

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

14th April, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the report for the following item to be considered at the meeting to be held on Wednesday, 15th April, 2026 at 5.15 pm.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

7. Strategic and Operational Issues

- (a) City Growth and Regneration Committee Plan 2026/27 (Pages 1 - 28)

This page is intentionally left blank

	be brought to the committee in May. Should any amendments be required following agreement of the Corporate Delivery Plan, these will also be reported in May.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the draft City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2026/27 attached at Appendix 1, subject to additional performance information being brought to the next committee meeting; • Approve the priority work areas and budget allocations presented in the Culture, Tourism & Events workplan for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 2; and • Approve the contribution to support the ongoing development of the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (work to be coordinated through Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) up to a maximum of £35,000.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>CG&R Committee Plan 2026/27</u></p> <p>Each year the Committee is tasked with agreeing a Committee Plan for the year ahead. This year's Committee Plan (attached at Appendix 1) has been developed to align to the council's Corporate Plan 2025/28, member feedback and engagement, in addition to decisions relevant to the Committee agreed through the rates setting process. The Plan is structured to articulate the council's contribution to the refreshed Belfast Agenda, particularly the strategic priorities and deliverables of the "Our Economy" and "Our Place" themes of the community plan. It is perhaps worth highlighting that the scale of the work programme required to support the delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil is necessitating realignment of some staff resources and this may impact of the timescales for the delivery of projects.</p> <p>A concerted effort has been made to better align the council's rate-setting process with the presentation of its plans to members. As a result, performance monitoring for the current year is still ongoing, and the End of Year report for the 2025/26 Committee Plan is not yet available. The development of SMART performance targets for 2026/27 is dependent on the current baseline position. Consequently, several targets in the performance monitoring section have been marked as "To Be Confirmed". These targets, along with the End of Year report for the 2025/26 Committee Plan, will be presented to members at next month's Committee meeting.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Culture, Tourism & Events Workplan/ Programme Budgets</u></p> <p>Many of the activities outlined within the draft Committee Plan will be resourced through the respective departmental budgets for 2026/27 in line with the Scheme of Delegation and in accordance with section G of the Financial Regulations. Members are asked to approve the priority Culture, Tourism & Events work areas for the 2026/27 financial year and their allocation from their respective budgets presented in Appendix 2.</p>

	<p>Within the Culture, Tourism & Events workplan, core activity will include support for the planning and delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil. The unit's operational priorities will reflect the council's commitment to facilitating this significant cultural event with relevant staff resources and programme delivery aligned to support its successful organisation and implementation as part of the wider Cultural and Tourism objectives of the council.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The draft Committee Plan 2026/27 and the subsequent work plans are aligned with the budget agreed by the Special Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 13th February 2026, namely a cash limit for the CG&R Committee of £23,958,554 as set out in Appendix 2.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Strategies, programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Officers and subject to individual equality, good relations and rural needs assessment.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft CG&R Committee Plan 2026/27</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Culture, Tourism & Events Work Plan 2026/27</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

City Growth &

Committee Plan



Contents Page

Introduction	3
Committee Membership	4
Belfast City Council Priorities	5
Key Programmes of work	7
Our Economy Priorities	7
Our Place Priorities	10
Performance Monitoring	15
Committee Finances	























Introduction

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

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

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

Committee Membership

 <p><u>Cllr Ian McLaughlin</u> (Chair) Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Court</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Joe Duffy</u> (Deputy Chair) Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Collin</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Fiona McAteer</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Titanic</p>
 <p><u>Ald James Lawlor</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Christina Black</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Court</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Sarah Bunting</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Balmoral</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Séamas de Faoite</u> Party: Social Democratic and Labour Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Sammy Douglas</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Titanic</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Aine Groogan</u> Party: Green Party District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Eric Harvey</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Lisnasharragh</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Donal Lyons</u> Party: Social Democratic and Labour Party District Electoral Area: Balmoral</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Áine McCabe</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Black Mountain</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Siobhan McCallin</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Collin</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Andrew McCormick</u> Party: Democratic Unionist Party District Electoral Area: Ormiston</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Emmet McDonough-Brown</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Conor McKay</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Botanic</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Ronan McLaughlin</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Black Mountain</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Luke Meenehan</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Castle</p>
 <p><u>Cllr Sam Nelson</u> Party: Alliance Party District Electoral Area: Castle</p>	 <p><u>Cllr Tomás Ó Néill</u> Party: Sinn Fein District Electoral Area: Oldpark</p>	

Belfast City Council Priorities

Since its launch in 2017 and subsequent refresh in 2024, the [Belfast Agenda](#) has been and remains a key city framework, coalescing partners beyond the core legislative requirements of community planning with a shared focus on addressing key city challenges. The approach adopted has enhanced the relationship between the public/statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to drive forward real change, address inequalities and improve quality of life within and across the city

The Belfast Agenda sets out a bold level of ambition and demonstrates strong collective leadership commitment to delivering the long-term vision and outcomes previously agreed. It is both delivery and outcome focused and is positioned as an overarching city strategy which identifies the major transformational programmes and investment opportunities for the city. The strategy also sets out several specific 'calls to action' for local, regional and national partners to work together to bring forward important strategies, programmes and investment which will help deliver the city's ambitions.

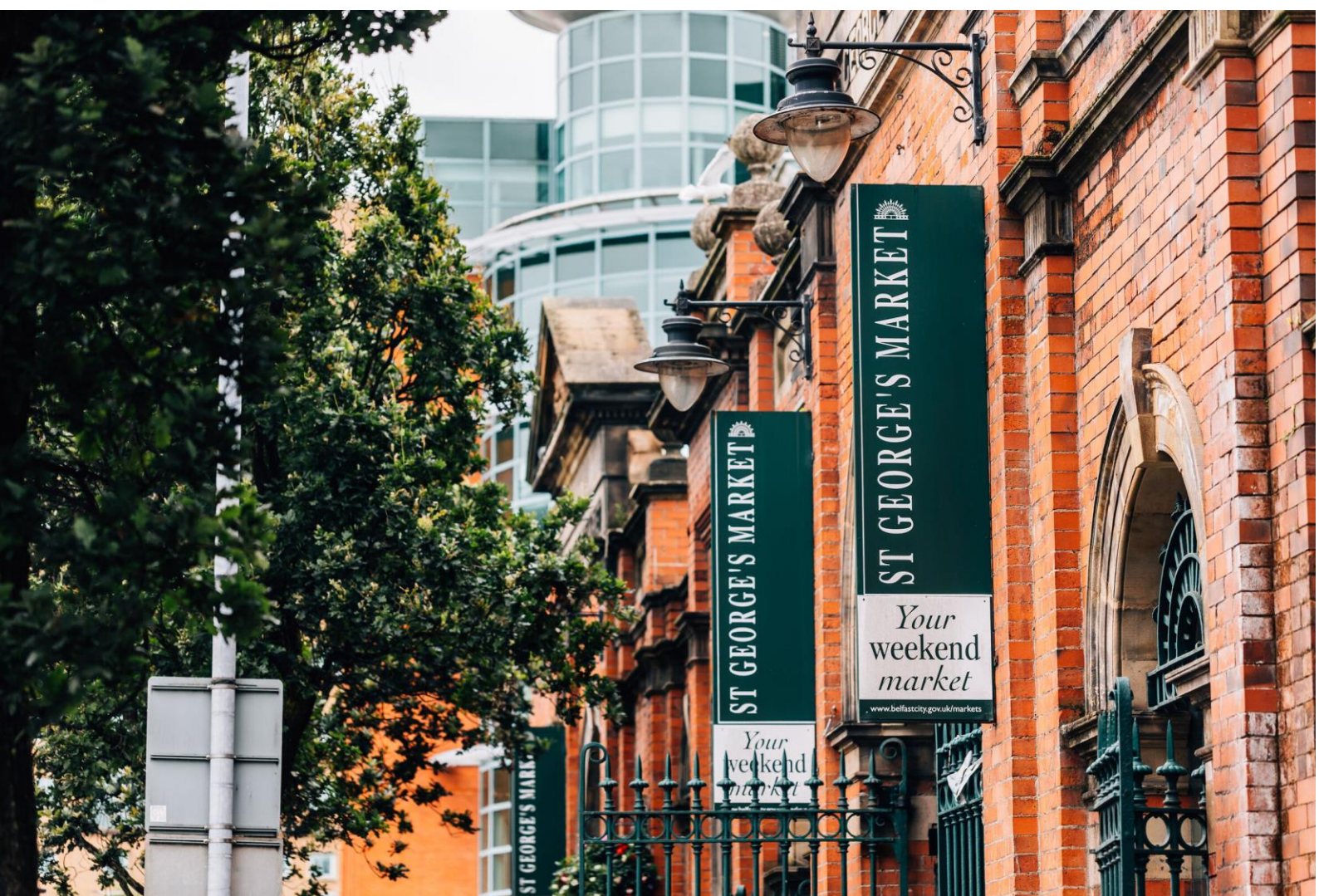
The council's corporate plan reflects what people in Belfast have told us they want and the type of leadership they feel the city needs. It takes the priorities of the Belfast Agenda and sets out the ways in which the council will support and deliver these to grow a sustainable, inclusive economy and equitable society; and sets out the work we will do as an organisation to continually improve and develop to continue to deliver excellent services. The council's five strategic themes are cascaded down from the Belfast Agenda and include:



1. **Theme 1: Our people and communities** - Making life better for all our residents.

2. **Theme 2: Our economy** - Creating inclusive, innovative and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity.
3. **Theme 3: Our place** - Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city.
4. **Theme 4: Our planet** - Creating a sustainable, nature-positive city.
5. **Theme 5: Compassionate city** - Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, fair and inclusive city – leaving no one behind.

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan is aligned to both the recently refreshed Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and newly developed Corporate Plan 2025-2028. It identifies the priorities that this committee will be focussed on over the year ahead and primarily relate to the 'Our Economy' and 'Our Place' themes. The key areas of work have been identified, and specific in-year deliverables are set out in the section that follows.



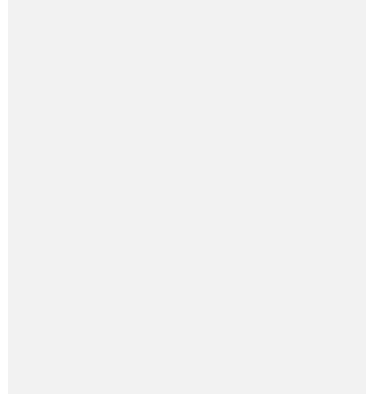
Our Economy Priorities

To support our economy in 2026/27 we will:

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Support business start-up and growth by managing and overseeing the delivery of the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NISS) and deliver targeted support in Belfast to meet funder and statutory targets	Undertake the 'Lead Council' role on delivery of NISS on behalf of the 11 councils to improve business start-up rates and support business growth. Undertake further work to develop a more sustainable funding model for the service and commence the commissioning process for service delivery beyond April 2027 (subject to available resources).
	Deliver a flexible menu of support through the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) for Belfast entrepreneurs wishing to start a business; tailored support for existing businesses wishing to grow or scale including grant assistance to support their growth (subject to funding).
	Undertake targeted outreach and engagement, particularly where there is a need for cultural change amongst under-represented groups to attract more people into the entrepreneurial pipeline.
Support the development of the social enterprise sector	Develop the social economy sector by providing mentoring, workshops and upskilling support
	Support social enterprises to increase their levels of earned income and explore appropriate investment models to support this
Maximise the benefits emerging from Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)	Regular engagement with BRCD and Innovation City Belfast to ensure alignment of plans and programmes of support.
	Support delivery of the benefits of first phase of BRCD delivery by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investing in business incubation support delivered by Studio Ulster & the Ulster Screen Academy that aims to give creative businesses access a dedicated desk space for 6 months within a professional working Virtual Production studio and environment • promoting and supporting local SMEs to access opportunities emerging through BRCD investments and funding programmes.
	Finalise and publish the Belfast Economic Proposition demonstrating the critical role of the city and the wider region in creating good jobs, supporting innovation and driving productivity; outlining the attributes that make our city an ideal destination for investment; and showcasing our innovation-driven indigenous businesses competing on a global scale or successfully trading around the world.
	Contribute to the development of a new strategic approach as part of the DBEC, focusing on promoting economic linkages along the corridor.
Establish Local Economic Partnership to support delivery of sub-regional economic development fund priority actions	Provide strategic leadership through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) convening meetings and bringing partners together to address local economic barriers, boost productivity, and support job creation.
	Oversee the delivery and monitoring of three projects identified within the local Action Plan including Northern Lights - Studio Ulster; Capital Investment for creative growth; and business growth and innovation support.
Develop and maximise international linkages to support inclusive economic growth	Engage and collaborate with city partners on collaborative business engagement activities with the cities of Nashville, Boston and New York to explore the potential for developing business-to-business opportunities, investment in capital and innovation programmes, and facilitating cultural/ tourism and educational linkages with partner organisations in host cities.
	Deliver a new approach to international engagement activity by creating new connections and engaging in key networks to ensure that Belfast is optimally positioned on the world stage and that collaborative opportunities for promoting economic development are maximised.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
Support the development and delivery of the Belfast Business Promise scheme	Create a community of organisations committed to doing “business for good” and work with local partners to drive engagement in activities aligned to key service commitments
Oversee the management of the Innovation Factory to maximise occupancy levels and optimise inclusive growth opportunities for existing tenants.	Support the efficient operation of the Innovation Factory, in line with the agreed Annual Service Plan obligations, while actively working to reduce the net cost to council.
Support access to sustainable employment opportunities and improve skills levels for target groups.	Delivery of Employment Academies (into work) within sectors with high job demand/good jobs or sustainable self-employment options such as caring professions, practical sectors and professional services, in line with business demand.
	Work with partners to deliver Upskilling Academies targeting those working in low paid sectors to achieve higher level qualifications and gain a better job, in line with business demand.
Support the management and development of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership (LMP).	Convene and chair up to six LMP meetings, to identify key labour market challenges and co-design solutions and co-ordinate delivery of agreed programmes of work.
	Work with partners to progress the 'Health & Work' agenda, influencing policy direction on integrating health and employability/ employment systems in line with the NICS Transformation Programme
	Design of the Belfast Employer Hub driven through a working group with key partners including EPIC Futures, DfC, DfE and Invest NI.
	Develop a new three-year LMP Action Plan 2027-2030 underpinned by a Strategic Assessment of supply, demand, policy and provision.
	Host localised jobs fairs and meet the employer events in partnership with Jobs and Benefits Offices and explore other jobs and skills events.
Deliver social value while supporting the wider employability and skills ecosystem.	Consolidate the Employability and Skills Provider Network to focus on engaging groups and organisations within local community infrastructure as well as those supporting target groups for those with barriers to work. This will include acting as the convenor of a Belfast-wide employability and economic inactivity ecosystem.
	Continue to operate as an RSA City of Learning, hosting other providers to be able to create and issue digital badges and work with other cities to enhance the functionality and ease of use of Digital Badging for the benefit of residents gaining vocationally specific credentials.
	Ensure Employability and Skills considerations are included within Developer Contributions by providing statistical data and analysis on labour market shortages. Review and recommend interventions regarding Skills Plans where applicable.
	Provide guidance to contractors to meet their Social Value job requirements and support inclusive recruitment practices on current labour market issues.
Improve the visitor experience at St George’s Market to drive footfall and enhance customer satisfaction and provide support for city markets.	Undertake a development plan with a focus on usage maximisation. This will consider a number of elements including the potential for additional market days; revamping the existing market days (with a specific focus on the Friday market); considering the balance between market days and other commercial uses; exploring opportunities for third-party market operations and/or market hire.
	Maximise stallage income by monitoring payments and addressing vacancies. Track weekly stall income in line with projections, addressing non-payments through enforcement process.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	Develop effective systems to manage the market operations, utilising CRM system to track and monitor all trader interactions, including correspondence issued and compliance data.
	Maintain engagement with all traders and their representatives to ensure effective communication of planned activities and develop terms of reference for engagement with the National Market Traders' Federation group to clarify roles and responsibilities.
	Manage and promote the delivery of the annual Christmas Continental Market and additional market events such as Twilight Markets and investigate the potential for additional market days and explore opportunities for third-party market operations and/or market hire.
	Ensure that St George's Market is a central focus of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann programme



Our Place Priorities

To support our place in 2026/27 we will:

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
<p>Support and work with partners to address housing challenges and delivery high quality housing-led regeneration and place-making</p>	<p>Deliver the housing-led regeneration programme, working in partnership with the Private Sector Partner (PSP) and other external partners including Housing Associations. Includes PSP workstreams aligned to the Strategic Partnership Agreement for the seed sites and additional opportunity sites as agreed- including agreement on site specific business plans, funding options, progression of planning and stakeholder engagement as appropriate; progressing the Strategic Site Assessment Phase 2 sites including delivery routes for development as appropriate; progressing the development of the lands within the Inner North West Development Brief area, in conjunction with the nominated Housing Association.</p> <p>Progress land assembly as appropriate as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Programme, subject to funding and investment criteria. Consideration of funding, financing, intervention options, models for delivery and aligned advocacy and engagement to advance the Housing Led Regeneration Programme.</p> <p>Undertake analysis in relation to the changes to the Total Cost Indicator and Housing Association Grant rates to inform a detailed evidence base around emerging implications for the delivery of social housing within the city, particularly in respect of the city centre.</p> <p>Lead and support a collaborative approach to housing led placemaking regeneration action plans as agreed.</p>
<p>Address the challenges facing the city to maximise investment, generate rates and support growth in the surrounding neighbourhoods and wider region</p>	<p>Advance the strategic engagement programme aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, working with city, regional and national government partners to seek to secure place-based and regeneration investment funding.</p> <p>Progress an overarching City Development and Investment programme /framework aligned to the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy, Belfast Agenda and A Bolder Vision and aligned to a work programme in relation to the Regeneration Assets and vacancy and dereliction work programmes, and to the Housing Led Regeneration Programme. Includes implementing the recommendations from the City Centre Investment Fund Review and progression of a Targeted Regeneration Investment Strategy. Includes advancing the next stages in relation to the Assembly Rooms Cluster; progressing options for vesting and/or acquisition by agreement of the Tribeca site in whole or in part (as agreed by Members); progressing options for the future use and development of the Sixth in partnership with the council's LLP partner; outworkings of the Vacant Offices study; progressing Castle Street Regeneration proposals (aligned to Inner North West Masterplan); progression of Dunbar Regeneration Scheme.</p> <p>Develop future use /development proposals and investment strategy for Regeneration Assets to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly Rooms Cluster • 2 Royal Avenue • 33-39 Royal Avenue • The Sixth • Commission House as part of the Dunbar Cluster • Housing Led Regeneration Sites (including lands at Joy Street/ Cromac Street) • Consideration of future targeted investment /strategic acquisitions approach (subject to funding)

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<p>Delivery of the City Wide Vacant to Vibrant capital grant scheme as part of the Vacancy & Dereliction Toolkit Programme.</p> <p>Progress the proposed Homes On Upper Spaces for Everyone (HOUSE) Programme as the next delivery workstream of the Vacant to Vibrant Toolkit Programme, including actively seeking funding to deliver the proposed pilot project.</p> <p>Undertake a scoping study on vacant offices (as part of the Vacancy & Dereliction Toolkit Programme), to include financial, economic and regeneration implications and future use and funding options.</p> <p>Progress the Dunbar Regeneration Scheme (including council lands and private sector assets) and bring forward an action plan and route map to deliver a comprehensive regeneration scheme for the combined lands assets.</p> <p>Conclude the Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme, administering Department for Communities funding in the Sandy Row area to support eligible businesses and the wider revitalisation of the area.</p> <p>Creative /Artists Workspaces – Progress options for capital investment for creative growth in line with LEP and Belfast Creative Workspaces Action Plan, explore capital investment in seed-funding approach to act as a catalyst in addressing initial viability challenges that the creative sector experiences in securing their own assets.</p> <p>Progress work programmes and city marketing and investment initiatives aligned to ‘Positioning the City to Compete’, working in partnership with the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership.</p> <p>Conclude the EOI for the sustainable long - term use of the ground floor for 2 Royal Avenue, aligned to overall building development and management considerations.</p> <p>Work with external partners to deliver the Future City Centre Programme, as part of the Community Planning ‘Our Place’ Board governance structures</p>
Transform connectivity within the city	<p>Deliver an overarching programme to support enhanced Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel across the city under the strategic design lens of A Bolder Vision (ABV) including support for the Late-Night Service pilot project, development of strategic projects aligned to the Waterfront Promenade Framework including Under the Bridges and the Sailortown Bridge, and ABV and progression of Section 76 public realm improvements at Little York Street, Little Patrick Street, 5Cs and Blackstaff Square & Environs.</p> <p>Seek Committee approval for the full ABV strategy which will support unlocking critical design considerations noting connectivity with surrounding communities as a key element of ABV/ work with city partners and government linking in with Council's own investment priorities as outlined in the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition to identify collaborative funding and delivery mechanisms aligned with the delivery of ABV, noting that the delivery of ABV will require alignment across a range of stakeholders and delivery partners.</p> <p>Work with partners and government to facilitate, progress and enable major infrastructure projects, policy and strategies in line with ABV approved Key Moves and updated interventions. This includes informing the Council's consultation response on the upcoming Eastern Transport Plan and working with DfI to support the creation of joined up planning and oversight delivery arrangements for BRT2 as well as other relevant and emerging strategies and strategic projects.</p>
Deliver Year 6 of A City Imagining, Belfast's 10-year cultural strategy.	Deliver Core Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG) funding to sustain accessible cultural activity (Festivals and events grants) and infrastructure (arts and heritage grants) within Belfast.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
	<p>Provision of Community Festivals Fund small grants (in partnership with the Department for Communities) to assist Community and Voluntary organisations to celebrate their identity, enhance community relations by delivering community festivals.</p> <p>Provision of arts and heritage small grants to cultural projects to support the outcomes identified within City Imagining.</p> <p>Support Belfast based artist studios and creative spaces through targeted investment and work in partnership with Arts and Business NI to deliver a capacity building programme.</p> <p>Manage strategic partnerships to enhance skills and development across specific art forms, support audience development and enhance accessibility provision including delivery of the Gig Buddies programme.</p> <p>Deliver a Fleadh themed 'Bank of Ideas' participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.</p> <p>Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified.</p> <p>Sectoral development initiatives, including research, support for sectoral forums and establishment of a cultural compact.</p> <p>Deliver the 2026 Culture Night programme, a city wide, venue based open call event including supporting marketing activity.</p> <p>Deliver next phase of the Heritage Audit and Roadmap, including the development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes.</p> <p>Work in partnership with Belfast Stories to build on the Neighbourhood heritage programme which will build capacity within communities to gather and shape stories of place and embed heritage skills within communities.</p>
Delivery of Fleadh Cheoil	<p>Oversee the delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil na hEirean in August 2026, stimulating a sense of belonging and pride amongst local people, attracting international visitors and showcasing Belfast and Northern Ireland on a local, national, and international platform.</p> <p>Undertake an evaluation of the 2026 Fleadh, capturing lessons learned (both strategic and operational) to feed into the delivery of the 2027 event.</p> <p>Create a lasting legacy from hosting the Fleadh by enhancing Belfast and Northern Ireland's international reputation as a destination for investment, tourism, and social impact, while promoting traditional music and cultural awareness across the region.</p> <p>Planning and preparation to host the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann 2027.</p>
Deliver Year 3 of the music strategy, Music Matters – a roadmap for Belfast	<p>Delivery of UNESCO City of Music activity including programmes to support artists, the music sector and venues, including working internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.</p> <p>Deliver the NI Music Prize 2026 and Sound of Belfast 2026, an event celebrating the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music.</p> <p>Work in partnership with Score Draw Music to deliver Output Belfast, Ireland's biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase.</p>
Deliver Year 5 of Make Yourself at Home, the 10-	Deliver the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme to include support of new or enhanced neighbourhood tourism visitor experiences.

Strategic Priority	In-Year Deliverables
year tourism plan for Belfast.	Deliver the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme to include industry planning session, annual seminar, capacity building, training toolkit and innovation vouchers.
	Deliver the Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme including delivery of Food and Drink Village for Fleadh 2026; Food Toolkit for industry; secure support from DAERA to enhance 2026-2027 programme; expand the network to 100 businesses.
	Position and promote Belfast in national and international markets through investment in Visit Belfast, the city's destination marketing and visitor servicing organisation to increase the value of tourism to the local economy and social impact.
	Deliver the sustainability programme in partnership with Visit Belfast and the council's Climate team to improve Belfast's performance in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index and maintain its place as a sustainable tourism destination within the GDS Index of 80 cities; and support the delivery of the sustainability promises as part of Fleadh 2026.
	Deliver the Belfast and Northern Ireland Conference Support Scheme in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast, to enable Belfast to compete and win national and international association conferences.
Delivery of the annual City Events programme of large-scale public city events and activities attracting local audiences and out-of-state visitors	Lord Mayors Day 2026 - Delivery of a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at other venues such as 2 Royal Ave,
	Christmas 2026 - delivery of the Christmas Lights Switch on event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall and work with partners to align plans.
	St Patrick's Day 2027 - build on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations, featuring the in-house delivered parade and city-wide projects delivered by partners. Work will also commence in 2026-27 on the new tender for Creative provision for St Patricks Day 2028-2030
	Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Plan the 2027 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.
Support delivery and maximise benefits from international and major events	Work with city partners to plan for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy. Continue to explore other opportunities for the city to host significant international events, aligning with the outcomes of the d Events Action Plan.
	Agree the new five-year Events Action Plan for the city, incorporating an ongoing approach to bid for events.
	Develop options for enhanced city animation.
	Engage with NI partners on maximising Belfast's position as part of the UK-wide bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035
Commercial Assets (Belfast Castle, Malone House, Belfast Zoo and Belfast Bikes)	Effective management and operation of Belfast Zoo, maintaining its reputation as a popular family-focused visitor attraction and welcoming and inclusive experience for all ages and abilities.
	Develop proposals to deliver long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo, generating additional revenue and achieving efficiencies, to reduce the net cost to council.
	Maintain Belfast Castle's and Malone House's reputation as premier function and event venues in their respective locations, generating additional revenue and achieving efficiencies, to reduce the net cost to council.
	Oversee the delivery of the Belfast Bikes public bike hire scheme, maximising journeys and subsequent revenue.

Performance Monitoring

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets are used to monitor performance and will be reported to committee on a six-monthly basis as well as the year-end.

Theme	Key Performance Indicator	2026/27 Target
Our Economy	# of jobs promoted through business start-up activity. (<i>Statutory indicator</i>)	325
	# of participants engaged at the early stage of the entrepreneurial life cycle.	TBC
	# of regional individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	TBC
	# of Belfast individuals/ entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity.	TBC
	# of regional businesses supported through business growth activity.	TBC
	# of Belfast businesses supported through business growth activity.	TBC
	% of regional Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	50%
	% of Belfast Go Succeed participants engaged who are female	50%
	% of participants who move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy.	75%
	# of participants on Employment and Upskilling Academies	TBC
	# of organisations accredited as Belfast Business Promise Supporters	TBC
	# of social enterprises and co-operatives supported	TBC
Our Place	# of previously vacant city wide properties that are occupied as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention.	TBC
	# of visitor servicing enquiries (Visit Belfast)	805,000
	GDS-Index ranking	Top 10
	# of people attending the annual programme of large-scale public city events	TBC
	# of attendees at major Cultural Festivals	TBC
	# of people engaged at engaged at arts and heritage organisations	TBC
	# of people engaged through cultural intervention participatory budgeting	TBC
	# of visitors to St. George's Market	1,000,000
	# of external events at St. George's Market	TBC
	# of Belfast Bike journeys	TBC
	Total revenue (£) generated from Belfast Bikes scheme	TBC
	# of bookings for conferences, wedding and events at Belfast Castle	TBC
	Total income (£) generated by Belfast Castle	TBC
	# of bookings for conferences, wedding and events at Malone House	TBC
	Total income (£) generated by Malone House	TBC
	# of visitors to Belfast Zoo	TBC
	Total income (£) generated at Belfast Zoo	TBC

Committee Finances

The expenditure for the 2026/27 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan is based on a total planned investment of £23.96 million, as agreed at the Strategic Policy & Resources committee meeting on 13th February 2026, as follows:

Service	Budget 2026/27
Off-Street Car Parking	-1,042,160
City Regeneration	2,578,657
Economic Development	19,718,245
Place and Economy Directorate	2,703,812
Committee Total	23,958,554



Culture Development Workplan 2026 / 2027

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Core multi-annual funding	Management of year 5 of cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG). Two-year funding 2026-2028: Total of £1,150,887 across Festival & Events and Arts & Heritage. Four-year funding 2024-2028: £600,240 to four Festivals and Events organisations and £791,783 to ten Arts and Heritage organisations.	April 2026 to March 2027	£2,542,910
Small Grants - Arts and Heritage	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes. (15 cultural projects supported)	April 2026 to March 2027	£153,788
Small Grants - Community Festivals Funding	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes. (20 community festivals supported)	April 2026 to March 2027	£83,000 + DfC match funding (£69,000)
Creative Workspaces	A continuation of programme to support Belfast-based Artist Studio's & Artist Led Directorship models to ensure a stable infrastructure for 2026/27. (12 organisations, collectives and artists-led spaces supported through artist studio organisational grant programme. Grants of £10,000-£20,000 are available to support Artist Studios & Artist Led Directorship models). Any awards exceeding £10,000 will be brought to Committee during the year for approval.	April 2026 to March 2027 Grant programme launched in May 2026	£150,000
Creative Workspaces	Continuation of targeted capacity building programme with Artist Studio and Creative workspace sector, to implement recommendations from artist studio support plan including partnership with Belfast School of Art . Minimum of 3 new graduate residences supported and wider engagement with 10-12 organisations, collectives, artist-led spaces.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Sector Support Programme	Design and deliver wraparound support programme aligned to investment model. Includes support for Festivals Forum, Belfast Visual Arts Forum and Green Arts Forum. Late Night Art Belfast (LNAB) marketing (minimum reach of 12k) and social media contract and Culture Forum included.	April 2026 to March 2027	£77,472
Research and development	Ongoing sector specific research and insights. Commission further research and engagement, collect and analyse data to ensure strategic approach to investment and delivery.	April 2026 to March 2027	£26,000
Heritage development	Next phase of implementation of the Heritage Roadmap including development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes and designing action plans and events through a co-design process. Includes strategic partnership with Belfast Stories and development of Neighbourhood Heritage pilot and the wider heritage ambitions of the cultural strategy. Establish steering group and development of Heritage Forum; review of investment programme opportunities; further develop the heritage network; co-design ways to support the value of both tangible and intangible heritage assets across Belfast; explore opportunities for connection with other culture programmes for example LNAB; build capacity within communities to gather and shape stories of place; embed heritage skills within communities.	April 2026 to March 2027	£68,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Cultural animation and Art in Public Realm	Further develop a 'City as a Gallery' or 'Art in the Public Realm' initiatives including Belfast Canvas and Art Unwrapped with Ulster University and National Museums NI.	April 2026 to March 2027	£25,000
	Development of phase two of "legal walls" pilot programme and mentoring programme for Street Art Community. (Street Art mentoring programme reaching a minimum of 30 artists).		£30,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Extension of Blueprint Programme for organisational resilience in partnership with Arts & Business NI and key UK and NI partners, with a focus on developing local civic participation within governance models. (At least 10 Belfast based organisations added to this bespoke programme to develop organisational resilience and expand network of peer learning and best practice within the cultural sector has commercial potential).	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Continue partnership with University of Atypical to promote accessibility in cultural spaces and support training for disability champions within the cultural sector. (Support for 20 organisations and individuals)	April 2026 to March 2027	£25,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Theatre & Dance NI to deliver a professional 3-year development and capacity building programme 'Transform' (2025-2028) for artists in theatre & dance sector at differing career stages, focusing on networking, mentoring and creation.	April 2026 to March 2027	£45,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Craft NI to deliver inclusive programme of showcase and professional development events for makers in Belfast including growth of August Craft Month. Includes development of a mentorship and capacity building programme for craft makers.	April 2026 to March 2027	£35,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Partnership with Visual Arts Ireland (VAI) to deliver a Peer Support Programme. Connecting Visual Artists who fall outside of the studio framework, to include those in rural areas, connecting them to the Belfast Art infrastructure. Providing professional development skills and engagement.	April 2026 to March 2027	£10,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Partnership with Thrive audience development agency to support audience development across the sector.	April 2026 to March 2027	£20,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Belfast International Performing Arts showcase in partnership with Culture Ireland and British Council , delivered by Belfast International Arts Festival and Theatre & Dance NI.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
	Belfast 2024 legacy support for North Star - a live music and spoken word performance inspired by the speeches of abolitionist Frederick Douglass during his historic visit to Belfast in 1845. North Star will be staged at the Irish Art Centre in New York June 3 rd to 21st 2026. Match funding provided by British Council.		£10,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people including Gig Buddies programme 2025–2028 in partnership with the Black Box .	April 2026 to March 2027	£45,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Capacity Building	Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified. Support established organisations to adapt to change and to support new organisations and practitioners to take longer term risks in programming or creative development. Development and delivery of catalyst projects and programmes with community partners. (A minimum of 50 cultural organisations or creative practitioners supported) Ongoing development of Culture Belfast social channels to highlight impact of investment and cultural activity in the city.	April 2026 to March 2027	£64,000
Engagement	Ongoing process to shared placemaking through cultural interventions - deliver second phase of Tools for Togetherness project, establishing a sharing library of artist-led community resources and initial test events with community groups. Support up to 3 pilots of socially engaged artist residencies. Partner with Metal Culture on projects addressing social inclusion, disrupting loneliness and increasing wellbeing through creative activities. Continue partnership with Queens University Belfast (QUB) on creative methods for evaluation. Support organisations to create new models that place citizens (participants & audiences) in decision-making roles, such as joining boards or creating citizen panels in partnership with Arts & Business. Bank of Ideas, a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects. (Up to 3 Artist residencies delivered, 1 UK-wide network, 2 local partnerships, up to 15 cultural organisations supported towards citizen empowerment. (Support a minimum of 35 creative projects supported through a participatory budgeting process)	April 2026 to March 2027	£105,000 £75,000
Culture Night	Public procurement exercise and appointment of a contractor to deliver the 2026 Culture Night programme including supporting marketing activity.	April 2026 to September 2027	£150,000
Music Strategy (Gradam Ceoil)	Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme (multi-year commitment)	April 2026 to March 2027	£18,000
Music Strategy (Place Artists at the Heart – Instruments)	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. (Support for approximately 70 pupils who would not have the means to own an instrument or have tuition beyond primary education).	April 2026 to March 2027	£20,000
Music Strategy (Teenage Kick: Youth Music Programme)	Teenage Kicks: Youth Music Programme – Continuation of programme that will encourage attendance and increase awareness of music events in the city by young people. Concerts in a range of venues will open up the diversity of the music scene and foster a community of young audiences for acts in the city.	April 2026 to March 2027	£20,000
Music Strategy (OurBelfastMusic)	Continuation of Belfast Music “OurBelfastMusic” Social Channels and platforms	April 2026 to March 2027	£15,000
Music Strategy (Output Belfast)	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	September 2026	£33,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
	conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public		
Music Strategy (Music Venue Trust)	Music Venue Trust - Strategic Partnership with the Music Venue Trust to support the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed.	April 2026 to March 2027	£12,000
Music Strategy (UNESCO Cities Network)	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 and artist exchanges with UCoM cities Hannover (Germany) Daegu (South Korea), Essouria (Morocco), London Ontario (Canada), Brno (Czech Republic), Ghent (Belgium), Ramallah (Palestine), Sanlurfa (Turkey), and Varazdin (Croatia). Includes BCC representation on UNESCO Music subnetwork meetings and UNESCO Celebration Day hosted by the Belfast International Arts Festival. Additionally provides pathways for meaningfully engaging artists in traditional art forms from across the UNESCO cities during the 2026 Fleadh.	April 2026 to March 2027	£30,000
Additional UNESCO City of Music Activity	Implementation of "Music Matters" Music Strategy. Delivery of actions within the Music Strategy 4 strands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Theme 1: Place artists at the heart o Theme 2: Nurture the Sector o Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience o Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO 	May 2026 to March 2027	£240,000
Networking	Support active participation in relevant local, regional and international cultural networks including but not limited to IETM, Eurocities, and other relevant international networks.	April 2026 to March 2027	£10,000

Tourism and Events Workplan 2026 / 2027

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme	Now in its 5 th year, the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme has significantly influenced Belfast's tourism industry and works towards positioning Belfast as a welcoming and inclusive for all visitors. In-year deliverables include industry engagement; business commitment through annual seminar and awards, securing participation from 70 businesses pledging to enhance their accessibility and inclusivity efforts. Capacity Building; assessing the inclusive tourism requirements of Council assets; financial support through Innovation Vouchers; collaboration with disability groups with the aim to be an accessible city; scoping and assessing training toolkit; and marketing.	April 2026 - March 2027	£45,000
Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme	Food and Drink play a pivotal role in shaping travel experiences, accounting for a third of total overnight visitor spending. The Food and Drink Tourism Network established in 2022 has been instrumental in driving industry growth. In-year deliverables include business engagement with approximately 150 businesses through targeted initiatives and events.	April 2026 - March 2027	£60,840
Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing	During the past 20 years there has been an investment of over £3m in visitor interpretative signage and wayfinding in Belfast. In year deliverables include delivery of updated interpretation content, maps, design, visuals and overlays with laminate for minimum 12 interpretative signs within the suite of Council tourism visitor signage; delivery of the welcome banners for Fleadh 2026; and explore opportunities for future investment in tourism interpretation and signage including digital options that will enhance the visitor welcome to and experience of Belfast; which can be used to attract investment and access funding as it becomes available.	April 2026 - March 2027	£26,000
Signage Upkeep	Upkeep, cleaning and maintenance of tourism signage network. In year deliverables include management of contract and delivery of services; and 12 monthly inspections.	April 2026 - March 2027	£50,000
Enhancing the Visitor Experience Priority Actions	Council is working with strategic partners including Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to deliver an enhanced visitor experience through our visitor information centres and at Council owned assets. A visitor attitude survey has been undertaken and the findings from it will help identify gaps and opportunities relating to the visitor expectations and delivery of enhanced visitor welcome and experiences in the city.	April 2026 - March 2027	£36,000
Tourism General Management	A Tourism Panel with city-wide commitment, as identified in Make Yourself At Home has been established. The purpose of this Panel is to be outward-looking, horizon scanning, future proofing and to ensure benchmarking to inform future strategic tourism planning across city stakeholders, underpinning Council's position as a strategic leader in its gateway role.	April 2026 - March 2027	£16,631
Business Tourism - Conference Subvention	Members will be aware that in January 2021 the CG&R Committee agreed ongoing support for Conference Support in line with an updated criteria and support to ensure that Belfast can compete nationally and internationally to win conferences for Belfast in an everchanging marketplace. This fund is administered by Visit Belfast and match funded by our partner Tourism NI. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that Belfast, including ICC remains competitive as a business tourism destination. Through the level of conference support, deliver a minimum of 4,000 out-of-state conference delegates for Belfast.	April 2026 - March 2027	£200,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Tourism baselines and measurement of tourism in Belfast and contribution to the NI Economy	The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local Council level continues to be impacted by the reduction in number of surveys and depth of detailed statistics by our national statistics agency NISRA, therefore it is important that Belfast can establish its own baselines and measure the social and economic impact of tourism to ensure that the contribution of Belfast to the NI economy is recognised and that ongoing investment in Belfast is secured. In year deliverables will include the continued implementation of the Tourism dashboard for Belfast; primary research to address known data gaps; utilising data led insights to inform positioning of Belfast as a leisure and business destination; and work with partners to share insights and examine data sources which measure the social, economic and environmental impact of tourism.	April 2026 - March 2027	£70,000
Sustainable Tourism: Global Destination Sustainability Index & Actions for Sustainable Tourism work including Green Tourism certification	Belfast completed its first index benchmarking and application in 2022, following which an application was made for 2025 which placed Belfast 9th out of 89 cities as a sustainable business tourism destination under the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index). The GDS index is a third-party evaluation of the destination's environmental, social, supplier and destination management performance across 77 indicators assessing policies and infrastructure, destination management and sustainability performance amongst the tourism supply-chain. In year deliverables will include forward planning for Climate Change; scoping of sustainability issues and solutions for major events in Belfast including Fleadh; delivery of a sustainable leaders' business event; provision of support in partnership with Green Tourism UK; work with TNI and Failte Ireland on the all-Ireland sustainability accreditation framework.	April 2026- March 2027	£25,500
City Events	On an annual/biannual basis, the Council's City Events Unit delivers a series of large - scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. The Tourism, Culture & Events also support several annual programmes and activities. Our cultural and tourism strategic priorities sets out long term recommendations for events in the city including better alignment across the Council in the design, delivery and funding of events.	April 2026 - March 2027	As detailed below.
Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival	Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival - Plan the 2027 Maritime festival in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities. This now biennial event will feature an array of local creative, will attract tens of thousands of visitors across a weekend in June 2027, and have specific KPIs on targeting an international audience.	April 2026 – November 2027	£217,000 (budget carried over into the 2027-28 year of event delivery)
Christmas	Christmas - delivery of the Christmas Lights Switch on event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall. As with 2025, there is the intention to supplement the Switch On with a six-week programme by city centre animation - both music and non-musical performance.	July 2026 - December 2026	£152,864
Christmas Lights	Christmas Lighting - delivery management of new tender for 2026 and beyond.	April 2026 - March 2027	£300,000

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
St Patricks Day	Building on the development of the St Patrick's Day Celebrations, featuring the in-house delivered parade and city-wide projects delivered by partners. Work will also commence in 2026-27 on the new tender for Creative provision for St Patricks Day 2028-2030.	August 2026 -April 2027	£300,000
Lord Mayor's Day	This event is a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at three other venues – 2 Royal Avenue.	April 2026- June 2027	£45,500
International Events	Working with city partners to plan ahead for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy. This will also include engagement with NI partners on to maximise Belfast's position in the bid for the Women's World Cup 2035.	April 2026- March 2027	£40,000
Small Grants Project Funding	Support for ten sport grants to ensure development and delivery of community-based sporting events (ten local sporting events).	April 2026 - March 2027	£80,000

This page is intentionally left blank