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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, on the basis of proportionality, and remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 9th May, 2022 at 6.00 p.m., for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 8)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 9 - 46)
7. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 47 - 58)
8. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 59 - 104)
9. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 105 - 124)
10. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 125 - 152)
11. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 153 - 168)

The Members of Belfast City Council are hereby summoned to attend.



Chief Executive

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Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held both remotely, via Microsoft Teams, and in-person on a proportional basis, on Monday, 4th April, 2022 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire); and
The High Sheriff, (Councillor Hussey);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey,
Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks,
Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins,
Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading,
Howard, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long,
Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCann,
McCullough, McDonough Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin,
McMullan, Mulholland, Murphy, Newton, O'Hara,
Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors McAllister, McCusker and McReynolds.

Declarations of Interest

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl) declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that she was an employee of Queen's University and she left the meeting for the duration of the item.

The High Sheriff (Councillor Hussey) declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that he taught at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) at Queen's University Belfast and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

Councillor Newton declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that his wife was employed by the Ulster University and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

Councillor Pankhurst declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that he was a PhD student and a teaching assistant at Queen's University Belfast and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

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Councillor Spratt declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that his wife was employed by the Ulster University and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

Councillor McMullan advised the Council that he was an individual member of the Belfast City of Sanctuary and that, as it was a non-pecuniary interest in an organisation which was formed for a public interest, he would participate fully in the discussion of the motion with the same name.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the item “Partner Agreements Quarter 3 Update and Rosario Youth Centre request” within the People and Communities minutes, on the basis that his son was a member of Rosario Youth Club and if the issue arose that he would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Hanvey declared an interest in respect of the item “Partner Agreements Quarter 3 Update and Rosario Youth Centre request”, in that he had been working with Rosario Youth Club in respect of funding and that if the issue arose that he would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to the item “Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service” within the Strategic Policy and Resources minutes, in that he was a Board Member of the Ligoniel Improvement Association, and he left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

Councillor Black declared an interest in relation to the item “Community Provision Grant Funding 2022/23” within the People and Communities minutes, in that she was employed by Grosvenor Community Centre and that if the issue arose that she would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Verner declared an interest in relation to the item “Community Provision Grant Funding 2022/23” within the People and Communities minutes, in that she was associated with an organisation which had applied for funding and that if the issue arose that she would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Corr advised that he worked for Falls Community Council, which was a recipient of Advice Consortium Funding, and that if the issue arose that he would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Minutes of the Council Meetings

Moved by the Lord Mayor,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Monthly meeting of the Council of 1st March and the Special meeting of 14th March be taken as read and signed as correct.

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Official Announcements

Congratulations – Mr. J. Walsh

The Lord Mayor and Members from each Political Party congratulated Mr. J. Walsh on his recent appointment as the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council and wished him well in his new role.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members for their kind words.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor and a number of Councillors expressed their condolences to Mr. R. Cregan, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources, upon the recent death of his father, Daniel.

Condolences were also paid to Councillor Mulholland upon the death of her father, Shane, and to Councillor Magee, on the loss of his father, John.

A Member also paid tribute to Ms. S. Workman, a dedicated and compassionate Community Development worker, who had recently passed away.

Industrial Action

A Member stated that she wished to put on record her congratulations to all those employees who had participated in picket lines across the City the previous week in the fight for better pay and that she hoped that management within the Council would engage in discussion with the unions in respect of an above-inflation pay rise for those staff affected.

Belfast Giants

A Member requested that the Lord Mayor would pass on her congratulations to the Belfast Giants Ice Hockey team for recently winning the Challenge Cup. The Lord Mayor agreed that she would invite the team to attend the City Hall to recognise the achievement.

Blu Hydrangea

A Member requested that the Lord Mayor would pass on her congratulations to Blu Hydrangea for recently winning RuPaul's Drag Race: UK vs the World, and that she had been an important role model. The Lord Mayor stated that she would be delighted to invite her to attend the City Hall in recognition of her win.

Monthly Letter

The Lord Mayor read out a letter from Ms. Esther Oluwalana, aged 9, who had recently moved with her family to live in Belfast. She explained how she had recently

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enrolled in Holy Rosary Primary School, along with her brother, and praised the welcome they had received both from teachers at the school and in Belfast in general.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Groogan
Seconded by Councillor Walsh

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th March, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Motion - Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service

Moved by Councillor Ferguson
Seconded by Councillor Matt Collins and

Resolved - That the Council agrees to suspend Standing Orders and to award the shortfall in funding of £181,878 to the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service, in principle, noting that it was subject to due diligence and a future report being submitted to the Committee.

Glór na Móna

In response to a Member's request, and with the Chairperson's agreement, the Council agreed that the decision of the Committee was to be amended to read that:

"the Committee agreed to allocate £86,000 to Glór na Móna and also agreed that a meeting between Glór na Móna and the Education Authority was to be arranged."

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th March were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain
Seconded by Councillor Bunting

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th March, be approved and adopted.

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Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy
Seconded by Councillor McCann

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 9th March be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly
Seconded by Councillor Howard

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 16th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Maskey

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 2nd, 15th and 29th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker
Seconded by Councillor Murphy

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 10th March be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McCullough
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 30th March, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Motions to be debated by the Council

University Sector - Industrial Dispute

(The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl), The High Sheriff (Councillor Hussey) and Councillors Newton, Pankhurst and Spratt, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting for the duration.)

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Heading proposed:

“This Council acknowledges the contribution to civic and economic life made by both Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster to the citizens of Belfast City. Belfast City Council also notes the high standard of teaching and research carried out by staff at both universities and the benefits made to the people of Belfast as an employer.

This Council is concerned at the current Industrial dispute taking place throughout the university sector and in particular its detrimental impact upon the international reputation, civic and economic contribution of Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster to the City. This council is further concerned of the failure to resolve this dispute will mean staff will seek employment outside the sector impacting upon quality of teaching and research and the local and international standing as universities of excellence.

Belfast City Council is also concerned at the failure of Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA), of which Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster are members, in addressing the proposed 35% cut in the Universities Superannuation Scheme payable to staff on retirement.

Belfast City Council is further concerned the Universities and Colleges Employer's Association appear to have no resolve in negotiating an amicable solution and is therefore prolonging unnecessarily the industrial dispute.

Belfast City Council therefore calls upon both local University Vice Chancellors to use their influence with the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association to resolve this dispute and if required for call for an allocation from the sector's reserves estimated at £46.8 billion to be used to support the Universities Superannuation Scheme.

This Council asks the Lord Mayor to write to both Vice Chancellors expressing the views of council and in particular the dispute to be resolved fairly and that Belfast City Council supports the principle of adequate pensions for all employees on retirement.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

The motion was put to the meeting and passed.

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City of Sanctuary

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Kyle proposed:

“That this Council supports Belfast City Council becoming a “Council of Sanctuary” and supports the initiative to have Belfast recognised as a “City of Sanctuary”.

As a council we recognise that:

- a) A “Council of Sanctuary” is a place that provides a welcome and safe place for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and supports the conditions that will allow people from these backgrounds to feel safe, valued and included in Belfast.
- b) We recognise as leaders we have a responsibility to receive and include new residents with care and dignity.
- c) This commitment to become a “Council of Sanctuary” does not seek to provide preferential treatment to one community over another, instead it recognises that during the arrival, settlement and integration journey, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants face many challenges and that as city leaders we will play our part in working to build a culture of welcome, equality and inclusion.
- d) This council will work to implement a “City of Sanctuary” through our actions and policies, through understanding the lived experience of communities that are new to Belfast and through supporting our partners in the community and voluntary sectors.

The Council Resolves to:

- Join a network of cities and towns which promote the inclusion and welfare of people who are fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries and become a recognised “Council of Sanctuary”
- Continue to understand the lived experience of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants living in Belfast
- Continue to work with organisations in the city who support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants
- Challenge anti-refugee and anti-migrant attitudes wherever they are found
- Ensure equality in the provision of our services and facilities and that public spaces can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone
- Develop an internal Race Equality and Diversity Action Plan – that will review how we deliver our services and take action as an employer to create a diverse workforce.”

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The motion was seconded by Councillor McMullan.

The motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 15th April, 2022

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Groogan (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,
Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McLaughlin, McReynolds,
Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director
of Finance and Resources;
Mr. R. Crozier, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Dorrian and Councillors Beattie, Long and McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 28th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following eight items is 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 following 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.

**Appointment of Director (Operational)
of City and Neighbourhood Services**

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing details of the recruitment and selection process which had resulted in the appointment of Mr. David Sales to the post of Director (Operational) of City and Neighbourhood Services.

Update on Industrial Action

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an update on the regional industrial action involving members of Unite the Union, which had taken place between 21st and 27th March and advising of the potential for further action.

Update on Organisational Recovery

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an update on the Council's organisational recovery and adopted the recommendation that priority be given to introducing a phased return of customer facing services to normal business as soon as possible.

City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an update on the progress being made across each of the operational areas in implementing the City Hall Recovery Plan.

Requests for the use of Council Parks

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing details of the following requests for the use of Council parks in 2022:

- Belsonic – Ormeau Park – 13th to 26th June (9 live events);
- Belfast Mela – Botanic Gardens – 28th August; and
- Planet Love Festival – Boucher Road Playing Fields – 10th September.

The report also sought multiple year approval for Belsonic to use Ormeau Park up to and including 2024, for up to a maximum of ten concerts each year, and for the Council to continue to provide financial support of £20,000 to Belfast Mela, given the positive impact which it had on the City. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee:

- i. approve the requests for the use of Ormeau Park, Botanic Gardens and Boucher Road Playing Fields, on the dates outlined above and delegate authority to her:

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- a. to negotiate, in conjunction with the Councils Commercial Manager, an appropriate fee, where applicable, which recognised the costs to Council, minimised negative impact on the immediate area and took account of the potential wider benefit to the City's economy; and
- b. to negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement, to be prepared by the Council's Legal Services section, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and 'take down' periods and booking amendments, subject to:
 - the organiser resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
 - compliance with any Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of the event; and
 - the organiser meeting all statutory Planning and Building Control requirements, including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainments Licence.
- ii. grant multiple year approval for Belsonic to host concerts in Ormeau Park each June up to and including 2024, and remove the need for Committee approval in 2023 and 2024 by allowing each concert to be approved under the scheme of delegation, based on a review of the previous year's outcomes and officer recommendations; and
- iii. agree to continue to provide funding of £20,000 to the Belfast Mela.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to recommendation ii. being amended to reflect that a decision on whether or not to grant approval to Belsonic to hold concerts in 2023 and 2024 would be taken by the Committee, rather than under delegated authority, also on the basis of the previous year's review.

Official Visit of US Secretary of Labor

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that Martin J. Walsh, United States Secretary of Labor, would be undertaking an official visit to Belfast on 26th and 27th May. Secretary Walsh had, in the past, addressed the Council in his role as Mayor of Boston and retained a strong interest in Belfast and Northern Ireland.

He reported that a request had been received on behalf of Secretary Walsh to meet on 26th May with the leaders of the Political Parties and, immediately afterwards, to address a special meeting of the Council on issues such as inclusive economic recovery, city resilience and climate intervention, Innovation City Belfast, investment and business ambitions with the United States. A "US International Homecoming" lunch event, involving business, community and political representatives, would also be taking place in a City centre venue that afternoon, during which Secretary Walsh would reinforce his country's ongoing support for Belfast and Northern Ireland. The Council had been allocated ten

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places at that event, at an estimated total cost of £3,000, which would be met from existing budgets.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee approve:

- i. a request for Secretary Walsh to address a special meeting of the Council at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 26th May;
- ii. a request for Secretary Walsh to meet with the leaders of the Political Parties at 9.15 a.m. on Thursday, 26th May; and
- iii. the attendance of up to a maximum of ten people at the lunch event being held on the afternoon of Thursday, 26th May, at a cost of approximately £3,000.

After discussion, the Committee agreed, given the cost to the Council of attending the lunch event, to adopt recommendations i. and ii. only.

2 Royal Avenue

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on future proposals for 2 Royal Avenue and on the Levelling Up Fund - Round 2. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee:

- i. note the success of the current meanwhile use of 2 Royal Avenue and approve, in principle, the proposal to seek a further meanwhile use until the end of December 2023 (with appropriate break clauses), with a similar focus on cultural, animation and creative activities.
- ii. note the update in relation to the Levelling Up Fund - Round 2;
- iii. grant approval for officers to develop a bid to the Levelling Up Fund - Round 2 in relation to the future use of 2 Royal Avenue, with regular updates to be provided to the Committee to ensure oversight and contribution to the application;
- iv. agree that officers use existing Levelling Up capacity funding to procure external support to assist officers in terms of bid development; and
- v. agree that officers develop a mechanism by which requests from other organisations for letters of support for funding applications be provided, if they support existing Corporate priorities.

After discussion, the Committee adopted recommendations i. ii. iv and v., as set out above.

In terms of recommendation iii., it was agreed that officers would continue to work up the bid for Round 2 funding for 2 Royal Avenue, with final approval to be deferred until

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its next monthly meeting to allow for other potential projects across the City which might qualify for this funding to be identified.

Update on Physical Programme

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for the Committee's consideration a report seeking approval to proceed with the implementation of procurement processes and providing details of recently awarded contracts.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed that any necessary procurement processes, including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements, be initiated for any non-recurrent projects for 2022/23, for 2 Royal Avenue, in connection with the extended meanwhile use and/or the Levelling Up application and any externally funded projects for 2021/22 and 2022/23, as required, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
- ii. noted the update in relation to contracts awarded between January and March 2022, as well as the emergency works completed under Standing Order 56; and
- iii. noted the comments of a Member on the need to progress community consultation on the proposed new leisure facility at Girdwood, under the Leisure Transformation Programme.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Energy Price Crisis

The Chief Executive informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor O'Hara, to the People and Communities Committee in the first instance for consideration:

"This Council notes the spiralling cost of energy bills and the increased pressure on households across the City, particularly the most vulnerable. In order to provide long-term solutions to escalating energy prices the Council will:

- commit to civic leadership on the development of community energy projects across the City. These projects will focus on developing renewable energy in partnership with communities and expert organisations, including the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and sourcing financing for these community energy projects;

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- engage with the Department for the Economy for support in developing community energy schemes; and
- write to the UK Government Treasury stating its support for a Windfall Tax on the Energy Companies which have recorded record profits.

For the purpose of this motion, the use of the term ‘community energy’ to mean community projects or initiatives focused on the four strands of reducing energy use, managing energy better, generating energy or purchasing energy. This included communities of place and communities of interest. These projects or initiatives share an emphasis on community ownership, leadership or control where the community benefits”.

The People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th March, had agreed to refer the motion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on the basis that it was considered to fall more within the remit of that Committee.

Councillor Smyth, who had proposed the motion, referred to the increasing challenges being faced by families across the City, in terms of rising energy costs. He highlighted the need for a long-term approach to be adopted to address the issue and pointed out that the Council, as a civic leader, had an important role to play in driving new solutions around energy needs, with the concept of community energy at its core. Northern Ireland lagged behind Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland in terms of community energy policy and development support and significant work was required across all sectors to address this.

He went on to highlight the important role being played by the Northern Ireland Community Energy Co-operative in taking forward community owned, renewable energy initiatives and energy efficiency services. The co-operative had recently supported a project in Edenderry Village, covering approximately 200 homes, which enabled participants to make a just transition from a fossil fuel to an affordable low carbon heating system. He concluded by commending the work of the Council’s Climate Resilience Team and the Climate and City Resilience Committee and by urging the Committee to support his motion.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Governance

Revision to Scheme of Allowances

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Department for Communities had forwarded to local councils a circular setting out revised maximum limits for basic and special responsibility allowances, with effect from 1st April, 2021. The maximum basic allowance had increased from £15,486 to £15,757, with the total maximum special responsibility allowance having risen from £117,774 to £119,835.

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Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee consider whether it wished to apply the increases in the basic and special responsibility allowances, as outlined.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed not to apply the increases in the basic and special responsibility allowances, with effect from 1st April, 2021; and
- ii. agreed to write to the Department for Communities calling for the current legislation to be amended to provide for the establishment of an independent process to deal with the scheme of allowances, thereby removing Elected Member involvement.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Update on Belfast Region City Deal

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 This report seeks to update the Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) which was formally signed on 15th December 2021 by the Belfast region partners, the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. The report also includes an update on development of the Outline Business Cases (OBCs) and an overview of next steps in the implementation of the deal.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- the update on the signing of the Belfast Region City Deal in December, 2021;
- the programme overview and the next steps in the implementation of the deal; and
- the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.

3.0 Main Report

Programme Update

3.1 The Belfast Region Deal Document and Governance Framework was approved by the SP and R Committee in October 2021 and individual BRCD partners also sought approval through their own governance structures in tandem. Following these formal approvals by partners including UK and NI Government the deal was formally signed on 15 December

2021 at the ICC Belfast, representing a key milestone for the Belfast region.

- 3.2 As Members will be aware, the original planned event had to be scaled back and moved to an online format due to the emerging revision of Covid-19 restrictions at that time. Whilst this was not how partners had envisaged marking the signing of the Deal, moving to an online format allowed for a wider audience than would have been possible with an in-person event. Over 200 people viewed the event online on the day, including partners, Elected Representatives, Government officials and representatives from the business community.
- 3.3 It was a momentous day for partners across the Belfast region, with the first ever signed City Deal for Northern Ireland securing £1billion co-investment to help transform the region's economy over the next decade. On the day of the signing the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Finance Minister signalled their full support for the implementation of the deal and for the partners' aim to deliver a 'Decade of Opportunity', resulting in significant press and media coverage for BRCD both on the day of the announcement and in the days following.
- 3.4 A number of communications products were developed in line with the announcement, including a programme video and an updated BRCD Summary document which has been circulated. Plans for strategic engagement and programme communication reflecting the new phase of the deal are currently being developed and Members will be updated as this progresses.

Investment Priorities

- 3.5 BRCD Partners have now developed Business Cases for their projects across the programme and Business Cases representing a majority of programme expenditure are now at an advanced stage.

Innovation

- 3.6 There has been significant progression in the Innovation Pillar with all five Innovation projects at an advanced stage of development, with a number of the projects having been progressed to RIBA stage 2 (design), through substantial investment at risk by the project sponsors.
- 3.7 The Queen's University led Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) and the Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical

Healthcare (i-REACH) projects have all received OBC approval from the Economy Minister and the Department of Finance.

- 3.8 The OBC for the Ulster University led Studio Ulster (formerly Screen Media Innovation Lab (SMIL)) project has been approved both by the Economy Minister and Department of Finance and the OBC for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) has approval from the Economy Minister but is awaiting approval from the Department of Finance.

Digital

- 3.9 Following Programme Business Case approval, the Digital pillar is commencing a new phase of work through the development of project OBCs. The Digital Programme is at an earlier stage of development, with one project, the i4c Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks in Ballymena at a more advanced stage with Economy Minister approval for its OBC received in early April. OBCs for other projects, including investment in advanced wireless and Regional Innovation Hubs in Newry, Mourne and Down and Ards and North Down have commenced.
- 3.10 An OBC for a proposed Digital Twin project, led by Digital Catapult with support from industry, is also being progressed and is due to be further considered by the Digital Advisory Board in summer 2022.

Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.11 OBCs for all three regeneration projects, Carrickfergus, Newry City Centre and Bangor Waterfront, have received approval from the Communities Minister and Department of Finance.
- 3.12 In relation to the Tourism projects the Mourne Mountains Gateway project has received approval from the Economy Minister and Department of Finance. Casework for the Gobbins Phase 2 is now complete with feedback pending and Destination Royal Hillsborough casework is scheduled for June.
- 3.13 Belfast Stories is being progressed by BCC and it is expected that following engagement with the Department for the Economy, Tourism NI and BCC, that BCC will now progress design to RIBA 2 to enable a full OBC to be developed, with Casework review in summer 2023.

Infrastructure

- 3.14 Following signing of the Deal and confirmation of funding, the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge will now progress to the next stage of project delivery which involves development of the procurement strategy to procure a Design and Build Contractor to develop the project.
- 3.15 Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) Phase 2 and the Newry Southern Relief Road are at an earlier stage of development. The public consultation on BRT2 is now complete, with a Belfast City Council response agreed by CG&R Committee in October 2021. The project team are now preparing the draft consultation report for consideration by the Minister and following Ministerial decisions an Outline Business Case will be prepared.

Employability and Skills

- 3.16 The Employability and Skills Board has been reconfigured as we move into the next phase of the Deal with a focus on delivery and responding to collaboration opportunities aligned to priority sectors where city deal investment is focused. The new Board initially focused on the programme of work, with the Action Plan for Year 1 now agreed set within the thematic priorities of the deal's Employability and Skills Proposition i.e. skills for inclusion, skills for growth and skills for a digital future. The work programme will integrate the contribution made by partners through alignment of their Employability and Skills interventions, including through Labour Market Partnerships, as well as seeking to create new opportunities for partnership working to drive improvements in employability prospects and increase skill levels in priority areas. A more flexible way of working that remains closely aligned to the priorities of DfE in terms of the 10X Skills Strategy and will continue to respond to the changing economic landscape resulting from the pandemic and other changes as they occur.
- 3.17 Recognising the scale of employment potential created via the city deal investment, partners are forming a dedicated project team who will have a key role in assessing the need for future skills intervention, working collaboratively to secure new funding in this area and to ensure that inclusion opportunities are maximised across the deal. In this regard work is underway across the programme of investment to integrate social value requirements within upcoming procurements, reflecting local and regional procurement policies and guidance.

- 3.18 The BRCD partners have already responded to the collaboration opportunity with new interventions such as Digital Futures, led by the FE Colleges and Digital Surge, led by Councils resulting in new interventions being offered within the market. Further success has also been achieved through the City and Growth Deal Complementary Fund with a up to £7.1m pot of funding ring fenced for a Digital Transformation Flexible Fund project. Work is currently underway to develop a business case for this project on a cross deal basis, offering grant support for small businesses to invest in hardware/software to support digital transformation.

Next Steps – Delivery Phase

Accountable Body

- 3.19 Members will be aware that the Council is the Lead Authority for the BRCD, which means that it carries out a range of functions that support and enable regional partnership working, such as employing the Programme Management Office and providing administrative, professional and technical support as required to support the Deal.
- 3.20 Now that the deal is signed, the Council will act as the Accountable body for the Deal ensuring that the partnership makes decisions in accordance with all legal, financial, and administrative requirements. Steps are being taken to put in place the financial and budget management arrangements and processes to ensure the BRCD funding is managed and accounted for appropriately. Appropriate accounting and reporting arrangements in line with specified requirements will also be established. Arrangements are also being made with partners to fund and establish programme management arrangements on a permanent basis

Memorandum of Understanding

- 3.21 As part of the long-term arrangements for working together across the BRCD partnership a Memorandum of Understanding is being developed to reflect partners' commitments to invest collectively and work collaboratively to achieve the ambitions for inclusive growth through delivery of the Deal. Once finalised and agreed this will then sit alongside the formal Deal Documentation.

Implementation and Financial Plans

- 3.22 The overarching deal document is supported by both an Implementation Plan and Financial Plan and the committee were provided with an update on both in the update to November committee. The Programme Management

Office has been engaging closely with the Department of Finance and project leads to finalise both documents.

Contracts for Funding

- 3.23 Before funding can flow directly to projects Contracts for Funding (previously referred to as Letters of Offer) need to be agreed between Departments and the Accountable Body and between the Accountable Body and Project Sponsors. The BRCD Partners have been working intensively with Departments over recent months to agree key commercial and practical issues and the BRCD Executive Board had previously written to the relevant government departments to emphasise the need for the issue to be prioritised. Following agreement on the key framework for the Contracts for Funding, it will need to be reviewed by all partners, contracts developed in relation to individual projects and appropriate legal advice will need to be taken.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.24 Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest Parties.
- 3.25 A virtual meeting of the Panel was held on 23rd February 2022, hosted by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. At this meeting, the Panel received an update on the signing of the Deal, progress on the overall BRCD programme of activity and key next steps. Members also received a presentation from Professor Paul Maropoulos on the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, one of the five Innovation centres of Excellence to be delivered by BRCD.
- 3.26 The minutes of the April and November meetings have also been approved and have been circulated. The next meeting will be hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council on 22 June 2022.

3.27 Financial and Resource Implications

All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

3.28 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that:

‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report:
Taking Action on Levelling Up

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 the Committee on PwC’s Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report: Taking Action on Levelling Up.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the update on PwC’s Good Growth for Cities 2022: Taking Action on Levelling Up report, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#), which measures the performance of cities and regions across the UK as indicators of ‘Good Growth’ and ranked Belfast as the highest-ranking city from the devolved nation.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 The Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index is an annual report which looks at broad measures of economic performance alongside well-being indicators to develop a metric for ‘Good Growth’ of cities. Specifically, the report ranks 50 of the UK’s largest cities based on people’s assessment of 12 key economic wellbeing factors, including jobs, health, income and skills, as well as work-life balance, house

affordability, travel-to-work times, income equality, environment and business start-ups. This year's report also includes two new indicators covering safety and vibrancy of local high streets. Indicators within the report align to the Council's strategic objectives such as the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan, BRCD. Belfast City Centre and Regeneration Strategy (BCCRIS), Bolder Vision for Belfast and the Reset for Growth report, as well as a number of other strategies and programmes.

- 3.2 Using these 'Good Growth' indicators, the report ranked Belfast in eighth place, and highest ranked city from the devolved nations. Other cities in the top 10 include London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Leicester, Sheffield and Bristol. Members will be aware of the projects and programmes Council are delivering aimed at job creation, regeneration and place making, vibrancy and making Belfast a city a great place to live, work, visit and invest. The recent findings from this report are a positive sense check in terms of our direction and focused priorities, and also highlighting the need to ensure that we continue to work to position the city to compete both nationally and globally.
- 3.3 Contained within the report are case studies of best practice at how investment in townscapes, support in community cohesion, efforts to foster local pride and attract new types of businesses are being used to boost growth. Belfast was selected as a case study for inclusion within the report, referencing a balanced and deliberately interventionist approach to regeneration. Work being undertaken by the city to invest in place-making, open and green spaces, community infrastructure, connectivity and cultural and tourism offerings in order to create a more attractive, accessible, and vibrant city centre which connects to surrounding communities are highlighted as best practice. It also referred to city investment plans including a citywide commitment to investing in neighbourhoods, leisure and community facilities and to strategies that integrate physical regeneration with cultural, social and environmental regeneration. It highlighted the Bolder Vision for Belfast as being key to a stronger and more resilient city core and acting as a call to action for the council, civic partners, local businesses and the wider local community. It also highlighted how Belfast is working to establish itself as a cultural centre in order to realise its global cultural and economic ambitions, referencing the 10-year cultural programme, UNESCO City of Music and the Belfast Stories development plans. The city's innovation and inclusive economic growth plans, supported by the BRCD investment and Belfast's position as the number one city for FinTech investments were referenced and that further investment in

digital connectivity and supporting centres of excellence would drive Belfast forward as a global digital and scientific centre and globally significant destination for innovation.

- 3.4 While the report welcomes the Levelling Up White Paper, analysis within the report demonstrates that Government, public and private sectors need to continue to work collaboratively to address regional inequalities and capitalise on the once in a generation opportunity to create successful places and deliver good growth. Members will be aware that the Council is working collaboratively with public, private, community and key anchor institution partners across a number of partnerships including Innovation City Belfast, Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, Belfast Region City Deal and the Climate Commission and to deliver strategic programmes of work including A Bolder Vision, a Future City Centre Programme and neighbourhood regeneration aimed at delivering our shared collective ambitions as outlined within the Belfast Agenda.
- 3.5 The report notes that in general cities which performed well in this year's index had strong local economies, and strong environmental and safety credentials. It also notes that the pandemic has caused a shift in public priorities, with people wanting to be more connected with their local communities and to live in greener, fairer places. Members will be aware of the effects of the pandemic in Belfast, and efforts by the Council to address the impact on our communities and businesses, including the delivery of the DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme and via Belfast: Our Recovery plan. The report has found that the shift in public priorities has also altered the growth prospects of cities and regions as people change how and where they want to work and live, with small and provincial cities benefitting more in the context of the levelling up agenda. This provides an opportunity for Belfast in terms of its desire to attract and retain residents in the city to deliver on our Belfast Agenda ambitions including to attract 66,000 new residents by 2035.
- 3.6 The report tracks regional and city recovery across different demographic and societal groups including young workers, ethnic groups, and women, however it does not publish the breakdown per city and region.
- 3.7 The report also proposed four key areas for cities and regions to consider as they develop Levelling Up plans and continue to address economic recovery. In order to secure a fairer economic recovery and build sustainable growth it highlights that local and central government and the private sector should focus on the following:

1. Levelling up and the reality of regional inequality;
 2. Capitalising on growth outside the larger metropolitan cities;
 3. Driving social mobility and addressing intergenerational inequality; and
 4. Green growth to provide the basis for all future action
- 3.8 There are various actions that sit below these priority areas for central and local government and businesses relating to investment in relationships across the public, private and third sectors to develop place strategies for place-based transformation; investment in high streets; sector focused employment investment; reskilling and apprenticeships; local economic strategies; housing education; improved transportation links; circular economy and green growth; net zero and sustainability.
- 3.9 These action areas align to Belfast’s strategic ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, and propositions outlined within the Innovation & Growth Commission ‘Reset for Growth’ report aimed at amplifying the city and region’s future success focused around priorities on being more globally relevant; immediate action on climate change and turning this into an economic opportunity; housing development; developing a stronger core city and delivery of a Bolder Vision and a focus on building world-renowned business clusters.
- 3.10 Financial and Resource Implications
- None associated with this report.
- 3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment
- None associated with this report.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee
Report on Planning in Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the following report and accompanying draft response in respect of the Public Accounts Committee’s report on planning in Northern Ireland:

- “1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
- 1.1 The NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published a report and recommendations in relation to Planning in Northern Ireland. This Committee report provides an overview of the PAC report and recommended response

from the Council. The proposed response was considered by the Planning Committee on 12th April for notation. The Council's proposed response is attached.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note this report and approve the attached response to the PAC report.

3.0 Background

3.1 In February 2022, the Planning Committee considered two recent reviews of the NI planning system:

- Firstly, the Northern Ireland Audit Office's review of the NI planning system, a copy of which can be accessed here:

<https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/planning-northern-ireland> and

- Secondly, the Department for Infrastructure's review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, a copy of which can be accessed here:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-planning-act-ni-2011-report>

3.2 Following publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report, the NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has been hearing evidence from key stakeholders. The following sessions were held.

- Evidence from the Department for Infrastructure – 10 February 2022
- Evidence from SOLACE – 17 February 2022 (including evidence from Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control, Belfast City Council)
- Evidence from NILGA – 24 February 2022

3.3 The PAC subsequently published its report on 'Planning in NI' on 24 March 2022. This paper provides an overview of the PAC report and includes a recommended response from the Council. A full copy of the PAC report has been circulated.

3.4 As further background reading, Members are referred to the agenda item to the February Planning Committee on the NI Audit Office report and the Departmental review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, see link below:

<https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=167&MId=10643&Ver=4>

Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI

Overview

- 3.1 Consistent with the findings of the NIAO report published in February 2022, the PAC report is extremely critical of the NI planning system. It concludes that the planning system in Northern Ireland is not working effectively or efficiently. The PAC calls for a fundamental review, led by someone independent from the Department for Infrastructure, to bring about the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose.
- 3.2 In relation to performance, the PAC observes that since the transfer of functions in 2015, planning authorities have failed to deliver on many of their key targets, particularly on major and significant development. The PAC was ‘appalled’ by the performance statistics. It states that it is simply unacceptable that almost one-fifth of the most important planning applications aren’t processed within three years highlighting that such poor performance has an impact on applicants, developers and communities and is risking investment in Northern Ireland.
- 3.3 The PAC notes that progress on Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been equally poor – with none of the plans being able to progress to adoption in the seven years since transfer in 2015. The PAC heard of the potential for LDPs to shape communities and make decision-making processes easier, but noted that the process has been hindered by the complete underestimation of the complexity and volume of work required; a lack of key skills and resources available to councils. These challenges were considered to have been compounded by a series of unnecessary ‘checks and balances’ implemented by the Department. The PAC urges all those involved in plan-making to work together to streamline remaining LDP processes and produce these important plans as soon as possible.
- 3.4 The PAC goes onto to express concerns about the poor quality of planning application submissions (BCC is the only Planning Authority that has so far sought to directly address this through publication of its *Application Checklist* in 2018). The PAC is also concerned about a lack of transparency in decision making (officers advise that the Council follows good practice in this regard through clearly minuting the reason/s for the Committee’s decision where it overturns the officer

recommendation. Committee reports also clearly explain where applications have been referred to the Committee by an individual Elected Member and reasons why).

- 3.5 The PAC is critical of the role of the Department and its lack of action to address under performance in the system. It observes that the Department is not providing strong leadership in driving change and that it does not grasp the severity of the issues facing the NI planning system. In this regard, the PAC recommends that a commission is setup to oversee much needed change to the NI planning system, but that it should be chaired by someone independent of the Department.
- 3.6 The PAC is extremely concerned about the significant level of silo working within the planning system itself and comments that it one of the worst examples of silo working in the public sector that it has ever encountered. It notes the fragmentation between central and local government, statutory consultees and even within the Department itself highlighting that it will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way going forward.

PAC Recommendations

- 3.7 The PAC report makes 12 recommendations, some of which overlap with the recommendations of the NIAO report. The recommendations are reproduced below with additional context around each provided in the PAC report.
1. The planning system in Northern Ireland is not working. The Committee recommends that a Commission is established to undertake a fundamental review to ascertain the long-term, strategic changes that are needed to make the system fit for purpose. This should be led by someone independent from the Department.
 2. The Committee has heard that there are a number of opportunities to make immediate improvements to the planning system. We recommend that a commission is established to identify tangible improvements that can be achieved in the short term. This must focus on problem solving, delivery and achieving outcomes within a fixed time frame.
 3. The Committee expects action to be taken to improve the planning system. In lieu of any accountability for performance within the system, the Department will provide the Committee with a radical action plan and

provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months' time.

4. The Committee recommends that the Department considers ways to streamline the remaining LDP processes and works with councils to learn lessons from those that have been through the independent examination process with a view to taking a more pragmatic approach to the remaining plans. The Department and councils need to work collaboratively to produce these important plans as soon as possible.
5. The Committee recommends that all those involved in decision-making ensure that processes are open and transparent, particularly where a high degree of interpretation has been exercised. The Department and councils should consider how checks on good record keeping, to ensure transparency, could be carried out effectively.
6. The Committee recommends that the Department should ensure that there is suitable and proportionate means of engaging with the planning system. This should include a deeper consideration of the appropriateness of limited third-party rights of appeal.
7. The operation of the planning system for rural housing is at best inconsistent and at worst fundamentally broken. The Committee believes that it is essential that policy in the area is agreed and implemented equally and consistently across Northern Ireland. The Department should ensure this is the case.
8. The Committee recommends that the Department urgently considers how it exercises its oversight of the planning system. In the Committee's view, this must be accompanied with a cultural change. Intervention should be to support delivery and to make improvements. The current minimal approach is no longer sustainable.
9. The Committee recommends that the Department and local government should implement immediate changes to improve the quality of applications entering the system. Whilst this may require legislative change, we do not believe that this should be an excuse for delay.

10. The Committee recommends that planning authorities regularly review past decisions to understand their real-world outcomes, impact on communities and the quality of the completed development.
11. The planning system must be financially sustainable and this requires an appropriate, long-term funding model. The Committee recommends that all those involved in delivering planning work together to achieve this. In the short term the Department should take the lead on bringing forward legislation on planning fees as a matter of urgency.
12. There is a fundamental need for a cultural change in the way local and central government interact around planning. Whilst cultural change will take time, this should be reflected immediately in a more inclusive planning forum which includes representation from developers and communities.

Next Steps

- 3.8 As reported to the Planning Committee in February 2022, this is a pivotal time for the NI planning system. Publication of the NIAO and Public Accounts Committee reports represents a significant opportunity for much needed change and improvement.
- 3.9 The Department for Infrastructure must provide a formal response to the PAC report within 8 weeks of its publication (i.e. by 19 May 2022). The recommendations also require an update be given to the successor Public Accounts Committee on the improvements made in six months' time.
- 3.10 SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in NI) is expected to provide a response on behalf of the 11 councils. It is recommended that Belfast City Council also formally responds. A recommended response to the PAC report is set out below for approval by the Committee.
- 3.11 The PAC's recommendation to establish a commission to oversee the fundamental change necessary for the NI planning system is welcome along with the proposal to include representatives of the development industry and communities. It is only through the participation of all key stakeholders that appropriate solutions can be developed and the necessary improvements delivered. The Council has a very important leadership role in this change process and will be seeking representation on the commission and any structures that feed into the proposed processes.

- 3.12 The Department is organising an all-day workshop with local government officers on 29th April to formulate the beginning of a potential plan or approach to addressing the issues identified. In order to achieve the stated objectives the discussions will need to resolve a number of aspects including: the overall purpose and scope of the review, governance including representation, assurance, monitoring and reporting arrangements, potential for outside support and expertise, resourcing and approach to implementation.
- 3.13 It is hoped that these various reviews will establish a momentum and commitment to addressing the structural and operational challenges. It is therefore proposed that progress and any emerging proposals will be brought back to Committee as updates going forward.

3.14 Financial and Resource Implications

The existing NI planning system is inefficient and underperforming and the PAC report correctly identifies the need to address its longer-term financial sustainability. In January 2021, the Council reported to NIAO that the net cost of its Planning Service is nearly £1.2m after fee income which demonstrated the Council commitment to the effective resourcing of this function. However, the Planning function is far from the cost neutral model suggested at the time of Transfer and the PAC's recommendation that the longer-term financial sustainability of the NI planning system should be addressed is therefore welcomed.

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

No adverse impacts identified.”

COUNCIL RESPONSE

“Belfast City Council was extremely keen to engage with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on first hearing of its review of the NI planning system. Council officials met NIAO at the outset, in December 2020, then followed this up with detailed written representations in January 2021 calling for fundamental change.

The Council notes the tonality of the Public Accounts Committee report and shares its high degree of frustration about how the NI planning system was designed and currently operates.

Both Belfast and wider region have enormous potential – economically, socially and environmentally. Belfast is the *First City*, economic driver for the region and of huge importance socially and culturally. If our City is to truly realise its tremendous potential, and to deliver on the Belfast Agenda, its Community Plan, then it must be supported by an efficient, effective and fit for purpose planning system.

To deliver on this, it is our firm opinion that further devolution must take place and that Belfast should enjoy the same autonomy and powers as other regional cities in these Islands, if it is to truly compete with them. Therefore, the Council must have responsibility for transport, regeneration, technical advice on most heritage assets and a much greater say on city wide infrastructure.

Consequently, Belfast City Council welcomes the Public Accounts Committee report, its recommendations and requirement for fundamental change.

The Council's Planning Service has been able to innovate to an extent, for example, through publication of its Application Checklist in 2018, as a means to improve the quality of planning applications on submission, but this like many other things is essentially a work around of the existing legislative process. There is no doubt that significant reform and change to planning legislation is required to address both the slow Local Development Plan process and underperformance in Development Management. This legislative change must be a key priority for the NI Assembly following the upcoming election.

The NI planning system must be about delivery and outcomes, rather than focusing on process and red tape.

In our view, it is necessary to have a much deeper understanding of how planning operates in NI in a systems context. In this regard, there are four main pillars for us to collectively focus on, namely, Culture, Systems, Delivery and Quality Outcomes.

We recognise that the only way to address the significant challenges with the current system is through collaboration and by truly working together. The Council recognises that it has an important leadership role in this journey of change and it very much looks forward to working with the Department for Infrastructure, the other ten councils, development industry, communities and other key stakeholders to bring about the fundamental reform that is needed. To this end, we have already been engaging with the Department and fellow councils on how to move forward.

We are also expecting the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in NI (SOLACE) to provide a response to the Public Accounts

Committee report on behalf of the eleven councils. As sovereign local authorities, the other ten councils may also wish to make separate representations to the Committee.”

The Committee approved the foregoing response for submission to the Public Accounts Committee.

**Advancing Community Wealth Building in Belfast –
CLEs Spend Analysis of Belfast Procurement and
Commissioning Working Group**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update the Committee on the emerging high-level spend analysis of the Belfast Anchors Procurement and Commissioning working group, which was established to explore how procurement and commissioning can embed community wealth building across the city to support inclusive and sustainable growth. This information was presented to the Social Policy Working Group in February, 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i note the initial high level spend analysis in the attached appendix and next steps, as outlined at paragraph 3.7; and
- ii note that CLES will present the completed analysis to a future meeting of Party Group Leaders and provide party briefings if required, to allow further consideration of the next steps for this project and how procurement and commissioning can be used to build and create local community wealth.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The purpose of the Belfast Procurement and Commissioning working group is to carry out a spend analysis within their organisation, as part of commissioned work on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership. It includes representatives from the city’s anchor institutions, the VCSE Panel as well as interested representatives from the city’s large private sector organisations (AllState and BT).

- 3.2 Four anchor organisations formed the first tranche for the analysis that the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) carried out working with the respective procurement teams: Belfast City Council, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Queen’s University and Ulster University. This analysis includes consideration of the Belfast and NI business base to explore strengths and weaknesses in the region to identify good practice and opportunities for development.
- 3.3 Following initial consideration by the Belfast Procurement and Commissioning Working Group, the high-level analysis was presented to the Social Policy Working Group (SPWG) on 28th February. The SPWG has asked that this be shared more widely with Party Group Leaders and the SP and R Committee to raise awareness of this work and to help inform the action plan and next steps.
- 3.4 The following summarises the key points in the initial high-level analysis attached to this report. This will be enhanced as the data from the second tranche of anchors is added, strengthening the city’s evidence base on the role of procurement in the local economy.
- The four Belfast Anchors annual spend amounts to £443m, with 72% of this being spent with suppliers in Belfast and the rest of NI;
 - 28% of spend from the 4 Belfast Anchors is with Belfast based SMEs;
 - Belfast anchor institutions procure from relatively large local firms (of those available), but their largest suppliers are based outside NI;
 - A sectoral analysis of the spend outside of NI shows that this tends to be on administrative and support services and manufacturing;
 - There are few current suppliers which are ‘socially owned’ (7 out of 900).
- 3.5 Spend data has now been provided directly to CLES by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust with Belfast Metropolitan College also agreeing to participate in this second tranche spend analysis. The NI Housing Executive and Belfast Harbour Commissioners have agreed to participate, in principle, subject to further discussion with CLES.
- 3.6 Supported by CLES, this will inform the development of a shared action plan focused on the intelligence gathered of the local supply chain and local business environment. Some of the key questions being considered through this are:

- How can we use this information about public sector supply chains to better support the local economy?
- How does market intelligence flow into the procurement life cycle and how does it influence how we develop tender specifications?
- How do we understand our local and social economy better through procurement?
- Are there opportunities to improve organisational processes by sharing practices and develop a procurement toolkit?
- Social Value Procurement is a key tool but is there scope for Anchor organisations to connect/signpost resources to better support small local enterprises/social economy.

3.7 The next steps for this project are:

- CLES to provide individual organisational feedback on the spend/market analysis for each participating organisation
- Completion of the data supply and analysis for the second tranche of participating Anchors in the spend analysis to deepen our understanding of the potential to use procurement and commissioning to support community/local wealth building
- Co-design and develop a draft action plan with the Network
- Inform and raise awareness amongst the Community Planning Partnership of progress and the role that procurement can play to build local wealth in delivering inclusive growth.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

This work has been commissioned by the City and Organisational Strategy Department on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership and is covered within 2021/22 departmental estimates and is aligned to the Council's bespoke membership of CLES held by the Place and Economy Department.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations, or rural needs implications at this stage."

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Asset Management

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for Committee's consideration a report seeking approval in relation to the following asset related disposal, acquisition and estate matters:

Shankill Shared Women's Centre - Permission to Enter Agreement

- The Committee approved the completion of a Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority to complete boundary realignment and subsequent construction works.

Land at Grampian Avenue Playground

- The Committee noted an update on two land acquisitions which it had approved at its meeting on 22nd June, 2018.

2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use

- The Committee approved retrospectively an Addendum to the existing Contract with Small World Music Limited, thereby extending its services to 19th April, 2022.

2 Royal Avenue – Lease for Bins Stores and Electricity Cabinet

- The Committee granted approval to enter into a lease with the Department for Communities to regularise the arrangement for bins stores and an electricity cabinet which encroach onto Council owned lands.

Ballysillan Playing Fields - Deed of Partial Surrender of Land

- The Committee approved the surrender of a 1.56-acre plot of land, which was currently part of lands leased to Iceland Foods Limited, to facilitate the redevelopment of the Playing Fields.

Site 10, Union Street – Renewal of Short-Term Licence

- The Committee approved the renewal of a short-term licence to Sunflower Belfast Limited to use a small area of land at Site 10 for bin storage for a period of nine months from 4th May, 2022.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 15th April, 2022**

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the North Belfast Area Working Group of 30th March, including the following recommendations:

BIF34 - Basement/Elim Project

- to agree a new option, involving a scaled back version of the project with a new build on an existing asset owned by Elim Church at Gainsborough Drive and to note that, on this basis, approximately £600,000 out of the approved BIF budget would be available for reallocation, leaving a BIF allocation of £900,000.

BIF45 - Midland Boxing Club

- to agree to allocate an additional £150,000 to the Midland Boxing Club project from the £600,000 reallocation from the Basement/Elim project.

BIF20 - Malgrove

- to agree to allocate an additional £450,000 to the Malgrove project from the £600,000 reallocation from the Basement/Elim project and to progress a planning application for the wider sporting hub proposal.

BIF41 - Marrowbone

- to note the movement of this project to Stage 3 – Committed.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 3 below.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 15th April, 2022**

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Provision of press and media photography services	Up to 3 years	£90,000	J Tully	The Council has an ongoing requirement for press and media photography as part of our marcomms delivery on behalf of the Council.
Patching (security installations and updates) of non-Microsoft packages	Up to 3 years	£34,000	R Cregan	To patch/install non-Microsoft packages. This keeps consistent support versions across our environment. DNS reputation checking helps prevent any malware calling back to control sites.
Laptops, docking stations and other peripherals	Up to 1 year	£500,000	R Cregan	New devices to facilitate hybrid working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle.
Purchase of new printers as old printers at various council sites become EOL and associated copy charges	Up to 1 year	£100,000	R Cregan	Approx. 80 printers are approaching end of life 'EOL' stage in 2022. If they break it may not be possible to get parts and they may need to be replaced. Replacement will be done on an ad-hoc basis.
Copy charges for existing multi-function printers	Up to 1 year	£100,000	R Cregan	Payment of copy charges for existing multi-function printers. Printers should be EOL but with limited used

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				over the past 2 years should last longer and so a new contract is not being purchased yet.
Outdoor maintenance services	Up to 5 years	£1,250,000	S Toland	Delivery of de-icing and snow-clearance services during the winter months (Primary service) – includes C&NS sites (Parks, Leisure Centres, Waste sites, depots etc) and car parks (managed by Physical Programmes). Includes other outdoor maintenance activities to support in house operations i.e. power washing and street cleaning services, roof and guttering clearing and cleaning and any other specialist outdoor maintenance services required.
Consultancy Support for permanent recruitment of Business Support Clerks	Up to 1 year	£100,000	J Tully	Due to a recent significant increase in recruitment requirements within the Council. The external support will help clear the backlog of recruitment required.
Integrated Design Team to provide design development services to support the DfC Covid 19 Revitalisation Programme, – Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations	Up to 20 months	£60,000	J Greer	The Integrated Design Team will work with grant recipients to develop concept and technical designs, to provide advice regarding statutory approvals, procurement and delivery.

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Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Requirement for 1 x temporary Environmental Health Officer required for 24hr shift rota cover for essential service delivery within the Port Health service (fully funded)	Up to 6 months	£50,000	S Toland/ R Crozier	Hays Recruitment

Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Support for trade mission to SXSW for local creative businesses, support for music businesses and place positioning as outlined in the UNESCO City of Music designation (fully funded)	Up to 3 months	£57,000	J Greer	Score Draw Music Ltd
Supplier required to develop and deliver a Queens Jubilee fund to support constituted charitable organisations within the BCC local government boundary	Up to 7 months	£110,000	S Toland/ R Crozier	Community Foundation NI
Deliver a largescale outdoor event at Titanic Slipways called Cristal Palace - 2 Royal Ave (fully funded)	Up to 2 months	£60,000	J Greer	Belfast International Arts Festival

Equality and Good Relations

Race Champion and Race Action Plan

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update the Committee on proposals to develop a Race Equality and Diversity Action Plan and appoint a Race Champion.

1.2 The Belfast Agenda states that ‘In 2035, Belfast will be a City that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive.’ The Council’s Good Relations Strategy sets out our vision and values for a shared, peaceful and reconciled Belfast. It states that good community and race relations are essential for a healthy and safe City and

that it will set the standard for Belfast to aspire to be a place of welcome and diversity. The strategy outlines how we can play our part in building a better city for residents and visitors alike, where different identities can be strength and our diverse cultural traditions can all be part of collective cultural wealth; a City where everyone has an equal place and where no-one is left behind.

1.3 A previous request from the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Kate Nicholl, for the appointment of a Race Champion and a Motion proposed by Councillor Canavan and seconded by Councillor Garrett, calling for the Council area to become a racism free zone, further highlight the importance of addressing race inequalities and racism. Two reports presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June and December 2020, provided updates on existing work in this area. It was agreed that further consideration of how the Council could address the above proposals was required, and that recommendations should be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at a later date.

1.4 In addition, at the Council meeting on 4th April 2022, the following motion was proposed by Cllr Kyle and seconded by Cllr McMullan:

- that the Council supports Belfast City Council becoming a 'Council of Sanctuary' and supports the initiative to have Belfast recognised as a 'City of Sanctuary', in order to provide a welcome and safe place for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and
- that a Race Action Plan be developed to review how we deliver our services and take action as an employer to create a diverse workforce.'

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to agree:

- i that a Race Champion be appointed from within Corporate Management Team to lead a Race Equality and Diversity Action Group to oversee the development of a Race Action Plan; and
- ii that the Council signs up to the Business in the Community initiative 'Race at Work Charter' initiative to learn from best practice and for support in developing our approach, agreeing actions and setting achievable goals and targets.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** The Council's approach to promoting good relations and tackling issues such as racism stem from the Good Relations Strategy. The Council's Shared City Partnership (SCP) oversees the work of the Council's District Good Relations Programme and the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. Through these, the Council facilitates a number of projects such as the Migrant Forum, the Diversecity Programme and recently, the Council has signed up to a 3-year Inclusive Cities Programme.
- 3.2** Consultation with black and ethnic minority groups in the community and a good relations audit have indicated that groups and people from black and ethnic minority groups find it challenging to engage with official structures and difficult to play a full and equal part in civic life and this is reflected in the statistics/data. They report that while positive relationships have been developed at community level with groups and individuals through Council programmes or through relationships with particular officers, black and ethnic communities find it difficult to have their voices represented at decision making level.
- 3.3** A review of current arrangements and programmes of work is required to identify where improvements can be made to promote the inclusion and visibility of black and ethnic minority groups in our workforce; to improve access to council services and elected members and to encourage the participation of black and ethnic minority groups in civic life.
- 3.4** It is therefore proposed that Corporate Management Team nominate a chief officer to undertake the role of Race Champion to establish and chair a Race Equality and Diversity Action Group. This group will oversee the development of a Race Action Plan with three distinct strands of work:
- **Workforce:** attracting more ethnic minority applicants and supporting our existing ethnic minority staff in the workplace
 - **Accessibility to services:** promoting access to council services to ethnic minority customers and citizens and;
 - **Civic leadership:** championing ethnic minority inclusion in decision making, in communities and in public life
- 3.5** Subgroups will be established for each strand to develop appropriate action plans which will be incorporated into one Race Action Plan. The subgroups will involve a variety of staff

including officers from Corporate HR, the Equality and Diversity Unit, Good Relations, Employability and Skills, departmental policy officers, community safety, the Customer Hub, Marketing and Communications etc. to ensure necessary linkages with existing relevant service delivery, activity, and work plans.

3.6 Business in the Community's Race at Work Charter

The Council has been approached by Business in the Community to sign up to its national Race at Work Charter. This campaign requires employers to commit to the following actions:

- Appoint an Executive Sponsor for race
- Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress
- Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying
- Make it clear that supporting equality in the workforce is the responsibility of all leaders and managers
- Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression
- Support race inclusion allies in the workplace
- Include BAME and other ethnically diverse led enterprise owners in supply chains.

3.7 Already well established with employers in all sectors across the UK, involvement with this campaign will enable us to learn from existing best practice to develop our approach and actions and set achievable goals and targets. Involvement in this initiative is available to the Council through our existing membership of Business in the Community at no additional cost. It is therefore proposed that the Council signs up to the Race at Work Charter as a visible commitment to addressing racial inequalities.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no direct resource implications in terms of costs associated with this report at present. Further resource implications will be identified through the development of a race action plan and costed for future approval.

A Chief Officer/Director will be required to champion this work and all chief officers will be asked to nominate officers to the three sub-groups identified at paragraph 3.4 and ensure that officers are released to participate in the groups and deliver the work required.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Actions, which promote the inclusion of black and other ethnic minority communities in employment and civic life, would have a positive impact on equality and good relations within the city.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 11th April, including the recommendations:

PEACE IV

Secretariat

- to agree the key elements of the business case, the anticipated level of achievement and the mitigations required across the programme.

Children and Young People

- to endorse and promote the Share2BAware campaign.

Building Positive Relations

BPR1 - Cross Community Area Networks

- the modification, as approved by SEUPB, to permit a cross border residential visit to Dublin for the East Belfast Cross Community Area Network, as part of the place shaping stage.

BPR5 - ROMA

- to uplift the contract with FSP by 10%, approximately £16,900, subject to budget agreement with the Secretariat and approval by SEUPB.

Shared Space and Services

- to extend to September 2022 the contracts for volunteer delivery with Sustrans and Volunteer Now and also the narratives project with Mediation NI, within the current contract value to enable delivery and the achievement of targets.

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PEACE PLUS

- to approve the logistics for running future meetings of the Shared City Partnership; and
- that the SEUPB appointed consultants attend the next meeting of the Partnership to provide an overview of the role of the PEACEPLUS Partnership for the oversight of the 1.1. Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.

GOOD RELATIONS

- that the City Hall be illuminated on 5th July to mark the Memorial Week of the Srebrenica Genocide;
- that £8,000 be allocated towards a programme of activities for asylum seekers, led by Mears, subject to clarification being obtained on whether Mears could access the Mears Foundation to fund this work, given that its staff would be delivering the service and the need to ensure there was no duplication with what Mears had been contracted to currently undertake and that The Executive Office was content to support the project; and
- to note that, whilst no formal letter of offer had been received from The Executive Office towards the District Council Good Relations Action Plan, the Departmental Management Team was content to proceed using the Council's 2021/22 allocation figures.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of Meeting of Party Group
Leaders' Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 8th April.

Requests for the use of the City Hall Grounds

The Committee approved the following requests for the use of the City Hall Grounds in 2022, with the organisers to submit an event management plan and risk assessment in advance of their event:

- 22nd July - Belfast Pride Family Fun Day; and
- 30th July - Féile Rocks Pride Concert.

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**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations made in respect of those applications received up to 1st April, as set out below, and agreed further to defer consideration of options for the future delivery of hospitality for functions to enable further information to be obtained:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2022 EVENTS						
Law Society of Northern Ireland	18 May 2022	Conference Welcome Reception for guests attending their 2-day conference taking place in ICC Belfast. Numbers attending - 100	A &B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Building Limes Forum	3 September 2022	Annual Conference Reception and Dinner for delegates attending a 3-day conference taking place in QUB. Numbers attending - 100	A &B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
The Pony Club	2 November 2022	Annual Conference Reception and Dinner for delegates attending a 3-day conference taking place in ICC Belfast. Numbers attending - 100	A &B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

**For all events noted above numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with Covid-19 social distancing guidelines at the time of each event.*

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**Minutes of Meeting of
Active Belfast Limited Board**

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 11th April.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Illumination of the City Hall

The Committee acceded to requests from:

- Councillor M. Kelly to illuminate the City Hall in red on Saturday, 28th May to mark Menstrual Hygiene Day;
- Councillor Walsh to illuminate the City Hall in red on Friday, 20th May, in support of An Dream Dearg's campaign for Irish language rights and the implementation of Irish language legislation, including the An Lá Dearg event being held at the City Hall on 21st May; and
- Councillor Garrett to illuminate the City Hall in rainbow colours later that evening to coincide with a vigil being held in memory of Aidan Moffitt and Michael Snee who had been killed in violent attacks in Sligo earlier in the week.

Additional Item

**Recruitment of City Solicitor and
Director of Legal and Civic Services**

The Chief Executive sought and was granted approval to initiate an internal recruitment exercise to fill, on an interim basis, his former post of City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services, with political representation on the shortlisting and interview panel to consist of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees) and Councillor Lyons.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 5th April, 2022

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Cobain (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland;
Councillors Black, Bunting, Michael Collins,
Corr, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Mulholland,
Newton and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. R. Crozier, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Mrs. V. Smyth, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were recorded on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Baker, de Faoite, M. Kelly, McReynolds and Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Black, Corr and Verner declared an interest in relation to item 2 (a) Community Provision Multi Annual Funding – 2023/2026, as they either worked for or were associated with an organisation in receipt of funding from the DfC. All those Members left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 2 items is 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 Committee meeting during discussion on the following 2 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Community Provision Multi Annual Funding – 2023/2026

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that each Council area had been allocated an award from the Department for Communities (DfC) to deliver a Community Support Programme (CSP), to support the aims of the DfC Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020 – 2025. She advised that Belfast City Council's CSP delivered a range of support to the community and voluntary sector through an open call for large grant programmes and direct funding for advice provision across the city. The two grant programmes being Community Capacity and Community Buildings Revenue Grants

The Director of Neighbourhood Services further reminded the Committee that, at the October 2021 meeting of Council, it had been agreed that the awards for the two grant programmes for 2021/22 would be rolled over to the 2022/23 financial year. The Members had been advised at this time that officers would proceed to develop a new multi annual bid that would open for applications during Summer 2022.

The Committee considered the contents of the report and recommendations contained therein in relation to the framework for the 2023/26 programme which sought approval of the outlined approach for implementing the large grant funding that was provided through Community Provision for activity from April 2023 – March 2026 and sought permission for a 3-year Letter of Offer to be issued to successful applicants, to extend until March 2026. The Committee noted that this approval recognised that the level of support required from the Council might increase if there was a reduction in the level of funding provided by the DfC.

The Committee noted that the Council had received an annual Letter of Offer from the DfC for the Community Support Plan, and that there was no indication that the level of funding from DfC would remain at the same level for the financial years 2023/24 – 2025/26. As noted in the March report to this Committee, the Council had not yet received the 2022/23 Letter of Offer.

The Director explained that the level of grant award from the DfC via the Community Support Programme (CSP) was traditionally £1,437,333.83. This consisted of two elements:

- Restricted Advice Grant of £607,928.42; and
- Community Support General £829,408.44.

The Council supplemented the £829,408 Community Support General DfC allocation to provide an overall budget of £1,929,829 which was broken down as follows:

- Capacity Building Grants - £835,824; and
- Revenue for Community Buildings - £1,056,296.

The Director drew the Members' attention to a number of key issues contained within the report and the following specific points were noted and agreed by the Committee:

- officers to submit an update report in the Autumn to advise of the outcome of the grant assessments, this would include an option for area-based allocations. The Committee noted that allocations were normally based on a citywide quality basis;

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- noted that the current upper limit for revenue awards was £20,000 per annum and agreed, given the current economic climate, to build in capacity for this to be increased;
- noted that the current upper limit for revenue awards was £50,000 and agreed, given the current economic climate, to build in capacity for this also to be increased;
- noted that if the upper limits did require to be uplifted that some groups might not receive funding as the overall budgets remained the same (as outlined above);
- agreed to include staffing costs associated with the running of the buildings, such as caretaking and cleaning, as eligible costs for the Community Buildings Revenue grant programme; and
- agreed to amend the aim of the Community Capacity Grant Aid to read as follows:

‘to support community development organisations that support, advocate and take action in relation to the interests of their members and communities, where communities will be defined as geographic communities and/or communities of interest’.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- agreed the approach outlined above for implementation of the large grant funding provided through Community Provision for activity from April 2023 – March 2026 and that an update report would be submitted in the Autumn which would provide detail in regard to the outcome of the awards;
- agreed the issue of the 3-year Letters of Offer to successful applicants to extend until March 2026; and
- noted that the level of support required from Council might increase if there was to be a reduction in the level of funding provided by the Department for Communities.

Waste Quarterly Update

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Committee with a comprehensive update on the following matters:

- The City’s current position, activities, and initiatives to address the challenges in relation to recycling of waste;
- The current activities of the Northern Ireland Resources Network;
- The latest position on the arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Plant Project and the interim arrangements around the disposal of residual waste;
- Activities concerning Household Waste Recycling Centres; and
- The draft response to the DEFRA consultation on the Introduction of Mandatory Digital Waste Tracking.

During discussion the Director addressed a number of queries in relation to Bryson House recycling figures and the possibility of tracking missed waste collections through the

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Customer Hub. The Director also undertook to brief the Members in the future regarding the current situation with the ARC21 contract, following which the Committee:

- granted approval for Mr. M. Campbell (Project Officer) to apply for membership of the Board of Northern Ireland Resource Network (NIRN);
- endorsed the Council's draft response to the DEFRA consultation on the Introduction of Mandatory Digital Waste Tracking; and
- agreed that the Customer Focus Task and Finish Group would investigate the potential of 'real time' local community issues being logged via the system and to provide an update at a future meeting.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

Notice of Motion - Graffiti Removal

The Director of City Services informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 30th March, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Alderman Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Newton, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

“With the growth of graffiti vandalism across the city, this Council will consider investing in and expanding the in-house unit charged with tackling this problem.

At present there is a team which deals primarily with sectarian, racist and homophobic graffiti, however, there has been a noticeable growth in more general graffiti, which undermines efforts to keep our city clean.

This is not a problem unique to Belfast but is one for which we should consider innovative solutions alongside traditional cleaning methods.

Council will also work in an inter-agency capacity to address issues around unwanted graffiti across the city. In doing so, Council should consider how its team can be made available to other agencies on a commercial basis.”

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Belfast Agenda Review (Action Planning Update)

(Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy, attended in connection with this item).

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 the committee on the progress of the Belfast Agenda Review, including the action planning phase.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i Note the following report which was submitted to the March SP&R Committee outlining progress of the development of the refreshed Belfast Agenda Strategy document and supporting four-year Delivery Action Plans.**
- ii Consider and provide comments on the emerging strategic intents and measures of success (stretch goals) as set out in slides 12-22 in Appendix 1.**
- iii Note the proposed next steps and timeline as set out in slide 33 in Appendix 1; and**
- iv Note the plans for continued elected member engagement, detailed in section 3.5.**

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 The following report was submitted to April's meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources (SP&R) Committee and sets out the emerging strategic framework for the refreshed Belfast Agenda. Given the cross-cutting nature of the priorities, objectives and targets which will provide the focus for community planning over the period 2022-26, it was agreed to bring this to the attention of members of the People & Communities Committee.**

The November 2021 SP&R Committee received an update on the emerging findings and recommendations following the initial phase of Belfast Agenda: Continuing the Conversation engagement to inform the refreshed Belfast Agenda (BA) for the period 2022-2026. As reported at the November meeting, there was broad agreement that the existing long-term vision and outcomes of the BA remain relevant, and the proposed priorities for focus were the things that stakeholders and communities believed community planning could help address over the next 4-year period. There had been feedback in relation to how some of the priorities had been framed and the need for them to be easily understood. As a result, some minor changes had been made to the framing of the priority areas such as, changing 'economic recovery' to 'Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth'. A summary of the current Belfast Agenda priority framework (which reflects many of the changes) is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 Bringing focus and commitment to delivery

Building on the recommendations and consensus reached through Phase I, the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and council has committed to co-design specific and measurable

actions plan(s) which would underpin the priority areas of focus. Subsequently, a small group of core partners (cross-sectoral) has been brought together to help further develop the approach to co-designing each of the priority areas and cross-cutting themes. Each task and finish group were responsible for analysing the range of outputs from phase 1 of the 'Belfast Agenda: Continuing the Conversation' engagement process; assessing relevant strategies, plans and local intelligence (including information received through the call for evidence); feedback from the community and Belfast Agenda Board engagement workshops; online and paper-based survey results; and the current delivery plans of existing Belfast Agenda Boards.

Based on this initial analysis, partners prepared a strategic framework to help bring focus and shape the co-designed action plans consisting of:

1. What we are trying to achieve over the next 4 years (strategic intent);
2. How will we measure success (stretch goals); and
3. How will we realise such success (SMART Action Plan(s)).

Figure 1 below illustrates this framework and how a structured and informed approach is being implemented with partners to ensure there is a strong thread between each of the priority areas, ambitions, measures of success and importantly the focus for collaborative action.

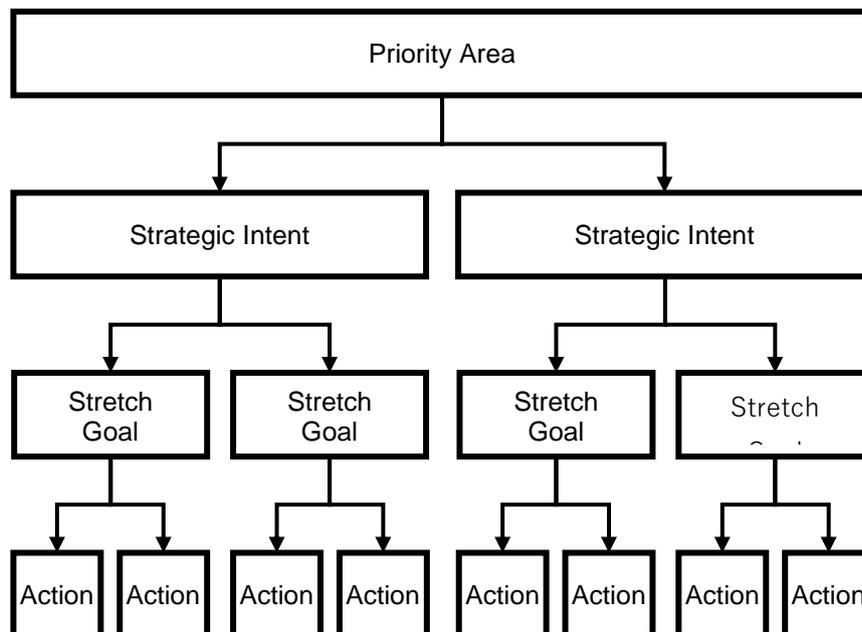


Figure 1: strategic framework adopted by partners to bring focus and shape co-designed action plans

- 3.3 Output from this initial exercise will inform the next phase of the Continuing the Conversation engagement programme, where we will continue to work with partners and communities to co-design delivery plans. This represents an ongoing and complex process, which requires participation and involvement across sectors and communities at multiple levels, which has resulted in some priorities being more developed than others. The emerging frameworks for each of the priorities are attached as part of the presentation attached at Appendix 1 (slides 12 to 22) which had been discussed with the All-Party Working group on Community Planning when it met on 23 February 2022. Please note that since the working group meeting of 23 February, the strategic intents and stretch goals have been further developed, particularly the City Development elements following the Board meeting on Friday 11 March. This reflects the dynamic nature of the co-design process which remains a work in progress. Members are asked to consider and provide feedback on the emerging frameworks outlined by 15 April 2022 to communityplanning@belfastcity.gov.uk. This feedback will then be reflected in future iterations and can be discussed further with members as the strategy is further refined.
- 3.4 As discussed with the All-Party Working Group, it is proposed that the timeline for developing the refreshed Belfast Agenda strategy document and underpinning delivery plans includes sufficient time for direct and genuine engagement with partners, communities/ communities of interest and specific sectors including the business and private sector over April and May 2022. In addition, more formal and intensive consultation activities are planned on the strategy document as well as further engagement to co-design the action plans during May and June 2022. Slide 33 in Appendix 1 outlines the proposed next steps and timeline for this process. It is felt that the timeline will allow for greater input and enable valuable buy-in to the emerging plans.
- 3.5 Political engagement with elected members

In addition to the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning on 23 February 2022, and subsequently the Strategic Policy, and Resources Committee, it is also intended to bring a similar paper, presentation, and discussions to the Social Policy Working Group in April 2022. The intention would be to bring a further iteration of the draft strategy and emerging action plans to Party Group Briefings and Committee in April 2022 for further consideration, input, and refinement. It is important to note that the feedback and recommendations from Members received following the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning meeting (23 Feb) will be factored into the continued refinement of the BA Refresh.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will continue to involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

It is recommended that the consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda will take account of the draft Audit of Inequalities and include specific sessions with targeted harder to reach groups to ensure that equality implications are considered as part of the review process.”

The Committee noted the update provided.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Temporary facility support to the Midland Boxing Club

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Committee is asked to note that Midland Boxing Club premises will be closed for re-development from June 2022 until March 2023. This project is being funded by the Belfast Investment fund and will be delivered by the council’s Physical Programme department. Council officers are currently working with the club to identify suitable alternative premises for interim use to enable them to continue to deliver their boxing programme to their 60+ members.
- 1.2 Outside of boxing, they also support the delivery of youth outreach programmes in North Belfast and their premises are normally used for hosting interface diversification activities in summer months. This has helped to strengthen good relations with other clubs from across the interface and tackle anti-social behaviour in periods of peak tension.
- 1.3 The club currently train 5 nights a week Monday to Friday, 5pm – 9pm and some Saturday mornings. While their premises are closed during the redevelopment, they require a suitable building with toilet and changing facilities that can be used for boxing activities and the delivery of other youth activities.

- 1.4 The club is also used by Midland Social & Recreational club who deliver a day-time programme Monday to Friday for older people in the local community. Ideally the club would like to find a suitable temporary premise to cater for the social and recreational club as well.
- 1.5 Woodvale bowling pavilion, which is situated in Woodvale Park, has been identified as a possible temporary home for both clubs. The bowling green and pavilion has not had a resident bowling club or interest from casual bowlers for over 5 years. This would offer an opportunity for community usage of the facility and could be the catalyst for local interest when the boxing club return to their own premises.
- 2.0 **Recommendations**
- 2.1 The Committee is asked to
- Grant authority for officers to repurpose Woodvale bowling pavilion as a temporary home for Midland Boxing Club and Midland Social and Recreation Club whilst their premises are being redeveloped.
 - Officers have met with the club on site and the facilities are considered to be suitable. Committee is further asked to grant authority for a key handling arrangement to be drafted between Council and Midland Boxing Club to enable the clubs to access the facility without the need for Council staff.
- 3.0 **Main report**
- Key Issues**
- 3.1 Officers have explored the option with representatives from Midland Boxing Club and confirmed that Woodvale bowling pavilion is a suitable venue to house their range of activities. A meeting took place with the club on site on Thursday 31 March 2022. The building is sizeable with a main hall, a side room, large kitchen facilities, toilets and changing rooms. The interior ceiling is pitched, so the height is suitable for the boxing ring to be erected on one side of hall.
- 3.2 There are adequate parking facilities within the park so it is not envisaged that increased usage and traffic at the site will cause any disruption to local residents or existing park users.
- 3.3 Following due diligence, it is likely that a level of training will need to be carried out with representatives from the clubs who have responsibility for facility management. Midland Boxing Club successfully manage their own premises and therefore with

adequate training around health and safety, security and fire evacuation procedures, officers are confident that the club should be able to manage the building via temporary facility management and key handling arrangement.

3.4 Midland Social and Recreation Club are in receipt of a Council revenue grant. It is envisaged this grant will be transferable to cover some running costs of the temporary venue.

3.5 Financial and Human Resource Implications

Midland & Social Recreation are currently in receipt of a £4500 revenue grant which could be transferred over to cover eligible costs at the interim facilities.

BIF capital budget also included scope to cover storage of boxing equipment during the period of redevelopment.

3.6 Asset and Other Implications

Council officers will carry out adequate training with representatives from Midland who have responsibility for facility management. A temporary facility management and key handling agreement will be drafted by legal services.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

There are no known implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Operational Issues

Installation of Sandbag Containers

The Members considered a report seeking consideration of a proposal to locate three new sandbag containers on Council land, as part of a Multi-Agency partnership approach to help mitigate and support communities across Belfast that had previously been impacted by flooding incidents.

The Director of City Services advised that it was anticipated that the proposal would enhance community resilience within flooding ‘hot spot’ areas and help to support residents, Elected Members and Community Groups to be more resilient in times of potential flooding.

She explained that Emergency Planning, in conjunction with other partner agencies, had identified the following three locations that had previously suffered with incidents of flash flooding:

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 5th April, 2022**

- Site 1. - Stockman's Lane (Musgrave Park);
- Site 2. - Shore Road, Shore Road Playing Fields (green space beside existing container); and
- Site 3. - Ardoyne Community Centre.

The Director advised that, once the containers had been located, the Regional Community Resilience Group members could commence engagement with residents to establish Community Resilience groups in these areas. They could also potentially link in with the existing community groups to enhance this community resilience work.

The Committee noted that the proposed works would be funded from the 2022-2023 Emergency Planning budget expenditure.

In response to a suggestion from a Member that sandbag provision in the Ardmore areas be considered, the Director of City Services undertook to liaise further with Councillor McAteer regarding the request.

The Committee agreed to locate three new sandbag containers at Stockmans Lane, Shore Road and Ardoyne Community Centre.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 6th April, 2022

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Alderman Dorrian; and
Councillors, Beattie, Donnelly, Gormley, Hanvey,
Howard, Hussey, T. Kelly, Maskey, McLaughlin,
McMullan and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Alderman Kingston and Councillor Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 9th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie and O'Hara declared an interest in relation to item 3(d), under the heading 'DfI Blue Green Infrastructure Fund – Active Travel Projects' in that, they were on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting while the motion was under consideration.

Request to present to the Committee **Translink - Weavers Cross**

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from Translink on the Weavers Cross Regeneration Scheme at its Special Meeting, scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 27th April, 2022.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

**Future City Centre Programme - Vacant
to Vibrant Expression of Interest Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the programme of work which had been developed in response to the rise in the number of vacant properties across the city centre.

She reported that, given the range of global and local factors, a toolkit approach had been undertaken, which comprised a number of forms of intervention, that included a mix of grant support and Council-led or delivered projects.

She outlined the work which had been undertaken to develop the following strands:

- Data;
- Retail and Leisure Performance Strategy;
- Matchmaking Service;
- Targeted Acquisition; and
- Capital Grant Pilot Programme – ‘Vacant to Vibrant’.

She explained that the Capital Grant Pilot Programme, ‘Vacant to Vibrant’, had been focussed within the city centre, to maximise its impact, with limited funding, and that, it had been proposed that property owners, businesses and organisations interested in renovating or repurposing a vacant space could apply for a grant and would be expected to contribute a minimum of ten percent match funding while also demonstrating quality assurance and clear commercial viability, which would be evidenced through a robust three-year business and financial plan.

She informed the Committee that the expression of interest process, which had been undertaken to gauge interest and to help shape the grant scheme and the level of support services which would be required, was still in the review stage and that an initial analysis of the responses received had indicated that the level of interest for the grant was likely to exceed the available funding of £700,000 over the identified two year period.

She summarised the findings from the Expression of Interest and reported that the process had also gathered information with regard to the demand for various forms of support for businesses seeking to occupy a vacant space and work had been ongoing to fully consider the range of support required.

She pointed out that the process had identified that access to capital was the most common challenge to occupying vacant space in the city centre, followed closely by rent and rates. She asked the Committee to note that the ‘Back in Business’ scheme, which had recently been launched by the Minister for Finance, offering a 50% rates discount for up to two years for the occupation of a vacant shop unit, only applied to premises which were or had previously been used for retail purposes.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 6th April, 2022**

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the overall Vacancy Programme, including data; the 'matchmaking' service to assist potential occupiers; a revised Retail & Leisure Performance Strategy; targeted acquisition and the 'Vacant to Vibrant' grant scheme;
- Noted the outcomes of the Expression of Interest regarding the proposed 'Vacant to Vibrant' pilot capital grant scheme, which included the potential demand for both capital funding and wrap around business support services;
- Noted that officers would continue to establish demand for the grant programme and the requirements for wrap around support services (for example, business plan preparation) and that a further report would be brought forward should additional services be required;
- Agreed that the grant application process would open in May / June 2022 and that further updates would be brought back to the Committee;
- Noted that officers would continue to explore other funding opportunities to support the capital grant programme, given the anticipated level of interest; and
- Noted the launch of the Department of Finance's 'Back in Business' scheme offering businesses a 50% rates discount for up to two years if they occupy a vacant shop unit.

**Future City Centre Programme –
Tactical Regeneration Programme and
'Grey to Green' Initiative**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of the report is to update Members in relation to a proposed Tactical Regeneration Programme; the Entries Phase 2 scheme; a 5Cs Revitalisation scheme and a 'Grey to Green' initiative for the city centre and linking to surrounding communities.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- (i) **Note the initial work to develop a 'Tactical Regeneration Programme' aligned to A Bolder Vision, and approve its further development to**

- progress feasibility of potential future projects, including an initial focus on the Great Victoria Street area;
- (ii) Note the DfC offer of capital funding to deliver the '5Cs Revitalisation' project, and approve Council support for the project by way of progressing design and delivery; note also the opportunity this presents for Castle Street with a potential further phase of work during 2022/23;
 - (iii) Note that Council have received and accepted via the Capital Letters of Offer process a LoO from DfC in respect of the Entries Phase 2 project and that work is progressing in line with this to deliver the scope of works included within the Entries Phase 2 scheme;
 - (iv) Note the opportunity to deliver on a 'Grey to Green' initiative for the city centre and linking to surrounding communities and approve the approach to developing potential future projects and funding applications.

3.0 Main report

Background

The Future City Centre (FCC) Programme has been developed in line with the Belfast Agenda, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Cultural Strategy and has been informed by the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. The FCC Programme sets out a framework to deliver on priorities including diversification of uses, enhanced connectivity, investment, and inclusive economic and cultural growth although it is recognised that it needs to remain agile to deal with the ever-changing challenges of the city centre. The FCC programme has six cross-cutting pillars and includes 'tactical regeneration' as a key area of work that has potential to make a significant contribution, alongside other interventions, in helping to achieve the overall objective of a reimagined city centre.

Tactical Regeneration represents an opportunity to deliver against the principles and objectives of A Bolder Vision, by delivering shorter term improvements that enhance and better connect spaces and places throughout the city centre, while also testing temporary interventions that can shape and inform delivery of permanent public realm, regeneration or infrastructure projects.

Tactical Regeneration

‘Tactical Regeneration’ is about being pro-active to deliver simple and creative interventions that are relatively quick and low cost. It is a form of temporary place-making that help address issues of vacancy and dereliction and to test potential interventions that can inform long term change and act as a catalyst for future permanent regeneration projects. It represents an opportunity to deliver against the principles and objectives of A Bolder Vision, by delivering shorter term improvements that enhance and better connect spaces and places, while also testing temporary interventions that can shape and inform delivery of permanent public realm, regeneration or infrastructure projects.

It can also enable better engagement with property owners, agents and others to develop a better understanding of the barriers to delivery and work in partnership to improve specific areas.

Tactical Regeneration can work on a number of levels, with a variety of outputs, but with a consistent objective to produce outcomes that are well curated, site sensitive and engaged, with a view to making a site or space a more people friendly place while influencing longer term use. Tactical Regeneration is intended to react quickly to immediate need, and where appropriate, go beyond the traditional concept of ‘space’ (for example, street or park) and also explore opportunities to utilise vacant sites or units for a range of uses.

There are two main forms of tactical regeneration that Council, working with others can deploy:

- i. ‘Tried and Tested’- a back to basics, replicable approach which includes deep cleans, general painting, greening, lighting etc.**
- ii. Opportunity to ‘Try and Test’- a site specific approach involving small to medium scale interventions in the public realm, vacant sites, or buildings. These interventions are intended to instigate and encourage positive use, opportunities for civic engagement and participation, for urban prototyping and experimentation. Outputs can include parklets, bespoke site-specific artworks, and features to create destination points, considered and designed venues/locations to facilitate and host**

meanwhile social, cultural and economic activities.

Working in partnership with multiple stakeholders, Council have delivered a number of recent initiatives that have included elements of Tactical Regeneration.

Belfast Entries Project

While this project includes large and complex interventions intended to be in place for several years, such as bespoke feature lighting, it also involved the curation of a number of smaller scale elements, that collectively have significant impact within individual entries, and across the scheme as a whole. Through a general refresh of the area, coupled with bold artworks and lighting schemes, the Entries Programme has added interest and contributed to wayfinding through the city centre, while promoting the heritage and culture of the entries themselves and have acted as destinations in their own right. Members may also recall that the Entries project won an award in the public-private partnership category at the all-Ireland Urban Land Institute and CBRE Excellence in Placemaking Awards for 2021.

Marquis Street and Other Examples

Officers worked with local traders, designers, and craftspeople to complete an upgrade to Marquis Street, a key connection from Castle Street into the city centre. Works included general painting, cut and clear of overgrowth, festoon lighting, interpretive panel (to tie in with the Entries and Lanes initiative) and a site-specific artwork. Local businesses have also sought to utilise the enhanced environment, including by securing pavement café licences to enable active use of outdoor space.

There are other examples of schemes of varying scale and complexity which have been delivered by Council, including a building wrap around vacant properties pending development at Lower Garfield St; a shutter painting scheme in Fountain St; interactive lighting of properties in Castle St and Brunswick St and the temporary lighting installation at the former Bank of Ireland building on Royal Avenue. While generally involving larger scale interventions, the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation programme has also included elements of tactical regeneration, such as, Union St, Adelaide St, Brunswick St, the Linenhall parklets and the Business Cluster & Community Grant projects.

Tactical Regeneration Programme

Officers propose to develop a Tactical Regeneration Programme that will enable a more strategic approach to be taken to the prioritisation and development of individual projects as part of a wider body of work. This approach would support the development of a 'pipeline' of projects tailored to specific locations and circumstances, but, curated and delivered to a consistently high standard that reflects and supports other initiatives and wider city development objectives.

By working up individual schemes in this context Council would be better placed to capitalise on funding opportunities that often arise at short notice and with limited timescales for delivery, often requiring delivery in line with 'in year' funding requirements from central government. The approach proposed would enable Council to respond quickly with projects that have been developed (for example, outline design / business case where applicable).

In relation to the proposed development of a tactical regeneration programme, there are a number of emerging project opportunities as below and identified in Appendix B:

5C's Revitalisation Scheme

Through Developer Contributions Council are working with DfC to develop this public realm scheme across a number of city centre streets - Chichester Street (including sections of Montgomery St & Upper Arthur St), Callender Street, College Street and College Court. Officers have also worked with DfC to identify potential short-term interventions that could be delivered within the project area in advance of the main scheme, and which would address issues outside the scope of a traditional public realm scheme, including treatment of dead frontages, interpretation and wayfinding, feature lighting and additional greening. The interventions would bring short-term benefit to these streets, ahead of the delivery of larger scale permanent works, such as, footway realignment and resurfacing (Appendix B).

DfC have identified an opportunity to support this initiative with capital funding and, pending receipt of a Letter of Offer, approval is sought to support design and delivery of this scheme.

As the 5Cs project area is immediately adjacent to Castle Street, there is also an opportunity for Council to consider extending a wider programme of improvements to take in Castle St and to deliver as a further phase of work during 2022/23 as part of the wider proposed Tactical Regeneration Programme.

Great Victoria Street /Shaftsbury Square

The decline in this area has been raised by this Committee and a number of other Stakeholders on a number of occasions, referencing the period of decline in recent years, with a number of prominent vacant and derelict properties alongside a poor quality of public realm, particularly on Great Victoria Street. Whilst certain businesses have sustained a presence in the area and continue to make a positive contribution in terms of well-maintained active frontages, there are a number of vacancies and the wider area is in need of significant intervention. It should be noted that there are several development proposals progressing through the planning process in the wider area, and major public sector placemaking and infrastructure projects like Belfast Streets Ahead 5 and BRT 2 also have the potential to have a transformative impact.

However, the timescales associated with emerging or committed public and private projects in this area are lengthy, and in some cases uncertain, and there is a growing consensus among local stakeholders that there is a need for shorter term action. DfC had convened a Shaftesbury Square Masterplan Group, while a further group comprising a mix of private sector business and other interests, including Council officers, Translink, NIHE, DfC and DfI has more recently formed by way of a 'South West Quarter Stakeholder Group' in relation to issues and opportunities across the wider 'South West Quarter' area, which takes in Great Victoria Street, Shaftesbury Square, Dublin Road and Sandy Row. Both of these groups acknowledge the longer-term opportunities in the area but have expressed support for Council, working with other partners, to bring forward tactical regeneration proposals to enhance the area in the short term.

Officers are proposing that a tactical regeneration scheme is worked up for part of this area initially and whilst the detail needs to be developed it could include a combination of minor works to building frontages, while also taking advantage of generous footway widths along Great Victoria Street through measures, such as, removal of street clutter and introduction of soft landscaping and greening opportunities where

possible (Appendix B). It is proposed that a scheme be developed that focuses on Great Victoria Street (east and west sides, from Bruce St to Donegall Rd), as a priority given the condition of this area. Potential interventions for other parts of Shaftesbury Square will be identified alongside this work, informed by the potential for funding. DfC have indicated that funding may be available in the 22/23 financial period if projects can be developed up into a business case status. There is also potential for funding from other stakeholders within this South West Quarter Stakeholders Group. The scale and timeframe of funding is yet to be determined however it is proposed to develop a suite of potential interventions within this area that can be tailored to suit the available funding.

The approach to these interventions will reflect and test the placemaking objectives of the 'Civic Spine' as set out by A Bolder Vision, which is currently being considered in part through Belfast Streets Ahead 5 and Belfast Streets Ahead 3. The BSA 5 team have engaged in recent Bolder Vision workshops, and are currently developing traffic modelling scenarios within the project area, including for Bedford Street, Dublin Road and Great Victoria Street. This modelling will inform further concept design work for BSA 5 and future updates will be brought into this Committee as the plans are developed.

This report is seeking approval to further develop the feasibility of a Tactical Regeneration Programme, which would include progressing outline designs for the Great Victoria St and Castle Street areas. Officers will continue to identify further areas that would benefit from similar types of intervention, for example, Royal Ave.

Further reports will be brought to this committee and SP&R as appropriate as projects are identified and developed, and as funding opportunities for the capital delivery of these emerge.

Entries Phase 2

Based on the success of the first phase, alongside significant support from city stakeholders, Phase 2 of Belfast Entries was included within the Belfast City Recovery Revitalisation Programme. The reopening of Sugarhouse Entry is a core element of this work, and DfC propose to fund the main works in this location, in addition to in-kind contributions committed by NI Water and the private sector. Phase 2 of the Entries will also include a refresh to Pattersons Place, College St Mews, Exchange Place, Wellington St and High St Court (Appendix C).

Reopening Sugarhouse Entry will provide an alternative connection between the retail core, via Pottinger's Entry, to the Cathedral Quarter via Waring Street, and will complement the forthcoming High Street public realm and cycle scheme. The scheme will deliver on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy priorities by improving connectivity and the city living experience, driving regeneration and creating a welcoming, safe and vibrant centre, and supports the aims of A Bolder Vision. Works in this location will be subject to approval from DfI in relation to re-opening this entry.

In addition to the funding provided through the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and, working in collaboration with DfC, Officers have submitted a business case and received a Letter of offer for additional capital funding to deliver the scope of works included within the Entries Phase 2 scheme.

'Grey to Green'

Further to the report on 'City Centre Open Spaces' brought to Committee in August 2021 which updated members on a number of strands of city greening work, officers have undertaken a review of open space and other 'greening' opportunities within the city centre linking to surrounding communities. This work identifies opportunities for improvements to existing, or creation of new, green spaces, with a particular focus on connecting routes with adjoining communities. While in some instances these 'grey to green' improvements can be delivered as a component of larger scale capital projects, or as standalone schemes themselves, there is also an opportunity to bring short term benefit and pilot innovative approaches through tactical regeneration projects such as those referred to in this report.

It is proposed that the incorporation of soft landscaping / city greening forms a key component of the Tactical Regeneration Programme that could include a range of responses to different typologies of space across the city, from an under-utilised space in the primary retail core, to an edge of city centre residential area. The delivery route for these types of improvements will vary and will often involve close co-working with other public, private and community partners. There is an opportunity, through the Tactical Regeneration Programme and more specifically as part of a 'Grey to Green' initiative to develop this area of work with a view to identifying a range of potential interventions and exploring deliverability with other stakeholders and funders.

There are opportunities within the city centre to work with the private sector and BIDs and to work with community stakeholders through initiatives like the 'Garden Grid' which has involved a number of community organisations working together to co-design green solutions for a network of sites in the inner north area. Led by Ashton, this project proposes to bring multiple small sites into use and link them into a 'grid' of spaces under a common land management organisation as a social enterprise plant nursery. The proposal includes use of 'pop-up' containers and mobile planting techniques to allow for a variety of sites to be adapted quickly with minimal capital. As well as making productive use of spaces, the project aims to work with residents on issues of health and well-being, street safety and food growing initiatives. Officers have been engaging with Ashton and others in relation to this initiative and will bring a further report back to Committee in the near future.

Co-working across a number of Council departments will also be required to ensure alignment of workstreams including 'Clean, Green, Inclusive & Safe', the Resilience Strategy, the Cultural Strategy, the Belfast Open Space Strategy, the One Million Trees and 'Urban Forest' initiatives.

While officers have carried out an initial analysis to identify potential sites where greening 'Grey to Green' interventions could be brought forward, there is a need to further assess feasibility and deliverability in order to develop a series of priority projects which could then be designed and costed. Funding options and future delivery and management models could then be considered against these more detailed project proposals, and further reports brought to CG&R and SP&R as appropriate. Approval is therefore sought to develop the 'Grey to Green' programme to business case status with an objective to apply for funding from a number of sources, including DfC and Dfl.

Financial & Resource Implications

Tactical Regeneration Programme - £100,000 will be met from approved City Regeneration and Development Budget for 22/23 (Future City Centre Programme budget line).

5Cs Revitalisation Project – DfC offer of capital funding of £162,000. £20,000 will be met from approved City Regeneration and Development Budget for 22/23 (Future City Centre Programme budget line).

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Entries Phase 2 – DfC capital funding of £150,000.

Grey to Green Programme - £30,000 will be met from approved City Regeneration and Development Budget for 22/23 (Future City Centre Programme budget line).

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The Future City Centre Programme is a high-level regeneration plan. The significant projects taken forward within the plan will be screened in their own right by the lead delivery division.

Where appropriate, emerging work strands will be individually screened for Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment.

The Committee:

- Noted the initial work to develop a 'Tactical Regeneration Programme' aligned to A Bolder Vision and approved its further development to progress feasibility of potential future projects, which included an initial focus on the Great Victoria Street area;
- Noted the DfC offer of capital funding to deliver the '5Cs Revitalisation' project and approved Council support for the project by way of progressing design and delivery;
- noted the opportunity presented for Castle Street, with a potential further phase of work during 2022/23;
- Noted that the Council had received and accepted, via the Capital Letters of Offer process a Letter of Offer from DfC, in respect of the Entries Phase 2 project and that work had been progressing to deliver the scope of works included within the Entries Phase 2 scheme; and
- Noted the opportunity to deliver on a 'Grey to Green' initiative for the city centre and linking to surrounding communities and approved the approach to developing potential future projects and funding applications.

**DfI Inconsiderate Pavement Parking –
Options Paper: Draft Response**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the draft submission to the DfI Inconsiderate Pavement Parking

consultation that closed on 18th March 2022. A draft response was submitted on behalf of Belfast City Council on the basis that it remains subject to agreement by this committee, and subsequent Council ratification in May.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

Approve the Council's draft response submission to the DFI Inconsiderate Pavement Parking consultation enclosed with this report at Appendix 2. Members are asked to note that a draft response was submitted by the closing date of 18 March 2022 on the basis that it remains subject to the approval of this Committee and subsequent Council ratification in May.

3.0 Main report

Background

The Department for Infrastructure is seeking a resolution to the difficulties caused by inconsiderate parking on the pavement. Initial exploratory work undertaken by the Department is presented in the document Inconsiderate Pavement Parking – An options paper (Appendix 1). The paper provides background on the issue, looks at the position elsewhere in the UK and Ireland and sets out some associated considerations before setting out what the Department considers would be the most practical options for dealing with the issue.

Context

There is currently no legislation in place to stop vehicles from inconsiderate or obstructive pavement parking and it is clear that this presents dangers to pedestrians, especially people with disabilities and parents or carers with prams and young children. While drivers often think they are doing the right thing by keeping the road clear for other motorists they fail to recognise that this blocks the pavement for those who walk, wheel or cycle. It can also force these people onto the road placing them at a high risk of harm.

The options being considered by the Department and which the consultation sought views on, are the following:

Option 1: introduce individual bans using the Department's existing powers.

Option 2: introduce an outright ban on pavement parking possibly with some exceptions.

Option 3: introduce powers that would allow the Department's Traffic Attendants to enforce against vehicles found to be parked on the pavement and causing an obstruction.

The Department also sought views on how to deal with vehicles parked across dropped kerbs which have been lowered specifically to help people cross the road.

Belfast City Council Draft Consultation Response

Members are asked to approve the Council's draft consultation response submission to the DFI Inconsiderate Pavement Parking – Options Paper, as included within Appendix 2 of this report. Given the tight timeframes for the submission to the consultation this response was submitted in line with the timeframes outlined within the Consultation, however, included a caveat that the response remains subject to agreement by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, and subsequent Council ratification in May. Officers will advise the consultation team of any further comments or amendment requests following this Committee meeting and the Council meeting in May.

The draft response sets out the Council preference for Option 2 - introduce an outright ban on pavement parking, possibly with some exceptions out of the three options presented within the Department's options paper. This option most closely aligns with the Council's Car Parking Strategy. It is also supported by the visioning principles of A Bolder Vision for Belfast, particularly principles two and three which seek to prioritise active travel, end car dominance, and promote safer streets for those who walk, wheel or cycle.

The response also notes that there can be no one-size-fits-all resolution to the issue of inconsiderate pavement parking or obstruction of blocked kerbs and that proper and meaningful consultation will be required. Clearly Disability and Inclusive Mobility Advisory groups such as IMTAC should be consulted to provide expertise and insights prior to a final decision being made. However, it is felt that it would be beneficial for everyone, not just people with disabilities, for an outright ban on pavement parking to be introduced, with the only exceptions being emergency situations.

The draft consultation response also highlighted the issue of inconsiderate parking within the inner-city residential areas

where parking availability is particularly constrained. We propose that there is improved management and regulation measures in city residential areas proportionate to location specific layout and viability, in recognition that many streets are not designed to accommodate current volumes of traffic and vehicle numbers.

Financial & Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The implications of the Equality or Goods Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessments will need to be undertaken forward by the Department for Infrastructure in line with their own policy positions and prior to undertaking an implementation.”

In response to a request from a Member, the Director of City Regeneration and Development agreed that she would include a request to address inconsiderate parking within cycle lanes in the response submission.

The Committee approved the Council’s draft response submission to the DFI Inconsiderate Pavement Parking consultation, including the aforementioned inclusion, and noted that a draft response had been submitted by the closing date of 18 March 2022, on the basis that, it remained subject to the approval of the Committee and subsequent Council ratification in May.

Dfi Blue Green Infrastructure Fund – Active Travel Projects

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the Department for Infrastructure’s Blue Green Infrastructure Funding related to Active Travel Projects.

She informed the Members that the Letter of Offer in respect of the project proposal for Active Travel Enablers had been signed and returned to the Department with progress having been made against delivery, in terms of scoping and procurement.

She reported that a series of discussions between Council officers and the Department for Infrastructure had taken place regarding the funding proposal around the development of designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine. She added that, following submission of the business case to the Department for Infrastructure, the funding had not been awarded but that there had been an indication from the Department that an offer of around 50% funding could possibly be made and that, with further development of the proposal, with a cost plan and initial designs, there could be a possibility of further funding in future years to support delivery and construction.

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She pointed out that the proposal aligned with the principles of A Bolder Vision and would help connect the communities in Sailortown with the city centre and might include enhanced pedestrian crossings, dedicated cycle lanes, soft landscaping, lighting, resurfacing, open space and street furniture.

The Director stated that discussions which had taken place with Belfast Harbour Commissioners had resulted in a proposal that the feasibility work for the North South Spine Scheme could be co-funded and co-delivered by the Council and the Harbour Commissioners up to RIBA Stage 3 and would be brought forward under the existing Memorandum of Understanding, with a view to preparing the scheme to a position that could attract project delivery partner funding in future years.

The Committee:

- Noted that the Letter of Offer from the Department for Infrastructure, for capital funding to deliver Active Travel Enabling projects, had been signed and that officers were working to deliver the secure cycle units, covered cycle units and cycle repair stands under the Letter of Offer; and
- Agreed to progress the proposal to develop the designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine connectivity project, in conjunction with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, with a view to attracting further capital funding for delivery.

Growing Business and the Economy

**Make Yourself at Home –
Planning for the future of Tourism**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in September 2021, it was agreed that the draft tourism plan for Belfast, *Make Yourself at Home* would complete a 12-week public consultation. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of feedback and present the final plan for approval.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- **Note the contents of this report and feedback received as part of the public consultation.**

- Agree the final plan, *Make Yourself at Home* including the priorities as set out at appendix 2 for year one and associated budgets.

3.0 Main report

Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in September 2021 it was agreed that the *draft* tourism plan, *Make Yourself at Home* would complete a 12-week public consultation. The purpose of this plan is to:

- Deliver on the tourism priorities set out in the *Belfast Agenda* recognising the importance of tourism to *Growing the economy* and *City Development*.
- Align to the ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, in order to ensure that tourism development supports cultural development and is based upon an authentic and sustainable Belfast offer.
- Support economic and social recovery in the context of COVID-19 including stabilisation, recovery and growth with the opportunity to build back better.
- Provide strategic context to the Belfast Region City Deal that sets out wider city priorities to ensure Belfast's appeal internationally and ability to attract out of state visitors.

Tourism Growth Pre Covid-19

Despite significant growth and the success of flagship projects such as Titanic Belfast there is still a gap in scale and maturity of the local industry when compared with other regions. Notably, Northern Ireland lags behind UK regions and Republic of Ireland with respect to tourism as a driver for job growth. However, the positive trajectory in place before Covid-19 had identified tourism growth as both feasible and a necessary part of inclusive economic growth. The challenge of any tourism development plan will be to create a sustainable model that continues to support the growth that is essential for city success and the creation of jobs.

Belfast's tourism and hospitality sectors directly support 19,300 jobs, one third of the sector in Northern Ireland. Key tourism sectors such as Accommodation & Food Services, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation and Transportation have been impacted by COVID-19 however if Belfast's recovery from the pandemic is managed then the growth potential remains high. The hospitality sector is an employment-

intensive one, supporting a disproportionate number of jobs compared with the average sectoral GVA: jobs ratio. Between 2013 and 2019 employment in Accommodation and Food Services in Belfast increased by 18.2 percent, compared with 8.5 percent growth in the city's total employment.

It was in this context that Tourism NI set the ambitious target of doubling the value of the tourism industry to £2 billion by 2030. A key element of this opportunity further reinforced by ambitions of the Belfast Region City Deal was getting a bigger share of the international visitors coming to the island of Ireland to travel to Belfast and the Belfast region.

Impact of Covid-19

While the full impact of Covid-19 is as yet unknown what is clear is that recovery will require new and innovative approaches in an increasingly competitive market. As the regional driver, Belfast will be hugely significant to this growth ambition, both in terms of visitor spend and the creation of new jobs. It is therefore imperative that our city break destination is developed in a strategic way which maximises the economic benefits that can be derived from tourism for local industries, businesses and communities, as well as increasing visitor numbers and spend and improving overall satisfaction levels.

Developing a ten-year plan

The *Make Yourself at Home* tourism plan sets out a vision for the future of tourism in the city that is centred on a people-based and sustainable model of development with a focus on:

- Increasing the coherency of the Belfast experience
- Supporting quality authentic products
- Developing skills
- Strengthening the city's position through marketing and communications

The approach

The past two decades have given rise to a number of trends within tourism development. This has included the popularity of approaches such as cultural tourism, green tourism or local tourism. What each of these approaches and associated models have in common is an increasing awareness that sustainable forms of tourism must respect the local context and support the economic, social, environmental and cultural values of a place.

In the context of Belfast, even before COVID-19, this is a complex proposition. The city requires further growth with

a clear international agenda and need to continue to attract and grow out of state visitors. The new tourism plan seeks to set out how this growth can be achieved in a responsible and inclusive way recognising that the city's greatest asset is its people.

The plan sets out a shared vision for tourism in the city and is supported by 4 strategic themes and three of catalyst projects. The strategic themes are:

- **Grow Belfast**
- **Experience Belfast**
- **Position Belfast**
- **Sustainable Belfast**

Each theme is supported by an evidence-based body of work and research.

Public Consultation

Following approval by City Growth and Regeneration Committee, the *draft Make Yourself at Home – A vision for the future of tourism* completed a 12-week public consultation. As part of this process Council engaged directly with over 330 stakeholders including:

- **Online citizens and stakeholder engagement:**
The council carried out an online 12-week consultation via the Council's YourSay engagement platform to gather information, and this provided an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review proposals, provide feedback and help shape the final plan. Results indicated 123 visitors and 30 full responses to the survey.
- **Workshops and Presentations** - nearly 200 attended these workshops tailored around the themes of the plan including a dedicated session on **Belfast Stories**. Attendance included a wide range of community tourism organisations, tourism businesses, partners and cultural organisations.
- **Council's Section 75 consultee list:** The council issued the consultation to our Section 75 list and provided representative groups with an opportunity to respond. Presentations were delivered to the Council's Equality Consultative Forum and Disability Advisory Panel.
- **Response to requests for one-to-one meetings and presentations** with a variety of stakeholders across the city, gave the opportunity for focused and in-depth

engagement with stakeholders. This helped to foster a greater understanding of how the draft Tourism Plan can feed into their field of work, as well as identifying opportunities for city wide partnership working and collaboration.

- **Presentation of the draft Tourism Plan as an integral part of recent Belfast Stories engagement.**
- **Council's stakeholder list: The council issued the consultation to a wide range of organisations including: Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI, Visit Belfast (500 tourism business partners), Community Tourism projects via Fáilte Feirste Thair, Eastside Partnership, Shankill Partnership and South Belfast Partnership, Belfast Hills Partnership and Colin Glen Trust and National Trust, tourism sector businesses, visitor attraction representatives, tour guides, individual artists and organisations within the cultural sector and trade representative organisations.**

The overall feedback on the plan was very positive with the principles of being people-centred, responsible and sustainable strongly welcomed. General areas of feedback included:

- **Support for an inclusive approach that recognises need for investment in neighbourhoods and creates opportunities for co-design with local communities. There is a need for long-term investment and capacity building to allow for engagement, development and delivery. This should be tailored to recognise that not all parts of the city or communities are at the same stage of development.**
- **Importance of Council's leadership role as well as direct delivery especially in relation to the principle of responsibility.**
- **Importance of an all encompassing approach to sustainability that includes an economic and social dimension as well as environmental.**
- **Affordability – need to minimise negative impact of tourism on locals and maximise positive impacts.**
- **Importance of alignment with climate and resilience programmes.**
- **Inclusivity is important and this should consider thematic as well as geographic**

alignment to reflect diversity within the city. Organisations that don't fit into neighbourhoods also need to be afforded opportunity to avail of funding and the governance structure should reflect this.

- Importance of measuring benefits to local communities beyond economic impact. The plan sets out a comprehensive approach to measuring success that includes economic and social benefits.
- Opportunity to position innovation in tourism using our digital and creative industries to come up with new ways to enhance experiences and improve connectivity.
- As well as new developments Council should commit to building on city's existing asset base and address challenges such as infrastructure to improve access.

Strategic Themes

Strategic theme 1: Grow Belfast (supported by EY Recovery report)

This theme focuses on the role of tourism in city recovery including the need for stabilisation of the tourism sector and the requirement for further growth in Belfast. This includes:

- Strategic context and evidence-based proposition that Belfast acts as a catalyst for the region.
- Measurement of the attractiveness of the city as a destination and how this plays a key role in maximising the economic impact of each visitor by increasing average length of stay and daily spending levels.
- Priority areas for investment e.g. catalyst projects.
- Introducing social, cultural and environmental measures to better understand and advocate for the true value of responsible tourism growth.

Specific areas for feedback to be addressed in implementation plans and alignment to ***Bolder Vision*** and ***A City Imagining***:

- Need to ensure that there is investment in existing assets
- Important to recognise and support key elements of Belfast's existing offer and wider Belfast stories such as maritime, music, culture and arts

- Relationship between regeneration and tourism including need to improve access to tourism assets through better connectivity – addressing areas of low footfall, dereliction etc.

Strategic Theme 2: Position Belfast (supported by a Positioning Review completed by Blue Sail Consulting).

A critical dimension to any tourism development plan is understanding the market and how the brand operates in this space. In order to develop an effective strategy there also needs to be consideration of the brand architecture for the city and the region. The result should be clarity of roles and responsibilities for agencies working in this field including Council's own role and city partners such as Visit Belfast and Tourism NI. *Make Yourself at Home* sets out a dynamic model for city positioning that strengthens Belfast's role as the gateway to the region in a way that responds to key markets including:

- Business Tourism and sub-sectors within this group.
- Leisure tourism target markets including - geographic considerations and the visitor journey.

This theme takes forward a new approach that pushes beyond traditional marketing methods towards enabling the people creating the Belfast experience to tell their story. Therefore, the approach is narrative driven and the new plan sets out areas of support on:

- How do we tell Belfast stories? How do we enable people to tell their Belfast story?
- How do we create an emotional connection with visitors?
- How do we make local stories resonate internationally?

The theme brings forward actions that support an effective way of working and will be particularly dependent on successful establishment of governance and leadership support mechanisms that will be strengthened to support the overall delivery of the plan.

Specific areas for feedback to be addressed in implementation plans and through work with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland:

- Need to ensure that as well as a Gateway to Northern Ireland that Belfast is positioned as a must-see urban destination on the island of Ireland by capturing GB and ROI city break market and attracting greater share of Out of State visitors to Ireland.

- **Belfast Stories needs to extend beyond city centre proposal to strengthen and support organisations already telly stories across the city.**

***Strategic theme 3: Experience Belfast* (supported by Visitor Experience Framework developed with CHL Consulting)**

The plan provides a summary of key actions to strengthen the coherency of Belfast's overall visitor experience. The plan contains strategic priorities that:

- **include experiences that can be brought to life through the development of an optimal mix of 'anchor' and ancillary products that get people into an area and keep them there**
- **focuses on encouraging international visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interacting with people, engaging the senses and learning the history and stories of the places.**
- **prioritises delivering immersive moments that inspire tourists not only to share their experience with others but also make them want to return to the city.**

This theme is critical to the overall success of the plan due to:

- **the role of Belfast City Council in developing the Belfast experience through the development of Council assets.**
- **Support for local initiatives and development plans through geographic or thematic based community development.**

In developing this theme, a number of pieces of foundational work have been completed including:

- **A mapping exercise which maps our existing tourism assets against the city's 'Belfast brand' and Tourism NI 'Embrace the Giant Spirit' brand.**
- **Assessment of the quality, market fit and sustainability of existing products.**
- **Development of a proposed combination of thematic and geographical clustering.**
- **Undertaken a gap analysis of potential experience-based products. The gap analysis reviewed what was missing from the tourism offer taking into consideration issues such as seasonality, immersive experiences, events and festival**

animation, and opportunities to meet local people for instance.

- Consideration of investment and evaluation criteria for longer term priorities and programmes of support incorporating social, environmental and economic factors.

Specific areas for feedback to be addressed in implementation plans include:

- Importance of investing in local tourism is recognised however this has to take a thematic approach as well as being geographic or place-based. There is an opportunity to develop clusters that helps to increase visibility of existing assets.
- The overall visitor experience will only be delivered if there are also improvements in connectivity and accessibility.

Strategic theme 4: Sustain Belfast (supported by benchmarking of Belfast as part of Global Destination Sustainability Index)

This theme is shaped by recommendations emerging from the benchmarking completed as part of Global Destination Sustainability Index. Members will be aware that Belfast signed up to this benchmarking following Committee approval in August 2020. The Global Destination Sustainability Index is the world's leading benchmarking and performance Index for cities, their events and their visitor economy. Its purpose is to engage, enable and inspire cities to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in. In addition to benchmarking a city's environmental strategy and social sustainability performance, the GDS-Index assess criteria that are industry specific: industry supplier support (restaurants, hotels, conference centres) and convention bureau strategy and initiatives. Alongside benchmarking it helps destination management organisations, convention bureaus, key industry associations suppliers and clients to develop effective strategies and practices in support of sustainability goals.

Since 2019, over 60 cities have started the process of benchmarking and assessment. The goal is to have 300 cities collaborating by 2023. The Index is based on 69 Indicators broken down into four categories:

- City Environmental Performance
- City Social Performance
- Supplier Performance
- Destination Management Performance

Belfast has now completed a second year of benchmarking resulting in significant improvement taking our place within top 20 cities. A series of related recommendations are included in *Make Yourself at Home*. A number of these relate to Visit Belfast's role as the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and Visit Belfast have already made significant progress in implementing these as part of their current funding agreement with a commitment to build on this on a multi-annual basis. However, Council also has a direct role and recommendations within the plan include the establishment of a taskforce and a sustainability lab for tourism in Belfast. Further action is also set out in relation to improving Council owned assets and supporting the supply chain.

Specific areas for feedback to be addressed in implementation plans and as part of ongoing work with Visit Belfast on Global Sustainability Index and Tourism NI on regenerative tourism:

- There is a market imperative to support this area of work based on consumer attitudes as well as a social responsibility.
- It is important for Belfast to maintain ranking on GDSI to ensure that we are striving to meet international standards.
- As well as overarching sustainability principles there should also be support for develop sustainable tourism products.

Catalyst Projects

All four of these strategic themes are underpinned by the need to support inclusive economic growth and to differentiate the Belfast offer in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. A fifth strand to the plan considers key strategic opportunities that could bolster investment in the sector in order to support recovery and future growth. These are catalyst or accelerator projects and are outlined below.

Catalyst Project 1: Our Place – support for local tourism

Adopting a place-based approach to the development of our neighbourhoods through local tourism investment that supports product development, jobs creation and destination management including the design and delivery of a Belfast Experience Development Fund to support product development. There are also opportunities to support capital development through alignment with existing programmes such as the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

Catalyst 2: Make Yourself at Home

This is a renewed commitment to long-term initiatives contained in the cultural strategy including signature Belfast events, International Year of Culture and UNESCO City of Music. The global summit of One Young World has been secured for 2023. A plan will be developed to bid for other major events that support the ambitions set out in the plan. Members will be aware that Belfast had planned to host a year of culture in 2023 in line with the original European Capital of Culture bid. However, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 at a city level in terms of the capacity of our local sector to deliver something of this scale in 18 months and the trajectory for the full return of international markets increasing makes this challenging. Therefore, it is now proposed that a multi-annual approach is taken forward focussing initially on the period 2022-24. Building on the cultural strategy, we have positioned events as one of the catalyst programmes for tourism to help contribute to the city's long term growth (visitor numbers, dwell time, spend and brand positioning) and in particular act as a key motivator for GB and Ireland visitors as part of the next phase of recovery. Over this initial period this would include at least 2 flagship events each with a critical mass of homegrown activity in 2024.

Catalyst Project 3: Our Stories

Delivering the Belfast Stories as part of the tourism pillar of the Belfast Regional City Deal must be part of an overall integrated approach to tourism development and inclusive economic growth for the city. Belfast Stories will connect to local tourism product development and infrastructure through a hub and spoke model. Importantly the Hub will be an exemplar for responsible and sustainable tourism demonstrating the principles set out in the ten-year plan. Through the focus on Belfast Stories, the project will also be transformative for the positioning of the city. The development programme for this project as part of BRCD is fully aligned to this tourism plan with cross-cutting priorities and synergies.

Implementation

The success of the plan will require ongoing review and delivery. To support this a number of key early actions have been identified including:

- Setting up of proposed governance and partnership model to drive the implementation of Make Yourself at Home
- Scoping short and long-term investment priorities and financing strategy
- Tailored action plans to address areas of priority.

Appendix 2 sets out priority actions for Year 1 of the new plan. This includes the development of a new investment programme for local tourism. The detail of this fund will be presented to Committee in due course setting out proposed process, criteria and timeframes.

Members will be aware that Council has supported local tourism conduits Fáilte Feirste Thiar and Eastside Tourism for a number of years under the City Connections Programme. This has included working in partnership to increase connectivity across the city, conducting consumer research and developing local partnerships. It is proposed that this programme is replaced by the new investment programme however in order to support transition and given that the new programme will not be operational until later in the year it is proposed that £25,000 is allocated (25% of previous annual investment) to these organisations.

As part of implementation and in response to consultation feedback, a number key areas of development are identified for Council to lead including:

- A detailed accessible (inclusive) programme to include working with tourism sector to review communications, train staff and improve facilities.
- A detailed sustainable tourism programme to address key weaknesses as identified by Global Sustainability Index (GDSI).
- A detailed food tourism programme to support hospitality and food businesses focused on local produce.

City Events

Members will be aware that significant work has taken place in recent years to realign City Events with Council's wider cultural and tourism ambitions. This has included a renewed focus on working in partnership and developing programmes that support the local cultural sector and represent an authentic Belfast Experience. Included in Appendix 2 are the proposed events for 2022/23. Further detail on approach and programmes will be presented to Committee at relevant points throughout the year. Members will note that there are currently no plans to deliver Hallowe'en in 2022. It is proposed that this event is reviewed in line with the development work that has taken place on other events. This should include options for city events to represent greater cultural diversity within the city and how a partnership model could be developed. An update will be presented in due course.

Financial & Resource Implications

There are currently no immediate new financial implications to this report. Appendix 2 sets out a breakdown of budget against programmes of work to be allocated from existing departmental budgets. Further detail on proposals for investment in local tourism will be presented to Committee in due course.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). A specific screening has been carried out on this associated tourism plan and was included as part of the consultation exercise. Mitigating actions have been considered as part of the implementation plans. Catalyst projects such as *Belfast Stories* will be subject to a separate Equality Impact Assessment. It is also anticipated that should any investment programmes emerge from this plan these will be subject to further equality screening.”

The Committee

- Noted the contents of the report and the feedback received as part of the public consultation; and
- Agreed the final plan, *Make Yourself at Home*, which included the priorities for year one and associated budgets.

Employability and Skills - Update and Workplan

The Director of Economic Development reported that, following the series of lockdowns and restrictions in 2020 and 2021, there had been significant volatility within the labour market. He pointed out that the Council’s employment academies had been designed in conjunction with employers to address the existing job vacancies and, since April, 2021, 816 people had been brought through the Employment Academies with an into-work rate of 75% for those who successfully completed the scheme.

He informed the Committee that, for 2022/23, it had been expected that the Employment Academies would engage around 540 participants with at least 70% expected to gain employment in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, care and customer service.

He pointed out that a number of initiatives were in place for young people, both in the formal education setting and outside of the school environment, focussed on improving educational attainment and helping young people at risk to find positive employment and training outcomes. He then summarised the following initiatives:

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- GCSE Support Programme;
- Youth Support Programme; and
- A new initiative that was being developed based on the Boston Summer Scheme model.

He outlined the priority areas of focus for the Labour Market Partnership and reported that the resources from the partnership enabled the Council to significantly increase the volume of activity and subsequent job outcomes. The Partnership also created a platform for engagement with government departments.

He stated that the Department for the Economy had allocated 90% of the requested match funding for European Social Fund projects, with the intention of releasing the remaining 10% within the 2022/23 financial year.

In response to a question from a Member regarding issues with applications for taxi licenses, the Director stated that he would bring a report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee:

- Noted the work that had been undertaken in the financial year to date, and the positive employability and jobs outcomes associated with the work; and
- Approved the priority interventions for the 2022/2023 financial year.

Supporting Business Start Up and Growth in Belfast

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on activity which had taken place to support the development of new and existing businesses across the city through the Enterprise and Business Growth Team.

He pointed out that the activities which had taken place in 2021/22 had been developed in partnership with a range of organisations which included Invest NI, Catalyse and Local Enterprise Agencies and highlighted the following areas of activity:

- Enterprise awareness activity: engaged 760 individuals through a range of activities. Some specialist support work undertaken with female entrepreneurs and student start-ups;
- Start a business activity: 279 new jobs created through the Go for It support, with 75 businesses receiving additional follow-on mentoring and financial support;
- Support for Social Enterprise and Co-operatives: 56 organisations had been supported with one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance, including six new co-operatives;
- Business growth supports: 327 businesses had engaged in a range of business support workshops and 357 had been

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supported through one-to-one engagement to help them to implement growth strategies and become more resilient;

- Innovation Factory: was at 70% occupancy, the operator had ambitious plans to increase those numbers in 2022/23. The centre had seen a high level of interest from new firms in sectors including TV/film, digital, engineering and green tech. Over the previous year, 84 businesses had engaged in masterclasses at the centre and, as part of their social and economic regeneration activity, over 30 work placements had been facilitated by IF customers over recent months, a series of school engagement activities had taken place and 10 local people had been trained as Digital Champions;
- Scaling and growth: in partnership with Catalyst and Invest NI, the Way to Scale programme supported 60 individuals to participate on a series of bootcamps to transform their businesses and support them to scale and grow to turnover of more than £3million. 10 were supported to participate in a one week residential at MIT and access a peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst and a Go to Market residential in Boston which focused on go to market strategies and tactics;
- City Vibrancy: In January 2002, the Vibrant Business Destinations programme had been launched, in partnership with DfC. To date, there had been 17 enquiries in relation to the programme and officers had been engaging with businesses to support them with the expression of interest process; and
- Investment had been undertaken in technology solutions to enable tracking of the impact of investment and carry out regular evaluations of programmes in order to measure their effectiveness. A bi-annual Belfast Business Survey had been relaunched, in conjunction with Belfast Chamber and responses from over 400 businesses were being analysed, the insights of which, would be shared with partners to build a collective understanding of the needs of businesses in the city and agree on priority interventions to address those needs.

He reported that work had been underway to develop an Economic Strategy to support sustainable and inclusive growth in Belfast from 2022 to 2030 and that it would clearly articulate the role of Belfast in the regional economy and would identify a series of key propositions to build on areas of competitive advantage in a rapidly changing global business context. He added that it would align with the ambitions of the 10X Economic Vision, as it would focus on how the return on investment could be maximised to secure transformational change that can benefit all residents.

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The Director of Economic Development outlined to the Members, the proposed activity for 2022/23 and that there would be a focus on a number of new areas of programme development and delivery, which included:

- Starting a Business: Working with the other councils across the region, Invest NI and DfE to bring forward plans to revamp the approach to business start-up post-2023;
- Social Enterprise and Co-operative Development: In 2022/23, to refresh the social economy action plan based on ongoing research that had been taking place with the sector;
- Growing a Business: Responding to both the opportunities and challenges generated as a result of climate change, close engagement would be undertaken with the Climate and Waste teams, in order to identify opportunities to help businesses to become more environmentally sustainable;
- Support to Scale and Grow: Working with the City Innovation team to pilot interventions in order to access future opportunities through Challenge Funds, particularly for those businesses in growth sectors; and
- Investing in Belfast: Focus would be on refreshing the City Investment Service to ensure that it provides the right support to new and potential investors in the city and complement the work of partners such as Innovation City Belfast.

He reported that, in June each year, over the past decade, the New York New Belfast Conference had taken place which showcased the best of Belfast business, education, tourism and cultural offer to a wide audience of New York and US influencers and decision makers, and that, in 2022, the event would take place on 23rd and 24th June.

He stated that it had been expected that the event would attract up to 150 US based delegates and would be hosted by the Mayor of New York City, Mr. Eric Adams and that there would be a series of presentations from Belfast based business organisations, with a number of side meetings with relevant political and business representatives.

He reported that an invitation had been received for the Lord Mayor to co-host the event and that, given the significant progress in the city since the last New York New Belfast in-person events, it had been proposed that the Council agrees to the attendance of the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and the Director of Economic Development, or their nominees, in order to articulate the focused investment narrative.

The Committee:

- Noted the Council's performance and contribution to delivering against Belfast Agenda ambitions to grow the

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Belfast economy, which had focussed on the support for Business Start-up and Growth;

- Noted the ongoing work on the Belfast Economic Strategy and agreed to receive future updates on this work in the new electoral term;
- Noted and agreed the priority work areas for the 2022/23 financial year; and
- Agreed attendance by the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of Economic Development, or their nominees, at the New York New Belfast Conference in June 2022 and approved the associated budget allocation of £6,000 from existing resources.

**PWC Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report:
Taking Action on Levelling Up**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to:

Update Members on PwC’s Good Growth for Cities 2022 report: Taking Action on Levelling Up

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

Note the update on - PwC’s Good Growth for Cities 2022: Taking Action on Levelling Up report which measures the performance of cities and regions across the UK as indicators of ‘Good Growth’ and ranked Belfast as the highest-ranking city from the devolved nation.

3.0 Main report

Background

The Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index is an annual report which looks at broad measures of economic performance alongside well-being indicators to develop a metric for ‘Good Growth’ of cities. Specifically, the report ranks 50 of the UK’s largest cities based on people’s assessment of 12 key economic wellbeing factors, including jobs, health, income and skills, as well as work-life balance, house affordability, travel-to-work times, income equality, environment and business start-ups. This year’s report also includes two new indicators covering safety and vibrancy of

local high streets. Indicators within the report align to the Council's strategic objectives and of this Committee, as set out within the CG&R Committee Plan, the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan, BRCD. Belfast City Centre and Regeneration Strategy (BCCRIS), Bolder Vision for Belfast and the Reset for Growth report, as well as a number of other strategies and programmes.

Using these 'Good Growth' indicators, the report ranked Belfast in eighth place, and highest ranked city from the devolved nations. Other cities in the top 10 include London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Leicester, Sheffield and Bristol. Members will be aware of the projects and programmes Council are delivering aimed at job creation, regeneration and place making, vibrancy and making Belfast a city a great place to live, work, visit and invest. The recent findings from this report are a positive sense check in terms of our direction and focused priorities, and also highlighting the need to ensure that we continue to work to position the city to compete both nationally and globally.

Contained within the report are case studies of best practice at how investment in townscapes, support in community cohesion, efforts to foster local pride and attract new types of businesses are being used to boost growth. Belfast was selected as a case study for inclusion within the report, referencing a balanced and deliberately interventionist approach to regeneration. Work being undertaken by the city to invest in place-making, open and green spaces, community infrastructure, connectivity and cultural and tourism offerings in order to create a more attractive, accessible, and vibrant city centre which connects to surrounding communities are highlighted as best practice. It also referred to city investment plans including a citywide commitment to investing in neighbourhoods, leisure and community facilities and to strategies that integrate physical regeneration with cultural, social and environmental regeneration. It highlighted the Bolder Vision for Belfast as being key to a stronger and more resilient city core and acting as a call to action for the council, civic partners, local businesses and the wider local community. It also highlighted how Belfast is working to establish itself as a cultural centre in order to realise it's global cultural and economic ambitions, referencing the 10-year cultural programme, UNESCO City of Music and the Belfast Stories development plans. The city's innovation and inclusive economic growth plans, supported by the BRCD investment and Belfast's position as the number one city for FinTech investments were referenced and that further investment in digital connectivity and supporting centres of

excellence would drive Belfast forward as a global digital and scientific centre and globally significant destination for innovation

While the report welcomes the Levelling Up White Paper, analysis within the report demonstrates that Government, public and private sectors need to continue to work collaboratively to address regional inequalities and capitalise on the once in a generation opportunity to create successful places and deliver good growth. Members will be aware that the Council is working collaboratively with public, private, community and key anchor institution partners across a number of partnerships including Innovation City Belfast, Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, Belfast Region City Deal and the Climate Commission and to deliver strategic programmes of work including A Bolder Vision, a Future City Centre Programme and neighbourhood regeneration aimed at delivering our shared collective ambitions as outlined within the Belfast Agenda.

The report notes that in general cities which performed well in this year's index had strong local economies, and strong environmental and safety credentials. It also notes that the pandemic has caused a shift in public priorities, with people wanting to be more connected with their local communities and to live in greener, fairer places. Members will be aware of the effects of the pandemic in Belfast, and efforts by the Council to address the impact on our communities and businesses, including the delivery of the DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme and via Belfast: Our Recovery plan. The report has found that the shift in public priorities has also altered the growth prospects of cities and regions as people change how and where they want to work and live, with small and provincial cities benefitting more in the context of the levelling up agenda. This provides an opportunity for Belfast in terms of its desire to attract and retain residents in the city to deliver on our Belfast Agenda ambitions including to attract 66,000 new residents by 2035.

The report tracks regional and city recovery across different demographic and societal groups including young workers, ethnic groups, and women, however it does not publish the breakdown per city and region.

The report also proposed four key areas for cities and regions to consider as they develop Levelling Up plans and continue to address economic recovery. In order to secure a fairer economic recovery and build sustainable growth it highlights

that local and central government and the private sector should focus on the following:

1. Levelling up and the reality of regional inequality
2. Capitalising on growth outside the larger metropolitan cities
3. Driving social mobility and addressing intergenerational inequality
4. Green growth to provide the basis for all future action

There are various actions that sit below these priority areas for central and local government and businesses relating to investment in relationships across the public, private and third sectors to develop place strategies for place based transformation; investment in high streets; sector focused employment investment; reskilling and apprenticeships; local economic strategies; housing education; improved transportation links; circular economy and green growth; net zero and sustainability.

These action areas align to Belfast's strategic ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, and propositions outlined within the Innovation & Growth Commission 'Reset for Growth' report aimed at amplifying the city and region's future success focused around priorities on being more globally relevant; immediate action on climate change and turning this into an economic opportunity; housing development; developing a stronger core city and delivery of a Bolder Vision and a focus on building world-renowned business clusters.

Financial & Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

The Committee noted the update on PwC's Good Growth for Cities 2022: Taking Action on Levelling Up report.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Community Planning Update: Belfast Agenda Review, City Development and Jobs, Skills and Education Delivery Boards

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Belfast Agenda Review, including the action planning phase, with a specific focus on the work being taken forward by the City Development and Jobs, Skills and Education delivery Boards.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- i. Note that a report was presented to the March SP&R Committee outlining the progress of the development of the refreshed Belfast Agenda Strategy document and supporting four-year Delivery Action Plans.
- ii. Note the progress for the City Development and Jobs, Skills and Education Boards as set out in this report.
- iii. Consider and provide comments on the emerging strategic intents and measures of success (stretch goals) as set out in slides 12-22 in Appendix 1.
- iv. Note the proposed next steps and timeline as set out in slide 33 in Appendix 1.
- v. Note the plans for continued elected member engagement, detailed in section 3.5.

3.0 Main report

Background

Members will be aware of the Belfast Agenda: Continuing the Conversation engagement that commenced in June 2021 to inform the refreshed Belfast Agenda for the period 2022-26. During this engagement there was broad agreement that the existing long-term vision and outcomes of the Belfast Agenda remain relevant, and the proposed priorities of focus were the things that stakeholders and communities believed community planning could help address over the next 4-year period. As a result of feedback received some minor changes have been made to the framing of priority areas such as changing ‘Economic Recovery’ to ‘Sustainable & Inclusive Economic Growth’ and the creation of a specific priority for City Development. A summary of the current Belfast Agenda priority framework is attached at Appendix 1

Bringing focus and commitment to delivery

Members will recall that in order to ensure that the vision and ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda translates into

delivery, four cross-sectoral Boards have been formed (City Development | Jobs, Skills and Education | Living Here | Resilience and Sustainability) under the auspices of the Community Planning Partnership.

Building on the recommendations and consensus reached through Phase 1, the Community Planning Partnership, Delivery Boards and Council have committed to co-design specific and measurable action plans which underpin the priority areas of focus. This has been the focus of each of the respective delivery boards, who have designated small groups of core partners to develop the co-design approach for each priority area. This has involved analysing the range of outputs from the phase 1 engagement process; assessing relevant strategies, plans and local intelligence; feedback from community focus groups & surveys; feedback from Delivery Board workshops and legacy actions contained within previous action plans.

Based on this initial analysis, partners prepared a strategic framework to help bring focus to the emerging co-designed action plans consisting of:

1. What are we trying to achieve over the next 4 years (strategic intent)
2. How will we measure success (stretch goals); and
3. How will we realise such success (SMART Action Plan(s)).

Sections 3.3 & 3.4 outlines how a structured and informed approach is being taken forward with respect to the City Development Board & Jobs, Skills & Education Board priority areas, ambitions, measures of success and importantly the focus for collaborative action.

City Development Update

Members will recall that in January 2022, an update was presented on the City Development Board workshop which took place in November 2021. Since the workshop, significant work has been undertaken with partners to co-design action plans. Some specific points we would highlight for Members include:

Housing-Led Regeneration

A Housing-Led Regeneration Group, chaired by the NIHE Chief Executive with representation from BCC, DfC, and LPS has been established to drive forward collaborative action

through community planning. planning. The following draft strategic intents have been defined:

1. Increase housing supply across all tenures in the Belfast City Council area (including a strategic sites assessment exercise of all public sector assets).
2. Increase the city centre residential population
3. Address dereliction in local areas
4. Adopt a placeshaping approach to local development
5. Identify housing stock which requires retrofit to reduce fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency

Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel

Work is underway with partners from DfI, Translink, Sustrans, Council and community partners to establish the right mechanism to deliver on this priority. The following draft strategic intents have been defined:

1. Reduce private car use to improve individual, community, environmental and economic well-being
2. Enable connections to and from the city centre, enhancing permeability with neighbourhoods by improving active travel and sustainable travel routes across Belfast

City Regeneration and Investment

Work is underway with partners from SIB, Council, the private sector and community representatives to establish the right mechanism to deliver on the City Regeneration and Investment priority with recognition that this priority must have citywide impact. To date, the following draft strategic intents have been defined:

1. Working collaboratively to maximise social, environmental and economic benefits of citywide regeneration schemes
2. Working collaboratively to unlock barriers to driving forward major regeneration schemes
3. Working in partnership to address dereliction and maximise placemaking and regeneration opportunities across the city and neighbourhoods

4. To create a vibrant, thriving city centre which positions the city to compete
5. Developing opportunities in line with strengths to position the city to compete globally

Future City Centre Programme

Members will also recall that in January 2022 it was agreed that a City Centre Delivery Group would be established to focus on the city centre. Particular areas of focus include regeneration, city centre living, connectivity, investment, vibrancy, cultural and tourism offering and digital innovation. On-going work is currently being undertaken via City & Neighbourhoods Services in relation to a Clean Green, Safe and Inclusive Action Plan based on a multi-agency approach. Discussions are underway with various partners to bring focus to the Future City Centre priority including accelerating some areas of work which have been identified in A Bolder Vision. To date, the following draft strategic intents have been identified:

1. Drive the physical, cultural and tourism regeneration of the city centre
2. Create a thriving city core through diversifying and enhancing the city centre offer
3. To build the foundations and establish Belfast as a globally significant destination for innovation
4. Facilitate a clean, green, safe and inclusive city centre

We will continue to work with partners and communities, including a recent City Development Board meeting held on 11 March 2022, to co-design delivery plans over the forthcoming weeks and months. This represents an ongoing and complex process, which requires participation and involvement across public and private sectors and communities at multiple levels, which has resulted in some priorities being more developed than others. It was also agreed at the recent meeting of the Board that there be VCSE / community representation on emerging sub structures. The emerging frameworks for each of the priorities are attached as part of the presentation attached at Appendix 1 (slides 12 to 22) which had been discussed with the All-Party Working group on Community Planning when it met on 23 February 2022. The strategic intents and stretch goals have subsequently been further developed, particularly the City Development elements following the Board meeting on Friday

11 March. This reflects the dynamic nature of the co-design process which remains a work in progress.

Jobs, Skills and Education Update

The Jobs, Skills & Education Board met on 7th March 2022 and agreed on the following strategic framework for its three priority areas of focus, to be considered further at the next meeting of the Community Planning Partnership and through wider consultation and engagement.

Educational Inequalities

Community planning partners have committed to ensuring that everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential, which means that upon leaving school young people will be supported into a positive destination of their choosing where they enjoy active participation in all areas of life. Educational attainment has a strong impact on individual wellbeing and the opportunities that people have to fulfil their potential. A specific task group comprised of community planning partners has been established to drive activity in this area, aligned with the Department of Education's A Fair Start Report & Action Plan.

Strategic Intent:

1. Every child and young person is supported in their wellbeing and learning so that they develop the skills and capabilities to fulfil their potential and progress to a positive destination.

Targets to be achieved by 2026:

- All schools, family and community place-based partnerships will devise and implement a whole community approach to the learning and development of children and young people; this will be evidenced in School Development Plans, relevant action plans and community partnership plans;
- Increase the percentage of school leavers progressing into positive destinations from 93% to 96%;
- Support children in their early years in disadvantaged areas in a seamless journey from antenatal, to pre-school, school and beyond;
- Reduce the proportion of pupils with less than 85% attendance from 12% to 8%.

Employability & Skills

Having a good job is important to people in Belfast and is key to ensuring we deliver inclusive growth for all our residents. The labour market in Belfast is complex and changing and there are many challenges regarding the skill levels of the city's resident. In order to make Belfast a city where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy and fulfils their potential, it is imperative that we work collectively to increase skills attainment while also matching people and skills to opportunities. Within this context we have worked with the Department for Communities and community planning partners to establish a labour market partnership that will seek to achieve the following:

Strategic Intent:

1. Quickly back to work – mitigate the economic impact of Covid-19 on the labour market by supporting those who have been or are at-risk of being made unemployed.
2. Increase opportunities – empower those furthest from the labour market to succeed and progress in employment.
3. No-one left behind – target disadvantaged groups through the delivery of an integrated, comprehensive, inclusive, holistic and local employability approach.
4. Catching-up – support access to careers paths, reskilling and upskilling for those who are out of work and those on low incomes.

Targets to be achieved by 2026:

- Decrease the proportion of residents who are unemployed, yet actively seeking employment, to 1.5%.
- Cut the proportion of working-age population with no qualifications to 12.0%.
- Reduce the working-age economic inactivity rate (excluding students) within the city from a baseline of 23.5% to 18%.
- Increase to the working-age population who have attained Level 4 or above qualifications to 56.0%.

Sustainable & Inclusive Economic Growth:

A thriving and prosperous economy is the engine of change for our city and the critical contributor to all the outcomes that

we wish to achieve. As the region's capital city, its major population centre and the hub for business and employment, Belfast is critical to Northern Ireland's economic future. Therefore, growing an inclusive and sustainable economy is one of our key priorities. Creating more and better jobs that are sustainable, rewarding, provide a career path and are financially rewarding has consistently been the major concern raised by residents and other stakeholders.

As a city, Belfast faces a number of economic challenges which affect our ability to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth, some of these challenges are deep rooted structural issues, which have been further exacerbated through COVID-19. Some of our challenges include lagging productivity, low levels of business start-up, innovation and export and ongoing issues with economic inactivity and high rates of unemployment.

The next iteration of the Belfast Agenda will be informed by an economic strategy which will support sustainable and inclusive growth for the period 2022-30. The strategy will clearly articulate the role of Belfast in the regional economy and will identify a series of key propositions to build on areas of competitive advantage in a rapidly changing global business context while ensuring that structural and environmental challenges are considered in order to drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth. A number of strategic intents, which are subject to further consultation, are outlined below and will inform the strategic intent, targets and actions for this priority area within the Belfast Agenda.

Strategic Intents:

- 1. Foster growth of indigenous businesses in Belfast by improving innovation, scale up, growth and survival rates in sectors aligned with Northern Ireland's vision for a 10x Economy**
- 2. Create new and better jobs in the city by driving innovation and increasing value add of business activity**
- 3. Build and maintain a skills pipeline that addresses the skills gaps of Belfast's current and future businesses, with clear pathways for employee growth and development into priority sectors**
- 4. Improve socio-economic inclusion in the city by providing fair access to well paid jobs**

- 5. Grow levels of exports and foreign direct investment in Belfast, supporting businesses to capitalise on Belfast's unique geographical opportunities**
- 6. Establish Belfast as a vibrant place to invest, live, work and play and attract a diverse and skilled workforce for the future**
- 7. Establish Belfast as a resilient, net-zero, circular economy and deliver business opportunities in green technology such as green hydrogen.**

Targets to be achieved by 2026:

While targets are still to be agreed through the progression of the economic strategy, some initial thoughts for further consideration include the following:

- Increase the number of new business start-ups and the survival rates of existing businesses**
- Increase the number of businesses in the city who are exporting and undertaking R&D activity**
- Decrease the proportion of residents who are unemployed, yet actively seeking employment, to xxx**
- Achieve an x% increase in our overall Inclusive Growth score (will depend on what framework we decide to go with)**
- Increase the GVA growth rate for Belfast and the surrounding region**
- Grow economic participation within priority sectors**
- Increase productivity of businesses and employees across sectors, focusing on skills required in priority sectors**
- Maintain improvements in 'quality of life' indices to maintain attractiveness of the city for current and future population**
- Reduce traffic congestion and improve transport links to areas of the city with potential for future growth**

It is proposed that the timeline for developing the refreshed Belfast Agenda strategy document and underpinning delivery plans includes sufficient time for direct and genuine engagement with partners, communities/ communities of interest and specific

sectors including the business and private sector over April and May 2022. In addition, more formal and intensive consultation activities are planned on the strategy document as well as further engagement to co-design the action plans during May and June 2022. Slide 33 in Appendix 1 outlines the proposed next steps and timeline for this process. It is felt that the timeline will allow for greater input and enable valuable buy-in to the emerging plans.

Political engagement with elected members

It is intended that regular updates will be brought to future meetings of Committee for consideration and input. The intention would be to bring a further iteration of the draft strategy and emerging action plans to Committee in May 2022 for further consideration, input, and refinement.

Members are asked to consider and provide feedback on the emerging frameworks outlined by 20 April 2022 to communityplanning@belfastcity.gov.uk. This feedback will then be reflected in future iterations and can be discussed further with members as the strategy is further refined.

Financial & Resource Implications

Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will continue to involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

It is recommended that the consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda will take account of the draft Audit of Inequalities and include specific sessions with targeted harder to reach groups to ensure that equality implications are considered as part of the review process.

The Committee:

- Noted that a report had been presented to the March Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, which outlined the progress of the development of the refreshed Belfast Agenda Strategy document and supporting four-year Delivery Action Plans;

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- Noted the progress for the City Development and Jobs, Skills and Education Boards;
- Noted the proposed next steps and timeline; and
- Noted the plans for continued Elected Member engagement.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

**External Market Application –
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival Bazaar**

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee that an application had been received on behalf of Firefox Events to hold a market of up to 40 traders, on the premises of the Common Market on 2nd May, 2022, as part of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival.

He pointed out that officers had been satisfied that the market would be well placed in the Common Market space and that it would be compliant with all relevant regulations and statutory requirements. He added that all of the traders would be local to Northern Ireland and were producing local and artisan products and that the local traders had indicated that they were fully supportive of the market event taking place.

The Committee agreed to grant a market licence to the Firefox Events to hold the one-off market as part of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival on Monday 2nd May 2022 from 1-5pm.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 13th April, 2022

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Donnelly (Chairperson);
Aldermen Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Bradley, Bunting, Howard,
M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Magee,
McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCusker, McKeown and
Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Unit Manager;
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Hutchinson, McCullough and Mulholland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in relation to the item under the heading 'Stationary Street Trading Licence application for Dargan Crescent' in that she had previously met with the applicant and indicated that she would leave the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item under the heading 'Applications for the Provisional Grant of an Outdoor Entertainments Licences for Flaxx @ Linen Quarter', in that he had spoken with regard to the Planning Application at a meeting of the Planning Committee.

Delegated Matters

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(d)

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications for licenses and Road Closure Orders which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

**Stationary Street Trading Licence
application for Dargan Crescent**

The Building Control Manager informed the Committee that, following its decision of 19th January, 2022 that was minded to refuse to grant a Stationary Street Trading Licence application for Dargan Crescent, on the grounds that, due to misconduct or some other reason relating to trading activities, it deemed the applicant unsuitable to hold a licence. The applicant, Mr David Reilly, had been notified of the decision and informed that he would be permitted to make personal and written representation to the Committee within 21 days from the date of notice.

He advised the Committee that, subsequently, the applicant had verbally informed the Senior Licensing Officer that he did not wish to appeal the decision.

The Committee agreed to uphold its initial decision of 19th January 2022 and refused the grant of the Stationary Street Trading Licence.

**Application for the Provisional Grant of an Amusement
Permit for Hollywood Bowl, Odyssey Pavilion, 2 Queens Quay**

The Building Control Manager reported that an application had been received from Hollywood Bowl for the provisional grant of an Amusement Permit which would consist of a 20-lane bowling alley, a licenced American diner style restaurant and bar and an amusement zone comprising of 12 amusement with prizes gaming machines with a maximum cash prize of £8.00, 64 amusement machines and four pool tables.

He informed the Members that, as the application did not include machines with a maximum cash prize of £25.00, admission would not be restricted to persons aged 18 years old or over and that the proposed opening hours were Monday to Saturday from 9am to 1am, and Sunday from 9am to 12am.

He pointed out that no representations had been received in response to a public notice of the application and that both the PSNI and NIFRS had no objections to the application. He added that a Building Regulations application had been submitted for alterations to the premises and that, should the Committee be minded to provisionally grant the application, the permit would not be declared final until all works had been completed and compliant with the Building Regulations.

The Building Control Manager outlined the evaluation of the application against the criteria contained within the Council's Amusement Permit Policy and stated that he did not consider the permit application to be contrary to the objectives and criteria of the policy.

The Committee agreed to grant the permit provisionally and to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to issue the final permit on completion of all technical requirements.

**Application for the Provisional Grant of
An Outdoor Entertainments Licences for
Flaxx @ Linen Quarter**

The Building Control Manager reported that an application had been received for the provisional grant of an Outdoor Entertainments Licence for Flaxx @ Linen Quarter, a newly constructed decking area situated on Brunswick Street, between James Street South and Franklin Street, on a section of road that had been formally closed by the Department for Infrastructure Roads to allow for the creation of a new public realm space.

He pointed out that, it had been proposed that entertainment would be provided with a maximum capacity of 500 persons on Monday to Saturday from 11.30am to 11.00pm and on Sunday from 12.30pm to 11.00pm.

He stated that no representations had been received in response to a public notice of the application and that both the PSNI and NIFRS had no objections to the application. He added that a Building Regulations application had been submitted for the construction of the new outdoor area and that, should the Committee be minded to provisionally grant the application, the licence would not be declared final until all works had been completed and compliant with the Building Regulations.

The Building Control Manager highlighted that the applicant had provided an acoustic report for the outdoor area to the Environmental Protection Unit for evaluation and that any necessary acoustic measures would be required to be implemented before the grant of the licence could be confirmed.

The Committee agreed to grant the application for the provisional licence and to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to issue the final licence on completion of all technical requirements.

**Application for the Provisional Grant of an Outdoor
Entertainments Licences for Cargo @ T13, Titanic Quarter**

The Building Control Manager informed the Committee that an application had been received for the provisional grant of an Outdoor Entertainments License for Cargo @ T13, on Queen's Road, an outdoor events space located on the hardstanding areas to the front of the T13 facility at Titanic Quarter and would include a bar facility, restaurant and live music.

He pointed out that it had been proposed that entertainment would be provided with a maximum capacity of 4000 persons on Monday to Saturday from 11.30am to 11.00pm and Sunday from 12.30pm to 11.00pm.

He stated that no representations had been received in response to a public notice of the application and that both the PSNI and NIFRS had been consulted, but that no response had yet been received from either the NIFRS or PSNI. He added that the applicant had been asked to provide an acoustic report for the outdoor area for evaluation and any necessary acoustic measures would be required to be implemented, along with

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any fire safety, structural or access requirements upon completion of works, before the grant of the licence could be confirmed.

The Committee agreed to grant the application for the provisional licence and to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to issue the final licence on completion of all technical requirements, subject to no objection being received from the PSNI.

**Applications for the Variation of an Outdoor
Entertainments Licence for Pug Ugly's,
21 Bedford Street**

The Building Control Manager reported that an application had been received for the variation of an Outdoor Entertainments License for the carpark area to the rear of 29 Bedford Street, known as The Boneyard, affiliated to Pug Ugly's, the applicant.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 20th August, 2020, it had agreed to grant the Seven-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence for Pug Ugly's, thereby permitting entertainment to take place on Monday to Saturday from 12.00pm to 1.00am, and on Sundays from 12.30pm to midnight.

He stated that the applicant had proposed that entertainment would be provided with a maximum capacity of 800 persons on Monday to Saturday from 11.30am to 2am and on Sunday from 12.30pm to 1.00am, to allow them to compete with the majority of licensed premises in the vicinity. He added that the applicant had pointed out that, due to Covid-19, many patrons had a preference to socialising outdoors and an extension of hours would allow those patrons to socialise later into the evening without being disadvantaged.

The Building Control Manager stated that no representations had been received in response to a public notice of the application and that both the PSNI and NIFRS had been consulted and that the PSNI had had no objections to the application. However the NIFRS had not yet responded. He added that special licence conditions with regard to noise measures had been attached to the licence and that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the premises in the previous 12-month period.

The Committee agreed to approve the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence, subject to no objection being received from the NIFRS.

Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (NI) 2021

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To update Members on a three-month trial, where authority was delegated to Council officers, to deal with any Article 44A extension applications for non-City centre locations and to

report on pubs and hotels in City centre locations, the operation of Biddu Duffy's and Horatio Todd's and on Police Service of Northern Ireland Authorisations for Additional Hours.

2.0 Recommendations

Given the limited uptake in Article 44A extension applications and Police Service of Northern Ireland authorisations for additional hours Members are asked to consider either:

- I. Extending the trial period whereby authority is delegated to officers to deal with all such applications in the manner previously agreed for a timeframe to be determined; OR
- II. Delegating authority to officers to deal with all such applications in the manner previously agreed until such times as there are sufficient applications made and evidence of any issues arising therefrom, if any, are such that would require those matters to be brought back to Committee for further consideration.

For either option this would be on the proviso that such applications did not relate to premises where the provision of entertainment had been subject to significant objections or prosecution in the past.

In such instances, these applications would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

3.0 Main report

Background

At your meeting of 19th January, the Committee considered a report on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (NI) 2021 and agreed:

- i. to delegate authority to Council officers, on a three-month trial basis, to deal with any Article 44A extension applications for non-City centre locations in a similar way to that which had been agreed for Biddu Duffy's and Horatio Todd's at the meeting on 15th December, 2021, with the proviso that such applications did not relate to premises where the provision of entertainment had been subject to significant objections or prosecution in the past. In such instances those

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- applications will be presented to the Committee for consideration;
- ii. that a report on the outcome of the aforementioned trial period be presented to the Committee for consideration; and
 - iii. that the report on pubs and hotels in City centre locations, the operation of Biddu Duffy's and Horatio Todd's and on Police Service of Northern Ireland Authorisations for Additional Hours, which was due to be presented to the meeting in February, be submitted at the same time as that relating to non-City centre premises.

Summary position following January Committee

**Biddu Duffy's, 133 Andersonstown Road
Horatio Todd's, 406 – 408 Upper Newtownards Road**

The Committee agreed to offer no objection to Article 44A extension applications for Biddu Duffy's and Horatio Todd's up to 13th April 2022 and that each applicant be requested:

- i. to agree to withdraw all Article 44A extension applications beyond 13th April, to allow officers to provide at the Committee meeting in April an update on any issues which had arisen from the operation of the premises during the 3-month trial period, given that both premises were located in close proximity to residential accommodation; and
- ii. to agree not to provide entertainment after 2.00 a.m., unless an Entertainments Licence was in place which expressly permitted entertainment to take place beyond that time.

Pubs and Hotels – Non-City Centre Locations Generally

The Committee agreed that, should any further Article 44A extension applications for non-City centre locations be received between the January meeting and 13th April 2022, officers should deal with them in a similar way as those for Biddu Duffy's and Horatio Todd's, in that each applicant would be requested:

- i. to agree to withdraw all Article 44A extension applications beyond 13th April, to allow officers to provide at the Committee meeting in April an update on any issues which had arisen from the

operation of the premises during the 3-month trial period, given that they were located in close proximity to residential accommodation; and

- ii. to agree not to provide entertainment after 2.00 a.m., unless an Entertainments Licence was in place which expressly permitted entertainment to take place beyond that time.**

This was provided that the application did not relate to premises where the provision of entertainment had been subject to significant objections or prosecution in the past.

In such instances, the application would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

Pubs and Hotels – City Centre Locations

The Committee agreed that Article 44A extension applications for pubs and hotels in City centre locations should continue to be dealt with by Council officers under delegated authority, as follows:

- i. to offer no objection to Article 44A extension applications which have been received to serve alcohol to 2.00am for city centre venues where they are in possession of an entertainments licence which permits entertainment to 3.00am every night of the week, and**
- ii. to confirm that, in principle, the Council has no objection to Article 44A extension applications which have been received to serve alcohol to 2.00 a.m. for city centre venues where they are in possession of an entertainments licence which permits entertainment to 3.00 a.m. only on specified nights of the week but advising the Court of the fact that the Entertainments Licence does not permit entertainment to 3.00am on some of the dates to which the extension applications relate.**

It was noted that, in cases where Article 44A extension applications had been received for premises where the provision of entertainment had been subject to significant objections or prosecution, those would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

Police Service of Northern Ireland
Authorisations for Additional Hours

The Committee agreed that authority be delegated to Council officers to deal with Police Service of Northern Ireland authorisations for additional hours and that no representations be made unless there is reason to do so by virtue of any:

- a. restrictions placed upon the Entertainment Licence (if the premises associated with the application has an Entertainments licence),
- b. complaints regarding the operation of, or anti-social behaviour in and around, the premises, and
- c. Building Regulation or other Council statutory enforcement issues.

Key Issues

Summary of 3-month trial period

Biddy Duffy's, 133 Andersonstown Road
Horatio Todd's, 406 – 408 Upper Newtownards Road

To date neither licensee has availed of the additional hours of operation permitted by their Article 44A applications granted by the Courts. As we understand it both licensees currently only intend to use their additional hours for special occasions such as Christmas, Easter or other significant celebrations.

Given that the premises are close to residential properties the intention of the 3-month trial period was to consider whether the premises operating to the later hours, or any period immediately following their termination, led to undue inconvenience to persons residing in the vicinity.

There is therefore no evidence to provide for Committee in relation to the impact, if any, of these bars selling alcohol to 2.00am on their local neighbourhood.

Pubs and Hotels – Non-City Centre Locations Generally

Since your meeting in January no other Article 44A extension applications for non-City centre locations have been received by the Council.

There is therefore no evidence to provide for Committee in relation to the impact, if any, of pubs and hotels in other non-city centre locations selling alcohol to 2.00am on their local neighbourhood.

Pubs and Hotels – City Centre Locations

The Council has received 22 Article 44A extension applications for City centre pubs and hotels and these have been responded to as outlined in section 3.6 above.

To date we have not received any noise complaints in relation to any of these venues nor are we aware of any concerns that the PSNI have in relation to these properties.

Police Service of Northern Ireland Authorisations for Additional Hours

The Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (NI) 2021 introduced new, or amended existing, powers for police authorisations for additional hours which,

1. allows pubs which have an Article 44 licence to apply to the PSNI for ad-hoc late opening (11.00pm - 1.00am) up to 20 times per year for a day not covered by the article 44 Order,
2. increases the number of occasions smaller pubs (which are not structurally adapted and therefore unable to apply for an Article 44 licence) can apply for late opening (11.00pm - 1.00am) from 20 to 104 times per year, and
3. increases the number of occasions registered clubs can apply for late opening (11.00pm - 1.00am) from 85 to 104 times per year.

The applicant must display notice of the application on or near their premises during the three weeks before the first occasion to which the application relates. The Council must also be served with a copy of the Notice three weeks before the first date to which the application relates.

The Council has not received notification of any applications in relation to the Police Service of Northern Ireland authorisation for additional hours since your meeting last December.

There is therefore no evidence to provide for Committee in relation to the impact, if any, of any applications to the Police

for authorisation for additional hours on local neighbourhoods.

Conclusions

Coronavirus has had a significant impact on the licensed trade and it would seem that the introduction of new legislation to permit longer opening hours has not had the widespread uptake that might have been expected.

As trade in the industry and tourism generally begins to pick up again it is anticipated that there will be greater interest from pubs and hotels in availing of the opportunity to serve alcohol until 2.00am.

To date the introduction of the new legislation does not appear to have had any impact on the rights of local residents not to be subject to unacceptable disturbance. This situation will be kept under review as the licensed trade recovers from the impact of the pandemic.

Financial and Resource Implications

None

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee agreed to extend the trial period for a further six months and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to deal with all such applications in the manner which had been previously agreed.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licenses Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of licences for Houses in Multiple Occupation which had, since its last meeting, been issued under the Council’s Scheme of Delegation.

Application for a Licence to operate a House of Multiple Occupation

The HMO Unit Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To consider an application for a Licence permitting the use of premises as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

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Premises	Application No.	Applicant(s)	Managing Agents
13 Fitzroy Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1HS	8836	Mr Jack Kennedy	Property People Belfast Ltd T/A Property People

Members are reminded that licences are issued for a 5-year period with standard conditions. Where it is considered necessary to do so, the Committee can also impose special conditions.

Background

The property was previously licensed as an HMO in the name of the previous owner who sold the property on the 4 August 2021 at which time the licence in accordance with Section 28 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ceased to have effect.

On the 15 October 2021 an HMO licence application was received from the owners of the accommodation. As this was a new application the HMO Unit consulted with the Council's Planning Service who on the 15 October 2021 confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development was granted with the planning reference LA04/2021/1732/LDE

Following the publication of this application, an objection was received in relation to the application. The objection raises concerns regarding overprovision of HMOs in the locality.

On the 15 October 2021 the applicant submitted an application for a Temporary Exemption Notice "TEN" and following clarification from the managing agent the TEN was granted on the 20 October 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

Taking into account the information presented Committee is asked to hear from the applicant and the objector and make a decision to either:

- (i) Grant the application, with or without any special conditions; or
- (ii) Refuse the application.

If the application is refused, the applicant has a right of appeal to the County Court. Such an appeal must be lodged within 28 days of formal notification of the decision. The licence will remain in place pending the appeal.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

Pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council may only grant a licence if it is satisfied that:

- a) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;
- b) the owner, and any managing agent of it, are fit and proper persons;
- c) the proposed management arrangements are satisfactory);
- d) the granting of the licence will not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- e) the living accommodation is fit for human habitation and—
 - (i) is suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
 - (ii) can be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

Planning

As this is a new application the HMO Unit consulted with the Council's Planning Service who on the 15 October 2021 confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development was granted with the planning reference LA04/2021/1732/LDE

Fitness

When considering the fitness of an applicant the Council must have regard to any offences concerning fraud/ dishonesty, violence, drugs, human trafficking, firearms, sexual offences, unlawful discrimination in, or in connection with, the carrying on of any business; or any provision of the law relating to housing or of landlord and tenant law. It also permits the Council to take into account any other matter which the council considers to be relevant.

The NIHMO Unit has consulted with the following units within the Council's City and Neighbourhood Services Department –

- (a) Environmental Protection Unit ('EPU') - who have confirmed that in relation to night-time noise there has been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of the HMO in the last 5 years,

- (b) Environmental Protection Unit ('EPU') - who have confirmed that in relation to day-time noise there has been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of the HMO in the last 5 years,
- (c) Public Health and Housing Unit ('PHHU') - who have confirmed that in relation to rubbish accumulation/filthy premises, there has been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of the HMO in the last 5 years,
- (d) Enforcement Unit ('EU') - who have confirmed that in relation to litter and waste, there has been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of the HMO in the last 5 years,

The Applicants and Managing Agent have confirmed that they have not been convicted of any relevant offences as set out at paragraph 3.3 of this report.

The Applicant or Managing Agent have not been convicted of any HMO related offences by the Council. The EPU, PHHU and EU, solely in respect of their statutory functions, have confirmed that there are no relevant, previous convictions in respect of the Applicant, Managing Agent or occupants. Due to data protection issues which have arisen, PSNI have not been accepting or responding to notification of these applications. Officers are continuing to engage with PSNI to find a resolution to this issue.

Officers are not aware of any other issues relevant to the Applicant's fitness.

Overprovision

For the purpose of determining whether or not the granting of a licence would result in an overprovision of HMOs in the locality of the accommodation, and in order to ensure consistency as both a planning and licensing authority the locality was defined as being HMO Policy Area 'HMO 2/22 Botanic, Holylands and Rugby' as defined in the document "Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015.

Legal Services has advised that there is a clear requirement in Section 8 of the 2016 Act upon the Council to be satisfied that the granting of a licence will not result in overprovision.

On the date of assessment, 14 February 2022 there were a total of 1100 licensed HMOs in HMO policy area 'HMO 2/22 Botanic, Holylands, Rugby' which equates to just over 45% of the total dwelling units, which in turn exceeds the 30% development limit as set out at Policy HMO 1. The 1100 licensed HMOs have a capacity of 5022 persons.

The total number of dwelling units in a Policy Area is measured by Ordnance Survey's Pointer database.

The Council must also consider the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation is required to meet that need.

The fact the use of the property as an HMO is permitted for planning purposes is a relevant consideration in determining whether the grant of this licence will result in overprovision. There is an argument that it may not do so as the premises are already being used as an HMO, subject to the TEN issued on 20th October 2021 which has been further extended until 26 April 2022.

However, it should be borne in mind that planning permission was granted on the basis that the use had been established for 5 or more years and was therefore immune to enforcement. No assessment of overprovision was made at that time. Given the level of licensed HMO properties in this locality as set out above it would be highly unlikely that a planning application for a new HMO in the area would be successful as the thresholds in the 2015 Plan have been significantly exceeded.

The Council recognises that there is a need for intensive forms of housing and to meet this demand, HMOs are an important component of this housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, play an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who are single, who have temporary employment, students, low-income households and, more recently, migrant workers.

In September 2017 The Housing Executive published the document 'Housing Market Analysis Update – Belfast City Council Area' which states 'HMOs' form an important element of the PRS, particularly for younger people on low incomes and for single people, under the age of 35, affected by the limitation of housing benefit to the shared room rate. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that this has been a popular sector with migrant workers."

On 2 March 2022 there were 27 licensed HMOs advertised for let on the website Property News in BT7, from the information provided on the website this represented 92 bed spaces, although most of the accommodation is not available for immediate occupancy.

Anecdotal evidence from conversations with HMO managing agents suggest that there is currently a lack of HMO accommodation available in the locality. It is officers' view that it is too early to tell whether this is a temporary problem or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

Objections

One valid objection has been received in relation to this application on the grounds of over provision of HMOs in the local area. (Appendix 3)

Attendance

The applicant and/or their representatives will be available to discuss any matters relating to the licence application should they arise during your meeting. The objector will also be in attendance if members want to hear from them.

Suitability of the premises

An inspection of the premises was carried out by Officers from the Service on 17 December 2022 at which time it was established that an emergency escape window was required to the first floor of the property.

Notice of proposed decision

On the 3 March 2022, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, Officers issued a notice of proposed decision to the applicant setting out the terms of the proposed licence. (Appendix 4)

The notice of proposed decision stated that the council proposed to refuse the licence as the council is not satisfied that the granting of the licence will not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality in which the living accommodation is situated.

A statement of reasons for the proposal was included in the notice of proposed decision.

Statement of reasons for the proposed decision

Overprovision:

In accordance with Section 12 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 '2016 Act' the Council is satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence will result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

For the purpose of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act. The Council has determined the locality of the accommodation as being HMO Policy Area 'HMO 2/22 Botanic, Holylands, Rugby' as defined in the document "Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015 (the '2015 Plan')

In making this decision the Council has had regard to:

- (a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality
- (b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation is required to meet that need

To inform the Council in its consideration of the above provisions, the Council has taken account of the 2015 Plan and in particular, Policy HMO 1 and Policy HMO 2.

The total number of dwelling units in a Policy Area is measured by Ordnance Survey's Pointer database.

Regarding Section 12(2)(a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality.

On the date of assessment, 14 February 2022 there were a total of 1100 licensed HMOs in HMO policy area 'HMO 2/22 Botanic, Holylands, Rugby' which equates to just over 45% of the total dwelling units, which in turn exceeds the 30% development limit as set out at Policy HMO 1. The 1100 licensed HMOs have a capacity of 5022 persons.

Regarding Section 12(2)(b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation is required to meet that need.

A survey of 50 properties advertised on the website Property News in the postcode area BT7 which includes policy area HMO 2/22 was undertaken on 2 March 2022.

This determined available accommodation was advertised in 27 licensed HMOs. From the information provided on the website this represented up to 92 bed spaces, although most of the accommodation is not available for immediate occupancy.

Anecdotal evidence from previous conversations with HMO managing agents suggest that there is currently a lack of HMO accommodation available in this locality. It is too early to tell whether this is a temporary problem or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

Officers cannot be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence will not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

Applicant's response to the notice of proposed decision

On the 16 March 2022 the applicant submitted a written response to the notice of proposed decision in which he provides representations and commentary on the statement of reasons included in the notice of proposed decision.

Additionally, the applicant provides commentary on the subject premises, his capacity as a fit and proper person and the objection received.

Financial and Resource Implications

None. The cost of assessing the application and officer inspections are provided for within existing budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality or good relations issues associated with this report."

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. B. Ruddy, who had submitted an objection to the application. Ms. Ruddy explained to the Committee that, as a resident of the area for over 30 years and as Chair of the Holylands Residents' Network, she had seen the destruction of the area due to overprovision of HMO licences over the previous number of years and that the community had been decimated. She highlighted the impact of overprovision in the area, stating that it was the most densely populated area in Belfast,

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it had the highest rates of antisocial behaviour and constant fly tipping and open bins in the streets, due to lack of space to the rear of the properties, had caused foul smells in the area.

She reported that residents had endured noise issues, both during the day and through the night, and that car parking had caused congestion and pollution within the residential area. She added that the figure of 45% HMO provision in the area, contained within the report was not a true reflection of the area and, in any case, was far above the 30% recommendation.

She referred to the Council statement that there had been no complaints received with regard to antisocial behaviour at this property. She stated that it had not been accurate as the complaints procedure involved a number of agencies and the complexity of making a complaint discouraged many residents from doing so. She added that there was an intimidation factor with regard to making complaints due to a fear that windows would be broken or cars damaged, if a complaint were to be lodged.

She acknowledged that demographics were changing in the area and that there was a need for HMO licences as part of the housing market to provide affordable housing, but stated that the Holylands area was saturated with regard to HMO provision.

Ms. Ruddy stated that her work in the local community was aimed at reducing antisocial behaviour and promote regeneration, to make it a more welcoming area for families and young people.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Ruddy for her presentation and welcomed Mr. J. Kennedy, the applicant, to the meeting. Mr. Kennedy explained that Ms. Ruddy had objected to the HMO application on generic grounds of overprovision and had not submitted any evidence in support of that claim. He stated that his application should not be considered to contribute to overprovision in the area and reported that there was significant underprovision in the area.

He pointed out to the Committee that the property had held an HMO licence, since 2014, prior to its recent sale and transfer of ownership, and that, had the change of ownership not occurred, the previous licence would have remained valid until November, 2023.

He referred to the Council's assessment for overprovision and stated that, in his view, the Council had a weak anecdotal commentary that was clearly not a robust assessment of housing provision in the area.

He informed the Committee that the property was an excellent example of very high quality, recently renovated, five-bedroom accommodation which was well designed and well managed and that the property met, if not exceeded, all necessary standards for the operation of an HMO licence.

He outlined the benefits of an HMO property for students, low-income households and migrant workers and stated that the private rental sector played a vital role in meeting accommodation needs. He added that there was underprovision of HMO properties in

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the area and that statements from two large, well-respected and established expert local agents who operated in the area, supported his assertion of underprovision, in that they stated that the volume of HMO provision in the area does not meet the demand.

Mr. Kennedy concluded by stating that he felt that his application, on a property which previously operated as an HMO, should be granted, in order to continue to help address the growing accommodation demand in the area and that his application was no different to the large number of applications that had been approved earlier in the meeting.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Kennedy for his presentation and asked the Committee if they had any questions for the applicant or objector to the application.

A Member stated that, although the fitness of the applicant was not being contested, the inference that there was underprovision of HMO licences in the Holylands area was not an accurate statement and that, the data assessment, undertaken in February, 2022, had indicated that 45% of the total dwelling units in the Botanic, Holylands, Rugby HMO Policy Area, were licenced HMO units, which exceeded the 30% development limit, as set out at Policy HMO 1. He added that Legal Services had advised the Committee that there was a clear requirement in Section 8 of the 2016 Act that the Council may only grant a licence if it had been satisfied that the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality.

One Member commented that she felt it had been unfair that property agents in the area, with the knowledge that, upon the transfer of ownership of a property, the owner must apply for a new licence, rather than a renewal, had not been forthcoming or transparent with regard to the application process and HMO policies in an area of overprovision, with prospective homeowners in advance of purchase.

The Committee agreed to refuse the application on the basis that granting the license would result in overprovision.

Non-Delegated Matters

**Continuation of Reduced Fees for
Entertainments Licences**

The Building Control Manager reported that, following the decision of the Department for Communities in February, 2021, which determined that a reduced fee of £1 would apply to applications for the renewal of all categories of entertainments licence, both indoor and outdoor, received after 6th April, 2021, to alleviate the hardship that was being experienced by the hospitality industry due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Department had asked for the Council's views on whether there was a need to extend the measure beyond the 2021/22 financial year.

He referred to the Committee's decision of 16th February, 2022, where it agreed that the Council would recommend that the reduced fee should continue for the 2022/23 financial year.

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He informed the Committee that the Department for Communities had subsequently written to the Council, and he highlighted the following points:

- Views received were mixed, but the majority of councils favoured extending the reduction on condition that the Department provided additional funding to cover the resulting loss of income;
- That, having considered the Councils' views and given that the Health Minister had only very recently lifted all remaining COVID-19 restrictions on hospitality venues, meaning businesses have still some way to go to get back to normal operation, the Minister had decided to continue with this easement for a further year;
- The nominal fee of £1 for renewal applications only, for all categories of entertainments licence would therefore remain as set out in Local Government Circular 4/2021 for the 2022/2023 financial year, subject to a further review later in the year;
- That DfC recognised that the continuation of the measure would result in further loss of income for councils during the year to come; and
- That additional funding of some £17m, provided by the Executive for council losses incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, would be allocated to local councils by the DfC and that the funding included provision to cover any loss of income resulting from the reduction in fees for the renewal of entertainment licences for 2022/23.

He pointed out that, under the assumption that all applications received during the 2021/22 financial year are to be renewed in the subsequent financial year, subject to the £1 renewal fee, it was estimated that the Council would lose income in the region of £180,000. He added that the Council had secured funding from the Department for Communities to cover Covid-19 recovery costs for the 2022/23 financial year which could be used to negate any loss of income as a result of extending the concessionary fee for a further year.

The Committee noted the decision of the Minister for Communities that the nominal fee of £1 for renewal applications, for all categories of entertainments licence, would remain for the 2022/23 financial year, subject to a further review later in the year.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

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HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff, Councillor Hussey;
Councillors Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Maskey, McMullan, Murphy,
O'Hara and Spratt.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Hutchinson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 2nd, 15th and 29th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted that a site visit had taken place in respect of the below application, on 30th March, 2022:

- LA04/2021/2280/F - Mixed use, mixed tenure residential-led development of 778 apartments in three buildings with internal and external amenity space; flexible commercial/community floorspace (convenience store with hot food counter/ a1/a2/d1 uses/cafe/bar/restaurant); public realm including public square and waterfront promenade; cycle and car parking and associated landscaping, access roads, plant and site works including to existing river revetment at lands adjacent to and south east of the river lagan, west of Olympic Way of Queen's Road, Queen's Island

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted a list of decisions which had been taken under the delegated authority of the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, together with all other planning

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decisions which had been issued by the Planning Department between 5th March and 1st April 2022.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the receipt of correspondence in respect of a number of planning appeals which had been submitted to the Planning Appeals Commission, together with the outcomes of a range of hearings which had been considered by the Commission.

Planning Applications

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE
POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)**

Withdrawn Items

The Committee noted that the following two items had been withdrawn from the agenda by officers:

- LA04/2020/0559/F - Renovation and single storey rear extension to dwelling, construction of a new detached garage and new entrance gates and pillars at 24 Malone Park; and
- LA04/2020/0235/F - Tyre depot with associated parking, site works and new entrance onto Duncrue Road at 2 Dargan Crescent.

**(Reconsidered Item) LA04/2021/0720/F - Subdivision
of existing dwelling into two apartments with two storey
rear extension at 64 Ashley Avenue**

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the application had previously been presented to the Committee at its meeting on 15th March, 2022. At that meeting, Members had raised the issue of potential prematurity in relation to the draft LDP Strategy and had deferred the application in order to get further information regarding the figures of existing HMOs and flats within the surrounding area.

The Committee was advised that the Local Development Plan Team had been consulted and had advised that, within the draft Plan Strategy, Policy HOU10 stated that planning permission should only be granted for HMOs and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within a Housing Management Area (HMA). The Members were advised that the data illustrated that there were 708 HMOs/flats/apartments and 1,171 domestic properties, so the percentage of HMOs and flats/apartments combined within the area was 60%.

The Principal Planning officer outlined the justification and amplification text for Policy HOU10 in the draft Plan Strategy, which stated that, in advance of the Local Policies Plan, those policies would be applied to the HMO policy areas outlined within designation HMO2 of the HMOs subject plan for Belfast City Council area 2015. Therefore, in advance of the Local Policies Plan being drafted, the Plan Strategy at the point of adoption would require that the provision of Policy HOU10 be applied to the existing Policy Areas as designated in the HMOs

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Subject Plan – that is, the Ulsterville HMO Policy Area (HMO 2/21). The latest available data showed that there were 529 HMO Units in the Policy Area and 1,171 domestic properties, so the percentage of HMOs in the Policy Area was 45%. As the application was not for HMO units, the policies contained within the Belfast HMO Subject Plan 2015 did not apply.

The Committee was advised that the Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy 2035 would guide future planning application decision making to support the sustainable spatial growth of the city up to 2035. The draft Plan Strategy had been subject to examination by the Planning Appeals Commission and the Council had been provided with a copy of its report, together with a Direction from DfI in relation to additional required steps before it could be considered adopted. Paragraph 1.10 of the SPPS stated that a transitional period would operate until such times as a Council's Plan Strategy was adopted. Accordingly, whilst the Draft Plan Strategy was now a material consideration, it had limited weight until it was adopted and, during the transitional period, planning authorities would apply existing policy together with the SPPS.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the application was compliant with current policies set out in the SPPS and PPS7 Quality Residential Environments and the Addendum to PPS7 PPS 7 (Addendum): Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas. Therefore, significant weight remained with the existing policies considered within the report and with which the application complied.

A Member stated that she still had concerns regarding prematurity and queried the policy test for PPS7.

After further clarification was given by from the Principal Planning officer, the Chairperson put the officers' recommendation to the Committee, namely, to grant approval to the application, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was accordingly declared carried.

**LA04/2021/0052/F & LA04/2021/0051/LBC - New shopfront
to ground floor and change of use of first floor from retail
to 3 no. 1 bedroom apartments at 10-16 Castle Place**

The Committee was provided with the details of the application, whereby full planning permission was sought for a new shop frontage for a retail unit A2 (financial services) at ground floor level previously approved under LA04/2019/0405/F. It was also proposed to change the use of the first floor from Use Class A2 financial services, to three 1 bedroom apartments.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the site was located in the City Centre Conservation Area and was part of 'Castle Buildings' (8-18 Castle Place), a 4-storey Grade B1 listed building. She outlined that there was an associated listed building consent application LA04/2021/0051/LBC.

The Committee was advised that minimal intervention would be made to the fabric of the building. The first floors would be divided into three 1 bedroom apartments.

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Each apartment would have a living room with an outlook over Castle Place. The windows on the front elevation area were all large and would provide adequate daylight into each apartment. The ground floor shop front was to be replaced with a new aluminium shop front with sliding doors. She outlined that it was considered that the design respected the listed building in terms of scale, height, massing and alignment. The works proposed would make use of traditional and sympathetic building materials and that the nature of the proposed use would respect the character of the listed building and the conservation area.

The Members were advised that the development involved the refurbishment of a city centre building with no external amenity space. Regard had to be given to the desirability of the renovation of the Listed Building and balanced against a shortfall in amenity space.

The Principal Planning officer reported that HED, the Council's Conservation Officer and Environmental Health had no objections to the proposal and that no third party objections had been received.

The Committee was advised that NI Water had since requested a Wastewater Impact Assessment to be submitted directly to it, to find a potential solution. It was considered, on balance, that the issue could be resolved by means of a negative condition.

The Committee approved the application and granted delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

LA04/2021/2095/F - Change of Use of warehouse and offices to public house (linked to existing adjacent public house) and entertainment venue/events space including street food market for on premises consumption (part retrospective) at Common Market, 16-20 Dunbar Street

The Committee was advised that the application was before it for consideration as the site included a Right of Way over Council-owned land.

The Principal Planning officer reported that full permission was sought for the change of use of warehouse and offices to a public house (linked to an existing adjacent public house) and entertainment venue/events space, including a street food market for on-premises consumption (part retrospective).

The key issues which had been considered included:

- the principle of a public house and event space at that location;
- impact on amenity;
- impact on traffic flow and parking; and
- impact on the Conservation Area

The Members were advised that the site was located within the Belfast City Centre boundary and unzoned whiteland within both the BUAP and dBMAP.

She explained that the proposal would constitute an appropriate city centre use which proposed minimal external changes and, as such, it would preserve the character and

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appearance of the Cathedral Conservation Area. Subject to the proposed mitigation measures, it was not considered to adversely impact the amenity of neighbouring properties.

The Committee was advised that there was currently an extant temporary planning permission on the site for an event space under reference LA04/2018/2903/F.

She outlined that Historic Environment Division (HED), NI Water, DfI Roads and the Council's Estates and Conservation Officer had been consulted and had no objections, subject to conditions. The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, whereby the Council's Environmental Health Service had confirmed that it had no objection subject to conditions.

The Committee was advised that no representations were received.

The Committee was advised that the Council-owned adjacent land and was in the process of granting a temporary licence for part of it to be used as an emergency fire escape route for the proposed venue. The Principal Planning officer advised that the application had been recommended for temporary approval only to align with that of the temporary licence to ensure that the proposal did not prejudice future redevelopment of adjoining sites.

The Committee approved the application for a temporary period of two years and granted delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

**LA04/2021/2788/F - Change of use of cash and carry
wholesale warehouse to general retail sales at Musgrave
Marketplace, 1-15 Dargan Crescent, Duncrue Road**

The Members were advised that the application was before the Committee as the Council was the landlord for the building.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the application sought full planning permission for the change of use of one aisle of the cash and carry from Class B4 to general retail sales Class A1, including an extension to the current area of floorspace of retail use by 53square metres. The existing retail area within the warehouse would be returned to cash and carry use.

She explained that the key issues which had been considered by officers during the assessment included the impact of the application on neighbouring land uses and the impact on restrictions placed on the approved use of the site.

The Committee was advised that the existing retail sales area within the cash and carry wholesale warehouse had been approved under application reference LA04/2017/2293/F and extended under application LA04/2019/1656/F. The applicant had stated that the reason behind the current application for the further extension of retail space and relocation of the retail area was that, in the three years that the alcoholic products had been available to purchase by all of the customer base, Musgrave had become acutely aware that they had underestimated the area required to properly operate their off licence and offer their full alcoholic product.

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The Principal Planning officer detailed that the proposed increase in retail sales area, over that previously approved, was a minor increase with the retail sales area still remaining ancillary to the main use of the building as a Class B4 cash and carry. The minor increase in retail sales was not considered to negatively impact the retail core of the city centre. She explained that conditions were recommended to ensure that retail sales remained restricted at the location.

The proposal had been assessed against and was considered acceptable with regards to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS), Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) and the Draft Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP).

No representations had been received and DFI Roads had offered no objection to the proposal.

The Committee approved the application and granted delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

(Reconsidered item) LA04/2021/0303/F - Redevelopment, refurbishment, and partial change of use of building at 35-39 Queen St & demolition of building and redevelopment of site at 31-33 Queen St and provision of ground floor offices/professional services units

The Principal Planning officer reminded the Committee that the application for planning permission and Conservation Area Consent was considered by it in August 2021. The Committee had accepted the officer recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording.

He explained that, when the application had been presented to the Committee in August, the applicant had an extant Pre Development Enquiry (PDE) agreement with NI Water. On that basis, the NI Water consultation response, of 1st March 2021, had advised that the receiving Waste Water Treatment facility (Belfast WwTW) had sufficient capacity to serve the proposal. However, due to the sewer network being at capacity in the Belfast catchment and sewer flows spilling from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) into the environment, NI Water had recommended that no further connections should be made to the network, or a condition should be incorporated which required an alternative drainage/treatment solution for the site.

NI Water had advised that the PDE was valid to 30th December 2021 and further advised that if a planning decision had not been determined by that date, NI Water should be reconsulted.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that, due to the length of time it had taken to finalise the Section 76 Planning Agreement, the 12 months for the PDE with NI Water had since expired. He explained that the Planning Service had reconsulted NI Water and that it had repeated its objection relating to network capacity concerns. However, it had also

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recommended that the application should be refused as sufficient waste water treatment capacity was not available at present for the proposed development.

The application had therefore been brought back before the Committee to highlight the change of position from NI Water.

The Members were advised that the agent had responded to the latest NI Water consultation response, advising that once the relevant consents were approved they would proceed with the demolition of the terraces and commence the new build works. The Committee was advised that that would likely take approximately 18 months to complete from the point of consents. The improvements to the WWTW were expected by July 2023 and should provide increased capacity by that stage. Therefore, officers advised that there was no significant issue around WWTW capacity. The Committee was advised that the applicant had also applied for a storm sewer requisition and that the removal of storm water from the combined system would address that part of NI Water's objection as well.

The Committee was advised that the concerns could be addressed by condition.

The Committee approved the application, subject to the additional condition and other appropriate conditions and the Section 76 Planning Agreement as set out in the original Development Management report. Delegated authority was granted for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and the Section 76 Agreement.

LA04/2021/2804/F - Shipping Container to store bikes, project equipment and materials on land adjacent to Connswater Community Centre

The Committee noted that the application was before it for consideration as the site was located on a parcel of land under the ownership of the Council.

The Members were advised that the site was within a wider designation as an Area of Existing Open Space in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) and the 2004 version. The BUAP 2001 had designated the site as un-zoned white land.

The area designated as an Area of Existing Open Space extended to 1.8 hectares. The Committee was advised that the proposed use was ancillary to the open space use and that the site covered a small fraction of the area and was of a minor scale in comparison with the extensive Comber Greenway and open space in which it was located.

The key issues which had been considered during its assessment included the design and the impact on open space and the surrounding character of the area and the impact on amenity.

The Committee noted that no third-party objections were received and that DFI Roads had responded with no objection to the proposal. The response from the Council's Environmental Health Service was awaited, but it was not considered that the proposal presented any issues, and it was therefore anticipated that a positive response would be forthcoming.

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The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, whereby updated drawings were received to remove the two containers that existed on the site, as they did not form part of the proposal.

The Members were advised that the temporary use of a small area of unused land to facilitate a shipping container in the short term was considered acceptable and would not result in a negative impact on the provision of open and recreational space to the area.

Given the nature, form, and materials of shipping containers, and the purpose of the container to store project materials and equipment, it was recommended that it be removed after a period of 2 years and that a more permanent storage solution for the bikes, more fitting to the context, be found.

The Committee approved the application, for a temporary period of two years, and granted delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

**LA04/2021/2879/F - Retractable awning
at 283 Ormeau Road**

The Committee noted that the application was before it for consideration as it was subject to Council funding.

The Members were advised that the proposed site was situated on the Ormeau Road and was designated as existing commerce area in Draft BMAP. The site was also within a Draft Area of Townscape Character. The key issues which had been considered during its assessment included the design/impact on character and appearance of the area, amenity and public safety.

The Committee noted that the proposed awning and materials were considered in keeping with the shopfront of the existing building and the commercial character of the area, including the draft ATC. The Members were advised that the proposal would not negatively impact the amenity of neighbouring properties, nor would it prejudice public safety.

DFI Roads had been consulted and had no objections.

No representations had been received.

The Committee approved the application and granted delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Thursday, 14th April, 2022

PRE DETERMINATION HEARING
HELD IN A HYBRID FORMAT AT 5.00 P.M.

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Hussey); and
Councillors Brooks, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Maskey, McMullan, Murphy and Spratt.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development
Management);
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Hutchinson and O'Hara.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Pre Determination Hearing for LA04/2020/1943/F – 3-19 (Former Warehouse) Rydalmere Street

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the applications had been considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 21st October, 2021. The Committee had accepted the officer recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording. However, in view of an objection from DfI Roads and the position of NI Water, the Committee had noted that, before a decision was made, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had to be notified of the application, and that it would decide whether to call it in and determine it itself.

He explained that the Council had notified DfI of the application on 29th October, 2021. The Committee was advised that, whilst DfI had 28 days to consider the notification, it had issued a holding direction to the Council, preventing it from determining the application, allowing the Department additional time to consider the notification. He explained that, on 7th December 2022, the Council had written to DfI seeking an update and timescale for it issuing its formal response to the notification. The Council

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highlighted the delays to the applicant and that the process was negatively impacting on the Council's own performance in processing the Major application.

The Members were advised that, following further written representations and a meeting between the Planning Service and DfI, the Department finally provided its response to the notification on 23rd March, 2022, five months following the original notification. DfI had confirmed that it was not calling in the application and that it was being returned to the Council for a decision. The Principal Planning officer outlined that no explanation had been provided by the Department as to the reason for the five month delay.

The Committee was reminded that, following return of the application to the Council for a decision, Regulation 7(1) of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 required that the Council hold a Pre-Determination Hearing to give the applicant and interested parties an opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Committee. He reiterated that a decision on the applications would not be made at the Pre-Determination Hearing, but that the Committee would be asked for its consideration at the subsequent Special Meeting to be held later that evening.

The Principal Planning officer outlined the details of the application to the Committee.

He explained the main issues which had been considered in the assessment of the case, including:

- the principle of housing at the location;
- the impact on Built Heritage and Archaeological interests;
- the design and layout of the proposal;
- transportation;
- the impact on amenity of nearby residents and businesses;
- waste management;
- drainage and flood risk;
- the consideration of Developer Contributions

The Members were advised that the site was located within the development limit of Belfast in the BUAP 2001 and Draft BMAP 2015 (dBMAP, both versions) and it was un-zoned, white land in both versions of dBMAP.

He outlined that the site was located within a draft Area of Townscape Character (BT041 Donegall Road (Village)). As the site was within the development limit, and taking into account the site context and that the proposal would bring the Listed Buildings back into viable use, the principle of housing at the site was considered acceptable, subject to the consideration of other regional planning policies.

The Committee was advised that DfC HED, DAERA NIEA, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and NI Water had no objections to the proposal subject to conditions. DfI Roads had concerns regarding road safety and traffic progression as a result of

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insufficient parking. However, it had also provided conditions and informatives should the Council view that the development was acceptable.

The Committee was advised that the concerns which had been raised by DfI Roads about insufficient parking, traffic progression and road safety should be balanced against the characteristics of the site, its sustainable location and the significant benefits of the scheme, notably that it would bring the important listed buildings back into viable use, deliver much needed affordable housing and that it would have regeneration benefits for the area.

The Members were advised that 29 representations had been received, the majority of which were received prior to the change in proposed tenure of the development to affordable housing. However, he drew the Members' attention to some recent objections and letters of support within the Case officers report. The Late Items pack also included a further objection from a resident who had previously objected. She wished to reiterate her concerns regarding parking in the area.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. B Dickson BEM, Chair of the Blackstaff Residents Association, who was objecting to the application, to the meeting.

Mr. Dickson advised the Committee that his overriding concern was that it would add to the existing parking problems in the area. He explained that South City Community Resource Centre had demonstrated very clearly the parking problems through a number of photographs taken at different times during the day and also that emergency and service vehicles found it difficult, and at times impossible, to drive through the streets. He stated that, in HMOs, there tended to be more than 1 tenant with a car.

He added that residents were also concerned about an additional planning application which had been submitted for the bottom of Rydalmere Street and Empire Street, for a further 97 apartments.

He added that there was no guarantee under the points system that the social housing units would be allocated to local residents.

He advised the Committee that the Blackstaff Residents' Association regretted that they had not been consulted about the plans by the developer. Mr. Dickson explained that while the application might improve the appearance of the listed building, it would create greater problems for the area. He outlined that the structure of the building was one of legacy and that it reflected the great clothing industry that once existed in the area. He suggested that, with the present supply and trading problems due mostly to the war with Ukraine and Russia, there might be an opportunity for the UK government to support the reuse of such old factory buildings to develop home industry.

Mr. Dickson added that the Blackstaff Residents Association felt that the structure should remain the same, with no added extensions, and that any proposed use for the building should not considerably add to the parking problems in the area.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Dickson for his contribution.

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He then welcomed Mr. B. Black and Mr. P. Taylor, representing the applicant and agent, to the meeting.

Together they advised the Committee that the scheme had a number of benefits, namely, that:

- it would bring a Grade B2 listed building back into use;
- the building had lain empty for a long time with no viable commercial use to date. The design was of a high quality and the Council's heritage officers had stated that the proposals were some of the best that they had seen in some time;
- 60% of the apartments would be for social/affordable tenants and that they had worked closely with NIHE and various housing providers in respect of the allocation of the units;
- they had created garden spaces and external amenity spaces to maximise the outside space, as well as maximising the apartment sizes within the heritage building;
- they had spent a long time working with planning officers to refine the scheme;
- several planning consultation events had taken place in respect of the scheme;
- the project represented an opportunity for urban regeneration in an area of need; and
- there would be ongoing consultation between the local residents and the management team of the building to try and prevent problems from arising.

Mr Alexander, applicant, explained that consultation had taken place with the community from eighteen months prior. He added that Mr. C Stalford MLA had organised a public meeting at the Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT) offices which had had a good turnout and that the feedback had been positive. He added that if the building was to be brought back into industrial use the parking intensification issues would be considerably worse than the proposed social housing scheme.

The Chairperson thanked the speakers for their contributions.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Thursday, 14th April, 2022

SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff, Councillor Hussey;
Councillors Brooks, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Maskey, McMullan, Murphy and Spratt.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management);
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Hutchinson and O'Hara.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Spratt declared an interest in items 2b and 2d – applications in respect of 24 Malone Park, in that he had previously engaged with residents regarding the site and he advised that he would leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

Planning Applications

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)

LA04/2020/0559/F - Renovation and single storey rear extension to dwelling, construction of a new detached garage and new entrance gates and pillars at 24 Malone Park; and

LA04/2020/0562/DCA - Demolition of rear extension (partly single storey, partly one and a half storey) and existing shed and summerhouse at 24 Malone Park

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the above two applications for a site visit so that Members could familiarise themselves with the area.

LA04/2020/1943/F and LA04/2020/1944/LBC – Residential conversion of the existing listed warehouses to form 57 residential units (1 to 3 bed units, including 60% social and affordable to

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**include a minimum of 20% social housing at 3-19
(Former Warehouse) Rydalmere Street**

The Committee was reminded that the details of the application had been presented to it as part of the preceding Pre Determination Hearing which had taken place immediately prior to the Special Meeting.

The Principal Planning officer explained that DfI had confirmed that it was not calling in the application and that it was being returned to the Council for a decision.

DfI Roads had concerns regarding road safety and traffic progression as a result of insufficient parking. However, it had also provided conditions and informatives should the Council view that the development was acceptable.

The Committee was advised that the concerns which had been raised by DfI Roads should be balanced against the characteristics of the site, its sustainable location and the significant benefits of the scheme, notably that it would bring the important listed buildings back into viable use, deliver much needed affordable housing and that it would have regeneration benefits for the area.

A Member expressed deep frustration that DfI Planning had taken five months to return the application to the Council for its determination without any explanation. The Committee agreed that a letter be sent to DfI Planning expressing its frustration in relation to the delays and to request a timeline as to when the regulations that require mandatory Pre-Determination Hearings under such circumstances will be changed. it

After discussion, the Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording.

(Councillor Brooks left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

LA04/2021/2280/F - Mixed use, mixed tenure residential-led development of 778 apartments in three buildings with internal and external amenity space; flexible commercial/community floorspace (convenience store with hot food counter/A1/A2/D1 uses/cafe/bar/restaurant); public realm including public square and waterfront promenade; cycle and car parking and associated landscaping, access roads, plant and site works including to existing river revetment on lands adjacent to and south east of the river Lagan, west of Olympic Way of Queen's Road, Queen's Island

The Senior Planning officer presented the details of the major application to the Committee. She explained that Blocks 11 and 11a were proposed for Build to Rent (BTR) accommodation whilst Block 9 was proposed for social housing (78 units), with the remainder being managed by the Housing Association for private rental. An area of the site (Area 10) would be dedicated as a public square called "South Yard Square".

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She outlined the main issues which had been considered during the assessment of the application included:

- the principle of a mixed-use development at that location;
- development of open space;
- housing delivery including affordable housing;
- transport including network capacity, parking provision and highway safety;
- design, layout and impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- impact on built heritage and archaeological interests;
- the quality of living environment for prospective residents;
- the impact on amenity of nearby residents and businesses;
- environmental protection and human health;
- waste management;
- drainage and flood risk;
- wastewater infrastructure;
- ecology and natural heritage;
- economic considerations;
- a Planning Agreement and developer contributions; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

The Members were advised that the site was located within the development limit of Belfast in the BUAP 2001 and Draft BMAP 2015 (dBMAP, both versions). It was un-zoned, white land in the BUAP 2001 whilst under both versions of dBMAP 2015, Zoning BHA 01 allocated the site and wider lands at Titanic Quarter for mixed-use development. She explained that dBMAP 2015 (v2014) required development to accord with an overall Development Framework to be agreed by the Department. The Development Framework had been prepared in 2003, adopted by the former Department of Environment and was amended in 2010.

She explained that, as the site was within the development limit and considering the site context, relevant zonings and site history, the principle of a mixed-use development including housing was already established and was acceptable.

The Committee was advised that the proposed development would cost an estimated £117million to construct, generating an estimated 310 full time equivalent (FTE) construction jobs over three years. It was further estimated that non-residential uses at the proposed development would require a total of 80 gross direct FTE jobs onsite to support commercial/community operations in the retail, professional services, health and care and hospitality sectors.

She reported that a number of green travel measures were included as part of the application in order to mitigate the low level of parking spaces. The measures included Travel plans for each block, a travel fund of £400,000 to be managed through the Travel Plan process and used by Translink to provide Travel Cards and to support the G2 Glider. In addition, Belfast Bikes and Car Club membership were also proposed as well as the option of a bicycle voucher. She explained that there would be a flexible pot of money in which membership of the Belfast Bikes and Car Club schemes and the option of a bicycle voucher would be offered

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to residents and, if any residents did not want to take up some of the options, the money would roll forward, meaning that the pot would be available for a minimum of five years.

In respect of the open space, she outlined that 26% of the site was public open space, which was in addition to the terraces and courtyards which were private spaces for residents.

She outlined that a number of amenities were provided on site, including a convenience store, bars, restaurants and a crèche, and that it was therefore anticipated that a reduced number of trips to and from the site would be required in comparison with other schemes.

She outlined that the total internal and external amenity space provided per unit ranged from 6.4 square metres to 8.5 square metres, which was slightly below Creating Spaces standards but that officers believed that the quality of the spaces and the proximity to amenities were relevant.

The Committee was advised that a number of representations had been received in respect of the scheme, 6 letters of support and 8 letters of objection. The letters of support welcomed the high density, City living as well as the sustainable transport options and the regeneration of the site. The objections cited issues with the Build to Rent model, the impact on existing land values, the impact on traffic and travel, the loss of open space, amenity issues and the height, scale and design.

Statutory consultees, including DfI Roads, DfC HED, DAERA NIEA, Shared Environmental Services (SES), DfI Rivers and Belfast City Airport, had been consulted and had no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement as appropriate.

The Committee was advised that the site fell within Phase 2 of Titanic Quarter which was the subject of the outline planning approval (Z/2006/2864/O). As part of that approval a number of conditions were imposed setting a trips ceiling, above which wider roads infrastructural improvements would be triggered. The wider area had already been subject to a number of other transport infrastructure improvements as part of the Titanic Quarter Transport Master Plan, including the realignment of Queen's Road; signalisation of Queen's Road / Sydenham Road junction; widening and improvements along Queen's Road; improvements on Sydenham Road; a high frequency bus service and the Glider Route; and the construction of the Sydenham Road / Titanic Boulevard signalised junction.

Further infrastructure works had also been approved under planning application LA04/2019/2810/F for the creation of the Titanic Eastern Access Road, which would provide connectivity from Sydenham Road to Queens Road via Hamilton Road. The Members were advised that it would improve vehicular progression on the Queen's Road and Queen's Quay.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack whereby the NIHE had advised that it had no further comment in relation to the Further Environmental Information (FEI) over and above its previous consultation response.

The Senior Planning officer also explained that NI Water (NIW) had provided an updated consultation response, having reviewed the FEI. It had noted that the original planning permission for the site had expired and that it was a new application. NIW stated that

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the TQ Development Framework did, in its view, hold some weight. NIW had signed up to the Development Framework including the associated Drainage chapter, in 2008, in light of the waste-water infrastructure requirements at that time. NIW stated that it believed that a review of the Titanic Quarter site from a holistic perspective was now required as the circumstances had developed. Due to waste-water infrastructure constraints, there might be environmental risks associated with increased loading as a result of the proposed development. NIW had therefore recommended approval of the application with conditions. Specifically, it had recommended a condition which required approval of mitigation via the waste-water assessment process to ensure that the impact of foul sewage connection would be at zero detriment from an environmental perspective. NIW had also advised the Planning Service that the mitigation solution should be easily resolved. However, formal confirmation could not be provided until the completion of hydraulic modelling which was due to be finished by the beginning of May.

The Senior Planning officer reported that non-statutory consultees, including Environmental Health, Economic Development, the Local Development Plan team, the City Centre and Regeneration team, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Belfast Harbour Commissioners had no objections to the proposal subject to conditions and relevant Section 76 provisions. The Council's Senior Urban Design Officer had provided detailed comments on design aspects of the scheme.

As part of the Late items pack, the applicant had sought to clarify a number of points contained within the case officer report. The Committee was asked to note a number of points, including:

- the number of objections was 8, not 9;
- clarification was provided regarding specific numbers of parking spaces and cycle spaces;
- the outline planning reference was Z/2006/2864/O as opposed to Z/2010/2864/O;
- additional clarification on trip levels and sources of information had been provided;
- in paragraph 4.2 of the Case officer's report, PPS13 had not been listed;
- regarding short-term occupancies - all tenancies would be protected and a full-time management team would be in place to control;
- regarding the phasing of social housing – once title to the land for Block 9 was transferred to a registered Housing Association, the first BTR block could be occupied (but not both). The remaining BTR block would only be able to be occupied once the social rented housing had been constructed to NIHE specification, transferred to a Housing Association) and certified to the Council with a certificate of completion. The approach sought to strike a balance between the need to ensure the delivery of the social housing units (and the other Housing Association units) and the delivery of the BTR units;
- all bars and restaurants would be publicly accessible;
- no bridge was proposed in the Phase 2 masterplan;

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- reference to new bicycle vouchers would be specified in the individual Travel Plans;
- in relation to paragraph 8.7.17 – there would be 614 Juliet balconies; and
- Para 8.7.18 – there would be no sky bars, but sky lounges instead.

The Senior Planning officer reported that six letters of support for the scheme had been received as well as nine letters of objection.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. S. Murphy, agent for the application, to the meeting. She advised the Committee that:

- the major mixed tenure residential development scheme was being brought forward by developers Lacuna Developments and Watkin Jones Group Plc, who had a track record of delivering in Belfast, having brought forward several of the purpose-built student accommodation schemes;
- it was a direct response to the opportunity to deliver a Build to Rent (BTR) proposition at scale, in support of the Council's Belfast Agenda, with its focus on increasing the resident population within and adjacent to the City Centre;
- the site was located on the river edge within Titanic Quarter which was part of Belfast's Innovation District. It was adjacent to Titanic Belfast and other heritage attractions, including the Slipways and Hamilton Dock, and was also on the Maritime Mile and within a 20 minute walk to the city centre;
- the 778-unit scheme included a mix of private and social rented units together with commercial ground floor uses including a crèche, high quality internal and external amenities and extensive high quality public realm equating to 26% of the overall site area;
- the application was supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment and followed extensive Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) with the Council and Statutory Consultees. Pre-application consultation had also taken place with local stakeholders;
- the planning history confirmed the principle of waterfront residential use at the site;
- the scheme was closely aligned to the objectives of a suite of City strategies and included generous provision of Housing Association housing and significant investment in high quality public realm, both of which would be of benefit to the City;
- the development would also deliver a range of social and economic benefits, the creation of jobs during both the construction and operation of the development, and the provision of additional services and facilities within Titanic Quarter, helping to build its critical mass;
- the proposals generally accorded with the approved Titanic Quarter Development Framework and the requirements of planning policy. They could be brought forward without harm to interests of planning importance, including heritage assets such as the shipyard's iconic scheduled cranes and graving dock, and the listed drawing office. Titanic Belfast would continue to be prominent and visible in local views,

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including over the scheduled slipways as envisaged by the Development Framework;

- the scheme was of a high standard of design which benchmarked well against similar schemes in other Cities in the UK and Ireland. It would mark a further step towards realising the vision of Titanic Quarter as a high-profile European waterfront and new urban quarter, contributing to the future prosperity of the city as a whole;
- a clear focus of the scheme was to ensure that it had strong sustainability credentials and could successfully be delivered from a transport perspective;
- the scheme was a direct response to tackling climate change, reducing urban sprawl and creating a connected community. Consistent with its highly accessible location, a low level of car parking was proposed;
- creating new dense neighbourhoods, supported by amenities, local services and public open spaces helped to build healthier and more sustainable communities, which, aligned with the Bolder Vision, would help create a greener, more walkable and connected city; and
- a Section 76 Agreement would secure the commitments made in the scheme's Travel Plan, including the delivery of appropriate cycling infrastructure and an innovative Travel Fund designed to equip future residents with a range of alternatives to the private car.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Murphy for her contribution.

A Member queried why less amenity space was being provided for residents in Block 9, which had been earmarked for social housing. She also queried why Block 9 did not meet the standards for adequate outlook. In response, Ms. Murphy advised the Committee that the site was located close to a number of public open spaces such as the slipways and that the site itself comprised 26% open space. She added that there was also the children's playpark and the sports facilities for all residents on site. She explained that Block 9 had been designed in line with the new City Centre Design Guide and that a number of the units had balconies.

The Senior Planning officer advised the Committee that the external private amenity space was similar in all three blocks. She explained that the difference between Block 9 and the other blocks was in respect of less internal amenity space, such as the absence of a working from home space and a sky lounge, which she explained that officers could not insist upon for social housing units.

A further Member stated that, while he welcomed that 10% of the units were to be designated for social housing, he would always like to see more. In response to a question regarding the management of the site, Mr. J. Anderson, Choice Housing, advised the Committee the social housing units were in one block as it would be too difficult to manage if they were dispersed throughout the blocks and that, in general, they zoned the areas for management purposes.

In response to a further Member's query regarding the scale and massing of the development, the Chairperson advised the Members that Mr. A. Murray, Director at TODDS, advised the Committee that extensive conversations had taken place with the Urban Design officer and with Historic Environment Division (HED) in relation to the design. He explained

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that the blocks had been architecturally considered with appropriate stepping of different building heights.

In response to a further question regarding the quality of the outdoor balconies and terraces, Mr. Murray explained that the climatic environment of the site, especially the prevailing winds, had been taken into consideration when designing the outdoor amenity spaces.

The Senior Planning officer added that it was important to note that, not only would South Yard Square be protected from the elements, but that it would be a focal point in the middle of Phase 2. She explained that it would be surrounded by buildings on either side, including the recently approved Hamilton Dock hotel.

A Member complimented the applicant team on a progressive application and on the inclusion of social housing within it. He added that the queries which Members had raised at the briefing the previous month had also been taken on board and dealt with in relation to the green travel measures and that that was to be welcomed.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. C. Sloan, DFI Roads, was in attendance to answer questions.

A Member asked for further clarification in respect of the Queen's Island Strategic Masterplan and in relation to the trigger point of the number of trips for wider roads infrastructural improvements. In response, Mr. Sloan advised the Committee that the Strategic Masterplan had not yet been finalised but that a detailed transport assessment had been carried out which illustrated that the development could be accommodated on the existing road network. He advised the Committee that the DFI assessment of the proposal had been a thorough desktop exercise in accordance with standards. He added that the responsibility for the upgrade of the junction at Queen's Road would likely fall to the Belfast Harbour or T2, as it was on private, not public, land.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. C. O'Hara, Technical Director at RPS, was in attendance to answer any questions in relation to transport and traffic. Mr O'Hara advised the Committee that the trigger level had been set in 2005, seventeen years ago, and that it had been based on trip predications at that time for development proposals within the Titanic Quarter. However, he advised the Members that the actual number of trips measured since that time had been significantly lower than anticipated. He explained that the only two sites which were operational were the Titanic Hotel and Titanic Belfast and that the prediction was that they would generate 2239 daily trips. He explained further that the actual trips associated with those two developments were less than 1000 per day and that there was therefore considerable headroom in that development alone in respect of the trigger level.

He confirmed to the Committee that the Transport Assessment, which had formed part of the planning application, had been carried out in 2019, when traffic had been at pre-pandemic levels. He explained that the assessment had taken into consideration the number of trips associated with the recently approved Hamilton Dock Hotel, the approved Aquarium, Catalyst Inc., the Odyssey approval and the Financial Services campus. He explained that they had undertaken detailed junction modelling, including the introduction of the Eastern Access Road. He added that it was important to note that the development in question only contained

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140 car parking spaces and therefore the traffic impact could not be that significant. DFI Roads reviewed and assessed the Transport Assessment and concluded that the impact of the proposed development could be accommodated on the existing network without the need for any mitigation measures.

In response to a further Member's question regarding the current capacity available in the area, the Senior Planning officer reiterated that the modelling undertaken in 2019 had illustrated that the figures which had been agreed in 2005 far exceeded the actual number of trips on the ground.

Mr. O'Hara advised the Committee that the capacity of the junction, as it currently sat with the existing 2019 traffic flow, all the associated committed developments and the proposal which was in front of Members that evening, was at 85% of its full capacity.

A Member stated that she still had concerns regarding the traffic levels in the Queen's Road area which had been well documented.

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – that the Committee writes to DFI Roads to request an update
on the upgrade of the junction at Queen's Road.

A Member requested further information in relation to the level of public open space within the development and how it had been calculated, expressing concern that not all the land would in actual fact be public open space. Ms. Murphy advised the Committee that, even by removing the creche's private outdoor play space, car parking areas and footways, the development was still well over the 15% as required by PPS8, with the space provided by the promenade, the promenade link/thoroughfare and South Yard Square.

A Member stated that she still had a number of concerns with the development, particularly the outlook and overshadowing of Block 9 and the amenity space provided. The Senior Planning officer responded to the queries raised and emphasised that the officers had taken an on balance approach and that the nearby facilities which were on the doorstep of the development mitigated against the amenity concerns raised.

The Chairperson then put the officer's recommendation, to grant approval to the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement as set out in Case officer's report and the Late Items pack. Delegated authority was sought for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and the Section 76 Agreement.

On a vote, four Members voted for the recommendation and three against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Miscellaneous Item

Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI

(The High Sheriff, Councillor Hussey, left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Committee considered the undernoted report and the associated appendices which are available on mod.gov:

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“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published a report and recommendations in relation to Planning in Northern Ireland. This paper provides an overview of the PAC report and recommended response from the Council. The proposed response is to be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 15 April 2022. A full copy of the PAC report is provided at Appendix 1 on mod.gov. The Council’s proposed response is provided at Appendix 2 on mod.gov.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Committee notes this report including the proposed response to the Public Accounts Committee at Appendix 2 on mod.gov.

3.0 Background

3.1 In February 2022, the Planning Committee considered two recent reviews of the NI planning system:

- Firstly, the Northern Ireland Audit Office’s review of the NI planning system (copy provided at Appendix 3 on mod.gov); and
- Secondly, the Department for Infrastructure’s review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (copy provided at Appendix 4 on mod.gov).

3.2 Following publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report, the NI Assembly: Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has been hearing evidence from key stakeholders. The following sessions were held.

- Evidence from the Department for Infrastructure – 10 February 2022
- Evidence from SOLACE – 17 February 2022 (including evidence from Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control, Belfast City Council)
- Evidence from NILGA – 24 February 2022

3.3 The PAC subsequently published its report on ‘Planning in NI’ on 24 March 2022. This paper provides an overview of the PAC report and includes a recommended response from the Council. A full copy of the PAC report is provided at Appendix 1.

3.4 As further background reading, Members are referred to the agenda item to the February Planning Committee on the NI Audit

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Office report and the Departmental review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, see link below:

<https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=167&MIId=10643&Ver=4>

4.0 Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI

Overview

- 4.1 Consistent with the findings of the NIAO report published in February 2022, the PAC report is extremely critical of the NI planning system. It concludes that the planning system in Northern Ireland is not working effectively or efficiently. The PAC calls for a fundamental review, led by someone independent from the Department for Infrastructure, to bring about the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose.
- 4.2 In relation to performance, the PAC observes that since the transfer of functions in 2015, planning authorities have failed to deliver on many of their key targets, particularly on major and significant development. The PAC was ‘appalled’ by the performance statistics. It states that it is simply unacceptable that almost one-fifth of the most important planning applications aren’t processed within three years highlighting that such poor performance has an impact on applicants, developers and communities and is risking investment in Northern Ireland.
- 4.3 The PAC notes that progress on Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been equally poor – with none of the plans being able to progress to adoption in the seven years since transfer in 2015. The PAC heard of the potential for LDPs to shape communities and make decision-making processes easier, but noted that the process has been hindered by the complete underestimation of the complexity and volume of work required, a lack of key skills and resources available to councils. These challenges were considered to have been compounded by a series of unnecessary ‘checks and balances’ implemented by the Department. The PAC urges all those involved in plan-making to work together to streamline remaining LDP processes and produce these important plans as soon as possible.
- 4.4 The PAC goes onto to express concerns about the poor quality of planning application submissions (BCC is the only Planning Authority that has so far sought to directly address this through publication of its *Application Checklist* in 2018). The PAC is also concerned about a lack of transparency in decision making (officers advise that BCC follows good practice in this regard

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through clearly minuting the reason/s for the Committee's decision where it overturns the officer recommendation. Committee reports also clearly explain where applications have been referred to the Committee by an individual Elected Member and reasons why).

4.5 The PAC is critical of the role of the Department and its lack of action to address under performance in the system. It observes that the Department is not providing strong leadership in driving change and that it does not grasp the severity of the issues facing the NI planning system. In this regard, the PAC recommends that a commission is setup to oversee much needed change to the NI planning system, but that it should be chaired by someone independent of the Department.

4.6 The PAC is extremely concerned about the significant level of silo working within the planning system itself and comments that it one of the worst examples of silo working in the public sector that it has ever encountered. It notes the fragmentation between central and local government, statutory consultees and even within the Department itself, highlighting that it will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way going forward.

4.7 **PAC Recommendations**

The PAC report makes 12 recommendations, some of which overlap with the recommendations of the NIAO report. The recommendations are reproduced below with additional context around each provided in the PAC report (see Appendix 1).

- 1.** The planning system in Northern Ireland is not working. The Committee recommends that a Commission is established to undertake a fundamental review to ascertain the long-term, strategic changes that are needed to make the system fit for purpose. This should be led by someone independent from the Department.
- 2.** The Committee has heard that there are a number of opportunities to make immediate improvements to the planning system. We recommend that a commission is established to identify tangible improvements that can be achieved in the short term. This must focus on problem solving, delivery and achieving outcomes within a fixed time frame.
- 3.** The Committee expects action to be taken to improve the planning system. In lieu of any accountability for performance within the system, the Department will

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provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months' time.

4. The Committee recommends that the Department considers ways to streamline the remaining LDP processes, and works with councils to learn lessons from those that have been through the independent examination process with a view to taking a more pragmatic approach to the remaining plans. The Department and councils need to work collaboratively to produce these important plans as soon as possible.
5. The Committee recommends that all those involved in decision-making ensure that processes are open and transparent, particularly where a high degree of interpretation has been exercised. The Department and councils should consider how checks on good record keeping, to ensure transparency, could be carried out effectively.
6. The Committee recommends that the Department should ensure that there is suitable and proportionate means of engaging with the planning system. This should include a deeper consideration of the appropriateness of limited third-party rights of appeal.
7. The operation of the planning system for rural housing is at best inconsistent and at worst fundamentally broken. The Committee believes that it is essential that policy in the area is agreed and implemented equally and consistently across Northern Ireland. The Department should ensure this is the case.
8. The Committee recommends that the Department urgently considers how it exercises its oversight of the planning system. In the Committee's view, this must be accompanied with a cultural change. Intervention should be to support delivery and to make improvements. The current minimal approach is no longer sustainable.
9. The Committee recommends that the Department and local government should implement immediate changes to improve the quality of applications entering the system. Whilst this may require legislative change, we do not believe that this should be an excuse for delay.

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10. The Committee recommends that planning authorities regularly review past decisions to understand their real-world outcomes, impact on communities and the quality of the completed development.
11. The planning system must be financially sustainable and this requires an appropriate, long-term funding model. The Committee recommends that all those involved in delivering planning work together to achieve this. In the short term the Department should take the lead on bringing forward legislation on planning fees as a matter of urgency.
12. There is a fundamental need for a cultural change in the way local and central government interact around planning. Whilst cultural change will take time, this should be reflected immediately in a more inclusive planning forum which includes representation from developers and communities.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 As reported to the Planning Committee in February 2022, this is a pivotal time for the NI planning system. Publication of the NIAO and Public Accounts Committee reports represents a significant opportunity for much needed change and improvement.
- 5.2 The Department for Infrastructure must provide a formal response to the PAC report within 8 weeks of its publication (i.e. by 19 May 2022). The recommendations also require an update be given to the successor Public Accounts Committee on the improvements made in six months' time.
- 5.3 SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in NI) is expected to provide a response on behalf of the 11 councils. It is recommended that Belfast City Council also formally responds. A recommended response to the PAC report is provided at Appendix 2 for notation by the Planning Committee and agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 5.4 The PAC's recommendation to establish a commission to oversee the fundamental change necessary for the NI planning system is welcomed along with the proposal to include representatives of the development industry and communities. It is only through the participation of all key stakeholders that appropriate solutions can be developed and the necessary improvements delivered. The Council has a very important leadership role in this change process and will be seeking representation on the commission and any structures that feed into the proposed processes.

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- 5.5 The Department is organising an all-day workshop with local government officers on 29 April 2022 to formulate the beginning of a potential plan or approach to addressing the issues identified. In order to achieve the stated objectives the discussions will need to resolve a number of aspects including: the overall purpose and scope of the review, governance including representation, assurance, monitoring and reporting arrangements, potential for outside support and expertise, resourcing and approach to implementation.
- 5.6 It is hoped that these various reviews will establish a momentum and commitment to addressing the structural and operational challenges. It is therefore proposed that progress and any emerging proposals will be brought back to Committee as updates going forward.
- 6.0 **Financial & Resource Implications**
- 6.1 The existing NI planning system is inefficient and underperforming and the PAC report correctly identifies the need to address its longer term financial sustainability. In January 2021, the Council reported to NIAO that the net cost of its Planning Service is nearly £1.2m after fee income which demonstrated the Council commitment to the effective resourcing of this function. However, the Planning function is far from the cost neutral model suggested at the time of Transfer and the PAC's recommendation that the longer term financial sustainability of the NI planning system should be addressed is therefore welcomed.
- 7.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**
- 7.1 **No adverse impacts identified."**

The Committee noted the update which had been provided and agreed the proposed response to the Public Accounts Committee.

Chairperson

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Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 7th April, 2022

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND REMOТЕLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McKeown (Deputy Chairperson);
Alderman Haire and Rodgers; and
Councillors Canavan, de Faoite, Flynn,
Gormley, Kyle, Long, McCann, McLaughlin,
Spratt and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Mr. R. McLernon, Resilience Co-ordinator;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Aldermen Dorrian and Sandford and Councillors Baker and Brooks.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April.

Presentation - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The Committee received a presentation from Kevin Hegarty, Director of Green Growth and Climate action with DAERA.

Mr. Hegarty outlined the background to the Green Growth strategy explaining that a number of factors had contributed to catapulting it up the agenda, including the NI Assembly declaring a climate emergency in 2020, the UK's commitment to net zero and Covid recovery. The Executive Strategy was signed by all Ministers and was approved by the Executive on 21 October in advance of CoP26.

He explained that there were a number of elements to the strategy, climate action, green jobs and clean environment. The Executive had made 10 commitments/areas of

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responsibility under the strategy and would focus on the following 3 in the near term: embedding green growth; investing in green growth; and leading by example. He said they had committed to embedding green growth by ensuring that green growth would be central to all budgetary and policy decisions by introducing a statutory green growth test and making green growth a budgetary priority. By investing in green growth, they would transform the economy by working proactively with business, communities and all parts of government to maximise funding and investment opportunities for green growth and promote innovation, skills, research and technology. They would endeavour to lead by example providing public sector leadership through delivering a government estate and fleet with net zero operational carbon emissions and ensure a green growth aligned with procurement strategy for all government spend. Mr. Hegarty informed the Committee of NI's 2 climate change bills explaining that climate bill no.2 was wide ranging.

A discussion followed the presentation, during which a Member asked Mr. Hegarty about the clean air strategy and other supporting strategies. Mr. Hegarty agreed to revert to the Committee with the exact dates for DAERA's supporting environmental strategies.

The Committee noted the content of the presentation.

Update on Current Issues

Net Zero Event

The Members received a report updating them on the visit to Belfast by Mayor Andy Burnham, Mayor Steve Rotherham and Lord Mayor Alison Gilliland on 30th March, 2022.

The aim of the visit was to establish a collaboration / partnership on delivering Net Zero between Belfast, Dublin, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City region ahead of a Decarbonisation Summit in England in June 2022.

The visit was framed around current efforts to decarbonise transport, heat and industry using innovations in hydrogen production, storage and use across the four cities to illustrate the challenges and opportunities arising from the transition, to show inter-linkages between different industries (transport, water etc.) and how hydrogen fitted with the wider energy system. Visiting delegations comprised Mayors and officers from the respective regions but also engaged key stakeholders locally, including Forge Integrated Primary school in South Belfast, Translink, Wrightbus, Catagen, B9 Energy, NI Water, MJM Renewables, QUB and Belfast Met. during the one day visit.

The report outlined the next steps, including that a virtual workshop would be held and areas agreed for collaboration ahead of the decarbonisation Summit in June.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

One Million Trees/UPSURGE Update

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 two key projects within the Climate Unit portfolio – the Belfast One Million Trees Programme and the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the project update.

3.0 Main report

The Climate Unit leads the delivery of two major projects for which external funding has been secured. Both projects work with a wide range of stakeholders locally and across the UK, EU and globally. Belfast One Million Trees Programme is the city tree planting initiative, which Belfast City Council coordinates and delivers on behalf of a range of city partners, working closely with delivery partners including the Woodland Trust, Belfast Hills Partnership, the National Trust, and The Conservation Volunteers.

The Horizon 2020 funded UPSURGE project is focused on nature-based solutions, improving the condition of soil for the purpose of growing plants and produce, the development of a community garden in an unused area of Belfast City Council's estate, engagement with and education for local stakeholders, and applying learning at a range of satellite sites likely to be focused on Council community gardens and allotments. Initially the project is a partnership with EU partners led by Slovenia, with a close working relationship between BCC and QUB driving the work of the Belfast demonstration. Belfast is one of five demonstration cities within the overarching programme of work.

3.2 Belfast One Million Trees Programme

Belfast One Million Trees Project is a 15-year city partnership and programme of activity led by Belfast City Council aimed at increasing tree planting, maintenance and management in the city, with key outcomes being increased climate resilience, support for public health and wellbeing, support for biodiversity, reduction in water runoff, improvement in air quality and reduction in urban heat island effects. The project is one of 30 foundational projects contained in the Belfast Resilience Strategy and aligns with city strategies such as the Living with Water Programme, Open Spaces Strategy, and Local Development Plan. We have three overarching aims:

- Create an inclusive structure and processes which enable tree planting and the growth of green infrastructure and biodiversity in Belfast.

- Plant at least one million trees within the next 15 years- delivering a step change in our approach to climate adaptation and environmental improvements.
 - Protect the city and the people of the city by reducing harms from air pollution, weather impact and loss of nature and improving health and well-being.
- 3.3 The initial proposal for the Belfast One Million Trees Programme was received by Council from the Belfast Metropolitan Residents Group. The motion came through People and Communities Committee which approved the role for Council to coordinate and manage the initiative and updates are periodically brought back to People and Communities Committee for approval. Programme management is led by the Climate Unit within Council, working closely with colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services, and across the Council.
- 3.4 A Belfast One Million Trees steering group was established in early 2020 which includes partners from statutory bodies, government departments, community organisations and conservation organisations. Over the course of several meetings a process was agreed whereby each year sites would be identified, assessed and planting plans put in place for the annual planting season which takes place between November and April. The city steering group sets the work programme and receives an update twice yearly. A delivery group was established early in the project which is made up of Belfast City Council, the Woodland Trust, National Trust and Belfast Hills Partnership. This group meets fortnightly and is responsible for workplan delivery. Furthermore, a communication group has been established which meets quarterly with communication representatives from Belfast City Council, the Woodland Trust and National Trust. The Communications Group created a communication plan and assets which have been adopted by the steering group and all partners.

In parallel an internal group was established within Belfast City Council which looks at the Council contribution. That group has made recommendations such as the establishment of a tree nursery on BCC land which has resulted in the Grovelands site being developed into a tree nursery, the development of a Belfast Tree Strategy which is now underway part funded by Belfast One Million Trees funding and the development of engagement events which include the 'Give a tree a home' events which we have now run on two occasions in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers – once in Ormeau Park and once in Waterworks Park.

In December 2020 the Belfast One Million Trees Programme launched officially, and at the same time the Yoursay Platform launched with a Million Trees section that includes tools such as a

map which members of the public can drop a pin into to indicate preferred locations for trees. To date there have been approximately 3,000 interactions with the Yoursay Million Trees page.

- 3.5 A number of workstreams are in progress through the Belfast One Million Trees Programme which include a rolling programme of business engagement which has resulted in 19 businesses being engaged in total around volunteering, sponsorship, and partnership. A total of £17,000 has been secured in partnership with businesses to date.

A supply line of native trees has been established through a contract with the Conservation Volunteers, who will also provide seed collection, tree planting and tree maintenance workshops for the Belfast One Million Trees Project.

As mentioned, we have developed a pilot tree nursery in the Grovelands site at Musgrave Park which will see trees supplied to Belfast City Council and into the city project.

We are currently planning a city tree count and land call which will be repeated annually, and we are working proactively to align with existing and new initiatives such as the Queens Green Canopy, Trees for Cities, Greenways, Planning – Section 76 developer contributions, A Bolder Vision among others.

A key piece of research is in the final draft stage – the Belfast I-TREE ECO report, which sets out the value of the existing tree cover in Belfast in carbon storage and sequestration, avoided water run-off, and amenity value. This has been undertaken by Treeconomics and Forest Research who are also forecasting the benefits of additional tree planting for the city journey to net zero. Findings of the report include identifying 83 species in Belfast, the most common being Ash, Sycamore and Beech. Belfast's urban forest's trees sequester an estimated 8,893 tonnes of carbon per year, has an associated value of £8 million. Overall, the trees in Belfast's urban forest store an estimated 318,626 tonnes of carbon, which has an associated value of £290 million. The trees within Belfast's urban forest reduce runoff by an estimated 317,000 m³, which is equivalent to approximately 127 Olympic swimming pools of surface runoff being averted every single year with an associated value of £593,000.

- 3.6 External funding was secured in 2020 from the Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Fund (289k over a 3-year period) which includes targets including:

- Develop and implement a new Belfast Tree Strategy
- Plant a minimum of 35 hectares per year

- Plant a minimum 1000 metres of hedgerow planted/restored per year
- Plant 10,000 trees outside woods per year
- Identify at least 2 strategically important sites per year (Cavehill)
- Produce 5 x farm plans per year
- Commission an I-Tree ECO project which will form the evidence base for the Belfast Tree Strategy and support the implementation of the Belfast One Million Trees Programme
- Minimum of 2,500 people engaged per annum through the programme
- We want to run a programme of community engagement which will commence early in 2021
- Hold 10 x woodland workshops and produce 2 x good practice guides
- Enhance community/micro-nursery coordination and support
- Assist and support 5 organisations with volunteer programmes (100 volunteers annually)
- Market our achievements and promote good practice, enabling public participation

3.7 Draft tree planting targets for the initiative are with the steering group for approval but we have recommended the following:

Year	Target	Actual	Year	Target	Actual
21/22	15,000	39,000	28/29	95,000	0
22/23	20,000	24,000*	29/30	100,000	0
23/24	30,000	0	30/31	90,000	0
24/25	50,000	0	31/32	85,000	0
25/26	70,000	0	32/33	80,000	0
26/27	75,000	0	33/34	75,000	0
27/28	85,000	0	34/35	70,000	0

3.8 **Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project**

The official title of the UPSURGE project is ‘City-centred approach to catalyse nature-based solutions through the EU Regenerative Urban Lighthouse for pollution alleviation and regenerative development’

3.9 The project is led by Maribor in Slovenia who coordinate a consortium which Belfast is one element of. The overarching work packages are:

- WP1 Management - E-Institute
- WP2 Overall NBS Assessment - LEITAT

WP3 Environmental Verification with Multimodal Sensing - OPERATE

WP4 Digitalisation and Connectivity with Citizens and Stakeholders - OC

WP5 NBS Demonstrations - QUB

WP6 Regenerative Assessment Enabling Regenerative Transition GCE

WP7 European Regenerative Urban Lighthouse - ICLEI

WP8 Quintuple-Helix based Verification, Communication and Dissemination - IETU

WP9 Ethics requirements - E-Institute

Belfast is one of five demonstration cities, with the Belfast work programme being managed by Belfast City Council. A total of 660,000 euros was secured for Belfast which includes infrastructure works, staff time, sensors and data platform, community engagement and training, and travel.

- 3.10 People and Communities Committee approved the use of Lower Botanic Gardens as the key hub in the UPSURGE initiative and the use of learning from the hub at associated satellite sites in the city, which are likely to be Council allotments and community gardens.
- 3.11 A steering group meets every three weeks which is made up of a team from QUB and BCC staff, to agree the Belfast work programme and to link back into overarching project meetings which happen of each of the work packages. An internal group within BCC has been established to advise and feed into the project.
- 3.12 To date we have undertaken a stakeholder mapping exercise and we are currently planning several stakeholder engagement and co-design workshops focused on the Lower Botanic Gardens site. A site visit and initial soil sampling has commenced, with the intention of developing an agroecology hub focused on research, training, engagement and also incorporating multiple uses in the wider site such as health and dog walking for example. The aim is to create a multipurpose space which benefits local people and the wider city.
- 3.13 A series of discussions have also taken place in relation to procuring sensors, data platform and wireless network, with Digital Services supporting this workstream and leading on the procurement which will be based on a specification developed by one of the workstreams for all cities use.
- 3.14 The UPSURGE project is a four-year project which is in year 1 at present. It is planned that the infrastructure works will take place in 2023, with stakeholder engagement and co-design taking place in 2022, along with sensor deployment.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 All activities are financed through previously approved internal and external funding.

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Implications**

5.1 Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process."

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Belfast Agenda Review (Action Planning Update)

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 the Committee on the progress of the Belfast Agenda Review, including the action planning phase.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i Note the following report which was submitted to the March SP&R Committee outlining progress of the development of the refreshed Belfast Agenda Strategy document and supporting four-year Delivery Action Plans;
- ii Consider and provide comments on the emerging strategic intents and measures of success (stretch goals) as set out in slides 12-22 in Appendix 1.
- iii Note the proposed next steps and timeline as set out in slide 33 in Appendix 1; and
- iv Note the plans for continued elected member engagement, detailed in section 3.5.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The following report was submitted to April's meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources (SP&R) Committee and sets out the emerging strategic framework for the refreshed Belfast Agenda. Given the cross-cutting nature of the priorities, objectives and targets which will provide the focus for community planning over the period 2022-26, it was agreed to bring this to the attention of members of the Climate & City Resilience Committee.

The November 2021 SP&R Committee received an update on the emerging findings and recommendations following the initial phase of Belfast Agenda: Continuing the Conversation engagement to inform the refreshed Belfast Agenda (BA) for the period 2022-2026. As reported at the November meeting, there was broad agreement that the existing long-term vision and outcomes of the BA remain relevant, and the proposed priorities for focus were the things that stakeholders and communities believed community planning could help address over the next 4-year period. There had been feedback in relation to how some of the priorities had been framed and the need for them to be easily understood. As a result, some minor changes had been made to the framing of the priority areas such as, changing 'economic recovery' to 'Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth'. A summary of the current Belfast Agenda priority framework (which reflects many of the changes) is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 Bringing focus and commitment to delivery

Building on the recommendations and consensus reached through Phase I, the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and council has committed to co-design specific and measurable actions plan(s) which would underpin the priority areas of focus. Subsequently, a small group of core partners (cross-sectoral) has been brought together to help further develop the approach to co-designing each of the priority areas and cross-cutting themes. Each task and finish group were responsible for analysing the range of outputs from phase 1 of the 'Belfast Agenda: Continuing the Conversation' engagement process; assessing relevant strategies, plans and local intelligence (including information received through the call for evidence); feedback from the community and Belfast Agenda Board engagement workshops; online and paper-based survey results; and the current delivery plans of existing Belfast Agenda Boards.

Based on this initial analysis, partners prepared a strategic framework to help bring focus and shape the co-designed action plans consisting of:

1. What we are trying to achieve over the next 4 years (strategic intent);
2. How will we measure success (stretch goals); and
3. How will we realise such success (SMART Action Plan(s)).

Figure 1 below illustrates this framework and how a structured and informed approach is being implemented with partners to ensure there is a strong thread between each of the priority areas, ambitions, measures of success and importantly the focus for collaborative action.

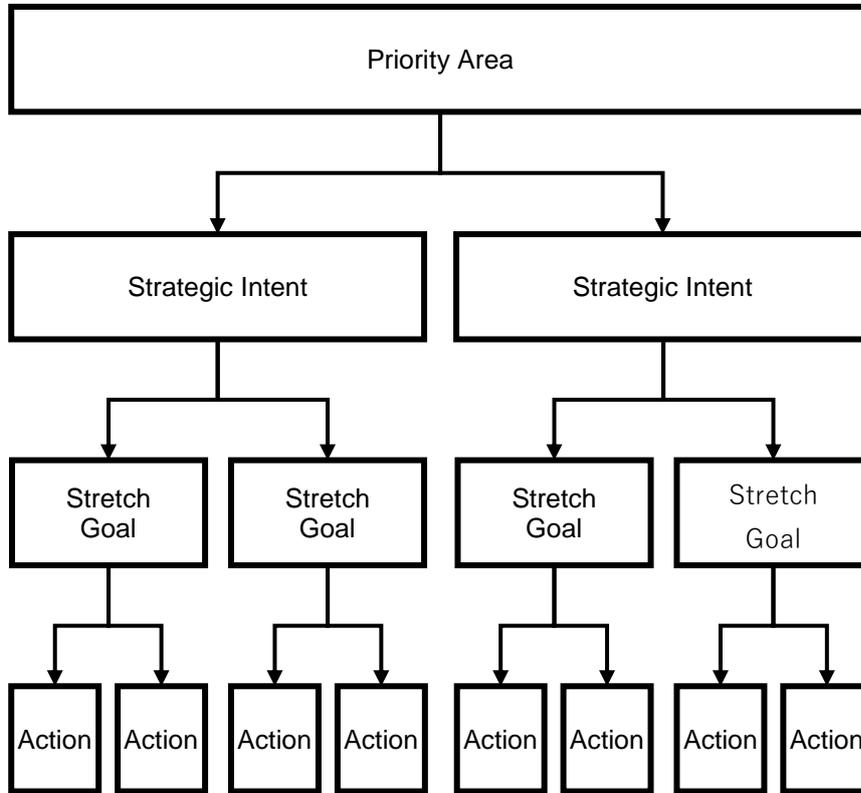


Figure 1: strategic framework adopted by partners to bring focus and shape co-designed action plans

- 3.3 Output from this initial exercise will inform the next phase of the Continuing the Conversation engagement programme, where we will continue to work with partners and communities to co-design delivery plans. This represents an ongoing and complex process, which requires participation and involvement across sectors and communities at multiple levels, which has resulted in some priorities being more developed than others. The emerging frameworks for each of the priorities are attached as part of the presentation attached at Appendix 1 (slides 12 to 22) which had been discussed with the All-Party Working group on Community Planning when it met on 23 February 2022. Please note that since the working group meeting of 23 February, the strategic intents and stretch goals have been further developed, particularly the City Development elements following the Board meeting on Friday 11 March. This reflects the dynamic nature of the co-design process which remains a

work in progress. Members are asked to consider and provide feedback on the emerging frameworks outlined by 15 April 2022 to communityplanning@belfastcity.gov.uk. This feedback will then be reflected in future iterations and can be discussed further with members as the strategy is further refined.

- 3.4 As discussed with the All-Party Working Group, it is proposed that the timeline for developing the refreshed Belfast Agenda strategy document and underpinning delivery plans includes sufficient time for direct and genuine engagement with partners, communities/ communities of interest and specific sectors including the business and private sector over April and May 2022. In addition, more formal and intensive consultation activities are planned on the strategy document as well as further engagement to co-design the action plans during May and June 2022. Slide 33 in Appendix 1 outlines the proposed next steps and timeline for this process. It is felt that the timeline will allow for greater input and enable valuable buy-in to the emerging plans.

3.5 Political engagement with elected members

In addition to the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning on 23 February 2022, and subsequently the Strategic Policy, and Resources Committee, it is also intended to bring a similar paper, presentation, and discussions to the Social Policy Working Group in April 2022. The intention would be to bring a further iteration of the draft strategy and emerging action plans to Party Group Briefings and Committee in April 2022 for further consideration, input, and refinement. It is important to note that the feedback and recommendations from Members received following the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning meeting (23 Feb) will be factored into the continued refinement of the BA Refresh.

3.6 Financial an Resource Implications

Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will continue to involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

It is recommended that the consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda will take account of the draft Audit of Inequalities and include specific sessions with targeted harder to reach groups to ensure that equality implications are considered as part of the review process.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Update on Shared Prosperity Fund

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 provide an update to members on the emergent Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF).

2.1 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that European Structural and Investment (ESI) funds help to pay for initiatives supporting business development, research and development, investment in digital and green infrastructure, as well skills and training interventions and support for job-seekers.

3.2 The ESI funds that the UK received were:

- **The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which focuses mainly on support to small businesses and on research and innovation, with a smaller emphasis on moving towards a low carbon economy;**
- **The European Social Fund (ESF), which is very strongly focused on employment. The main way it does this is by encouraging people into the workforce, such as by building networks between employers, local authorities and charities, and by improving people’s skills. ESF funding also included the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), which funds schemes such as apprenticeships and traineeships;**
- **The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which funds improvements in agriculture as part of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (as opposed to income support payments to farmers, which are not part of structural funding);**
- **The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), a much smaller fund supporting improvements in fisheries.**

3.3 In the EU’s 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) period, the last MFF in which the UK was an EU member state, its funding allocation from ESI funds was €16.3 billion. This worked out to around £2.0 billion per year on average.

- 3.4 Northern Ireland has been a net beneficiary of the EU Structural funds and their impact has been significant – indeed in Northern Ireland we received approx. 5% of the total UK allocation, while only representing 2.8% of the population
- 3.5 The European Social Fund has been a vital component in addressing inequalities, poverty and supported the creation of more and better jobs, which it does by co-funding projects that improve the levels of employment, the quality of jobs, and the inclusiveness of the labour market in areas of impact. ESF projects are funded to a value of 65% by ESF with a 35% match funding requirement historically. Data provided by Department for the Economy and contained in appendix 1, indicated that ESF allocation for the current programme period in Belfast March 2018 – to March 2022 had a value of £55,479,367 for ESF with the total value being £85,352,887, including 35% match funding of £29,873,520.
- 3.6 The UK Government announced in 2017 that ESI fundings successor will be a Shared Prosperity Fund . The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a Government-allocated fund which is intended to reduce inequalities between communities, as part of the Government’s wider ‘levelling up’ agenda.
- 3.7 The objectives set by the Government for the SPF is to tackle inequalities between communities, and raise productivity in those parts of the country whose economies are furthest behind, but so far it has given few details around its scale, design and implementation.
- 3.8 On February 2nd 2022 Pre-Launch Guidance for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was published. It stated that that it would provide £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition.
- 3.9 The pre-launch guidance confirmed that in England, Scotland and Wales local government will be given responsibility for developing an investment plan for approval by the UK Government, and for delivery of the Fund thereafter. This delivery model follows the recent approach of the Levelling Up Fund which provided a ring fenced portion of funding to 100 leading local authorities while in Northern Ireland the round one levelling up and community renewal funding was dispersed via a competitive bid process.
- 3.10 The guidance confirmed that the approach in Northern Ireland is as per the extract below,

‘In Northern Ireland, the UK Government is considering options for development of a Northern Ireland investment plan. We are

committed to working with local partners to ensure that the investment plan reflects the particular needs of Northern Ireland's economy and society. We want this plan to draw on the insight and expertise of local partners, including the Northern Ireland Executive, local authorities, City and Growth Deal geographies, businesses and the community and voluntary sector to target interventions where most appropriate. This plan will be used by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities who will have oversight of delivery for Northern Ireland, working closely with local partners.'

- 3.11 The guidance confirmed that for the devolved administrations broader governance, statutory and regulatory requirements will be detailed in a Prospectus, which is expected to be published in the spring. It is important to note that as well as governance the specific amount of funding available to address the broad objectives of the programme have not been provided as yet.
- 3.12 Over successive funding cycles, councils have effectively managed and deployed EU resources to support local economies. In the current programming period, councils are responsible for administering around £18million of funding to support business start-up and growth. This comprises ERDF funding matched with budget from Invest NI and supported by resources from each of the councils. The lack of ERDF resources presents a significant risk to this support and will impact significantly on the predominantly micro business base in the region.
- 3.13 Local authorities in Northern Ireland are also at the centre of the EU's PEACE funding – an instrument that is unique to this region. Local Peace Plans – developed across three priority themes within each council area – account for around £45million of expenditure across Northern Ireland on a range of activities aimed at building positive relations and embedding peace within local communities. Again, councils play a lead role in developing locally-agreed plans and overseeing delivery – including accountability for all spend.
- 3.14 Members will be aware that Labour Market Partnership structures that have been established within each of the council areas over the last year. These Partnerships aim to improve employment outcomes and enhance skills levels of local residents. They bring together regional government departments, local skills providers and business representatives to develop innovative approaches that can improve outcomes for key target groups and help local companies to secure the talent pipeline that they need to grow their business. While these partnerships are in their infancy we propose that they can be a useful conduits for identifying and shaping priority interventions in the skills arena. We would also propose that the aforementioned structures established for administering and accounting for ERDF and PEACE funding could

also act as useful conduits and instruments for shaping the objectives and assisting with the dispersals of SPF funding.

3.15 Council officers have engaged with representatives Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and recently representatives from NILGA met with Minister O'Brien, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. While this engagement is welcome the lack of clarity regarding the design process for Shared Prosperity, formal engagement routes, governance and the level of funding are still a concern for Council given the significant level of investment, its impact and existing infrastructure. SOLACE has formally written to Minister O' Brien to request that councils have a lead role in the new programme and have asked that more detail on the issues highlighted above are provided as soon as possible.

3.16 Finance and Resource Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

The Director of Economic Development highlighted that the guidance confirmed that, for the devolved administrations, broader governance, statutory and regulatory requirements would be detailed in a Prospectus, that would be published in the spring. He said it was important to note that as well as governance the specific amount of funding available to address the broad objectives of the programme had not been provided as yet. He highlighted that there was no clarity on the process.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the comments of the Director.

Recap on Issues to be Raised at Future Meetings

The Resilience Co-ordinator raised the item in relation to issues to be raised at future meetings. After discussion, the Committee agreed on the following:

- that the Resilience Co-ordinator would circulate to Members options for climate and resilience training;
- that the Resilience Co-ordinator would re-circulate to Members the list of items for discussion at future meetings that had previously been agreed.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item is 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 following item as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Update on Legal Proceedings

The Divisional Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration a report updating the Committee on legal proceedings which had been issued by the Council in respect of the Decision by the DAERA Minister on 2nd February, 2022 to halt border checks which were required under the EU-UK Protocol.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson