

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 10th February, 2021

REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and
Councillors Beattie, Donnelly, Ferguson,
Gormley, Howard, T. Kelly, Lyons, Maskey,
McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, O'Hara and Spratt.

Also attended: Councillor Kyle.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive;
Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director (Destination Hub);
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager (North);
and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for the inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillors Hanvey and Heading.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Kingston declared an interest in relation to item 2.f) DfC Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme - Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme Update, in that he was a voluntary Director of the North Belfast Working Men's Club.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following 6 items were restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt

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information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Finance Update

The Committee noted the contents of the report which had been presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in January.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2021 / 2022

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an overview of the budgetary pressures facing the Council in 2021/22, together with the cash limit for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2021/22 as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 22nd January, 2021.

He advised that a full breakdown of District Rate charges per household would be provided at the next Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee:

1. Agreed that the report would not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interest in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 1st March, 2021;
2. Agreed a cash limit of £18,237,846 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2021/22 and the individual service limits detailed in table 3 of the report; and
3. Noted the next steps to setting the district rate, as outlined in paragraph 3.17 of the report.

**The Zoo - Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec 20)
Performance Update Report**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provide an update in regards to the Zoo performance during Quarter 3 (Oct to Dec) of the 2020-21 financial year across the following areas:

- Visitor Services;
- Education Services;
- Animal Collection;
- Marketing and Events; and
- Financial performance.

The Committee noted the Zoo performance update report for the period October – December 2020.

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Belfast Destination Hub – Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy and Programme Director provided an overview of the progress made with regard to the Destination Hub Outline Business Case (OBC) and programme, together with a summary of the next steps and timelines.

During discussion, the officer's explained further the intended environmental and social standards of the building, ownership of the asset, and management of the Hub,

In response to a Members question in relation to accessibility and inclusivity of the design, the Programme Manager confirmed that an Equality and Inclusion Group had been put in place to consult on such issues, and that further representation of Members and disability representatives could be considered.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the progress which had been made in relation to the Destination Hub Outline Business Case, including submission to the Belfast City Region Deal for consideration under the tourism and regeneration pillar of the Deal;
- Noted that work to secure a site for the Destination Hub was ongoing; and
- Noted the next steps and Programme, as outlined in the report.

One Young World 2023

The Director of Economic Development provided an update on Belfast's bid to host the One Young World Global Summit in 2023. He explained that One Young World was the global forum for young leaders and its mission was to convene young talent from every country and sector, working to accelerate social impact by identifying, promoting and connecting the world's most impactful young leaders, typically age 18-30, to create and drive change through responsible and effective leadership.

He advised that the annual One Young World Summit presented cities with the unique opportunity to host an internationally diverse, youth-driven event and highlighted how this would align with the wider strategic priorities for the city.

The Committee noted the contents of this report and agreed to receive further updates as the programme developed.

Department for Communities (DfC) Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the Business Cluster and Community Scheme currently under delivery as an element within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme.

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She tabled an overview of the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme applications which the Council had received and a summary of the funding availability. It was reported that the number of applications the Council had received exceeded the amount of funding available under the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme element of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme funding. She also explained that guidance on the delivery of parklets had recently been received from the Department for Infrastructure.

She highlighted that, due to the ongoing Covid-19 related restrictions, Officers had requested an extension of 6 months to the delivery timeline of the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme to allow sufficient time to deliver the agreed capital interventions, and the Department for Communities had approved the request on 26th January, with all spend to be completed by the 30th September, 2021. This extension had subsequently been applied to all of the elements of the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme including the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor McMullan,
Seconded by Alderman Kingston,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to write to the Department for Communities to request additional support through the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme for the business and community cluster grants; and notes the issue regarding the DfI Parklet Guidance and agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure to request that the Streetworks Licence eligibility is expanded to include Community Groups and Business Clusters.

After discussion, the Committee:-

- Noted that the scheme closed to applications on 1st February, 2021 and that officers were currently assessing the submitted applications;
- Noted the verbal update that was provided to the Committee to reflect the latest status on the grant scheme;
- Agreed that the Committee formally writes to the Department for Communities to request additional support through the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme for the business and community cluster grants; and
- Noted the issue regarding the DfI Parklet Guidance and agreed that the Committee writes to the Department for Infrastructure to request that the Streetworks Licence eligibility was expanded to include Community Groups and Business Clusters.

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Presentation

BID One - proposed business plan for new 5 year term

The Chairperson introduced Ms. K. McBride, Managing Director of Belfast One BID, to the Committee and she was admitted to the meeting.

Ms. McBride provided a presentation to update the Committee on the work which had been undertaken by the Belfast One BID in the last five years. She advised that the Belfast One vision was for a Belfast City Centre, which by 2026 had recovered from the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; a City Centre so safe, clean and active, that it had attracted an increased residential population and resulting business investment.

Ms. McBride highlighted that the Belfast One BID purpose included driving footfall to the area, events and celebrations, supporting retail, dynamic inputs, city dressing, proactive interventions, data collection, training, animation and cinema. She pointed out that successful events which had taken place included Belfast Restaurant Week, Summer Cinemas, Fashion Shows, together with regular seasonal events.

Ms. McBride reported that the dedicated professional Clean Team carried out additional on street cleansing, including entries and shop frontages, which would help future consumer confidence.

She advised that over £90,000 worth of Belfast City Centre Gift Cards had been purchased, which would also support City Centre Businesses.

During discussion, Ms. McBride explained further the challenges of the changing high street and online shopping. She advised that opportunities to provide experiences for visitors were being undertaken, such as the implementation of a pilot pedestrianisation area and entertainment space.

In response to a Members question regarding the potential overlap with the work of Belfast City Centre Management, she clarified that a representative from BCCM sat on the BID One Board, and they also shared some Service Level Agreement's.

The Chairperson thanked Ms McBride for her presentation and she left the meeting.

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Committee that the ballot would open on 4th February, 2021 and close on 25th March 2021, with the decision to be completed by 26 March. He pointed out that all levy payers would be entitled to vote in the ballot and the Council had three properties in the BID One area, therefore, would be entitled to a vote for each of the properties.

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After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the presentation from the Belfast One Business Improvement District (BID); and
- Agreed to use the council ballots to support a 'Yes' vote for a new five year mandate for the BID.

Request to Present

Visit Belfast

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Committee that Visit Belfast was the city's Destination Marketing Management Organisation (DMMO) dedicated to marketing Belfast as a city break, conference, day-trip and cruise ship destination. It also, in its visitor servicing role, managed the operation of three gateway Visitor Information Centres (VICs) including Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, the Arrivals Desk at George Best Belfast City Airport and the Arrivals Desk at Belfast International Airport and a range of visitor servicing initiatives on behalf of the Council.

He advised that the Council was the principal funder of Visit Belfast and, as such, usually received an annual presentation of their business plan, as part of the process to approve annual funding.

During discussion, one Member suggested that Visit Belfast had recently published a presentation which might be of interest to the Committee. The Director of Economic Development advised that he would ensure the link was issued to the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and the progress to date;
- Agreed to receive a presentation on Visit Belfast's 2021-22 Business Plan at the Committee in March 2021, including a request for Council support towards the work programme for the coming financial year; and
- Noted that a copy of the presentation from Visit Belfast would be requested in advance of the meeting, together with detail regarding their promotion of Council assets.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

**Update on Additional Investment
in Tourism Upgrades**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on further recovery funding that has been made available by Tourism**

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NI. It is requested that Belfast City Council works in partnership with Visit Belfast to facilitate this funding in order to:

- Make the necessary health and safety adjustments to the Cruise Belfast Welcome Hub
- Provide digital upgrades to existing visitor servicing
- Enhance conference subvention scheme to support business tourism recovery

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and agree that Belfast City Council works in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to facilitate necessary recovery support funding via contractual mechanisms as advised by Legal Services.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Belfast's visitor economy has been severely impacted by Covid-19 and it is anticipated that many of the challenges that the pandemic has brought to the tourism and hospitality industry may be with us for some time in the future. It is in this context that Tourism NI have identified funding to support recovery of services provided by Visit Belfast including visitor servicing and business tourism retention.

3.2 Investment in Health and Safety upgrade to Cruise Hub

Members will be aware that approval was granted at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in January 2021 to work in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to facilitate necessary Covid-19 health and safety upgrades. The total amount previously cited was an allocation of £110,000 from Tourism NI to support this work. Tourism NI have advised Council and Visit Belfast of an enhancement to the total amount awarded to this project which is now £135,000 inclusive of VAT. Members are asked to note this amended amount and approve officer facilitation of this funding.

3.3 Investment in visitor-facing technology in Visit Belfast Welcome Centre (VBWC)

Since the VBWC opened in December 2013, many of the digital assets, including screens and devices are in need of

upgrade and replacement in order to meet user needs and keep up with advances in technology. A further £35,000 (inclusive of VAT) of investment from Tourism NI has been agreed to support upgrades to digital assets in the centre. The overall aim of the investment is to ensure that VBWC continues to offer a best-in-class experience and continue to meet the expectations of today's travellers in terms of content, quality and speed. Both Belfast City Council and Tourism Northern Ireland's Gateway content on the current digital assets will be upgraded as part of the process. Members are asked to note this investment and approve officer facilitation of this project.

3.4 Investment in Conference Subvention

Since 2016, Tourism NI has been an equal funder of the Conference Subvention Scheme that is used to secure conferences for Belfast; contributing £200,000 each financial year to the scheme which is administered on behalf of Belfast City Council and TNI by Visit Belfast.

Tourism NI has successfully bid for additional recovery monies from the Department for Economy to further support bids for conferences in an ever more competitive market with challenges around for example access, space restrictions and hybrid format. It will be a one off support of £200,000 in financial year 2020/21 and will be additional to its existing commitment of £200,000 per annum to Belfast City Council to best support endeavours to secure conferences for future years.

- 3.5** Tourism NI has requested that Belfast City Council agree to accept an Addendum to the existing Conference Support Service Level Agreement for the £200,000 which will held to be drawn down as part of the existing scheme to increase retention and recovery of business tourism in the city as conferences are bid for and won for Belfast.

3.6 Financial & Resource Implications

There are no financial implications for Council other than an allocation of officer time to facilitate contract management and administration. The timing for administration of the Agreement and processing invoices is challenging but achievable and necessary in the context of facilitating a return to business and recovery for the tourism sector.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Any proposed works and programmes will be required to adhere to required equality implications including access requirements.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairperson