

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



**Belfast
City Council**

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
REPORTS TO FOLLOW

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Friday, 21st August, 2026 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

3. **Restricted Items**

- (c) Local Growth Fund (Pages 1 - 16)
- (o) Strategic Acquisition (Pages 17 - 24)

5. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (c) Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition (Pages 25 - 30)

9. **Operational Issues**

- (d) Minutes of the Disability Working Group of 14th August 2026 (Pages 31 - 32)

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Subject:	Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition
Date:	21 August 2026
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Deirdre Kelly, Programme Manager, City Regeneration & Development Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

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

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition and ongoing engagement in relation to devolution and associated funding.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: I. Note the update on the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition, including the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. II. Note the update on the Scottish Cities Alliance Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting and approve the signing of a joint letter to the Prime Minister aimed at working together to develop models of city and regional empowerment within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that unlock growth. Further updates to be brought to Committee as this engagement progresses. III. Approve attendance of the Lord Mayor as set out in the report at the Belfast MP's sponsored event at Houses of Parliament in Westminster, as part of advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition.
3.0	Background
3.1	The Committee will recall receiving an update in November 2025, followed by a further report to the CG&R Committee in February 2026, on the Belfast Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition. The Proposition sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding consistent with other UK cities, and aligned with a growth proposition which is underpinned by a full Business Case predicated on city regeneration priorities. As part of this work, the Council has submitted a proposal to the UK Government seeking support for a new £250 million City Regeneration Fund and associated powers to drive growth, regeneration and investment in the city.
3.2	As previously reported to Committee, Belfast faces a structural regeneration deficit that cannot be addressed through existing funding mechanisms. The city has experienced long-term underinvestment in regeneration, limited devolved powers and stalled development activity. Public spending on regeneration is approximately half that of comparable English cities, while key funding streams available elsewhere in the UK have not been extended to Northern Ireland, resulting in missed economic and social opportunities. The English Devolution White Paper signalled a significant shift in funding and powers for English cities. Without parity of targeted regeneration investment, Belfast risks falling further behind in terms of growth, competitiveness and investment attraction.
3.3	The Belfast Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition seeks the powers and responsibilities required to drive growth and investment in the city, centred on the establishment of a £250 million City Regeneration Fund (CRF). The proposal responds directly to Belfast's longstanding regeneration challenges through targeted investment in housing-led regeneration across all tenures, the remediation of derelict and underutilised sites, green and blue infrastructure, public realm and placemaking, and enabling infrastructure to unlock strategic development opportunities.

3.4	The CRF is designed to complement and enhance the impact of other investment, including the Belfast Region City Deal by accelerating regeneration and development activity, unlocking private sector investment and supporting inclusive economic growth. The Proposition would provide Belfast with investment mechanisms comparable to those available to English Core Cities without impacting on the Northern Ireland Executive's core funding settlement.
3.5	As set out in the Proposition, the proposal builds on existing governance structures established through Belfast City Council's City Centre Investment Fund and draws on proven investment models operating in cities such as Liverpool, Leeds and Greater Manchester. It is intended to deliver a strong economic and social return through robust governance, targeted investment and the creation of long-term regeneration capacity.
3.6	Development of the Proposition has been informed by extensive engagement with cross-sector stakeholders and aligns with the findings of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake, which received political and stakeholder endorsement.
4.0	Main Report
4.1	Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Investment As previously reported to Committee in November 2025, the Belfast Place-Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition is underpinned by a full Five Case Business Case comprising the Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management Cases. The business case sets out the rationale for enhanced regeneration investment and powers for Belfast and demonstrates the significant preparatory work undertaken by the Council and its partners to establish the conditions for successful delivery.
4.2	The business case seeks the powers and responsibilities required to drive growth and investment in the city, centred on the establishment of a new £250 million City Regeneration Fund (CRF). The proposed fund would support targeted investment in housing-led regeneration, green urban infrastructure, placemaking, site assembly and remediation, enabling infrastructure, and the delivery of strategic regeneration schemes, including stalled major schemes, capable of unlocking wider economic and social benefits. The business case emphasises the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with the Executive and relevant departments through a new model of partnership and joint delivery to maximise the impact of any investment secured.
4.3	Importantly, the business case and delivery at city-region level demonstrates that Belfast already possesses many of the governance and delivery mechanisms required to expedite delivery. Building on the governance arrangements established through the City Centre Investment Fund, this approach draws on proven investment models operating across a number of English cities, including the Chrysalis Fund in Liverpool, the Leeds Revolving Investment Fund and the Greater Manchester Property Venture Fund, which have successfully used targeted public investment to stimulate regeneration and attract private sector capital.
4.4	The proposed City Regeneration Fund is intended to complement and enhance the impact of other investment including the Belfast Region City Deal by accelerating regeneration and development activity, unlocking private sector investment and supporting inclusive economic growth.

4.5	The CRF also proposes a more collaborative model of working between local and central government, enabling Belfast City Council and Northern Ireland departments to respond more effectively to market opportunities and regeneration challenges. This approach is consistent with the principles of place-based growth and devolved decision-making set out within the UK Government's English Devolution White Paper and more recent Integrated Settlements model for Mayoral Combined Authorities. The CRF would place Belfast on a footing more comparable with the English Core Cities by providing access to dedicated regeneration funding additional to existing City Deal arrangements.
4.6	It is important to note that council has a number of partnerships committed to attracting investment and finance to the city and city-region and a collaborative, unified approach will be taken to engagement and advocacy. More information will be brought to Members as this develops further.
4.7	Advocacy & Engagement A programme of advocacy and engagement continues to support the advancement of the Proposition. Council officers and Elected Members have undertaken a programme of engagement with the Northern Ireland Office, HM Treasury and MHCLG, alongside Belfast MPs and Northern Ireland Executive departments, to advocate for the proposal and demonstrate its alignment with the UK Government's growth mission and place-based investment priorities.
4.8	Scottish Cities Alliance Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting Following approval at SP&R Committee in November 2025, the Lord Mayor, the Council's nominated Elected Member BCRD Lead and senior officers attended a devolution-focused roundtable with city leaders from Scotland and Wales in London in January 2026.
4.9	The meeting was convened by the Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA), a collaboration between Scotland's eight cities and the Scottish Government. It brought together representatives from the SCA, the Cardiff Capital Region, and Belfast City Council to discuss evolving city-regional governance and devolution arrangements across the UK.
4.10	Discussions focused on the implications of the accelerating programme of English devolution, particularly the establishment of Mayoral Combined Authorities, and the potential impact on the competitiveness, investment attractiveness and reform capacity of cities in the devolved nations. Participants noted the increasing momentum behind English devolution deals, the continued extension of mayoral powers, and growing alignment between English city regions and UK Government funding, policy development, and institutional focus.
4.11	The meeting concluded that, without coordinated action, the pace and scale of English devolution could reshape the UK's economic and institutional landscape in ways that disadvantage cities in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. However, participants also recognised a significant opportunity to secure deeper, fairer and more effective city-level devolution through collective advocacy, evidence-based case making and governance models tailored to the specific circumstances of each devolved nation.
4.12	A follow up meeting was held in May 2026 at UKREiiF, the UK Real Estate, investment and infrastructure Forum. As approved by CG&R Committee in February 2026, the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Council's nominated Elected Member/Chair of the BCRD Council Panel attended this meeting.

4.13	Building on the January discussions, participants considered the challenges facing cities in the devolved nations, including what the shared diagnosis of the “double squeeze” of UK-level decision-making and limited devolved powers at city-regional level. It was argued that this combination restricts access to long-term funding, capital flows and policy discretion available to English Mayoral Authorities. Participants felt that deeper, faster devolution tailored to national contexts is required, supported by long-term funding under city control and strengthened multi-level governance between UK Government, devolved governments and city regions. Five areas of common ground were identified: the readiness of cities to deliver growth; the value of place based governance pluralism; the need for varied pace and models of devolution; opportunities for joined-up engagement; and the importance of a sustained collective voice in UK-level discussions.
4.14	Participants considered continued group engagement and joint case-making to Westminster, to include the development of shared representation to the new Prime Minister. A draft letter has been prepared by the SCA welcoming the new Prime Minister’s focus on advancing devolution, noting that there is a significant opportunity to work together to develop models of city and regional empowerment within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that unlock growth while complementing the responsibilities of devolved governments and seeking engagement with UK Government, the devolved administrations and city and regional leaders on the next phase of devolution. Subject to approval from Members, it is proposed that Belfast City Council signs this joint letter and continues ongoing engagement alongside Scotland and Wales, with updates to be brought back to Committee as this engagement progresses.
4.15	During UKREiiF, senior Council officers also participated in a roundtable discussion with senior HMT officials, facilitated by Core Cities and also attended by other UK Core City representatives. The roundtable concluded with agreement to convene a further engagement between HM Treasury and representatives from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast to consider how the economic potential of these cities can be more fully reflected within the UK Government’s growth agenda, while remaining consistent with the respective devolution settlements across the devolved nations. Discussions highlighted the particular importance of investment policy and the use of financial and fiscal levers, recognising that current arrangements differ across jurisdictions. Participants noted the significant opportunities to leverage private sector investment and accelerate regeneration priorities with resultant economic growth, as demonstrated through engagement at UKREiiF. HM Treasury officials indicated a willingness to continue the dialogue through a dedicated follow-up meeting with the Devolved Nation Core Cities to explore these issues in greater detail and identify areas for future collaboration focused on regeneration and place-based growth. Work is on-going to arrange this follow up meeting.
4.16	Westminster Engagement To support engagement with Westminster on the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition, Belfast’s MPs have agreed to host a roundtable meeting with Members of Parliament and Peers in September at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. Approval is sought for the Lord Mayor, accompanied by senior Council officers, to attend this engagement in order to promote the Belfast Proposition, strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, and participate in a programme of one-to-one meetings to further advance the proposition.

4.17	This engagement is particularly important given the recent changes within the UK Government. Work is ongoing to build relationships with the new administration and to align the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition with emerging government priorities, including the renewed focus on devolution, place based regeneration, regional growth, and commitment to undertake the biggest transfer of power, funding and responsibility from Westminster in a generation. The proposed engagement will provide an opportunity to raise Belfast's profile and the Place Proposition, notably in advance of the Autumn Statement, and importantly, complements ongoing work across innovation, economic development and City Deals.
4.18	Engagement with the Northern Ireland Executive As noted in the November 2025 Committee update, the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) has facilitated a number of high-level engagements with the Northern Ireland Executive to advance the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition. This engagement has included convening a joint Ministerial meeting with the Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities in September 2025; a meeting with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister held in April 2026; and subsequent follow up meeting with Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) officials and the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) in May 2026.
4.19	In addition, following an invite from the BCRPP, the Minister for Communities attended UKREiiF supporting the region's presence at the UK's leading forum for real estate, regeneration and infrastructure investment. This provided a further opportunity to discuss the Belfast Place Based Growth & Regeneration Proposition, including a ministerial roundtable facilitated by the Director of Core Cities UK.
5.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
5.1	Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course following consideration by UK Government.
5.2	Costs including travel and subsistence for the Lord Mayor's attendance at the Belfast MPs sponsored event in the Houses of Parliament at the time of preparing the report for Committee are estimated at £900.
6.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
	None associated with this report.
7.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None

Disability Working Group

Friday, 14th August, 2026

MEETING OF DISABILITY WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy and de Faoite.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;
Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;
Mr. M. Johnston, Language Officer;
Ms. L. Dennis, Equality and Diversity Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Brennan.

Election of Chairperson

The Working Group noted that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Moved by Councillor Abernethy,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite, and

Resolved – that Councillor Brooks be elected to serve as Chairperson to the Working Group until the date of the Annual Meeting in June, 2027.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th March, 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Accessible and Inclusive Belfast

The Policy, Research and Compliance Officer provided the Working Group with an update on the revised approach to accessibility and inclusion in Belfast.

He referred the Members to the Disability Action Plan 2026-29 – ‘Accessible and Inclusive Belfast – be part of the conversations’ and explained that it would be delivered through a series of engagement events and tools, combined with formal consultation.

The Equality and Diversity Officer stated that the Disability Advisory Panel and Sign Language Users Forum would be consulted with in relation to the experience of deaf

and disabled people during the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 with a view to informing preparations the 2027 Fleadh and other large-scale events.

She outlined the following four shared outcomes:

- Delivering for our Communities;
- Knowing our Communities;
- Leadership; and
- Diverse and Skilled Workforce.

She referred the Members to the new actions that would be delivered to achieve those outcomes over the following three years and stated that they would be monitored and revised as necessary. He reported that the engagement period would open towards the end of September, 2026 and would run until January, 2027.

Following discussion, the Equality and Diversity Officer advised that she would consider an appropriate format to hold a discussion with all Elected Members with regard to the Disability Action Plan.

The City Solicitor agreed to write to the Departmental Ministers to seek their commitment to the ambition to make Belfast a fully accessible city by 2035 and to consider the appropriate platform within the Council for Living Streets to make representations to.

The Working Group approved the approach taken to 'Accessible and Inclusive Belfast – be part of the conversation' and noted the updated version of the Disability Action Plan.

Sign Language Act Update

The Language Officer provided the Working Group with the background of the Sign Language Act and reported that the Sign Language Act had received Royal Assent on 10th July, 2026.

He explained that Clause 3 of the Sign Language Act required public authorities to take reasonable steps to ensure that information and services provided by the organisation were as accessible to individuals in the deaf community as they were to individuals who were not in the deaf community and should offer or facilitate the use of British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language for the benefit of individuals in the deaf community in accessing information and services provided by the organisation.

He stated that Clause 6 required public authorities to develop sign language action plans and he reported that public authorities were expected to draft a first five-year Sign Language Action Plan from 2027/28, followed by a consecutive three-year Sign Language Action Plans and that a guidance document was currently being developed to support local authorities.

The Working Group noted the report.

Chairperson