

**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 COMBINED PACK**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Wednesday, 9th October, 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) Vacant to Vibrant Update (Pages 1 - 14)
- (b) Housing Led Regeneration Update (Pages 15 - 20)
- (c) Belfast 2024 (Pages 21 - 32)

#### **3. Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure**

- (a) Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 10 Year Stocktake Update (Pages 33 - 46)

4. **Positioning Belfast to Compete**

- (a) Major Events Update (Pages 47 - 58)
- (b) International Relations - future approach (Pages 59 - 64)

5. **Growing Business and the Economy**

- (a) Site Visit - Request from Belfast Chamber (Pages 65 - 68)

6. **Strategic and Operational Issue**

- (a) Request for approval for Crafted with Pride Markets (Pages 69 - 70)
- (b) Special Committee Presentations (Pages 71 - 74)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6  
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy 10 Year Stock Take Update
<b>Date:</b>	9 October 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Deirdre Kelly, Programme Manager / Angela McIntyre, Regeneration Project Officer

**Restricted Reports**

**Is this report restricted?** Yes  No

**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

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>
Never		<input type="checkbox"/>

**Call-in**

**Is the decision eligible for Call-in?** Yes  No

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the 10 year stock take of Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy, as agreed as an in year deliverable in the City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan 24/25.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee are asked to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The emerging findings from the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) 10-year stock take, in the context of the existing strategy.</li> <li>• The proposed BCCRIS Summit event to launch the key messaging.</li> <li>• Request for Members to provide any further comments to inform the final stocktake report.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
3.1	As Members will be aware the Committee agreed as part of the Committee Plan for 24/25 <i>“to take forward a ten-year review of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration &amp; Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) building on the work of the recent Regeneration Trackers to inform city and Council priorities going forward”</i> .
3.2	By way of background, BCCRIS launched in 2015 and is the adopted regeneration policy for the city centre. BCCRIS recognised that the city centre is one of the most important places in the Region, where investment impact can be maximised, where rates are generated and where momentum can be built to support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods and wider region. Belfast as the capital city, and regional economic driver generates £16.2bn GVA with 14.3% of Northern Ireland’s business base and accounts for 30% of total employee jobs. The stocktake has evidenced that this is very much the case today, it is clear that Belfast is everyone’s main city and has an important role to play as a centre for commerce, culture, tourist attractions, recreation, entertainment, learning and employment. Its core centre area needs to ensure collective efforts are intensified to ensure it can continue to perform these important roles for all areas of the city and the region to derive benefit.
3.3	<p>The Strategy sets out the context for developing the city centre and outlines collective aspirations for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas. The Strategy is based on the following core principles, which are referred to as the policy areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the Employment Population</li> <li>• Increase the Residential Population</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the Retail Offer</li> <li>• Maximise the Tourism Opportunity</li> <li>• Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres</li> <li>• Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre</li> <li>• Connect to the City Around</li> <li>• Shared Space and Social Impact</li> </ul>
3.4	<p>To facilitate the implementation of these policies the strategy also identified a series of projects and a number of opportunities. The projects were intended to focus efforts on discrete initiatives which will help to achieve the policies and create a liveable and economically thriving city. Five Special Action Areas were identified for parts of the centre where it recommended that more intensive local plans should be prepared.</p>
3.5	<p>At the time of publication of BCCRIS and as part of Local Government Reform in 2015 the Council were preparing for the planned transfer of regeneration powers; however these did not transfer to Councils. In 2016, the Department for Social Development (predecessor of Department for Communities) agreed a joint working arrangement with Belfast City Council, where they adopted BCCRIS going forward as their regeneration policy, although noting that as DSD were considering the evaluation of its area-based Neighbourhood Renewal Programme they could not specifically adopt the 5 Special Action Areas within the Strategy at that time.</p>
3.6	<p>The stocktake involves looking back at what was envisaged through BCCRIS and taking stock in order to assist in a focus to looking forward. The stocktake is not intended to be an in-depth analysis of all the elements of the strategy but rather an overview of progress over the 10- year period and a consideration of the high-level priority areas going forward in the context of what was contained within the existing strategy. It is not seeking to rewrite the strategy, which was subject to extensive consultation at the time of its development including cross party-political support from the Council Party Group Leaders and adopted by DSD (DfC) as their regeneration policy for the city centre. The stocktake has provided an opportunity to look at progress to date and identify future opportunities through the lens of how the city centre has evolved, and the role of the city centre for all users. It builds on existing agreed principles as set out in our Inclusive Growth Strategy, the Belfast Agenda and A Bolder Vision, all key aspects which have come forward since the launch of the strategy in 2015.</p>
3.7	<p>Importantly, when BCCRIS was published in 2015, it was recognised that in order to deliver on the collective ambition collective and collaborative working would be required across the</p>

	<p>public sector, third sector and private sector, and this is still very much the case today. Given the comprehensive nature of BCCRIS and recognising that the ambition is collective and would require significant partnership working it has been important that the stocktake be shaped not only by the information contained in the annual regeneration and development trackers (which charts physical development activity and previously reported to Committee), but by engagement across all sectors and partners.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Main Report</b></p>
<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p><b>Shaping the stocktake</b></p> <p>The stocktake has been shaped by a programme of engagement, revisiting the extensive engagement which was carried out in 2015. Joe Berridge (Urban Strategies) worked with the Council to develop BCCRIS back in 2015 and he has played a key part in the current stocktake exercise. This stocktake exercise has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Party Group Leaders Engagement</li> <li>• Two online focused community workshops.</li> <li>• Facilitated community and public in person evening workshop.</li> <li>• Internal cross departmental engagement.</li> <li>• Industry conversations (Business &amp; Development).</li> <li>• Central Government Departments including DfI and DfC.</li> <li>• City centre site visits.</li> <li>• Desk based research, including taking cognisance of the breadth of engagement undertaken by the Council in recent years with relevance to the city centre.</li> </ul> <p>Members are asked to note the <b>emerging stocktake summary points</b> below, which are in the context of the existing strategy, noting that there is also reference to policy landscape change since 2015 in terms of Local Government Reform; including transfer of planning powers, development of the LDP and the publication of the Belfast Agenda: A couple of overarching comments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Role of the City Centre:</b> In 2015, it was recognised that the city centre is one of the most important places in the region. City centres are where investment impact can be maximised, where rates are generated and where momentum can be built to support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods and wider region. Importantly for Council this enables the redistribution of growth, to ensure inclusive growth across our city. The generation of rates income from the city centre also supports the delivery of our vital services and our significant physical programme across the city, bringing much needed investment into communities. The findings of the stocktake evidence that this</li> </ul>

is very much the case today, and that Belfast, as the regional economic driver is the regional centre for commerce, culture, tourism, recreation, entertainment, learning and employment, and contributes £47million in non-domestic district rates (2022/23). City centre jobs represent c.37% of all Belfast jobs and 11% of all jobs in Northern Ireland. The emerging messaging from the stocktake reinforces the need to set out the role of Belfast, our city centre and support needed to strengthen its role in positioning the wider region for inclusive investment and innovation.

- **Much has been achieved since 2015, and there is still room and the to grow – sustainably:** The stocktake review underscores a very positive trajectory of development over the period from 2015, recognising also the significant impact that Covid has had on the city centre, and highlights areas where further focus is required. Engagement feedback from across a broad spectrum of stakeholders recognises that there has been significant regeneration progress across a number of sectors which has been very positive, but also an opportunity now (in the context of the existing strategy) to take stock on what our collective priorities are as a city going forward and seek to address the challenges that exist. This is particularly important given the return of the Executive and publication of draft Programme for Government, coupled with a continued interest in development in the city, the changing nature of how the city centre is used and the need to ensure the existing residential and business communities continue to play an important role in the future sustainable development of the city centre.
- **A Number of Game Changers have taken place since 2015:**  
The stocktake highlighted the positive progress over the last decade, completed game changing developments including Ulster University relocation, Belfast Grand Central Station, Waterfront Hall extension, the introduction of the first phase of the Belfast Rapid Transit, development along the waterfront area (including Titanic Quarter and City Quays). There has also been significant levels of development across a range of asset classes, particularly offices, tourism / hospitality and student accommodation. The stocktake also highlighted a degree of frustration at the slow pace of progress in other areas including city centre living, improved connectivity, public realm and public and green spaces. The importance of connectivity and public transport, as well as the city centre 'hours of activity' are emerging strongly as key findings. Whilst good placemaking has been identified as being critical, city management, 'place keeping' and the importance of the city centre as a safe, clean, compassionate and inclusive space have also been highlighted.

4.3	<p>➤ <b><u>Emerging Key Points in relation to the 8 policy areas:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase the Employment Population:</b> BCCRIS focused on the need to increase Grade A offices given the lack of new city centre office development at that time, coupled with a significant marketing programme for occupiers and investors, and consideration as to how BCC could de-risk private sector investment in Grade A office accommodation. Over the BCCRIS period to date there has been significant investment in office space and increases in employment targets set. In 2015 BCCRIS set a target of 1.5m sq ft of new office space to be delivered by 2030, by 2024 over 2m sq ft of new office space had been delivered. The number of employee jobs in the city centre increased by 12% (above the regional average) from 77,255 in 2015 to 86,427 in 2024. The stocktake did however highlight that vacant secondary office accommodation will be a challenge going forward.</li> </ul>
4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase the Residential Population:</b> In 2015 BCCRIS noted the low overall city centre residential population and that a significant residential population is highly important for the successful functioning of the city centre, referencing knowledge workers, younger newcomers to the city, and empty nesters, and recognised the importance of existing communities bordering the city centre. It also highlighted the opportunity for student housing development, recognising the importance of students and with a need for a balanced approach to student housing development. Opportunities for market and private rented sector housing were noted, including identification of key residential sites, marketing of publicly owned sites and if necessary, preparation of financial models to underpin and support funding applications. It highlighted that city centre living is not a case of ‘build it and they will come’ and that a compelling attractive and secure environment is essential. Improvements to open space, public realm, food and entertainment offerings, connectivity and ‘buzz’ are as important as ensuring availability of appropriate sites.</li> </ul> <p>The 2021 Census indicates a city centre residential population of 13,654 which has increased to an estimated 14,793 people live in the city centre today (2022 Mid-Year Estimates). By early 2024, 5,223 student beds had been completed (with more than 1000 beds under construction), with a recognition that students represent an important source of city centre housing demand not only whilst studying but after they graduate and commence their careers. BCCRIS had set a target of at least 6,000 new homes by 2030, however by 2024 there has been limited development, with less than 500 new homes completed. Although c1,000 are currently under construction and a number of recent planning approvals granted across various tenures including Build To Rent and</p>



social which suggests a degree of progress. However, there are a number of residential units in the city centre that have received planning approval, but development has not progressed. City centre living has emerged as one of the most important priorities going forward. Viability issues and lack of specific regeneration and housing funding to unlock housing development comparative to other UK cities have been identified as significant barriers. Council's approach to securing a Private Sector Partner to deliver a significant programme of Housing Led Regeneration on city centre lands was noted as a positive step.

However, a key theme from the stocktake is a need to address funding, viability and water infrastructure issues to help unlock the delivery of city centre living. Members will also recall recent reports brought to Committee on a Place Based Growth Proposition for the city which provides insight into the economic growth potential for the city on foot of increased regeneration and housing development. The proposition also highlights the significant gap in specific regeneration and housing related funding streams in Northern Ireland / Belfast compared to other UK cities (eg High Street Fund, Brownfield Infrastructure Levy Fund etc) which arguably puts Belfast at a distinct disadvantage in terms of city competitiveness and the ability to drive forward city regeneration priorities such as increased city centre living.

4.5

- **Manage the Retail Offer:** BCCRIS noted the fundamental changes to retail across the UK, including online shopping and out of town retail. Reference was made to ensuring a viable future for the North East Quarter (North St /Royal Ave area), as well as the opportunity to re-brand the centre as a retail and leisure destination and develop policies to support speciality and artisanal shopping. The stocktake noted that vacancy rates have decreased over the past few years (eg decrease from 23% in 2022 to 21% in 2024), although still above the UK average, it is recognised that a significant proportion of this is due to vacancy in stalled regeneration schemes. Unlocking stalled regeneration schemes and particularly the Tribeca site, given its scale and location in the heart of the city core and with significant dereliction and vacancy in this area, was noted as a key priority in the stocktake.

BCCRIS had highlighted that given Belfast's regional role there was the potential to attract a greater number of multinational retailers, as well as the benefit of increasing the number of independent retailers to create a point in difference. The stocktake shows that 57% of the city centre retailers are independent versus 43% in 2015. There is also evidence of confidence in Belfast from multinational brands, with a number of recent new to market entrants and first to island brands. Over the time period other

major retailers have also expanded or located flagship stores. BCCRIS had identified opportunities for schemes that encouraged start-ups and attracting new businesses to the city centre. To date, Council's £1m Vacant to Vibrant Pilot Capital Grant Scheme has incentivised a large number of property owners and occupiers to bring vacant space back into use for independents and SME's, supporting the city centre's revitalisation, including reuse of heritage buildings. The stocktake has shown however that retail, in line with other UK cities, remains challenging and stakeholder feedback also highlights that 'place keeping', cleansing, social and environmental issues are a priority in order to create a safe, welcoming and clean environment for customers, coupled also with events, animation and programming to attract people to come into the city. Having people living in the city centre will also be key to supply the retail sector.

4.6

- **Maximise the Tourism Opportunity:** BCCRIS had noted the positive trajectory of tourism indicators in 2015, but with great untapped potential remaining. It referenced the need for more hotel rooms as well as the opportunity for a new major tourist attraction; concerted tourism marketing to build on Belfast is unique brand; increasing events and working with local organisations to amplify the food, music and cultural events. The stocktake highlighted that the vision for tourism proposed in BCCRIS in 2015 has been exceeded, with a very positive progress in increasing hospitality, food & beverage and tourism facilities. By early 2024, 1,928 hotel rooms were completed (with over 300 rooms under construction and c 1,250 rooms with planning approval and others pending). It also noted the successful and ongoing promotion of Belfast as a tourism and cultural destination including increased business tourism; the completion of the extension at Belfast Waterfront/ICC; significant increase in cruise tourism and the wide ranging cultural and tourism events programme, the Cultural Strategy 'A City Imagining' as well as the ongoing Belfast 2024 programme of activities. In 2015, BCCRIS had highlighted potential for a significant new tourism destination within the city centre, and suggested use of heritage buildings on offer. The progress of Belfast Stories as one of the flagship City projects is noted in the stocktake as being catalytic for the city centre.

4.7

- **Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres:** BCCRIS references the importance of the University of Ulster development and city centre linkages; increasing skills base and innovation as positive developments since 2015. The stocktake has found the Belfast Region City Deal has significantly advanced innovation and learning and noted there are now 40,000 students across two universities and further education campuses. One of the main game changers for city

<p>4.8</p>	<p>centre has been the Ulster University Campus relocation- £364m development which has delivered £1.4bn in regeneration impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre:</b> BCCRIS had noted the lack of green space; the need to rebalance the scales between tarmac and soft landscaping, the need for transformation of the inner ring road; developing a transformative vision for the river corridor, progressing cycle and bike rental and parking facilities and developing key bike routes. The stocktake has found that whilst some progress has been made, there are opportunities which have not. Positives include Belfast Bikes, Cathedral Gardens proposed redevelopment, various public realm improvements being progressed (Little York Street; 5C's; Blackstaff Square etc), pedestrianisation of Union Street, BRT Phase 1, City Quays Gardens, the Entries Programme etc are all positive signs. However there was a strong desire to see significantly enhanced public realm, open space and cycling facilities. Delivery of priority schemes from the emerging Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) City Centre Chapter and alignment with A Bolder Vision are seen as critical going forward.</p> </li> </ul>
<p>4.9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Connect to the City Around:</b> BCCRIS had highlighted how the hard boundaries of the river and the arterial roads contribute to lack of connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods and the river. A range of enhanced connectivity measures and improvements were recommended. It was felt that commitment to what BCCRIS envisaged has come forward through A Bolder Vision. This is an ambitious blue print to explore a shared approach to creating a more attractive and connected city. This includes a collective commitment to a number of priority thematic areas and proposals where there is an opportunity to intervene to transform critical parts of the city to create a green, people focused, connected city centre. Four key priorities were agreed, including a strong civic spine, reimagining the inner ring road, infrastructure to support city centre living and embracing the River Lagan. It is clear from the stocktake that whilst A Bolder Vision provides the blue print for this alongside the Eastern Transport Plan, there is the need now to see delivery on key schemes and interventions. On completion of the ETP for the city centre (envisaged early 2025) there is an opportunity to make this and the outworkings of A Bolder Vision a priority for the city centre will be subject to funding and resources.</p> </li> </ul>
<p>4.10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Shared Space and Social Impact:</b> BCCRIS highlighted that the city centre needed to be a place for everyone, with design and management fostering that sense of space for everyone, focusing on what appeals and attracts all citizens. It recommended making public spaces friendly for all ages; informal leisure and sports uses; increased</p> </li> </ul>

water activity on the river etc and ensuring social benefit is an integral element of city investments. There have been positives on this including for example use of 2 Royal Avenue as a civic and cultural space and opening up of the rear area into Bank Square; Cathedral Gardens pop up park and current redevelopment; incorporation of public space within designs for Belfast Stories; diversification of some retail space for leisure uses (e.g. Castlecourt); various place making schemes, parklets, pavement cafes etc as well as cultural and animation programming. There remains a need to continue to embed this within future development and activity.

4.11

➤ **Additional Levers for Change (Post BCCRIS 2015)**

- **Belfast Region City Deal:** A £1 billion programme of co-investment across central and local government and regional partners.
- **Local Development Plan:** In 2023 Belfast formally adopted the Local Development Plan Strategy, which will shape the physical future of the city. The Plan Strategy provides a statutory basis for the eight policy areas of the BCCRIS to be part of decisions made on development in the city. The LDP provides a 15-year planning framework, and following adoption of the Plan Strategy, work is now underway on the Local Policies Plan which will include the local policies, allocations and site specific proposals to deliver the vision and objectives as set out in the Plan Strategy.
- **Community Planning:** BCCRIS was developed in the context of council's new responsibility to produce a Community Plan for the city, the Belfast Agenda, which was launched in 2017 and underwent a statutory refresh in 2024 with delivery of focused action plans. The development of the city centre is a priority area in the Belfast Agenda.
- **A Bolder Vision:** An ambitious blueprint brought forward by BCC/DfI/DfC to help shape how spaces and places are used with a people focus. Priorities include a strong Civic Spine; Inner Ring Road; Waterfront and City Centre Living. Alignment with the emerging ETP is key.
- **Climate Change:** Belfast declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 with a Climate Commission and Carbon Roadmap in place in 2020, which includes a key focus on the built environment and transport and the need to decarbonise, upgrade and retrofit. Local Area Energy Plan was recently launched. Belfast Agenda has 'Our Planet' as a key priority including resilience and sustainability of built environment.

4.12

**Emerging Areas of Focus from Stocktake for the next 5 – 10 years (within context of existing strategy):**

- Increasing **city centre living and addressing viability, funding, policy and water infrastructure issues**, noting the economic and social benefits which come from

having a bustling lived in city centre. This is also in the context of the recent **Place Based Growth Proposition** report that was brought to Committee highlighting the growth potential of the city but noting the lack of specific regeneration funding (including for city centre living) comparative to other UK cities to help unlock this.

- **Unlocking major regeneration opportunities and particularly the Tribeca site;** given its scale and location in the heart of the city core and with significant dereliction and vacancy in this area.
- **Delivery of A Bolder Vision** priority projects including public realm development, open space, capital infrastructure (inc major junctions) proposals and inclusive placemaking, recognising that the **Eastern Transport Plan Belfast City Centre Chapter** provides an opportunity to give focus and direction to this. This also includes **removing severance and barriers** to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities, the waterfront and Titanic Quarter.
- Continuing the transformation of the **Waterfront** area through the vision of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework and ensuring communities are fully engaged.
- Support to **existing retailers and businesses**, as well as **attracting new businesses and retailers, SME's and social enterprises**.
- **Belfast Region City Deal** and the delivery of transformative, catalytic projects including **Belfast Stories** and **BRT 2**.
- Consideration on the **future use of secondary vacant office space**
- A **multi-agency** approach required in the **management and 'place keeping'** of the **city centre** to ensure it is clean, safe, compassionate and inclusive.
- The importance of **climate considerations** in the development of the built environment including the protection and **preservation of our built heritage**
- Ensuring the city centre is **vibrant, unique and thriving** through **animation, shared space and diversification of uses**– capitalising on Belfast's distinct draw which will support hospitality, retail, SMEs, social enterprises, tourism and night-time economy. A specific focus on **Night-Time Economy** and the opportunities and challenges, including transport.
- The importance of developing **family friendly, shared and safe spaces** with diversification of uses to attract a range of users.

4.13

**Key Levers & Ways of Working:**

- On the basis that BCCRIS is a collective vision for the city centre and its surrounding areas, as relevant in 2015 as it is today, there is a need for **continued partnership working, across public, private and third sectors** to properly leverage the ambition

and further potential of the city centre for the benefit of the city as a whole and the wider region.

- A collective approach to the recommendations set out in the **Place Based Growth Proposition** that seek to help address the **institutional, physical and market issues** that contribute towards barriers to future inclusive growth and development. To include Belfast **seeking parity with the core cities** in other policy areas including capacity (revenue) funding, place based financial incentives and specific regeneration funding.
- **Increased collaborative ways of working**, and importantly models which ensure the people of Belfast are part of this process. It is estimated that to deliver on the inclusive growth ambitions of the Belfast Agenda, with the city centre identified as a priority, it is likely to require **investment of c£7.5bn**, which will require **private sector funding alongside public / third sector** and collaborative working being critical.
- **Prioritisation** across public sectors, working alongside private / third sector of **catalytic regeneration and infrastructure projects** that will deliver optimal outcomes for the city.
- **The need to look at funding models** to deliver on key priorities and help address viability, infrastructure and placemaking challenges.
- Importance of **inclusion of city centre communities** (inc those that bound the city centre) in regeneration activities and ensuring that **the social impact from development of the built environment** is maximised.
- Recognising that the **development and management of the built environment** and transportation and infrastructure development should be **people focused**.

4.14

#### **Proposed Launch Event – BCCRIS Summit**

It is proposed to hold an event to consider the stocktake findings i.e. a BCCRIS Summit on 25 November, in Belfast City Hall. It is proposed that the event will bring together representatives from the public, private and third sectors to celebrate the key BCCRIS achievements delivered over the past decade whilst providing an opportunity to consider the challenges and opportunities going forward. It will provide an opportunity to discuss collective areas of focus and priorities to support the continued inclusive growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas to 2030. Proposed participants include political representation; original author of BCCRIS Joe Berridge, together with public sector, business and community representation.

4.15

#### **Moving Forward:**

As noted above this stocktake is **not a re-write of the existing strategy** for the city centre and the emerging areas of focus are based on the current strategy and the feedback from the stocktake. Deliverability will require a continued collaborative approach across public, private

4.16	<p>and third-party sectors. From a Council perspective, many of these emerging areas of focus are incorporated within the Belfast Agenda Action Plans, the Corporate Plan, CG&amp;R Committee Plan, A Bolder Vision and with a further policy context via the LDP and emerging Local Policies Plan for the city centre. Members will also recall the recent report brought to committee on a Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast which highlighted the potential for significant enhanced economic growth of the city but with a disparity of funding and powers currently comparative to other city regions. A further report will be brought back to Members on proposed next steps for the Place Based Growth Proposition.</p> <p>Members are asked to provide any further comments on the emerging findings of the stocktake and which can be reflected in the final stocktake report. Following the proposed BCCRIS summit and finalisation of the stocktake report, further updates will be brought back to Committee as appropriate.</p>
5.0	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Met within existing and approved budget.</p>
6.0	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.</p>
7.0	<p><b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Major Events Update</b>
<b>Date:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Lesley-Ann O Donnell, Senior Manager Culture and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kerry McMullan, Tourism and Events Development Manager

<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%;"><b>After Committee Decision</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>After Council Decision</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sometime in the future</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Never</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>								
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>								

<b>Call-in</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Christmas Programme and the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the contents of this report.</li> <li>• Approve attendance of the Lord Mayor and senior officials at the 2025 US Comhaltas Convention and the early release of budget to Ards CCE to allow early booking of flights and accommodation.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<b>Christmas Programme Update:</b>  <b>Background:</b> The Christmas Lights Switch On event will take place on Saturday November 16 <sup>th</sup> and will be a free of charge ticketed event. With the stage providing family-oriented entertainment including local musicians and performers culminating in the switch on of the lights by our Lord Mayor.  As in recent years, 2RA will provide a programme of Christmas - themed activities across the six weeks of Christmas to supplement the Switch On and provide a focus throughout the festive period.  Members will be aware that a report to committee in June 2023 recommended several adjustments to the Christmas light switch on to mitigate identified health and safety risks - these included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event build in the early hours involving staggered road and lane closures.</li> </ul>

- The careful co-ordination of deliveries of equipment and stock of the Christmas market to facilitate an appropriate cut off to allow for the build of the stage and rig.
- The stage and all associated equipment and infrastructure should remain in situ following the event to allow roads to reopen immediately after the event. This will allow of a de-rig to take place on Sunday morning during a less busy period.

Members should be aware that the mitigation outlined above has increased some costs related to both equipment rental and security. Any expenditure will be found from existing corporate budgets.

Planning is very well advanced, with temporary road closure applications submitted in August and many performers contracted.

#### **Proposed Event Programme 2024:**

The wider event schedule will consist of a range of elements including:

- The Official Switch - On event
- 2 Royal Avenue
- Christmas Market
- Festive Lighting Scheme
- Marketing and Communications Activity

Belfast's Christmas celebrations will officially begin on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November with the Switch- On. This event will take place from approximately 6:30pm to 7:30pm. The stage programme will consist of:

- Walkabout performers entertaining the audience at each three entrances, Donegall Place & Donegall Square East & West .
- Proposed stage programme: a variety of short acts celebrating the best of Belfast performers both professional companies and community organisations, all supported by Council. This will include:
  - Compered by a media partner with "switch-on" of the lights by the Lord Mayor.
  - Young musician to open the event (bagpipes)
  - A local singer with live band, sourced from the Oh Yeah Music Centre, a Lord Mayor's Charity.

- Musical excerpt from Christmas Performance.
- A Christmas Theatre excerpt
- A special Circus performance
- Rock Choir – carols and uplifting rock songs.
- A primary school choir

## **.2 Royal Avenue Programme:**

Following the success over the last two years, there will be an allocation of the Christmas programming budget allocated to the 'Winter's Den' activity in 2 Royal Avenue, beginning on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November and running throughout the Christmas period. The programme will be delivered by the operators of the venue- MayWe Events.

The 2RA Christmas programme will also include a variety of sustainable festive workshops, festive Christmas carolling and musical sing – a longs, Jazz afternoons for seniors, family theatre and performances, celebrations from around the world including art, storytelling and dance, baby sensory sessions, autism and disability friendly events such as sensory workshops, activities and storytelling.

Additionally, the programme launch will support the Christmas Light Switch -On at City Hall on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November by offering a sensory space for families with a dedicated sensory area, sensory decoration making workshop, a relaxed silent disco and walk about characters. An 'alternative tree lighting' ceremony will also take place in the venue for those unable to manage the crowds at City Hall.

This event programme will be supported by external events including, Santa's Post Office, Christmas tea dances, choir performances, a festive Ceilidh, traditional performances and markets including the Potters market and Twilight markets.

MayWe will also work with the Lord Mayor's chosen charities where appropriate.

The Maywe budget allocation also includes all staffing, branding and decoration, technical support and late - nights openings.

## **Christmas Market:**

The Christmas Market will run this year from Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November to Sunday 22 December. Market Place Europe Limited (MPEL) currently hold the Continental

Markets contract and this year will be celebrating 20 years of the Belfast Christmas Market and hope to have some Dickensian themed weekends and additional activities.

There will be over 100 stalls and the new contract also sets out the requirement for 40% local traders and 60% continental traders. There will be a Santa's Grotto supporting the Lord Mayors Charity and a return of free school educational tours. MPEL also ran the 'Jolly Big Business Boost' offering a free chalet to a young business. When the Continental Market trades at the front of the city hall the footfall increases into St Georges Market and throughout the city Centre. The Christmas Market and the local Christmas offer in St George's trade side by side very successfully. MPEL has offered a free pitch to St Georges Market traders this year and in previous years to further enhance trade for the local traders.

**Marketing and Communications Activity:**

Council will operate a digital campaign with pulse screens and online advertising to promote the fact that there is an event taking place on 16<sup>th</sup> November, as well as weekend entertainment thereafter and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. Council will be directing people to [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas) URL, where the switch on event information will be displayed prominently on the page. As information is finalised on the event schedule, online messaging will be strengthened.

Promotion will take place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before event details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight the Switch On date and 2 Royal Avenue in edition to be circulated to just under 160k homes in early November. A press release will also be issued to promote the ticket release and the confirmed details of the event schedule.

**2024 Approach to Ticketing:**

As with 2023, our approach to ticketing involves a number of strands, for which we have engaged Visit Belfast due to their service offering. The site capacity is for 10,000 in a comfortable manner. Therefore, the ticket allocation will be slightly above this figure to allow for a percentage of 'no shows'- normal industry practice even for paid

for events. There will be a staggered release (both a morning and evening release) as per 2023, to accommodate working parents.

There will be a further allocation of tickets held back for those with no access to computers, tablets and smart phones, to call in to collect tickets. Each year, there is an accessible platform erected, with spaces booked by telephoning Visit Belfast. Tickets will be capped to 5 per booking. Furthermore, Visit Belfast will provide visitor servicing and support staff on the evening of the event to assist with ticket queries and the scanner technology used to expediate entrancing on to the site.

**Christmas Lighting Scheme:**

2024 will be year 5<sup>th</sup> and final year of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme which will begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November and run until the 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

The installation, storage and maintenance of our festive lighting scheme is managed through a third party that was appointed via a public procurement process. This contract is currently in its final year and due for renewal from 2025 onwards, The supplier has seen significant cost increases relating to insurance, energy costs and labour costs.

The budget for the Christmas Festive Lighting Scheme was unchanged in the previous 4 years and has historically been supported through additional non-recurrent budgets. Whilst there has been an uplift allocated to lighting for 2024, this has covered increasing costs outlined above, repairs to previously damaged sites, a small number of new additional sites and the offset of previous non recurrent funding.

The provision of festive lights covers the city centre with a combination of cross - street and pole mounted features. New sites included in the scheme this year are; Church Lane, Anne Steet and 2 Royal Avenue. Officers are currently conducting final site visits at the Belfast Stories site, Berry Street and Lower Garfield Steet to provide additional lighting on the Royal Avenue area.

Officers are also investigating alternatives for Arthur Street and Anne Street due to ongoing building works. Officers are currently developing the new tender terms to be progressed for provision from 2025 onwards.

**Lighting on Arterial Routes:**

Council previously received funding from DfC revitalisation funding which allowed Officers to distribute monies via a funding programme to business clusters on arterial routes for them to produce some Christmas related activity. Given reduced levels of budget within Executive Department budgets funding has not been provided for any additional activity on arterial routes. It should be noted that there would also be significant cost and the lead time required to secure the wayleave agreements and install the mounting infrastructure.

**Existing Funding Mechanisms:**

Members should note there is a pre-existing mechanism for groups to secure funding to programme activity during the festive period. The 'Community Festivals Fund' is administered via Culture and the Central Grants Unit. This funding scheme is accessible by community groups but not council. Those groups can apply for funding between £2,500 - £10,000, and this is for arts and heritage activities and/or other cultural events that contribute to the cultural identity of an area or group and celebrates the uniqueness of that area or group.

The fund is currently supporting the following Christmas activities:

- Féile An Phobail - Féile na Nollaig 2024
- Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich - Fleadh Feirste 2024 – Christmas festival
- Shankill Winter Festival

Other 'Winter Festival' activities include would be:

- Forward South Partnership - Holyland Winter Festival
- EastSide Partnership - CS Lewis Winter Fest 2024 Belfast
- 'Bring a Little Light lantern festival' from Wandsworth Community Centre.

The current scheme is closed. Any festival must take place between November and March. Council receives applications from a range of community groups and arts organisations.

**Shared Prosperity Fund:**

At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> September, Members agreed to include opportunities for additional animation, lighting enhancements and marketing in a bid for Shared Prosperity Funding. Officers are speaking with BIDS on the potential for provision of additional lighting / dressing in the city centre to address areas where lighting is poor, this work will be ongoing to ensure appropriate provision of wayleaves and eyebolts. Additional marketing and promotion could also be commissioned but all of the above would be subject to receipt of a letter of offer in relation to Shared Prosperity Funding.

**3.2 Update on Bid for Fleadh Cheoil**

**Bid Submission**

Council in partnership with Ards CCE continues to bid for the 2026 Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Our latest revision of the Bid Book was been delivered to Comhaltas HQ to meet the 30<sup>th</sup> August deadline for the 2026 iteration of the event, with an announcement expected during early March 2025.

**Ongoing Engagement**

Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Senior BCC Officials attended the recent Fleadh Cheoil in Wexford from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August 2025 to participate in a series of engagement, networking and lobbying events with Members of Ards CCE, raising the profile of the Belfast bid.

Additionally, the Events Team attended an operational Familiarisation Day visit with internal and external colleagues on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August to further consolidate operational learnings within a new ground footprint context in Wexford – this included observing Campsites, Visitor Servicing, Security, Ancillary and Volunteer provision. The Events Team have previously attended the two consecutive years of the event in Mullingar to scope operational requirements and have met with Sligo representatives, a previous host of Fleadh Cheoil.



Learnings have been considerable and this will further be consolidated by a follow up session with Members of the Wexford FEC scheduled for Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October. It is anticipated that this operational familiarisation will be further developed for next year, with invitations extended out and a more close shadowing role likely with members of the Wexford FEC.

Moving forward, it is anticipated that members of the Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann will visit Belfast in the coming weeks, ahead of the final decision of the host city for 2025. The itinerary will be in-line with previous visits by the Ard-Chomhairle to Belfast.

### **Draft Governance**

A draft governance structure in line the official fleadh guidance manual is being developed. Operational learnings from Sligo, Mullingar and Wexford have also helped to inform this governance model. This model will no doubt be altered over time to suit the needs of the organising team. However, the Terms of Reference have taken into consideration the plans outlined in our bid book and recognise the various considerations laid out in the manual. Similarly, attention is being given to the lessons learned from Fleadh visits and Executive feedback.

A dedicated Project Plan document has been developed by the Events Team and is now in place to commence 'Task and Finish' work on specific aspects of operational planning with both internal and external stakeholders.

### **Resource**

Roll out of the governance structure, the 'standing up' of the working groups and implementation of the Project Plan is now very much dependent on Fleadh dedicated resource coming into post in the coming months. Work is currently being expedited to secure additional staff resource asap and a report will be presented on short-term staff requirements to SP&R later this month.

### **Ards CCE**

Officer engagement with Ards CCE is ongoing - Officers are meeting with the branch regularly on attendance required at the various conventions across Ireland, the UK

	<p>and the United States as part of ongoing lobbying and engagement. Ards CCE have also been working with the Events Team to map potential venues and programming content for Belfast Fleadh Cheoil.</p> <p>On Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, the Lord Mayor hosted Ards CCE in the Lord Mayor’s Parlour to celebrate their recent success of 4 All Ireland medals at the recent Fleadh Cheoil in Wexford.</p> <p>Lord Mayor and Chief Executive will attend the Annual Comhaltas Christmas Dinner in Dublin and the GB convention in February as a final lobbying opportunities ahead of bid announcement.</p> <p>The US Comhaltas Convention 2025 is to be held at the beginning of April 2025 inclusive. This is an important date in the Comhaltas calendar in terms of US votes and connecting with diaspora markets which will play a key role in securing visitors to Belfast for future event iterations. Under the conditions of the current in-year Funding Agreement with Ards CCE, the branch are responsible for making their own travel and accommodation arrangements. This includes for the US Convention at the beginning of April 2025.</p> <p>To facilitate the early booking of flights and accommodation and ensure value for money, approval is sought to part release some of next years Ards CCE annual funding agreement early and within the financial year 2024 / 2025 (circa 25K). This is subject to drawn down and satisfactory verification of the current year Funding Agreement before release of any additional monies. As per the last two years, it is proposed that Ards CCE will attend with Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and a senior Council Official.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p> <p>4.1</p>	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>The cost of delivering the programme is £300k for Christmas Lights and £153k for event delivery, This will be funded from existing budgets. As noted subject to a timely letter of offer there is the potential for supplementing this with Shared Prosperity Funding.</p>

4.2	Attendance at US Comhaltas Convention 2025 by Ards CCE will be forward funded from part release of next years Ards CCE annual funding agreement.
5.0	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>There are no Equality, Good Relations nor Rural Needs Implications associated with this paper.</p>
6.0	<p><b>Appendices:</b></p> <p>N/A</p>

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<b>Subject:</b>	International Engagement Approach – initial proposals
<b>Date:</b>	9 October 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager Economy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Laura Leonard, International Relations Manager

**Restricted Reports**

**Is this report restricted?** Yes  No

**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

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
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7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**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	The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed approach to a review of the council's international engagement activity. Subject to member agreement, a more detailed report will be brought back to the Committee at a future date.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the planned review of international opportunities and potential objectives and areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agree to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity can support and advance our key ambitions.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	At the September meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, members noted a proposal to undertake a review of international opportunities and potential objectives and areas of interest aligned to city priorities and agreed to receive a future report to consider how targeted international engagement activity could support and advance our key ambitions.
3.2	As a first step in this work, it was agreed that officers would bring back a series of high-level considerations to shape the work and that, subject to agreement on the outline approach, a more detailed report setting out the framework would be brought back to a future meeting.
3.3	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>In undertaking the initial review, officers reflected on the previous International Relations Framework which had expired in 2021. We consider that the purpose set out in that framework remains broadly valid, namely: "to ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the international stage to realise our ambitions, and that our resources and priorities are aligned with the overarching strategic vision for the city". It notes that the council's approach should consider the wider international engagement approach at a regional level – as articulated through the Programme for Government. The current Programme for Government is out to consultation. It comprises three key missions, one of which is "Prosperity". One of the critical areas of action is identified as "building on our international relationships to advance our economic development and attract new investment opportunities". It is understood that a new International Relations Strategy for NI, to support this, is currently being developed and will be brought before the Assembly in the near future. This reflects the approach set out above – and identifies the opportunity to leverage the NI Executive's networks and resources to support our international engagement work.</p>

3.4

Priority work areas

The previous International Framework identified a number of priority areas of focus. These were broadly termed:

- Promoting trade and investment
- Attracting visitors and students.

3.5

Our initial assessment is that these should remain as priority areas of focus in any new approach. However, taking account of changes in the operating environment since the original framework, our views on how this work might evolve include:

- Promoting trade and investment: likely to remain our top priority but balance of effort to move towards supporting local businesses to explore international markets rather than FDI (although we should continue to support Invest NI in this work). Another significant change since the last framework is our strong capital investment proposition and – in particular – the need to identify and access international financing and profiling opportunities to bring forward critical development schemes.
- Attracting visitors and students: Tourism numbers have rallied significantly over the last year and are now back near pre-Covid numbers. The sector remains a key employer in the city and planned investments such as Belfast Stories and key international event opportunities such as Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann will increase the number of out-of-state visitors. We will need to work closely with Tourism Ireland through their international office network to tailor messaging and maximise coverage, in line with wider campaigns. Given the recent investment in culture through interventions such as Belfast 2024, it is likely that the cultural dimension of the tourism messaging will be profiled more significantly in the future. Increased investment in local tourism product should ensure a more authentic and unique local offer and will provide the opportunity for learning from international city partners and developing cultural relationships.
- With regard to the priority around attracting students, supporting our universities and colleges to attract international students is likely to remain an important part of our work given their significant ambitions in this field. Another aspect of this support to Universities and colleges that has grown in recent years, is making connections and introductions for our Academic Institutions with respect to teacher/staff exchange and joint research partnerships.
- One area that may be worth exploring is how we can support the work of Invest NI around “attracting in” talent to address some of the skills gaps in our growth sectors – potentially utilising the international students as part of our talent pool. This will obviously need to consider visa regulations and stipulations at the time and will

complement rather than replace our existing proposals to help our own residents into new or better jobs.

3.6 Other areas of engagement may include:

- Innovation City and Smart Belfast: with the appointment of a new Innovation Commissioner and the re-establishment of the Innovation City Belfast Board, there is likely to be an increased focus on promoting the city globally as a beacon for innovation – with a particular focus on inclusive innovation. The vision for ICB is that “Belfast is a place where global excellence in innovation supports inclusive economic growth, delivers more and better jobs, and has a sustainable positive impact on our city, its citizens and the wider region”. International partnerships, collaboration and profiling opportunities will be critical to ensure that this vision is realised.
- Resilience/net zero: since the launch of the Resilience Strategy in December 2020, the work to transition Belfast to an inclusive, zero-emissions, climate-resilient economy within a generation has stepped up significantly. In this field, global networks are critical for learning and sharing of good practice and the regulatory frameworks often derive from international agreements. There are emerging opportunities for profiling investment opportunities from external markets for the pipeline for priority projects identified through interventions such as the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan
- Supporting sustainable and inclusive growth: this has been identified as a priority area of work within the Belfast Agenda. It is likely to be an underpinning pillar of our engagement activities – and will drive our workplans to ensure that sufficient consideration is given to this narrative when exploring investment opportunities.

3.7 In addition to what we should focus on, officers have also given consideration to how we should work. Initial thinking on this includes:

- While recognising the need for some flexibility as part of an overall framework, we need to take a strategic approach to opportunity, building on the strengths of our existing city to city relationships. We have Sister City status with Nashville, Boston in the USA, and Shenyang in China, as well as the recently secured Memorandum of Understanding with Sejong in South Korea.
- We consider that this approach could be delivered through a multi-annual plan (aligned to the Belfast Agenda timelines) but with an annual action plan and review to take account of learning and new emerging opportunities
- Need to focus on areas where we can add value: this may mean leveraging partner resources to maximise impact and/or taking the decision not to progress with some proposals or areas of work



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to create an overall framework that is fully aligned to and supportive of ambitions and commitments set out in the Belfast Agenda – principally the “Our Economy” and “Our Place” themes – but may also be opportunities under “Our Planet”</li> <li>• Need to establish a mechanism for objectively assessing emerging opportunities in order to prioritise resources and focus effort – we will not be able to do everything and there are activities that will not advance our city ambitions so we should be clear in our analysis of these</li> <li>• Need to build on existing linkages – going stronger and deeper rather than spreading our resources too thin</li> <li>• Need to work through strategic partners – making use of existing resources, and networks rather than duplicating effort</li> <li>• Reciprocity – value of focusing collaboration on willing and engaged partners</li> <li>• Need to consider appropriate metrics to assess impact of interventions and engagement, recognising that it can be difficult to directly attribute outputs and outcomes to single interventions and that the international engagement activity should be considered as a value-added element of an overall strategy</li> <li>• Need to ensure value for money – in line with all service delivery</li> <li>• Need to keep the approach under review in line with the changing global context and changes in personnel/political mandate/policy within the market.</li> </ul>
3.8	<p><u>Moving forward and proposed next steps</u></p> <p>In order to move forward, members are asked to consider and comment on the initial reflections presented above. Following consideration of feedback from Members, officers plan to undertake a mapping of existing linkages across the council alongside a series of engagements with our external partners to understand the current levels and nature of activity as well as building an understanding of resource commitments and future plans. This initial review work will be critical in helping us to avoid duplication as well as maximise opportunities for synergy with external partners. It will also help consider internal resource allocations as part of the budget setting process. It is proposed that a more detailed framework will be brought back to this Committee in February/March 2025 in order to work towards an agreed approach for the new financial year onwards.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>No specific resource implications at this point. Available resources and future resource requirements will be identified through the scoping exercise.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with this report.</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	None



<b>Subject:</b>	Site Visit Request – Belfast Chamber
<b>Date:</b>	9th October, 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 type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input 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.**

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- Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

<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 or Summary of main Issues</b>
	To consider the request from Belfast Chamber to a walk around the city centre followed by a brief meeting.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>2.1</b>	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Consider the request from Belfast Chamber for a walk around the city centre followed by a brief meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	A request has been received from Mr. G. Annon, Belfast Chamber President, for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, together with members of the Belfast Chamber board and council for a walk around the city centre followed by a brief meeting in their offices at Custom House.
3.2	The Correspondence notes that Belfast Chamber represents 600 businesses in the city across all sectors including retail, leisure, financial and professional services. The majority of which are based in the city centre, and we pride ourselves as being the voice of business. Over recent months there has been an increasing level of frustration in connection with the city centre and we have received a significant level of feedback from members. The issues range from anti-social behaviour, to cleanliness, lack of investment in public realm and the continuing absence of city centre residential development.
3.3	It highlights that the walk and meeting would give a fantastic opportunity to engage directly on these matters ensuring the committee members are aware of the business community's views. It would also be a good forum to discuss potential solutions. Belfast Chamber wants to work positively and constructively with Belfast City Council to make our city a better place to live, learn, work, visit and invest.
3.4	Members of the committee are asked to note that the issues raised by the Belfast Chamber include cleanliness and anti-social behaviour, which are under the remit of the People and Communities Committee. As an alternative to inviting members from both Committees, and given the focus on the City Centre, it may be appropriate to consider attendance by members of the All Party Working Group on the City Centre.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Resource Implications</b>
	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b>
	There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	None

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Subject:	Request for approval for Crafted with Pride Markets
Date:	9 October 2024
Reporting Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager Economy
Contact Officer:	Clodagh Cassin, Markets 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 After Council Decision Some time in the future Never	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <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 advise members of a request received from organisers of two 'Crafted with Pride' proposed markets to take place in 2 Royal Avenue.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Members are asked to agree to approve the issuing of a market licence for Belfast Pride to hold markets on 8 December 2024 and 20 July 2025.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Belfast City Council has exclusive rights to hold markets in Belfast. Anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to Council for permission. The Markets Unit has recently received an application from Belfast Pride for two markets to take place on 8 December 2024 and 20 July 2025 in 2 Royal Avenue. Each event will involve around 30 stalls selling mainly crafts and food.

3.2	<p>The organisers behind the Crafted with Pride Market have hosted a number of events in 2 Royal Avenue. The most recent one was part of Belfast Pride event in the city during the summer. Both markets will have over 30 stalls each and will help encourage footfall into the City Centre and 2RA.</p>
3.3	<p>Members will recall that, as part of the Markets Development Plan agreed by this Committee in March 2024, it was agreed that officers would undertake a review of the current Markets Rights Policy by which licences such as this are granted. That work is currently under way and a revised policy will be brought back to this committee for endorsement in the coming months. This request is being considered under the current policy and, as it stands, officers have no specific concerns about the proposed market. We do not consider that it will have a negative impact on existing city markets – particularly St George’s Market and the Continental Market at Belfast City Hall – as the December market is a one-off event taking place over the course of one day in the run-up to Christmas.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>This market will bring a potential income to the council of £150.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>No specific equality/good relations implications. No negative impact on rural areas.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
	<p>N/A</p>





<b>Subject:</b>	Special Committee Presentations
<b>Date:</b>	9th October, 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Damien Martin, Strategic Director Place and Economy
<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"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input 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

- Information relating to any individual
- Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
- Information in connection with any labour relations matter
- Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
- 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
- Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

<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 or Summary of main Issues</b>
	To consider the schedule for the presentations at the forthcoming Special Committees.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>2.1</b>	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Consider the request from The MAC to present at a future Special Committee;</li> <li>ii. Note the schedule of presentations for October and November; and</li> <li>iii. Consider any questions to put to the representatives of Translink / the Department for Infrastructure (Roads) at the proposed presentations outlined in the report.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	A request has been received from Ms. L. McGinley, Interim Director of The MAC to present to a future Committee to provide an update on the work being undertaken by The MAC and its commitment to create a more inclusive, collaborative, and resilient MAC that engages with a broader range of audiences, communities, and partners.
3.2	If agreed, it is suggested that The MAC present at the Special meeting in November, subject to their availability.
3.3	The following presentations have also been scheduled for the Special Committees: <p><b><i>Wednesday, 23rd October at 5.15 pm (Special)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translink (Grand Central Station Update)</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Wednesday, 27th November at 5.15pm (Special)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translink (Grand Central Station Update)</li> <li>• Department for Infrastructure (Roads) - Autumn Report</li> <li>• The MAC (subject to approval)</li> </ul>
3.4	As in previous years, the Presentations will be requested in advance of the meetings. The Committee will also be asked to send any questions/issues it might wish to raise, in advance, to the Democratic Services Officer. A list will then be compiled and issued to the representatives for consideration before the meeting(s).
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Resource Implications</b>
	There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b>
	There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements associated with this report
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	None

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