time provision of services and the setting up a free public transport initiative on certain days and evenings in the run up to Christmas 2023. It was reported that Belfast City Council had engaged with Translink and a range of stakeholders through the "Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel" (CAST) sub group (co-chaired by Translink and Sustrans) which also had an action to "Expand the timetable with a greater service in the evenings and funding for the provision of night-time services", with Translink as the convening lead.
3.5	The Committee was informed that Council officers had engaged specifically with Translink on this Motion and given the current budget constraints, no commitment on free public transport initiatives could be given at this time.
3.6	Subsequently, Belfast City Council, at a meeting of Council on 7th May agreed that the Council would write to DfI to request that consideration be given to the funding of the provision of public transport nighttime services.



3.7	<p>Accordingly, a response has been received from the office of the Minister for Infrastructure John O’Dowd MLA, in relation to the matters raised. (Appendix 1).</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 – DfI Response

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From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure  
**JOHN O'DOWD MLA**

Ms Eilish McGoldrick  
[mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:mcgoldricke@belfastcity.gov.uk)

Private Office, 3rd Floor,  
James House, Gasworks Site,  
2 - 4 Cromac Street,  
Belfast, BT7 2JA  
Telephone: (028) 9054 0540  
Email: [Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

Your reference: EMcG040624  
Our reference: Cor-1411-2024  
21 June 2024

Dear Eilish

### **TRANSLINK NIGHT-TIME PROVISION OF SERVICES**

Thank you for your letter to Minister O'Dowd dated the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 calling for consideration to be given to the funding of the provision of nighttime public transport services in Belfast.

The Minister fully understands the need to support the nighttime economy and recognises the benefit that late night public transport services can add to our economy and citizens however, the provision and operation of services is an operational matter for Translink within the budget available to them.

Whilst passenger numbers continue to grow there is still a significant cost to running the public transport network in its current form and the Department has been underfunded by over a decade of cuts by the British government. However, you can be assured that the Department will continue to work with Belfast City Council, Translink and Executive colleagues to promote active and sustainable travel where possible.

Yours sincerely



**EMMA STOCKMAN**  
Private Secretary to the Minister

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Belfast City &amp; Region Place Partnership Update</b>
<b>Date:</b>	7 August 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>	
<p><b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">After Committee Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

After Council Decision  
Sometime in the future  
Never

<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Call-in**

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

No

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update members on outcomes from the Belfast City &amp; Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme including attendance at MIPIIM as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the update on outcomes from the Belfast City &amp; Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme, including attendance at MIPIIM as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024.</li> <li>Approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.</li> </ol>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
3.1	<p>Members will recall that this Committee received an update on the Belfast City &amp; Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) in June 2024. This Committee noted the presentation from representatives from the BRCPP; approved that officers continued to support the delivery of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the BCRPP and in line with Council's procurement processes; and approved the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private sector partnership contribution towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme. They also agreed to write to the BCRPP to request that they consider establishing a sub-group of the partnership for community engagement with a focus on social value; and Members deferred consideration of attendance by senior officers</p>

	<p>at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme until a report was submitted to the Committee in August to outline the tangible benefits of the conference.</p>
3.2	<p>In terms of context setting, Belfast City Council has been working with public and private sector organisations to proactively promote Belfast to local, national and international audiences to attract capital investment to support realising the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda, and this has included attendance at various national and international conferences, exhibitions and showcase events, including MIPIM, since 2016. More recently, attendance at MIPIM has been through participation in the BCRPP annual programme of activity, as reported to this Committee in June 2024, and aligned to our wider Positioning the City to Compete proposition, a key programme of work within this Committee's work plan as agreed at a special meeting of CGR Committee in May.</p>
3.3	<p>Members should note that delivering on our Belfast Agenda ambitions requires a £7.5bn investment. This quantum of investment will require significant private sector funding and institutional investment, highlighting the importance of continued engagement and promotional activities with capital investment markets to positively position Belfast as an attractive investment location.</p>
3.4	<p>Members will also be aware that work has commenced on a ten year stocktake of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration &amp; Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), as agreed in this Committee's work plan. The output report will identify the positive development that has come forward over the past ten years, but also identify catalyst opportunities for the city in the next decade. It is likely that many of these catalytical projects will require significant private sector capital investment to be brought forward, which will require Council and City partners working collaboratively to promote these opportunities through international forums such as MIPIM.</p>
3.5	<p>The Regeneration Lobbying &amp; Advocacy Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast, as agreed by SP&amp;R Committee in February 2024, highlights the disparity in regeneration and investment funding for Belfast and the benefits that enhanced investment could make for Belfast, with work advancing at various levels. It also highlighted the key role that the private sector plays in terms of deliver of the growth ambitions for the city and the importance of working in partnership with the private sector to support delivery.</p>
3.6	<p>In 2023, Northern Ireland's commercial investment sector attracted £338 million of investment, with 24% of this investment coming from Institutional investors, which is notably lower than the UK average, as reported by property advisory firm, Savills. The report also noted the proportion of investment in NI from institutional investors has reduced significantly</p>

<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p>	<p>since the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016, by way of comparison YTD Q3 2023 the UK commercial investment (including offices, retail, industrial and hotel) from Institutional and REIT/ Listed investors was approximately 50%.</p> <p>Members will recall that Party Group Leaders or their nominees and senior officers participated on a study visit to Manchester and Leeds in April 2024. Discussions with elected representatives and senior officers from Manchester and Leeds emphasised the important role that attracting institutional investment has played in shaping their city growth in recent times by providing both long term patient capital and partners who are bought into the cities' values and vision. Both Councils also noted that local authorities have a strong convening role in attracting investment and supporting private sector delivery by providing the strategic vision, city priorities and messaging to give confidence to the private sector and institutional markets. They noted that successfully delivering regeneration outcomes required them proactively and consistently sharing this vision and message both domestically and internationally to attract institutional investment. MCC highlighted that Manchester's success in recent years has been built on strong partnerships between the private and public sectors. This collaborative approach has allowed them to create a clear vision for growth and attending place promotion events such as MIPIM provides a global stage to present this vision and breadth of ready-made investment opportunities to investors who could become long-term collaborators.</p> <p>It is evident that in order to deliver our aspirations for the city that Belfast must continue to proactively promote itself to the international institutional investment market to attract long term patient capital at scale and to assist with bringing forward the catalytic regeneration and development projects required to deliver on our wider inclusive growth ambitions.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Main Report</b></p>
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>At City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 9 August 2023, the key objectives for the BCRPP Programme for 2023 / 2024 were presented as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.</li> <li>• Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.</li> <li>• Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.</li> </ul> <p>MIPIM is the world's leading real estate conference and is recognised as a reference point for the global real estate industry. Over 20,000 delegates from 90 countries attended MIPIM in 2024, including over 2,000 investment companies which collectively manage approx. €4 trillion of assets, providing unique access to global investment capital to accelerate</p>



	regeneration and development activities through participation in face-to-face discussions, workshops and panel discussions.
4.3	UK cities / regions who attended MIPIM 2024 included Cardiff Capital Region; Liverpool; London; Greater Manchester; Newcastle; West Midland's region; and the Western Gateway. Many of these cities have attended MIPIM for a number of years, recognising the importance of MIPIM in providing a platform to showcase their cities and development opportunities to attract global sources of capital. Many UK cities success in recent years has been through collaborative private and public sector working, with local government taking a lead role in facilitating this collaborative approach to seeking this external investment required to deliver their growth ambitions.
4.4	The Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2024 comprised of executive-level representatives and decision-makers from 15 organisations including Belfast Harbour, BRCD Council representatives, Invest NI, Titanic Quarter, private sector developers and professional services firms.
4.5	Key activities over the three-day conference included Belfast representatives joining panel sessions organised by other UK cities, UK Government, and partners covering a variety of topics including city centre living, waterfront regeneration, social value and Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, providing an opportunity to showcase city investment and development opportunities to potential investors and developers from across the UK and internationally. The Belfast delegation participated in the inaugural collaborative UK city event with Liverpool, Cardiff, Business Central South, British Property Federation, Department for Business and Trade and key investors. In addition, officers held a number of pre-arranged one to one meetings with key institutional investment funds and officers from other UK cities to build relationships and share learnings.
4.6	It is important to note that MIPIM forms one element of the overarching BCRPP programme of activity which is delivered through a structured programme of work focused on the key pillars of Research; Events; Advocacy and Engagement; and Communications aligned to securing investment and regeneration for Belfast and the wider city region. Therefore, outcomes from MIPIM should be viewed in the context of the wider programme objectives as outlined above.

4.7	<p><b>Programme objective: Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.</b></p> <p>The 2023 / 2024 programme included a presence at international real estate investment conferences, UKREiF 2024 and MIPIM 2024, and the organisation of a Dublin Investment Showcase event which was delivered in conjunction with Urban Land Institute (ULI). It is important to note that all three events took place within a six-month period which allowed for initial and follow up engagement with potential investors and collaborators in a relatively short time period. An overview of MIPIM investor engagement is set out below.</p>
4.8	<p><u>MIPIM Investor Engagement</u></p> <p>There was a significant footfall on the Belfast Stand throughout MIPIM with a number of requests for impromptu meetings for investors, highlighting the continued interest in Belfast within the national and international investment community. In total, 133 leads were collected on stand with interest from a variety of sectors including residential development, leisure / hotel development, green energy and life sciences. In addition, City Council officers held one-on-one meetings with key institutional investors, banks, pension funds and end-occupiers interested in opportunities across the city.</p>
4.9	<p>Work is on-going to follow up with contacts made during MIPIM 2024 and other BRCPP activities. As noted at June Committee there has been a number of follow up meetings in Belfast over the past months, with more planned in the coming months from investors, developers and occupiers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major housing / residential developers who have not to date delivered projects in Belfast / NI</li> <li>• Real estate investment trust (REIT) with a strong interest in residential developments</li> <li>• End-use occupiers including FDI companies, commercial / leisure operators, innovation hub operators and F&amp;B operators</li> </ul>
4.10	<p>The marketing activities during MIPIM have translated into inward visits to the city, with many of these visits / meetings taking place with private and other public sectors partners of the BRCPP who have testified to the benefits of attending MIPIM. Commercial sensitivities and the length of timeframes for concluding investment transactions make it is difficult to precisely quantify the total level of inward investment achieved from attendance at international events such as MIPIM. However, to give Members an idea of the types of investment secured following introductions and engagement by 'Team Belfast' at MIPIM since 2016, Elkstone Partners, a leading Irish Investment House, have made a number of significant investments in Belfast, including purchasing Murray Exchange in February 2024 which was the key office investment in Q1 2024. Greystar, an international investment</p>

	<p>management firm, have invested in a number of purpose-built student managed accommodation (PBMSA) schemes in Belfast, with their most recent investment being Nelson Street, a £48m PBSMA development.</p>
4.11	<p>In June 2023 Legal &amp; General, with whom senior officers and other partners have held a series of meetings with at MIPIM, announced a £150m investment in the residential development Loft Lines, which is the largest single residential investment in Northern Ireland for 20 years, and will see the delivery of 778 new homes including 151 social and affordable homes, and significant public realm investment. MIPIM 2023 and 2024 saw a notable increase in interest in residential opportunities in Belfast from institutional investors, with follow up visits taking place. While these types of processes can take a number of years to complete, we anticipate that this engagement will continue to translate into investments to assist with bringing forward residential development in Belfast in the coming months and years.</p>
4.12	<p>Members will be aware of the Council's on-going competitive dialogue process to secure a private sector partner (PSP) to deliver residential led, mixed use developments across the city. This process follows an Expressions of Interest exercise which was presented at MIPIM 2023. Attendance at both MIPIM and UKREiiF 2023 allowed officers to actively engage with the private sector and investment market and afforded the opportunity to fully detail and explain the scale of the opportunity and the type of partner Council were seeking to attract.</p>
4.13	<p>In addition, private sector partners have established working relationships and secured business as a direct result of relationships brokered at MIPIM. By way of example, the Belfast based team from ARUP, a BCRPP Partner, has highlighted that working relationships made at MIPIM resulted in increased business and successful tendering outcomes on specific major projects.</p>
4.14	<p>Positively positioning Belfast as an attractive investment location to an international audience relies on strong collaboration with central government and international partners. The Partnership works collaboratively with the Department for Business &amp; Trade (DBT) throughout the annual programme of activity. It supported the delivery of Northern Ireland Investment Summit which took place 12 and 13 September 2023 through supporting the showcasing of capital investment opportunities via a Capital Investment Roundtable and familiarisation tour of city regeneration and investment opportunities, with follow up engagement with investors who attended the Summit taking place at MIPIM and UKREiiF. In addition, MIPIM provided a useful platform for engagement with UK Government representatives to promote potential investment opportunities in Belfast and the wider city</p>

region and have early engagement on the place-based growth proposition for Belfast. In recent years it has also provided an opportunity to showcase to both investors and international companies the research, development and innovation capabilities of the Belfast Region, which are being significantly enhanced in growth sectors through BRCD investments, and which is now so critical for international businesses when making decisions on where to locate or expand.

4.15 **Programme objective: Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.**

As mentioned previously, the BCRPP is delivered as a public private partnership with a significant percentage of the partners having consistently supporting the Partnership since its inception, showing the value that city partners perceive from being part of this collective partnership approach.

4.16 Feedback from BCRPP Partners

The private sector partners have highlighted that one of the significant benefits of attending MIPIM is the calibre of the Belfast delegation coming together to collectively showcase the city as “Team Belfast”, highlighting that relationships formed and enhanced at MIPIM help aid collaboration to deliver on our shared ambitions for the city. Outlined below is an overview of feedback received from the Belfast delegation post-MIPIM:

*“I believe it is crucial that there is a joined-up approach across public and private sector partners as well as third level education (QUB, UU) to promote Northern Ireland on the international stage. Given that we face constant challenges in this part of the UK, it is essential that we are able to have a platform from which to create our own narrative rather than allow others to shape this for us outside of our control. Northern Ireland has so much that is positive to offer and doing this face to face at MIPIM plays to our strengths.”*

*“It is extremely important to promote the city region on an international level. If we don't talk about ourselves, there'll be no-one else talking about us. There are many countries around the globe that are promoting themselves at present, and subsequently many regions within each. It is important to be a part of these discussions in order to make sure Belfast is seen as the investment opportunity it truly is.”*

*“We are all trying to sell NI to the world, so having positive people championing Belfast and wider NI is important as we need to keep shouting to be heard.”*

*“It is essential that such events are supported by both the private and public sector. Investors are encouraged by economic and political stability. Great to see Belfast City Council and Invest NI represented alongside the private sector. The challenge (and opportunity) is how Belfast can demonstrate effective collaboration and strategic alliance with both Dublin and the UK that would make a compelling proposition to invest in Belfast and enjoy the benefits from dual market access.”*

*“I think it is extremely important for Belfast to be put on the international stage as the city continues to develop with our dual market access and North South relations continuing to grow, it puts our city up there with the largest UK cities in terms of attendance and visibility.”*

*“When you have everyone in the same boat, pulling the same way then you start to make waves and you can get really get places. It HAS to be a united approach: Council, businesses, planning, Translink, Invest NI, and employers with support from the Assembly so that we can give confidence to the people who are looking at us and Belfast/NI is actually worth spending time, money and effort in.”*

*“Important for Belfast to be represented as other cities such as Cardiff / Manchester etc to maintain prominence and increase exposure for future investment.”*

*“Public and private partners need to demonstrate that Belfast is a cohesive place to do business with as few barriers as possible.”*

4.17 **Programme objective: Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.**

Communications through digital marketing and PR activities is a key strand of work within the BCRPP programme of work. Outputs included the development of an interactive Belfast Region Investment Guide which was a key marketing asset at MIPIM 2024.

4.18 As part of the communications campaign focused on Belfast’s attendance at MIPIM, high quality media coverage was secured in a number of publications including Insider Housing, Ireland’s Business Post, Place North West, and Real Asset Management. A targeted social media campaign highlighting Belfast’s presence at MIPIM and key messaging on investment and regeneration opportunities reached 50.7K+ people and received 11.2k views of high-quality video content.

4.19	<p><b>Learning from best practice</b></p> <p>Beyond building important investor relationships, MIPIM also provides an opportunity for attendees to learn from best in class examples in delivering regeneration. A focus for MIPIM 2024 was bringing attention to crucial topics such as sustainability, waterfront regeneration and city centre living. Belfast delegates attended roundtables and panels on topics such as ‘delivering sustainable economic growth through partnerships’ and ‘creative retrofit’, partaking in discussions and learning from best practice examples. This knowledge sharing and understanding of how other cities have faced some of the challenges and opportunities Belfast is faced with is invaluable.</p>
4.20	<p>At the June Committee Members had also highlighted the need for community engagement by the BCRPP with a focus on social value. There have been some initial discussions on the most effective way of doing this and over the coming weeks this is to be explored further with community representatives, building also on a report BCRPP had previously commissioned (Building Social Impact) in relation to maximising social impact from the built environment. Further detail will be brought back to Committee on this.</p>
	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Approval is sought for attendance of senior officers at MIPIM 2024. Travel costs for Council attendance at MIPIM 2024 to be met from within existing and approved departmental budgets. All other costs related to these events would be met from the 2024 / 2025 BCRPP Partnership programme budget.</p>
6.0	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p>
7.0	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>



Subject:	Music Strategy and UNESCO City of Music update
Date:	7 August 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Chris McCreery, Culture Development Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Call-in</b>	
	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>							
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>						
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the work relating to the UNESCO City of Music plan and seek approval to the allocation of funding to several important strands of the music strategy.						
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>						
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the contents of this report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast”</li> <li>Agree the actions for remainder of 2024/25 as set out in the report and in Appendix 1 including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets</li> </ul>						
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>						
3.10	At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the final “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast”. Mirroring A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are several actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector.						
3.11	UNESCO Music delivery is funded from existing recurring and non-recurring departmental funds. At the meeting of the Special Policy and Resources Committee in April 2021, members agreed an allocation of resources to the delivery of the music strategy. £900k has been allocated towards City of Music and the Music Strategy for delivery on key developmental activities across 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. Members received updates and approved allocations of spend against various initiatives in April, June, August and September 2023. There has been substantive progress against each of these initiatives, including:						
3.12	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Programme/Action</u></th> <th><u>Status</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board</td> <td>Completed in April 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase</td> <td>Completed in June 2023</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Programme/Action</u>	<u>Status</u>	Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board	Completed in April 2023	Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase	Completed in June 2023
<u>Programme/Action</u>	<u>Status</u>						
Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board	Completed in April 2023						
Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase	Completed in June 2023						



Continuation of Gradam Ceoil bursaries	Launched in March 2023 and continuing to March 2024
Micro bursaries programme, available to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. Delivered in Collaboration with Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Launched in December 2023. 18 musicians received awards of up to £1,000 in January 2024.
The Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues through a partnership with Music Venue Trust	Completed in September 2023 with 5 Grassroots Music Venues in receipt of funding to upgrade equipment
Belfast Music marketing channels	New supplier appointed July 2023
Implementation of Access Riders to improve disability access	November to September 2024
The NI Music Prize	Event took place on 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
City of Music Industry sessions – series of free information sessions for the local music community	Delivered 6 sessions to date
Creation of a digital music support service developed in collaboration with Music Connections	Launching in September 2024
Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24	Launching in September 2024
Programme to develop the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment.	Contract appointed in March 2024
Health and Wellbeing sessions for musicians and the industry	Ongoing throughout 2024
“Go Green” toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation	Launching November 2024
Music Matter Internship Programme – Supporting 7 internships across the music industry	Supplier appointed in August 2024, programme launching in September 2024.

Support for international exchanges with other UNESCO Cities of Music.

Exchanges held with Hannover, Germany, Brno, Czech Republic, and London, Ontario Canada

3.13 **The Belfast Music Board**

The Music Strategy sets out governance recommendations for Belfast Music, including the formation of a Belfast Region Music Board. The overarching role of the Board is to oversee the implementation and prioritisation of the music roadmap, anchoring the city’s commitment to music and ensuring its composition represents the varied interests and needs of both the music sector and the people of Belfast.

The board was appointed in April 2023 and consists of 24 individuals from across a wide variety of disciplines, industries, and interest. The Belfast Music board has been meeting regularly alongside officials in the culture team to map out programmes and initiatives against each theme and priority in this Music Strategy. This engagement has been vital in informing and shaping the projects contained in this paper.

3.14 **Theme 1 - Placing Artists at the Heart**

Theme One of the Music Matters strategy focuses on “Placing Artists at the Heart”. The most basic – or foundational – needs of musicians, music creators and performers are the focus of this theme with a range of initiatives including funding, creative and professional development and opportunities to collaborate and create with others.

Building on the success of previous initiatives in this area, a range of programmes are recommended. These include:

3.15 **The NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast** – The Northern Ireland Music Prize honours 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 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. 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.

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

	<p>significant event and key milestone for Belfast as the regional driver for the music industry in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The 2024 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. Belfast City Council has supported the event since its inception and provided £30,000 of support in 2023.</p>
3.16	<p>At the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, members also agreed to provide support to conduct an independent review of the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast. This independent review considers 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 has involved 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. This review is currently concluding, and a further update and full report will be presented to members in Autumn 2024.</p>
3.17	<p>Officials have received an interim report and recommendations from the review based on the research undertaken and the discussions held to date. This interim report recommends that funding is increased to enhance, scale and strengthen the activities being delivered at Sound of Belfast, including the NI Music Prize, in its 10th anniversary year. This additional resource would be ringfenced for a dedicated marketing and communications campaign to champion artists, promote the events and engage new audiences with Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize. Based on the recommendations from this interim report, it is recommended to allocate £45,000 to the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Output Belfast-</u> Established in 2016, Output Belfast has earned its reputation over the last 7 years as Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme the event is directly related to priority 2.5 within the music strategy, which reads “Develop regular music business touchpoints throughout the year using existing conferences to offer more regular but bitesize opportunities for micro learning”. The conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences,</p>

	<p>followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Activity includes music and creative digital showcasing and networking events, business development panels and workshops and meetings and networking with key international creative digital companies.</p>
3.19	<p>In December 2023, members agreed to allocate £28,000 to Score Draw Music Ltd to continue the delivery of the Output Conference in 2024. This conference was originally planned for April but due to logistical challenges with the April date, council officials and Score Draw Music explored alternative dates later in the year. The event will now take place on Tuesday 12th November to coincide with, and celebrate, the 10-year anniversary of Sound of Belfast.</p>
3.20	<p>This will be the first time that the Output Conference and showcase will take part during the same week as Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize and represents a unique opportunity to test the impact of combining both events and create a critical mass of activity throughout the city.</p>
3.21	<p><u>Continuation of the Micro-Bursaries scheme</u> – This programme provides up to £1,000 to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. In 2023, this programme was delivered in Collaboration with Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, through enhancing their existing bursary programme to include a music micro-bursary. This initiative proved to be highly successful, with over 160 applications from musicians with 18 musicians receiving support. It is proposed to continue this scheme in 2024/25 with an allocation of £20,000 to the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival.</p>
3.22	<p><u>Continuation of the Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme</u> - At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on Wednesday 8 September 2021, members agreed to support the Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme of a five-year period (2021 – 25) and contribute £15,000 each year.</p> <p>The Gradam Ceoil Bursary Scheme is a series of three annual awards awarded to young (18–25-year-old) traditional musicians in Belfast, in partnership with Duncairn Arts Centre, Red Shoe productions and TG4. Each award is valued at £3,000 each and the programme aims are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide support, training and mentoring</li> <li>• To support creativity and cultural expression</li> <li>• Build capacity in online/broadcasting presentation skills (in acoustics and visuals)</li> <li>• Develop capacity and profile for the traditional music sector in Belfast.</li> </ul>
3.23	<p>The 2024/25 scheme aims to launch in January 2025 and will select three young Belfast traditional musicians to receive an award in March 2025. Highlights from the 2024 awards</p>

	<p>included the recipients performing at the Gradam Ceoil awards in Limerick for the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, as well as a special performance at the Fleadh Cheoil and an invite to the Lord Mayor’s parlour for a reception to celebrate. It is proposed to continue this important partnership with a £15,000 contribution in 2024/25.</p>
3.24	<p><u>Health and wellbeing</u> – In 2023/24, officials have worked on a range of partnerships with key organisations such as Tonic Rider and Help Musicians NI to co-design practical wellbeing events and initiatives focusing on the physical and mental health of music creators. This has manifested as a number of practical schemes, including a partnership with Help Musicians NI that will see hearing health care and greater awareness of hearing health in the local music industry. In addition, a pilot programme with NI Alternatives entitled “Fit to March” will launch in September 2024. This programme is targeted at the marching band community and will focus on physical and mental well-being of marching band members. It is recommended that this important element of the music strategy continues in 2024/25 with an allocation of £15,000 towards additional co-designed and targeted programmes.</p>
3.25	<p><u>Music Mentoring Programme Stage Two - Point 6.1</u> within Theme One of the Music Matters strategy recommends investment in “the delivery of a specially designed mentoring programme for individuals working in music, including continued professional development for senior or experienced individuals working in music” In 2023/24, members agreed an allocation of £30,000 towards the development of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme to upskill participants including agents, managers, PR professionals and labels. This programme is currently at procurement stage and will be delivered throughout Autumn 2024.</p>
3.26	<p>It is proposed to continue this programme with an allocation of £30,000 for Stage Two in early 2025. Stage two of the programme will allow the music industry entrepreneurs that have been through the programme thus far to continue their educational development by putting into practice with a cohort of artists, the latter of whom will be the focus of this continuation of the opportunity. The output of this second stage will be a group of local music creators who can progress through their careers with greater confidence in how they manage their individual businesses alongside a stronger team of individuals working in the spheres of management, PR and other complimentary roles.</p>
3.27	<p><u>Music Industry Sessions</u> - Theme one of the Music Strategy focuses on the development of musicians, including action point 2.4 which seeks to “provide opportunities via events and</p>

programmes to provide regular access to professional associations in music to deepen existing relationships and create new ones”.

In 2023/24, officials delivered 6 industry free industry sessions for musicians. It is proposed to continue this important sessions throughout 2024/25 with an allocation of £10,000 towards an additional 6-8 events. Proposed events thus far include focuses on women in sound design, meeting the Tallinn music industry, managing your vocal health, PR and connectivity in the digital sphere.

3.28 **Theme two – Nurture the sector**

Theme two of the Music Strategy focuses on strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators. Through prioritising the sustainable growth of the music business sector, initiatives in this theme support entrepreneurialism, meaningful business development, professional development and sustainable career pathways within the sector. A range of initiatives are proposed within this theme including:

3.29 **Educating the Educators** To support and promote sustainable career pathways within the music sector, it is proposed to run a Pathways Into Music programme in 2024/25. This programme will work directly with the Pathways into Music Foundation and is based on a successful scheme delivered in England supported by Arts Council England.

This programme for music educators, education hubs and talent development organisations will consist of a two-day in-person event in Belfast in autumn 2024, plus three accompanying webinars. These events will focus on careers and trends in the music business, providing music educators with the information, knowledge and contacts they need to advise and support students who seek to pursue a career in music.

The programme will be open to anyone involved in educating or supporting young people making music from key stage three (aged eleven) or above, including: music teachers, instrument tutors, and FE and HE lecturers, plus people working for music education hubs and talent development organisations. This programme will be delivered directly with the Pathways into Music Foundation, in collaboration with the Education Authority. It is proposed to allocate £20,000 towards this programme, reaching between 50-100 education professionals.

3.30 **Supporting Accessibility in Music** – Theme two of the Music Strategy includes a commitment to allocate programming funding to provide opportunities for disabled musicians in performance

spaces across Belfast. In addition, there are several commitments to ensuring that music programming takes an inclusive approach at all times and that music activities are made available in safe spaces for all ages, where the needs of those with disabilities can be met.

To ensure greater opportunities for showcasing musicians with disabilities or additional needs, as well as to provide music activities that are accessible to all, it is proposed that BCC partner with the University of Atypical to develop a pilot a new support scheme that would allow recipients to host activities and events that would develop, promote and provide platforms for those within the d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse music community. This programme would be developed through a strategic partnership with the University of Atypical for Arts and Disability (UofA), a disabled-led lead sectoral organisation for arts and disability.

It is envisaged that these grants would support not just costs associated with the running of the potential events but also costs that ensure access needs are met. It is proposed to allocate £30,000 to the University of Atypical for this pilot programme.

3.31 **Theme 3 - Igniting the Live Experience**

Theme three of the music strategy focuses on supporting the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth. This theme recognises the importance of live music to Belfast for creators and performers, for freelancers and those working in music, and for the people of the city, our audiences. a range of programmes are recommended for 2024/25, including:

3.32 **Strategic Partnership with Music Venue Trust –** The Music Venue Trust is a UK wide charity which acts to protect, secure and improve Grassroots Music Venues. The organisation has been a key partner during both the formation of the Music Strategy and at implementation stage. In 2023/24, Council collaborated with the Music Venue Trust to run a Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues. This scheme resulted in five Belfast venues receiving capital grants to improve their facilities.

3.23 Priority 9 of the Music Strategy focuses on deliver a series of measures that would facilitate the development of a thriving, sustainable and strong live music sector, including a commitment to “engage with the Music Venue Trust to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed”.

3.24	<p>Through meaningful discussions with the Music Venue Trust as to how best to benefit the Belfast Music venues, it is agreed that prolonged engagement would have the most lasting impact upon the sector and would allow for the long-term fulfilment of five Music Matters strategic priorities. Through this engagement, the Music Venue Trust will work closely with venues throughout Belfast, including a co-designed series of events and workshops bringing together venue staff and leaders from local music venues with experienced counterparts and stakeholders from across the UK.</p>
3.25	<p>These events will focus on development opportunities for local Belfast music venues, education and knowledge sharing of best practice and utilisation of the annual report to compare and contrast regional statistics. A key aspect of the day will be information gathering to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed (9.4). They will be able to utilise this direct engagement with the sector to also develop a strong awareness of the current entertainment licencing processes and how they impact local venues (9.3) as well as their event space and equipment needs (9.5) and other challenges facing venues. This research will go on to inform best practice at Council when supporting local venues as well as future partnerships with the sector and advocacy work undertaken by the charity. It is proposed to allocate £20,000 towards this strategic partnership with the Music Venue Trust.</p>
3.26	<p><u>Greening the Sector</u> - Priority 12 of the Music Strategy focuses on greening the live music sector, embedding sustainability at the heart of its approach to business operations.</p> <p>To deliver on this priority, it is proposed to allocate up to £5,000 towards an event and launch of a toolkit in November 2024. This event will be focused on sustainability in creative productions, particularly within the music sector, featuring a panel discussion with key Belfast creatives who will explore practical strategies and innovative approaches to making creative productions more environmentally sustainable, alongside experts in the field from organisations such as Native Events, specialists in looking at new ways of working more sustainably. The conversation will be live-streamed to reach a broad audience and later made available online as a valuable digital asset. In addition to the panel discussion, it is proposed to launch the Green Arts Toolkit for Belfast, a comprehensive resource designed to help artists and cultural organisations implement sustainable practices. This toolkit, developed in collaboration with Native Events, will provide actionable guidelines and best practices for reducing the environmental impact of creative activities. The event offers a unique opportunity to introduce this critical resource to the music community, with the support of Belfast City Council underscoring the city's commitment to</p>



	<p>sustainability and cultural leadership. The event will be produced by NI Science Festival and Nerve Centre and promoted through each organisations own channels, as well as the Belfast 2024 channels.</p>
3.27	<p><u>Safety in Music</u> – Priority 11 of the Music Strategy aims to support venues and performance spaces in implementing initiatives to ensure the health and safety, both physically and in terms of mental wellbeing, of performers and attendees at live music events.</p> <p>To support a safer night-time environment for those working in or attending music events across the city, it is proposed to partner with and support Equity NI’s ‘Safe Home’ campaign through a series of events and training with local venues with the inclusion of the Musicians’ Union and relevant stakeholders in night-time safety. It is proposed to allocate up to £10,000 to this programme which will include practical training and events for local venues and the creation of video and print assets that will further increase knowledge and uptake of the campaign across the city.</p>
3.28	<p><b><u>Theme 4 – Unlocking the unifying power of UNESCO</u></b></p> <p>Theme 4 of the Music Strategy aims to create a sense of ownership of the UNESCO title for the people of the city, recognising the vital role they have played in our musical past and the exciting role they can play in our music future. This roadmap aims to provide more opportunities for embedding music in all corners and communities of the city and also seeks to position the Belfast City of Music brand on the international stage as a gateway to visitors and investors.</p>
3.29	<p>As part of Belfast’s application and status as a City of Music, member cities are committed to <i>“work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.”</i>. In 2023/24, support was provided for local music creators and industry to undertake international exchanges with other UNESCO Cities of Music such as Hannover, Germany, Brno, Czech Republic, and London, Ontario Canada. In addition, a partnership with the Belfast International Arts Festival provided a platform for a special UNESCO day featuring acts from other UNESCO cities at the Festival. It is proposed to continue this partnership with the Belfast International Arts Festival through hosting a UNESCO City of Music day on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024, featuring artists from City of Music Kansas, USA.</p>
3.24	<p>As well as collaboration between cities, UNESCO Member cities are also expected to take part in official UNESCO events, including the annual UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)</p>

	<p>conference and UNESCO Music subnetwork meetings. Officials and the Lord Mayor were in attendance at the UNESCO conference in July which featured over 250 cities across the globe. Following this conference, officials have received expressions of interest from 11 different UNESCO cities to collaborate on a range of opportunities. Officials are actively considering each opportunity and exploring meaningful opportunities for artists and music entrepreneurs from that will allow our local talent to be showcased on a global platform and increase opportunities for music tourism.</p>
3.25	<p>Finally, it is important to note that 2025 will mark four years since Belfast was awarded the title of UNESCO City of Music. As part of this year, Belfast City Council will be expected to complete and submit its Membership Monitoring Report highlighting each Creative Cities' contribution to UCCN's implementation. This report is mandatory for member cities every four years and will require a detailed analysis of progress against commitments in the music strategy alongside a plan and budget for the following four years.</p>
3.26	<p><b><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2024/25 budget from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy.</p>
3.27	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>The cultural strategy, <i>A City Imagining</i> and the Music Matters Music Strategy have both been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	Appendix 1 - Music Workplan 2024-25

## Appendix 1 – 2024-2025 Music Strategy Initiatives

Theme	Priority No.	Description	Approach	Timeline	Budget
<b>Theme 1</b> <i>Placing Artists at the Heart</i>	1.4	Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme (multi year commitment)	Partnership with Duncairn Arts Centre. Including 3 bursaries for emerging musicians	February 2025	£15,000
<b>Theme 1</b> <i>Placing Artists at the Heart</i>	1.4	Micro bursaries programme, available to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform.	Following a successful pilot round with 18 musicians supported, continue to partner with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival to provide grants for local music creators.	October 2024 to April 2025	£20,000
<b>Theme 1</b> <i>Placing Artists at the Heart</i>	1.7 4.1	Support and enhance initiatives which provide instruments for local communities across Belfast to ensure individuals, regardless of age, sex or background, have the opportunity to learn or engage with music	Partnership with the Ulster Orchestra to identify former Crescendo pupils from Years 8 and 9 (as of Sept 24) who wish to avail of a free bursary scheme providing tuition and instruments which the school and/or pupils cannot access otherwise. Support for approximately 36 pupils who would not have the means to own an instrument or have tuition beyond primary education.	September 2024 to April 2025	£20,000
<b>Theme 1</b> <i>Placing Artists at the Heart</i>	1.8	Co-design with sectoral stakeholders and fund a programme of practical wellbeing events and initiatives to ensure the physical and mental health of music creators is safeguarded and protected throughout the year.	Partnership with key organisations such as Tonic Rider and Help Musicians NI	August 2024 to August 2025	£15,000

	2.8				
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	2.5 3.3 5.3	NI Music Prize & Sound of Belfast	Event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music. Additional support to include enhanced support for musicians and increased marketing elements.	November 2024	£45,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	2.1	Music Connections Website – a one-stop-shop online Music Directory to promote and connect all facets of the music business and those working in it	Continuation of the Music Connections website and online directory and support service for musicians.	February 2025 to February 2026	£30,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	2.1 14.1	Continuation of Belfast Music Social Channels and platforms	Delivered via procurement exercise in September 2024	September 2024 to September 2025	£15,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	2.3 6.1	Invest in the delivery of a specially designed mentoring programme for individuals working in music, including continued professional development for senior or experienced individuals working in music	Delivery of the second stage of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme	December 2024	£30,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	2.4 2.5	Output Belfast	Direct partnership with Score Draw Music. Output is Ireland's biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Additional resource to enhance the showcase programme to coincide	November 2024	£38,000

			with 10 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sound of Belfast.		
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	2.4 2.5	City of Music Industry Sessions	Continued programming of free and accessible educational events around an array of topics within the music industry. A space to allow local music creators and entrepreneurs to network together.	September 2024 to June 2025	£10,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	5.4	Allocate programming funding to support organisations who seek to develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres	Continue to support projects that develop and promote diverse and under-represented genres where gaps are identified.	September 2024 to June 2025	£15,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	1.1 5.2 5.4	Allocate programming funding to support organisations who seek to provide opportunities for disabled musicians in performance spaces across Belfast	A partnership with University of Atypical that will support the charity in launching a fund for the d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse community within music to run accessible music events.	October 2024 - March 2025	£30,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	6.2 8.2	Professional development programme for music educators, education hubs, and talent development, community music and youth organisations, putting the focus on music careers.	A partnership with Pathways into Music Foundation to support an inspired and educated next generation; more informed teachers and careers advisors.	September 2024 to March 2025	£20,000
<b>Theme 2</b> <i>Nurture the Sector</i>	6.2	Undertake a skills audit of the sector, identifying the gaps and working with stakeholders to deliver upskilling programmes and initiatives	A partnership with First Music Contact and the Oh Yeah Music Centre to support the delivery of the FMC Regional Development Plan in Northern Ireland. FMC's aim is to conduct an analysis of musicians' needs. The regional development strategy takes place in the context of a talent development pipeline of support to grow the careers of musicians and	September 2024 to March 2025	£3000

			music industry professionals on the Island of Ireland.		
<b>Theme 3</b> <i>Igniting the Live Experience</i>	9.1 9.3 9.4 9.5	Music Venue Trust	Partnership with the Music Venue Trust to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed.	November 2024 to March 2026	£20,000
<b>Theme 3</b> <i>Igniting the Live Experience</i>	10.1	A safer night-time environment for those working in or attending music events across the city	Support Equity NI's 'Safe Home' campaign through a series of events with local venues with the inclusion of the Musicians' Union and relevant stakeholders in night-time safety. Support the creation of video and print assets that will further increase knowledge and uptake of the campaign across the city.	September 2024 onwards	£10,000
<b>Theme 3</b> <i>Igniting the Live Experience</i>	12.2	Aligning with UNESCO ambitions, provide a practical "Go Green" toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation	Support of launch event and webinar to launch the toolkit with Nerve Centre and NI Science Festival.	September 2023 to March 2024	£5000
<b>Theme 4</b> <i>Unlock the unifying Power of UNESCO</i>	14.3	Provide a comprehensive social media and communications toolkit to the sector to help them proactively promote Belfast music on their owned channels	Commission Fiona McAuley, Snr Director of Digital Marketing UK & CEU and social media expert, to create a social media and communications toolkit that will be hosted on the Music Connections website and made available to our sector, thereby increasing the artists and entrepreneurs in our local sector's skillsets.	September 2023 to March 2024	£3000

<b>Theme 4</b> <i>Unlock the unifying Power of UNESCO</i>	16.1	Music as a key asset for the outward promotion of NI	Collate Belfast music-focused imagery and videos that can be utilised when promoting Belfast on a global platform, such as during UNESCO City of Music forums.	Ongoing	£15,000
<b>Theme 4</b> <i>Unlock the unifying Power of UNESCO</i>	UNESCO City of Music Commitments	Work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.	Support active participation in UNESCO cultural networks with reciprocal benefits between the cities including but not limited to partnership with UCoM city Kansas (US) Hannover (Germany) Daegu (South Korea).  Includes BCC representation on UNESCO Music subnetwork meetings and UNESCO Celebration Day hosted by the Belfast International Arts Festival.	September 2023 to August 2024	£30,000
<b>Governance</b>	Governance recommendation 1 + 3	Belfast Region Music Board	Support for the continuation of the Belfast Region Music Board, prioritising governance training with Arts & Business.	April 24 to March 25	£3000

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<b>Subject:</b>	Enterprise Support Service update								
<b>Date:</b>	7 August 2024								
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Greer, Director of Economic Development								
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cathy Keenan, Programme Lead, NIESS Margie McKay, Enterprise and Business Growth Manager								
<b>Restricted Reports</b>									
<p><b>Is this report restricted?</b> <span style="float: right;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></span></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 5%;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Some time in the future</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>								
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Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>								
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>								
<b>Call-in</b>									
<p><b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b> <span style="float: right;">Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></span></p>									
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>								
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that is being led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils.								
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>								
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note and endorse the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service across Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses</li> <li>Note the pending end date of the current funding in March 2025 and the lack of clarity around future resource availability at this point</li> <li>Agree to support the work to secure resources for delivery beyond March 2025.</li> </ul>								

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	At the August 2023 meeting of this Committee, members were provided with an update on progress to operationalise and deliver the Enterprise Support Service which has been branded as Go Succeed. Since the last update, the service was successfully launched and has now been operational for around eight months.
3.2	By way of background, members will recall that Belfast City Council led on a successful funding application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This provided £17 million of support for the period to March 2025; £12 million programme delivery and £5 million for small grants. Following receipt of the funding agreement in September 2023, the service became operational in November 2023.
3.3	The new service aims to be the go-to source for expert business advice across the region. It represents the councils' collective response to our statutory responsibility and offers a set of connected enterprise support services where individuals, entrepreneurs or businesses can access a continuum of support to meet their needs, depending on their stage of development.
3.4	<p>The key objectives of the model are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurture a strong entrepreneurial culture, recognising enterprise as a viable career option and/or a route out of economic inactivity</li> <li>• Enable a vibrant and productive business base across Northern Ireland</li> <li>• Increase the proportion of 'innovation-active' businesses in NI and embed this more firmly with enterprise/ start-up agenda</li> <li>• Diversify the representation amongst those supported by the enterprise and innovation ecosystem</li> <li>• Delivery a service designed with the user in mind</li> <li>• Focus on adding value to existing support available in the ecosystem</li> <li>• Providing regional coverage while ensuring that delivery reflects local differences/nuances.</li> </ul>
3.5	Go Succeed provides a continuum of support from early-stage enterprise awareness through to starting, growing, and scaling a business. The concept was that the service would help people get the right support at the right time – and would also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.

3.6	<p>The service has been established to deliver across three core areas – Start, Grow and Scale – with tailored support for clients aligned with their growth ambitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Start:</b> this element of the service aims to identify individuals with entrepreneurial intentions as well as reaching those individuals who do not have an intention to start a business but could be encouraged to do so. There is specific, targeted support for a range of underrepresented groups. The menu of support available includes masterclasses, peer support networks and 1-1 mentoring</li> <li>• <b>Grow:</b> this element of the service provides support for existing businesses. 1-1 mentoring is allocated based on the business' potential to grow and innovate. Masterclass and peer support network activity are also provided to support existing businesses to make key decisions on issues such as entering new markets or accessing finance for growth</li> <li>• <b>Scale:</b> this part of the service is geared to supporting start-ups that have the potential to go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years. Support is delivered through 1-1 mentoring which aims to enable access to finance or further support through Invest NI, Catalyst or others.</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £4,000 (and up to 70% of capital/revenue costs) are available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.</p>
3.8	<p>The delivery is underpinned by investments such as a wide-reaching marketing and communications campaign; a call handling service to deal with phone enquiries as well as an online portal to deal with online requests for support and a regional CRM system to enable tracking of client engagement across the service.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Regional Performance Update</u></p> <p>Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of regional performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18,793 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities</li> <li>• 3,204 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)</li> <li>• 2,514 businesses supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)</li> <li>• 176 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.</li> </ul>

3.10	<p>The service provides an opportunity for councils to deliver a consistent approach to enterprise, start up and growth provision across the region. However it also has the flexibility to adapt to meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs and businesses within local areas. To achieve this, councils have developed local-level annual service plans which identify key areas of focus for outreach and delivery activities. This can include interventions to increase participation and address specific barriers faced by certain under-represented groups including females, individuals with a disability, ethnic minorities etc. It can also allow for targeted sector support activities such as those aimed at the tourism and hospitality sector or creative and digital sector support.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Belfast Performance Update</u></p> <p>Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of Belfast performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,984 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities. This has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increasing awareness of enterprise among young people at the Young Enterprise Big Market event in St George's Market</li> <li>○ Development and delivery of an Inclusive Enterprise Pathway programme. This has involved delivery of 20 workshops and more than 700 individuals were engaged between October 2023 and March 2024. Participants insights from these sessions highlighted positive levels of engagement from females, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities when compared to other mainstream enterprise programmes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• From January-March 2024, the Enterprise and Business Growth team also delivered inclusive mentoring support to 15 individuals with further barriers to engagement. Delivery included a series of group sessions supplemented with 10 hours of 1-1 mentoring and provision of small grant funds for personal development and business supports. The team continues to engage with representatives of key organisations to raise awareness of, and inform, enterprise support initiatives</li> <li>• 523 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)</li> <li>• 481 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks).</li> </ul>

3.12	82 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024, drawing down over £300,000. These grants have enabled businesses to purchase capital and/or revenue items which will support their future growth plans.
3.13	<p>Critical to the service is the ability to deliver place-based activity and to be responsive to the needs of the local business community. In Belfast, there has been a series of targeted masterclasses for businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector. We have also put in place a number of information and support sessions to help businesses access other support services such as the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and have organised support clinics to help businesses interested in exploring new markets and introducing new technologies into their business. For the year ahead, planned activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establishing, and building upon, relationships with key stakeholders across the city to put in place targeted interventions to engage with under-represented groups and work to overcome the barriers to starting or growing a business for those groups</li> <li>○ Working with the council's Culture and Tourism teams to support a neighbourhood tourism programme promoting innovation and entrepreneurship across all city neighbourhoods and helping bring forward new tourism products</li> <li>○ Continuing to raise awareness of the Social Economy sector, encouraging and supporting new and existing social enterprises and co-operatives</li> <li>○ Partnering with the council's Employability and Skills team to target self-employed sectors, including childminding, and delivering bespoke academies to break down barriers to self-employment.</li> </ul>
3.14	Looking ahead, it is critical that funding is secured to enable this service to continue. The SPF funding is currently scheduled to run out in March 2025 and there is no clarity as to the future SPF funding approach beyond this date. There has been some engagement with the Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Minister has been vocal in his support for the service. However, at this point, DfE is not making a financial contribution to support the delivery of NIESS – although councils are using some of resources allocated to them from central government for the delivery of their statutory duty to provide start-up support as their match funding contribution to the overall funding pot.
3.15	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council is currently acting as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we have established a delivery and management team which is fully resourced through the SPF funding. The overall indicative SPF budget is in the</p>

3.16	<p>region of £5 million revenue in year 1 and £7 million revenue in year 2, with around £5 million available across the funding period for grant support.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	N/A



<b>Subject:</b>	Sub regional economic development - update		
<b>Date:</b>	7 August 2024		
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Damien Martin, Strategic Director, Place and Economy		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager, Economy		
<b>Restricted Reports</b>			
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>			
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>		
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Call-in</b>			
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>		
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on work being led by the Department of the Economy (DfE) on sub-regional economic development, in line with the Minister's Economic Vision set out in February 2024.		
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>		
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the update on the work currently being led by DfE around sub-regional economic development.</li> <li>• Note the pending development of sub-regional economic development plans and the timelines for council engagement in this activity.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to receive a future update on this work with a view to discussing the Belfast City Council priorities.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Members will be aware that, for some time, the NI government departments – led by DfE – have been considering sub-regional approaches to economic development. In June 2023, this committee agreed a response to a call for evidence issued by DfE in the context of “10X Place”. That call for evidence sought to build an understanding of how policy could be effectively flexed to meet local economic needs – and also to understand relative strengths across the region.
3.2	<p>The council response covered a range of issues in line with the questions asked. A summary of the key points raised in that response included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simply creating a sub-regional tier without additional transfer of statutory authority does not equal sub-regional economic development</li> <li>• The critical issue is flexibility of approach to meet local needs</li> <li>• Local authority boundaries can be building blocks for building up or drilling down – depending on the issue</li> <li>• Concerns at creating another layer/partnership mechanism – propose that it would be more effective to use existing structures</li> <li>• Request to understand what elements were “in play” – all of DfE portfolio? Consideration that wider input/support was critical – particularly from DfC and DfI, given need for critical infrastructure investments to support any economic development activity.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>Following the restoration of the NI Executive in February 2024, Minister Murphy set out his economic mission. It comprises four key themes, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the proportion of the working-age population in “Good Jobs”</li> <li>• Promote Regional Balance</li> <li>• Raise Productivity</li> <li>• Reduce Carbon Emissions</li> </ul>
3.4	It is our understanding that the 10X Place work has effectively been replaced by the work around “promoting regional balance”. In our recent engagement with DfE and Invest NI regarding sub-regional economic development, we have continued to raise a number of key issues, namely:



- Role of Belfast as regional driver – research clearly shows that cities play a key role in generating wealth and opportunity. They need to be supported to play that role – and the benefits that accrue go beyond the city boundaries
- Ongoing inequities in Belfast – particularly within communities that face multiple disadvantage: there is a £3,474 yearly earnings gap for Belfast based on place of work and place of residence; 6 of the top 10 most deprived wards are in Belfast and the top 15 most deprived wards for the Education, Skills and Training domain of the Multiple Deprivation Matrix are all in Belfast
- Research also suggests that the underperformance of cities is one of the most significant contributing factors to low levels of productivity across the UK – policy needs to focus on removing barriers to growth rather than just trying to re-locate growth
- Need to ensure that this is not just about brining all areas “up to the same level” – productivity levels in NI already lag behind UK, RoI and many global metrics: Belfast’s level also needs to continue to improve (and this in turn can support the wider region).

3.5

In terms of tactical interventions that could support these ambitions, there are a number of areas of potential interest. These include:

- Maximising the impact of the City Deal investments – through innovation diffusion and SME access as well as skills interventions, including inclusive pathways
- Supporting the development of key clusters in areas of competitive advantage – through targeted investment in finance; infrastructure and expert support
- Targeted outreach and engagement support to develop inclusive pathways into new growth sectors.

3.6

With regard to next steps in this work, it is our understanding that DfE intends to move ahead with the development of a “sub-regional economic development plan” in September 2024. That “plan” is likely to be more of a broader set of intentions, with the ask that each council comes forward with their outline areas of priority and resource requirements. Council boundaries will be the building blocks for action – but they are open to collaborative activities, working across council boundaries on areas of shared interest e.g. sectoral priorities. No details are yet available on timelines, but it is likely that DfE will ask that plans are submitted in early 2025, to enable delivery from the new financial year. DfE officials have advised that engagement is taking place to try to secure additional resources

	for this work: However, we have made the point that it should not just be about new resources but, more importantly, considering how the existing resources can be flexed.
3.7	One other stipulation that DfE have flagged is that the plans will be brought together by local partnerships. They have not prescribed what these partnerships should be and have suggested that it is for councils to advise. This recognises the volume of existing partnerships that are already in place across all council areas, working on broader economic development issues.
3.8	It is likely that additional information on the proposed way forward will emerge in the coming weeks. At that point, officers will bring back a more detailed update and set out a proposed approach to ensure that the position of Belfast is recognised and appropriately supported through this work.
	<u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u>
3.9	No specific financial or resource implications at this time.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.10	DfE will be responsible for the overall equality impact assessment work on this activity.  It is intended that support will be available to all council areas – urban and rural.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	N/A