

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



Belfast
City Council

12th April, 2022

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 15th April, 2022 at 9.30 a.m., for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN WALSH

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Appointment of Director (Operational) of City and Neighbourhood Services (Pages 1 - 2)
- (b) Update on Industrial Action (Pages 3 - 6)
- (c) Update on Organisational Recovery (Pages 7 - 10)
- (d) City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress (Pages 11 - 16)
- (e) Requests for the use of Council Parks (Pages 17 - 22)
- (f) Official visit of US Secretary of Labor (Pages 23 - 26)

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (a) Motion - Energy Price Crisis (Pages 27 - 30)

4. Governance

- (a) Revision to Scheme of Allowances (Pages 31 - 56)

5. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

- (a) Update on Belfast Region City Deal (Pages 57 - 84)
- (b) PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report: Taking Action on Levelling Up (Pages 85 - 134)
- (c) NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in Northern Ireland (Pages 135 - 182)

6. Physical Programme and Asset Management

- (a) Asset Management (Pages 183 - 198)
- (b) Update on Area Working Groups (Pages 199 - 206)

7. Finance, Procurement and Performance

- (a) Update on Contracts (Pages 207 - 214)

8. Equality and Good Relations

- (a) Race Champion and Race Action Plan (Pages 215 - 218)

9. Operational Issues

- (a) Minutes of Meeting of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum (Pages 219 - 222)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall Grounds (Pages 223 - 226)
- (c) Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality (Pages 227 - 232)

10. Issues Raised in Advance by Members

- (a) Illumination of the City Hall

(Councillor M. Kelly to request that the City Hall be illuminated on the night of Saturday, 28th May to mark Menstrual Hygiene Day)

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

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Subject:	Motion – Energy Price Crisis
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
	To bring to Members' attention a motion on the Energy Price Crisis, which the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th March, referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
	The Committee is asked to consider the motion.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February, considered a report providing details of the motions which had been received for consideration by the Council on 1st March.

In accordance with Standing Order 37(h), the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor O'Hara, was referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration.

Energy Price Crisis

“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;
- 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”.

- 3.2 The People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th March, agreed at the request of Councillor Smyth, the proposer, 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.

	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>No financial implications at this stage.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>All potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications will be taken into consideration.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Revisions to Scheme of Allowances
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider amendments to the Council's Scheme of Allowances to increase the rate of Basic Allowance and the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> consider whether it wishes to apply the increase in the Basic Allowance from £15,486 per annum to £15,757, with effect from 1st April, 2021, and consider whether it wishes to increase the total maximum Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) from the current £117,774 per annum to £119,835 as set out in Appendix 2, with effect from 1st April, 2021.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1.1	The Department for Communities issued a circular, LG 10/2022, which set out revised maximum limits for basic and special responsibility allowances with effect from 1st April, 2021.
3.1.2	The Committee, at its meeting in March 2022, agreed to apply the increase in the basic allowance from £15,057 per annum to the current £15,486. Local Government Circular LG 10/2022, dated 28th March, 2022, has increased the maximum basic allowance, which Councils may pay to Members, to £15,757 with effect from 1st April, 2021.
3.1.3	The Committee is also requested to consider whether to apply the increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) budget, with effect from 1st April, 2021. For a number of years, the Council has agreed a split in the special responsibility allowance budget so as to pay both the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Party Officers (Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader and Party Secretary – depending upon Party size). The current division of SRAs is set out in Appendix 1. If the increase in the overall budget is increased, a suggested split is set out in Appendix 2.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.1.4	The increase to the maximum rates of each of the allowances has already been considered and can be met through existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.1.5	There are not any Good Relations, Equality or Rural Needs issues associate with this report.
4.0	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Current division of SRAs Appendix 2 – Revised division of SRAs if the increase in the maximum is applied Appendix 3 – Proposed Scheme of Allowances 2022-2023 Appendix 4 – Local Government Circular LG 10/2022

Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – Current**Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons**

Position	Allowance	Number of Positions	Total
Chairpersons	£5,460.00	7	£38,220
Deputy Chairpersons	£2,730.00	7	£19,110
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£2,730.00	1	£2,730
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,365.00	1	£1,365
Total			£61,425

Political Party Officers

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,465.00

Deputy Leader/Secretary Basic Allocation £3,150

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £162.15 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per Party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	18	£162.15	£2,534.94	£3,465	£6,383.70
SF Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
SF Secretary				£3,150	£3,150
DUP Party Leader	15	£162.15	£2,112.45	£3,465	£5,897.25
DUP Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
DUP Secretary				£3,150	£3,150
Alliance Party Leader	10	£162.15	£1,408.30	£3,465	£5,086.50
Alliance Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
SDLP Party Leader	6	£162.15	£844.98	£3,465	£4,437.90
SDLP Deputy Leader				£3,150	£3,150
Green Party Leader	4	£162.15	£563.32	£3,465	£4,113.60
PBPA Leader	3	£162.15	£422.49	£3,465	£3,951.45
UUP Leader	2	£162.15	£281.66	£3,465	£3,789.30
PUP Leader	2	£162.15	£281.66	£3,465	£3,789.30
Total	60				£56,349

Total

£117,774

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Allocation of Special Responsibility Allowance – with increase applied**Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons**

Position	Allowance	Number of Positions	Total
Chairpersons	£5,555.54	7	£38,888.78
Deputy Chairpersons	£2,777.77	7	£19,444.39
Chair BW&UH Cttee	£2,777.77	1	£2,777.77
Dep Chair BW&UH Cttee	£1,388.89	1	£1,388.89
Total			£62,499.83

Political Party Officers

Party Officer Basic Allocation £3,525.63

Deputy Leader/Secretary Basic Allocation £3,205.12

Remainder allocated to Political Party Leaders £164.99 per Member of the Party

Position	Number of Members	Allocation per Party Member	Allocation per Party Strength	Basic Allocation	Total
SF Party Leader	18	£164.99	£2,969.82	£3,525.63	£6,495.45
SF Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
SF Secretary				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
DUP Party Leader	15	£164.99	£2,474.85	£3,525.63	£6,000.48
DUP Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
DUP Secretary				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
Alliance Party Leader	10	£164.99	£1,649.90	£3,525.63	£5,175.53
Alliance Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
SDLP Party Leader	6	£164.99	£989.94	£3,525.63	£4,515.57
SDLP Deputy Leader				£3,205.12	£3,205.12
Green Party Leader	4	£164.99	£659.96	£3,525.63	£4,185.59
PBPA Leader	3	£164.99	£494.97	£3,525.63	£4,020.60
UUP Leader	2	£164.99	£329.98	£3,525.63	£3,855.61
PUP Leader	2	£164.99	£329.98	£3,525.63	£3,855.61
Total	60				£57,335.16

Total

£119,834.99

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Scheme of Allowances

Payable to Councillors 2022/2023

Revised April, 2022

This Scheme is made under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and will take effect from 1st April, 2021.

Councillors' allowances

Councillors' allowances are governed by statute and provision is made for the following types of payments:

(a) Allowances:

- (i) Basic Allowance
- (ii) Special Responsibility Allowance
- (iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance
- (iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance
- (v) District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Allowances (DPCSP)
- (vi) Renunciations
- (vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

(b) Expenses

- (i) Travel
- (ii) Subsistence

In issuing the payment of allowances to elected members the Council follows the instructions set out by the Department of Environment in 'Guidance on Councillor Allowances' March 2012 and further circular updates.

Information regarding other provisions for Councillors is also included:

(c) Additional Information

- (i) IT/Phone Package
- (ii) Councillors' Support Services

(a) Allowances

(i) Basic Allowances

A basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all Councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and approved duties. Basic allowance is also intended to cover incidental costs incurred by Councillors in their official capacity, such as the use of their homes and the cost of any telephone calls, including mobile phone calls.

The maximum annual allowance with effect from 1st April, 2021 is £15,757 payable monthly.

This allowance will be paid in equal monthly instalments via the Council's Payroll and is subject to tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable.

If a Councillor ceases to be a Councillor before the end of his or her term of office, payment of the allowance will cease and a pro rata calculation will be made to ensure that the Councillor receives the correct amount of allowance. If necessary, an adjustment for under or over payment may be made to ensure that the final payment is correct, and the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Basic Allowance.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) or section 60(1) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the basic allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall continue.

(ii) Special Responsibility Allowances

In addition to Basic Allowance the Council also pays Special Responsibility Allowances to those Councillors it considers to have significant additional responsibilities over and above the generally accepted duties of a Councillor. These special responsibilities are related to the discharge of the Council's functions.

The maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance is determined by the Department for Communities. The division of the Special Responsibility Allowance is based upon the positions held by individual Councillors as agreed.

- The Council agreed a special responsibility allowance threshold of £119,835 which may be paid to holders of positions of responsibility. No more than 50% of the Councillors can receive a special responsibility payment and no individual member can receive more than one special responsibility payment.

Special Responsibility Allowance is paid in equal, monthly instalments. Special Responsibility Allowances are liable for tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable

In the event of a Councillor ceasing to hold an office which entitled him or her to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance before the term of office is completed, payment of the Allowance ceases. If necessary, an adjustment for under or overpayment may have to be made to ensure that the final payment is correct, and the Council reserves the right to recover any overpayments of Special Responsibility Allowance.

Rates of Special Responsibility Allowances with effect from 1st April, 2021 are:

Position	Committee	Allowance
Chairperson's Allowance	Strategic Policy and Resources	£5,555.54
	City Growth and Regeneration	£5,555.54
	People and Communities	£5,555.54
	Licensing	£5,555.54
	Planning	£5,555.54
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	£2,777.77
	Brexit Committee	£5,555.54
	Standards Committee	£5,555.54

Deputy Chairperson's Allowance	Strategic Policy and Resources	£2,777.77
	City Growth and Regeneration	£2,777.77
	People and Communities	£2,777.77
	Licensing	£2,777.77
	Planning	£2,777.77
	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	£1,388.89
	Brexit Committee	£2,777.77
	Standards Committee	£2,777.77

Position	Party	Allowance
Party Group Leader	Sinn Fein (18 Members)	£6,495.45
	DUP (15 Members)	£6,000.48
	Alliance (10 Members)	£5,175.53
	SDLP (6 Members)	£4,515.57
	GREEN (4 Members)	£4,185.59
	PBPA (3 Members)	£4,020.60
	UUP (2 Members)	£3,855.61
	PUP (2 Members)	£3,855.61
Deputy Party Group Leader	Sinn Fein	£3,205.12
	DUP	£3,205.12
	Alliance	£3,205.12
	SDLP	£3,205.12
Party Secretary	Sinn Fein	£3,205.12
	DUP	£3,205.12

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of any special responsibility allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is wholly suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, the whole of any special responsibility allowance payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be

payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, that part of any special responsibility allowance (to which the partial suspension relates) payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall be withheld.

In circumstances where a councillor is partially suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 60(1) (Decisions on Interim Reports) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, that part of any special responsibility allowance (to which the partial suspension relates) payable to the councillor in respect of the period for which the councillor is partially suspended shall be withheld, subject to the provision that the allowance withheld shall be payable to the councillor concerned should the final adjudication of the Commissioner for Standards exonerate the councillor concerned.

(iii) Civic Dignitaries Allowance

Section 32 of the Finance Act provides that a council may pay to the Civic Dignitaries such allowances as it considers reasonable to meet the expenses of those offices and they should be considered totally separate from SRA arrangements.

The Civic Dignitary Personal Allowances are paid in equal, monthly instalments and are liable for tax, National Insurance and pension deductions where applicable.

The entitlements, per annum, are:-

- Lord Mayor £34,800
- Deputy Lord Mayor £6,250
- High Sherriff £6,250

Where a Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor is suspended from carrying out the duties of a councillor in accordance with section 59(5) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the part of Civic Allowance payable to the Councillor in respect of the period for which the Councillor is suspended will be withheld.

(iv) Dependants' Carers' Allowance

Any Member who is the main carer of a dependant, where care is required to enable that Member to perform an Approved Duty (see page 9), may claim Dependent Carers' Allowance (DCA). The rate for Standard Care is based on the hourly national living wage for age 25 or over, and the rate for Specialised Care is double the rate for Standard Care. The rates from 1st April, 2022 are:

- Standard Care £9.50 per hour limited to £494.00 per month
- Specialist Care £19.00 per hour limited to £988.00 per month

A dependant is defined as:

- a child under 16 years old;
- a child 16 years old or older, where there is medical / social work evidence that full-time care is required;
- an adult with recognised physical/mental disability where there is medical / social work evidence that full-time care is required; or
- an elderly relative requiring full-time care.

For the purposes of this allowance, a carer is defined as a responsible person over 16 years old who does not normally live with the councillor as part of that household; and is not a parent/guardian of the dependant. A specialist carer is a qualified person who is needed where it is essential to have professional assistance.

Receipts must be obtained from specialist carers and must accompany the claim form. Councillors may claim only once for each occurrence of an approved duty (page 9) and only one Dependants' Carers' Allowance rate is payable, even if there are two or more dependants being cared for.

Councillors must disclose any financial support provided under this allowance when applying for other care services offered by another public body.

This allowance claim may also include the duration of essential travel time, up to a maximum of one hour before the approved duty starts and ending up to one hour after it finishes.

(v) District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Allowances (DPCSP)

This allowance is paid to councillors who are members of the District Policing and Community Safety Partnership. Each councillor is entitled to claim £60 per attendance at each meeting and may claim for up to a maximum of 20 meetings a year. Each member can also claim for mileage for attending each meeting directly from DPCSP.

Chairpersons of each DPCSP are entitled to claim for an additional 10 meetings per year of the DPCSP. In addition the Chairperson of the 4 DPCSPs also sit on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and are entitled to claim for up to 20 meetings per year of this partnership.

(vi) Renunciations

Councillors may, if they wish, renounce their entitlement to basic, chairperson, vice chairperson or special responsibility allowances. They can do this by writing to the Chief Executive. A councillor can subsequently withdraw the renunciation. They can also amend a renunciation (for example, to limit it to one kind of allowance only). The withdrawal or amendment cannot have retrospective effect.

(vii) Disqualification or Suspension of a Councillor

The Local Government Commissioner for Standards may impose sanctions on a Councillor who is found to have breached the Northern Ireland Code of Conduct for Councillors. Such sanction may be imposed at the conclusion of the Commissioner's adjudication process of the alleged breach or at the conclusion of an interim adjudication by the Commissioner.

For the purpose of this Scheme of Allowances, the following action will be taken upon receipt by the Chief Executive of a decision by the Commissioner which results in the disqualification or the suspension of a Councillor:

Disqualification

If a Councillor is disqualified, then the payment of all allowances and the provision of all support services outlined in this Scheme will cease with immediate effect from the date of disqualification.

Suspension

If a Councillor is wholly suspended for a period, then the payment of all allowances and the provision of all support services outlined in this Scheme will cease with immediate effect from the date of suspension.

(b) Expenses**Travel and Subsistence Allowances**

All claims for travel and subsistence should be submitted within three months. Any claims made outside of this time limit cannot be processed.

(i) Travel

- Motor Mileage Claims**

The rates of Travel and Subsistence Allowances, including motor mileage and pedal cycle rates, are reviewed annually by the Department for Communities, following consultation with the Northern Ireland Joint Council for Local Government Services.

Claims can only be made where expenditure is incurred in relation to the Councillors undertaking Approved Duties.

Travel claims may be made through Democratic Services and it is a matter for each individual Councillor to ensure that the details contained in any claim are accurate and only include actual expenditure for which they are entitled to make a claim.

In some instances, mileage claims may be liable for tax and National Insurance deductions.

The following rates are currently in use, with most Councillors getting the maximum amount of 65.0p per mile:

	Motor Cars				Pedal Cycle	Motor Cycle (all engine capacities)
	450-999cc	1000-1199cc	1199 + cc	Electric Car		
0-8,500 miles	46.9p	52.2p	65.0p	45.0p	20p	24p
After 8,500 miles	13.7p	14.4p	16.4p	25.0p		
Passenger rate	5.0p					

- Public Transport**

Expenditure on public transport in relation to attending approved duties can be claimed back only when accompanied by proof of purchase. Any journeys made using public transport should be noted separately in any travel expenses claim.

(ii) Subsistence

If Councillors attend conferences, courses or undertake visits as representatives of the Council they are entitled to receive appropriate subsistence allowances.

Before a Councillor attends an event, they must obtain Committee approval. Councillors may also attend approved events as part of their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Any accommodation or travel arrangements for conferences are made directly by the Council.

Councillors should take a careful note and keep receipts for any expenses they incur while they are away on Council business because they may be able to claim for these as part of their subsistence allowances or as incidental expenses. This relates to such things as meals, bus and taxi fares, necessary telephone calls, etc. Purchases of any alcoholic beverages may not be claimed for.

Within the UK

The rates for subsistence allowance are determined by the Department for Communities. The following table shows the current rates of subsistence which may be claimed for:

Maximum Subsistence Rates		
	BRITISH ISLES	LONDON
Accommodation Allowance	£100.70	£122.45
Meal Allowance		
Breakfast	£11.50	
Lunch	£13.50	
Tea	£4.70	
Dinner	£20.95	
Total Meal Allowance	£50.65	

Departments will assist Councillors in the completion of claim forms and Councillors should make contact with an appropriate officer immediately upon returning from the conference to give details of additional expenses incurred and to sign the necessary claim forms.

Claims without receipts should rarely happen. However, Councillors must use the '[Lost or Unobtainable Receipt Voucher](#)' to claim reimbursement for expenditure they have incurred when no receipt is available.

Outside the UK

For travel outside the United Kingdom, the Council will pay advanced subsistence at the rate of £75.00 per 24-hour period, or £45 per part 24-hour period.

Approved Duties

Under the existing Regulations Councillors are entitled to claim expenses in relation to an approved duty. An approved duty may be defined as:-

- (a) attendance at a meeting of the Council or of any of its Committees. Members may only claim travelling allowance for attending Committees to which they have been appointed. A Member, however, may claim mileage allowance for attending a meeting of a Committee to which he or she has not been appointed if he or she is attending at the invitation of the Committee concerned or has been sent by another Committee to state a particular case.

Or

- (b) attendance approved by the Council for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the Council:
- attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of Advisory/Liaison Committees Steering Groups/ Working Groups;
 - attendance at approved conferences, courses, study visits or seminars as a representative of the Council;
 - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of PCSP's and DPCSP's;
 - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of community centre committees ;
 - attendance on a Council or Committee deputation relevant to the functions of the Council; and
 - attendance by appointed Councillors at meetings of outside bodies only if the functions of the Outside Body relates to the statutory functions of the Council, and where remuneration is not made by the Outside Body to which the Councillor has been appointed.
 - Attendance at training courses or briefing sessions provided by or through the Council

In addition, the Council's Chief Executive can authorise as approved duties certain miscellaneous functions.

Tax

Useful information on treatment of tax for councillors could be found at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs website via <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim65900>.

Councillors' Pension Scheme

Councillors are automatically enrolled in the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Scheme (NILGOSC). The main purpose of the scheme is to provide a pension in retirement for Councillors. The benefits paid under the Scheme are based on length of membership of the Scheme and career average pensionable pay.

The pensionable pay of a councillor consists of the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance payments only. The contribution rate depends on how much each Councillor is paid but will be between 5.5% and 7.5% of the pensionable allowances received.

If a Councillor no longer wishes to participate in the pension scheme, or has any queries regarding the scheme, NIGOSC should be contacted directly on 0345 3197 320

(c) Additional Information

(i) IT /Phone Package

Personal computer equipment can be provided by the Council to each Councillor on the basis that the Council owns the equipment and lends it to those Councillors who request it.

Councillors IT Package currently consists of the following:

- Tablet PC
- All-in-one printer (printer, fax and scanner)
- Smartphone, which includes a call, text and data allowance

• **Tablet PC**

Each Councillor is entitled to receive a tablet PC for their duration as a Member of Belfast City Council. The device is provided by the Council to assist Councillors in undertaking their role more effectively. The main benefits are having online access to the council minutes system and other Council provided software and to engage more effectively with constituents.

Where a Councillor has been provided with a tablet PC, hard copies of Council, Committee and Working Group report packs will not be provided.

• **Mobile Telephone costs**

Each Councillor will be offered the use of a mobile phone for the duration they remain a Councillor of Belfast City Council. The device is available for upgrade periodically.

The Council will cover the cost of line rental which includes:

- a. the cost of all phone calls to UK landlines or UK mobile phones whilst within the UK;
- b. the cost of all text messages to UK landlines or UK mobile phones whilst within the UK; and
- c. 4GB of data usage per month.

All costs incurred by calls, texts or data usage outside of that detailed above, are met by the Councillor and will be deducted the following month from the Councillor's basic allowance.

Hands free mobile phone equipment

The Council will contribute towards the cost of purchase and installation of hands free mobile phone equipment for use in the Councillors' cars on the following basis:-

- Reimbursement will be made in respect of the costs of installation of the equipment in the Councillor's own private vehicle and shall be subject to the submission of appropriate receipts
- The maximum amount of reimbursement on each occasion to be £250.00.

• Home Telephone

The Council may meet the costs of basic monthly/quarterly line rental of the home telephone of each Councillor. Councillors are required to pay the rental cost in the first instance and, having submitted the telephone bill, will then be reimbursed this amount, subject to any tax deductions being applied through the Council's payroll system.

The Department for Communities has determined that as the Councillor's Basic Allowance covers incidental expenses involved in being a Councillor, such as the use of a home telephone, it is therefore not possible to reimburse the cost of telephone calls made on a landline.

• Broadband Internet Access

In order to encourage Councillors to use the Council's IT system remotely (from home or office), Councillors may claim part of their home broadband internet rental costs (maximum £25 per month).

As with phone line rental reimbursement, Councillors are required to pay the cost of the broadband in the first instance and, having submitted the appropriate bill, will then be reimbursed up to £25.00 per month, subject to any tax deductions being applied through the Council's payroll.

Access to the Council's systems is provided by means of a virtual private network (VPN). Councillors should speak to officers in Democratic Services to arrange to have the VPN set up on their computer.

• Electronic Minutes System

The electronic minutes system is accessible on the Council's website as well as the corporate intranet. The purpose of the system is to have a range of information relating to councillors and the Council's decision-making process in one place.

The system allows Councillors and members of the public to:-

- View the schedule of meetings;
- Access agendas, reports and minutes of Council, Committees, and Working Group Meetings; and
- Search for historical decisions.

The system is also used to alert Councillors that Committee summonses, agenda, minutes and reports have been published and, when any amendments or changes have taken place, Councillors can then access electronically.

(ii) Councillors' Support Services

The Council provides Councillors with a wide range of support services to assist them in carrying out their work as Councillors. Support services include typing of correspondence, post, message and enquiry services, council stationery, research service, room bookings, Councillors training, travel arrangements, expenses and subsistence payments and general enquiries.

- **Members' Common Room**

The Members' Common Room is located at the reception area of the City Hall, adjacent to the Committee Rooms. Individual mail boxes and a kitchen are available for Councillors' use.

- **Party Rooms**

In addition to the Members' Common Room, the Council provides Party Rooms for each of the political party groups within the Council. These may be used for meetings, work or discussions with constituents.

All accommodation and facilities provided are for use in connection with Council or constituency business only.

In addition to a conference table, printer, scanner, television, tea/coffee making facilities and filing space, each Party Room has at least one PC in addition to docking stations for use with the Council provided tablet PCs.

- **Correspondence**

Items for typing may be left with Democratic Services, where a confidential secretarial service is available for letters, reports and all other correspondence related to Council or constituency work.

After typing, letters will be left in the Councillor's mailbox in the Members' Common Room or can be posted to the addressee.

- **Post**

A postal service is available for correspondence which relates to Council or constituency work.

Letters must be addressed to individuals living within the City boundary although letters to public bodies and government Departments with addresses outside the City will also be accepted.

Circularised mail will not be accepted.

Councillors can also be provided with prepaid envelopes for use in their routine correspondence to constituents etc. Please speak to Democratic Services officer to request an allocation of prepaid envelopes.

Postal facilities are not available for party political issues.

- **Message and Inquiry Service**

Democratic Services staff act as a point of contact for all enquiries and telephone messages concerning Councillors from the general public, constituents and Council officers.

The telephones in the party rooms are set to divert to staff on no reply and telephone messages for Councillors will be taken. Urgent messages will be relayed immediately to Councillors, if contact is possible, and other messages will be emailed or left in their mail boxes.

- **Council Stationery**

Personalised headed-paper, compliment slips and business cards with the Council logo will be provided for each Councillor during their term of office. Standard Council stationery items are also available in the Members' Common Room.

- **Civic Gifts**

A limited range of Belfast City Council branded gifts is available for use by Councillors. The gifts are intended for VIP guests to City Hall or for special individuals or groups which a Councillor wishes to recognise. Councillors may also request civic gifts when visiting special individuals or groups when on Council business in other countries. When requesting Civic Gifts, the Councillor must sign a receipt of goods and a database of issued gifts is maintained.

- **Research and Information Service**

Democratic Services staff will be available to assist Councillors in obtaining information and carrying out research on items related to Council and constituency business.

- **Receiving Constituents**

Councillors may make arrangements to receive constituents or visitors in their party room if space is available. Councillors may also request to book a committee room to meet with a group of up to 3 visitors. Visitors will not be permitted access to party rooms or the committee rooms unless accompanied by a Councillor.

- **Car parking**

Councillors have 24 hour access to the City Hall car park. A pass for display in Councillors' vehicles will be provided by Democratic Services.

Car parking for guests of Councillors is limited. However, if this is required, please contact Democratic Services staff. The visitors' name and the registration number of the vehicle will be required for the purposes of admittance by Security staff.



Chief Executive of each District Council
Finance Officer of each District Council
Other Interested Parties

Local Government and Housing
Regulation Division
Finance Branch
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG
Phone: 028 9082 3346
email: Anthony.carleton@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: CO1-21-1742

28 March 2022

Circular LG 10/2022

Dear Sir/Madam

**CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES CIRCULAR – UPDATED
MARCH 2022**

This Local Government Circular provides a consolidated record of all councillor allowances and supersedes Local Government Circular 07/2021.

This consolidated circular is required to determine and reflect an increase in maximum rates for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance from 1 April 2021 and an increase in Dependents' Carers' Allowance from 1 April 2022.

All determinations are made by the Department under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019.

If you have any queries on the content of this circular please contact Jeff Glass on 028 9082 3375 or Ian Lewis on 028 9082 3506 or by email jeff.glass@communities-ni.gov.uk or ian.lewis@communities-ni.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

ANTHONY CARLETON
Director
Local Government and Housing Regulation

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1. Basic Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2021

Basic Allowance	Maximum £15,757 per annum ≠
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≠ (The basic allowance includes an element for incidental and consumable costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity. In 2015/16 this element was £1,000 and each year this amount is uplifted in line with the increase applied to the basic allowance, therefore this element within the basic allowance is £1,109 from 1 April 2021.)

2. Dependants' Carers' Allowance

- valid from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£8.91 [^]	£463
Specialist	£17.82	£927

[^](Based on national living wage)

- valid from 1 April 2022

The following table states the maximum rates for dependants' carers' allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance	Hourly Rate	Maximum monthly amount
Standard	£9.50 [^]	£494
Specialist	£19.00	£988

[^](Based on national living wage)

3. Travel Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2017

The following table states the maximum rates for travel allowances.

Type of Vehicle	Rate per Mile
A pedal cycle	20.0p
A motor cycle (all engine capacities)	24.0p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 450cc but not exceeding 999cc	46.9p *13.7p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 999cc but not exceeding 1,199cc	52.2p *14.4p
A motor car of cylinder capacity exceeding 1,199cc	65.0p *16.4p
An electric car	45.0p **25.0p
Passenger rate (per passenger)	5.0p

* For mileage above 8,500 miles

**For mileage above 10,000 miles

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

– valid from 1 April 2021

The following table states the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance that a council may pay. The maximum rate is based on the size of the council population. Each council's population figures are updated each year by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and it is the duty of each council to operate within the total maximum rate appropriate to its population band. For ease the maximum any councillor can receive, within each band, is also provided.

Population of council	Maximum Special Responsibility Allowance £	Maximum (1/5 th) for individual councillor £
Less than 120,000	55,479	11,096
120,000 to 199,000	77,671	15,534
200,000 +	119,835	23,967

5. Subsistence Allowances

– valid from 1 April 2015

The following table states the maximum rates for subsistence; however, where councils believe it is necessary there is flexibility for councils to increase these rates by applying a suitable measure of price inflation.

PERIOD/MEAL	RATES £	
	British Isles	London
Accommodation allowance - An absence involving an overnight stay, away from the normal place of residence. This rate does not include any meal allowance.	100.70	122.45
Breakfast allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period before 11 am)	11.50	
Lunch allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 12 noon and 2pm)	13.50	
Tea allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period including the period between 3pm and 6pm)	4.70	
Evening meal allowance - (more than 4 hours away from the normal place of residence or, where approved by the council, a lesser period ending after 7pm)	20.95	



Subject:	Update on Belfast Region City Deal
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the update on the signing of the Belfast Region City Deal in December 2021. note the programme overview and the next steps in the implementation of the deal. note the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.

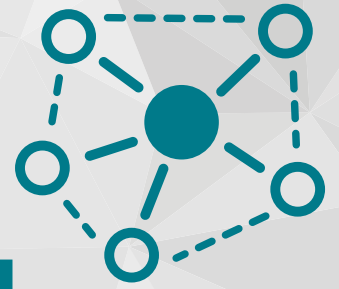
3.0	Main Report
	Programme Update
3.1	The Belfast Region Deal Document and Governance Framework was approved by the SP and R Committee in October 2021 and individual BRCD partners also sought approval through their own governance structures in tandem. Following these formal approvals by partners including 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 is attached at Appendix 1. 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 (E&S)
3.16	The Employability & 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 E&S 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 E&S 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 & 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.

	<p>Next Steps – Delivery Phase</p> <p>Accountable Body</p> <p>3.19 Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is the Lead Authority for the BRCD, which means 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.</p> <p>3.20 Now that the deal is signed, Belfast City 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</p> <p>Memorandum of Understanding</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Implementation and Financial Plans</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Contracts for Funding</p> <p>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.</p>
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	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 23 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 (AMIC), 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 are attached at Appendices 2 and 3. The next meeting will be hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council on 22 June 2022.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.27	All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.28	<p>The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that:</p> <p><i>‘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.’</i></p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – BRCD Summary Document</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Minutes of the BRCD Council Panel of 28th April, 2021</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Minutes of the BRCD Council Panel of 4th November, 2021</p>



BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

Summary
December 2021



A decade of opportunity
starts **now**

THE BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

The highly ambitious Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), signed in December 2021, arrives at a critical time. The Deal represents a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners and secures a bespoke package of investment from central government and the BRCD partners of more than £850 million to support the delivery of our shared vision of:

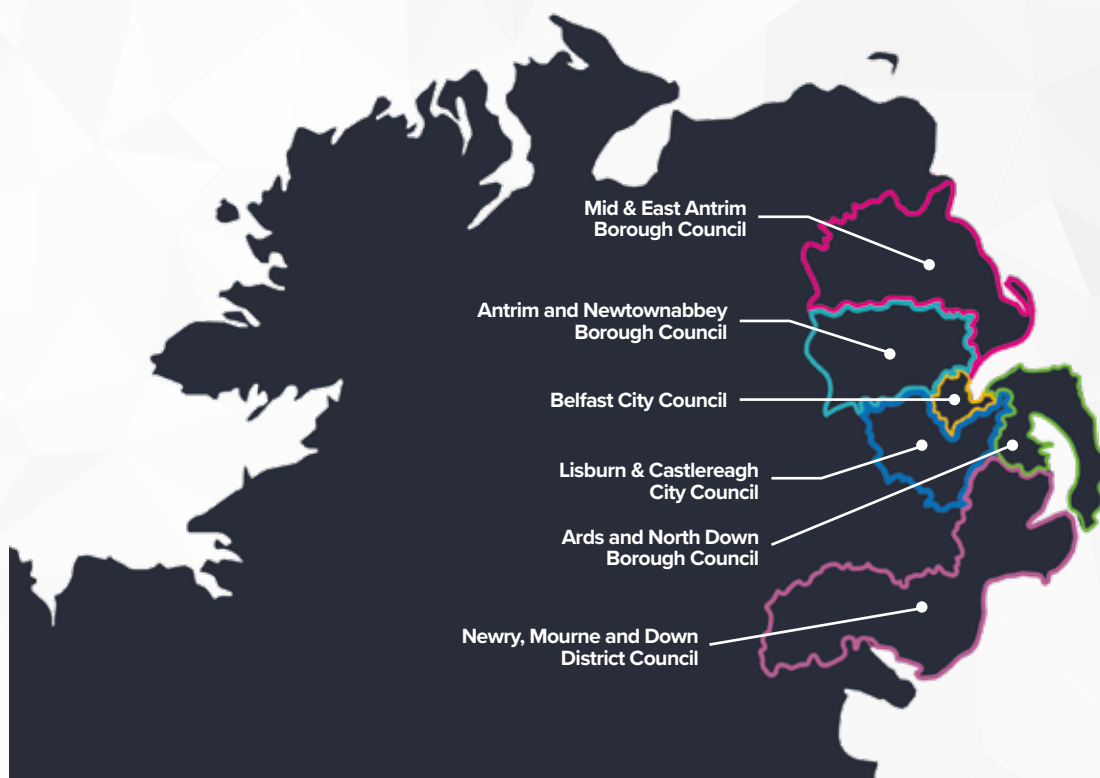
“Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and a balanced spread of benefits across the region.”

This substantial financial commitment, which will be further supplemented by the private sector to create a programme in excess of £1 billion, will generate up to 20,000 jobs as it is delivered over the next 10 to 15 years - an exciting, once in a generation opportunity to accelerate economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way.

This Deal will strengthen the region's offer in growth sectors such as life and health sciences, the digital and creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. It will support next generation digital capabilities, boost tourism and support the regeneration of our region, underpinned by infrastructure developments and investment in skills to connect people to jobs and services.

The Deal involves an integrated programme of investment that cuts across the responsibilities of local councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. The BRCD partners comprise the six local authorities; Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the region's two universities; Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, and four of the region's further education colleges; Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, Southern Regional College and the South Eastern Regional College.

The BRCD region has a population of over 1 million residents. The region is young, ambitious and growing - over half the population is under the age of 40. The place-based nature of the City Deal presents an enormous opportunity to drive economic recovery and boost competitiveness, improving the region's resilience to future shocks and stresses and complementing key plans for economic recovery post the Covid-19 pandemic.



It is estimated that over the lifetime of the programme the Belfast Region City Deal will:

-  support the creation of up to **20,000 jobs**
-  **connect local people** to **new and better jobs**
-  place the region at the **top table of digital innovation**
-  deliver **£400 million in GVA** directly on-site and within the region
-  target delivery of almost **£1 billion of private sector leverage**
-  create compelling **world-class visitor attractions**
-  help to **regenerate major towns and cities**
-  foster **collaborative working**

The ambitions for inclusive growth will be delivered through the following pillars of investment:

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL



Innovation and Digital

Achieving world leading competitive advantage in key sectors: building our innovation and digital capability - facilitating invention, commercialisation and widespread adoption as a driver of economic prosperity and increased well-being

Tourism and Regeneration

Boosting tourism and regenerating our region - creating world-class visitor attractions and investing in towns and cities to provide a year-round destination that will provide stand out in international markets

Infrastructure

connecting people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure

Employability and Skills

Putting in place arrangements to enable a constant pipeline of talent to support the growth created by the BRCD investments and ensure that the right skills are available within the region to support the emerging job opportunities

INNOVATION

The BRCD will invest more than £300 million in five industry-led centres of excellence, focusing on the industries of the future, providing new tools and utilising data insights to support increased productivity and business competitiveness.

AMIC - Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre will provide the springboard for manufacturing innovation in NI, providing a specialised environment for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sectors to access the very latest manufacturing technology and Industry 4.0 smart automation, supported by experienced, professional engineers and a state-of-the-art Factory of the Future.



CDHT - Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology will provide a world-class space for academia, industry and clinicians to innovate and boost the productivity of the life and health sciences sector by accelerating the development of medical technology devices and diagnostics. Technology, Community and Clinical Living Labs will be based beside the Ulster University Belfast campus and at the Royal Victoria Hospital.



GII - Global Innovation Institute is a unique combination of expertise, combined with a ground-breaking partnership approach to delivering scalable computing solutions. GII is aiming to transform Northern Ireland's digital economy by substantially increasing both the volume and range of digital innovation taking place within the region, and developing skill sets to meet industry needs, focussing on health and agri-food.



i-REACH - Institute of Research Excellence for Advanced Clinical Healthcare

an integrated clinical research centre of excellence, iREACH is an NHS, industry, and research facility. It will transform the region's ability to test new drugs, medical-technology, care pathways and societal interventions. It will leverage the opportunities that exist at the interface of medical research and digital transformation.



Studio Ulster (formerly Screen Media Innovation Lab - SMIL)

will provide a large-scale Virtual Production studio complex to include world-class commercial Virtual Production stages, fully supported by an integrated research, development and innovation centre of excellence in real-time and Virtual Production. Studio Ulster will drive a revolution in production pipelines across converging sectors with application in film, broadcast, commercial, animation, games, immersive and visual effects.



DIGITAL

The BRCD will invest £125 million in a challenge-led, flexible digital programme that will maximise the benefits and opportunities of the Innovation centres of excellence and focus on areas where the region can be distinctive and competitive. The key interventions include:

The Belfast Region Innovation Challenge Fund

- This £55 million fund will support an agile approach to address the emerging needs and unique characteristics of the region and be designed to stimulate collaborative innovation and investment.
- The fund will stimulate innovation to address the region's 'Grand Challenges' of (i) artificial intelligence and data, (ii) health and wellbeing and (iii) sustainability and resilience.
- Funding opportunities are likely to include a range of financial instruments including capital grants, small business research initiatives, challenge prizes and equity/debt investments.



Enabling Infrastructure

- £40 million of funding to invest in digital connectivity (including advanced wireless), data infrastructure and other enabling infrastructure to support the Belfast Smart District and wider regional innovation.



Regional Innovation Hubs

- £30 million of investment will deliver a series of Innovation Hubs across the region.
- The Hubs will build upon and leverage existing sectoral strengths including cleantech and creative industries in order to promote innovation activity and new business growth across the region via local hubs.
- **The i4C Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks** regeneration site, Ballymena represents the first of these Hubs which will provide a physical base and support to increase levels of SME innovation and commercialisation activity. It will also provide skills and training solutions in the cleantech sector including the Hydrogen Training Academy.



BOOSTING TOURISM AND REGENERATING OUR REGION

The BRCD will invest more than £300 million in delivering globally visible tourism products and reimagined town and city centres that will support sustainable year round tourism and drive economic recovery.

Bangor Waterfront

will reconnect the town with the sea through a range of attractions and experiences. The investment will provide high quality public spaces, a new Music Hub and will regenerate assets including Bangor Marina, Pickie Fun Park and watersports facilities at Ballyholme Yacht Club, enhancing the town and encouraging further investment.



Belfast Stories, a transformational anchor visitor attraction in Belfast will allow people to connect with the city and one another through stories, screen and social spaces. The experience will include a state of the art multi-screen film centre and vibrant public spaces allowing for lively event programming and animation.



Image for illustrative purposes only c/o BDH Grimshaw.

Carrickfergus

Regeneration

will provide investment in Carrickfergus Castle, including its visitor hub and historic walls. Its connection to the town centre will regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town placing it firmly on the map as an authentic, heritage-led tourism hub - a 'must visit' starting point to the Causeway Coastal Route.



Destination Royal

Hillsborough

will further enhance Hillsborough Castle by restoring and developing the historic Courthouse and Fort and investing in the Forest. This will include opening a Social Enterprise Café and integrating and improving connections between these attractions and the wider village through improved public realm, to attract more visitors to this world class heritage village.



The Gobbins

aims to build on this exhilarating visitor attraction through the addition of a stunning staircase, an upgrade to the cliff top path - to include a new rope bridge that stretches across the coastline - and the development of a new Welcome Hub which will include Augmented Reality experiences.



The **Mourne Mountains Gateway** will redefine visitors' experience of the Mourne Mountains whilst supporting the sustainable growth of tourism and protecting the natural heritage and habitat of the region. The project will deliver a world class visitor attraction, and will create improved, and more sustainable access to the Mournes.



Newry City Centre Regeneration will deliver a civic hub, theatre and conferencing facilities which, together with new public realm and grade A office provision, will revitalise the city. The regeneration will also create and sustain jobs, increase visitor numbers, appeal to residents and stimulate the evening economy.



CONNECTING OUR REGION

Our investment of £140 million will help to connect people to opportunity and services through enhanced and sustainable infrastructure.

Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge will connect Belfast city centre with Ormeau Park, providing access to jobs, leisure space, services and opportunities for residents and visitors, contributing to the improved health and well being of local communities.



Newry Southern Relief Road will link the A1 bypass with the A2 Warrenpoint dual-carriageway providing an alternative strategic route for traffic that reduces pressure on Newry city centre, facilitates onward travel to Dublin and improves access to other regional gateways.



Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 - BRCD funding will support enabling investment for the extension of this public transport network which will support improved access to health, education, leisure and job facilities and improve economic return across the region.



EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS

The employability and skills profile of the local labour market is a critical factor in competitiveness. Despite a positive upward trend in skills over recent years, NI continues to lag behind its competitor regions in terms of the pace of change. The future skills system will need to be increasingly agile if it is to be in a position to respond effectively to these challenges and to changing market conditions such as automation and the pace of technological change.

New NI Executive strategies and plans for employability and skills are also seeking to respond to this challenge. City / Growth deals offer an ideal opportunity to support, enhance and contribute to arrangements emerging through the creation of Local Labour Market Partnerships and the NI Skills Strategy for more joined-up employability and skills planning.

The BRCD investment will support efforts to rebalance our local economy by building on our competitive strengths, increasing productivity and supporting the creation of more and better jobs. However, for it to succeed it will be critical that the right skills are in place to enable people to avail of the opportunities arising from this investment and that pro-active measures are put in place so that the opportunities emerging reach as wide a range of people as possible - a fundamental aspect of City / Growth deals across the UK.

The BRCD partners will therefore work together to align our plans and resources in the following priority areas to help prepare an appropriately skilled workforce that can benefit from the

employment opportunities that will emerge as a result of the transformative investments in innovation and digital, tourism, regeneration and infrastructure.

Skills for Growth: working with employers to align skills programmes and employment opportunities with the growth in sectors supported by BRCD; helping to create new apprenticeship pathways and fostering development of higher level skills;

Skills for Inclusion: creating opportunities to address skills imbalances and improve access to employment opportunities across the region through socially inclusive progression pathways; and

Skills for a Digital Future: helping to build our digital literacy from grassroots up and enhancing the digital transformation of businesses across the region, with a specific focus upon smaller enterprises.

The impact of Covid-19 further underlined the need to harness collective effort and investment in digital technology. Early in 2020, a Digital 'Task and Finish' group was established by the BRCD partners to consider how to support an inclusive and sustainable recovery. Arising from this work, Further Education Colleges, working with industry partners, and supported by funding from the Department for the Economy, delivered the **Digital Futures Programme**, an innovative skill development and work experience initiative providing unemployed and under employed graduates with the opportunity to reskill in relevant digital areas, including Cloud Computing, Data Analytics or Cyber Security.



DEAL DELIVERY TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2018



Proposition submitted to UK Government

OCTOBER 2018



Chancellor announced BRCD

MARCH 2019



Heads of Terms signed

MARCH 2021



Outline Business Cases developed

DECEMBER 2021



Deal Document signed

2022 ONWARDS



Deal Delivery

- Stakeholder engagement
- Project delivery
- Further private investment leveraged
- Collaborative working
- Full Business Cases approved
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Project completion
- Benefits delivered



Images courtesy of Tourism Northern Ireland and partners.

 #BRCityDeal

 www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastregioncitydeal



Belfast
City Council



**Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

LCCC
Lisburn &
Castlereagh
City Council



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**



**Ulster
University**



NORTHERN
Regional College



SERC
INSPIRING. TRANSFORMING. ENRICHING.



**Southern
Regional
College**



**Northern Ireland
Executive**



UK Government

BRCD Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Council Panel
Date:	12:30 pm, 28 April 2021
Councillors in attendance:	<p>Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Trevor Cummings – Mayor, Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Richard Smart - Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council Councillor Eric Hanvey - Belfast City Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Sorcha Eastwood – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p>
Officers:	<p>Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council Suzanne Wylie – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCD Programme Director, Belfast City Council Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Nicola Rowles – Interim Director of Development, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Ursula O'Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Professor Frank Lyons - Professor of Music and Associate Dean of Research and Impact in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University Emer Husbands, Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Theresa Slevin – BRCD Programme Office</p>

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	<p>Mayor of Ards & North Down Borough Council, Cllr Trevor Cummings welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Ards & North Down Borough Council.</p> <p>Stephen Reid, Chief Executive of Ards & North Down Borough Council, outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.</p>
2.0	Apologies
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Cllr Glenn Finlay (Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council)</p> <p>Alderman Phillip Brett (Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council)</p> <p>Councillor Robert Logan (Mid & East Antrim Borough Council)</p> <p>Councillor Willie Clarke (Newry, Mourne & Down District Council)</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council</p> <p>Anne Donaghy (Mid & East Antrim Borough Council)</p>
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Cllr Cummings asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Cllr Cummings asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Dunlop proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Seconded – Cllr Burgess.</p> <p>Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Programme Progress Update & Deal Development
5.1	<p>Programme Progress Update</p> <p>Stephen Reid, Chief Executive of Ards and North Down Borough Council and Damien Martin, BRCD Programme Director for BRCD provided a progress report to the Council Panel highlighting the progress in completing Outline Business Cases (OBCs), the majority of which had now been submitted for formal review by NI Government (and UK Government where applicable).</p> <p>Specifically, four of the five projects under the Innovation Pillar had been submitted for formal review and had started to progress through Casework Committee, including the Screen Media Innovation Lab, which Members</p>

	<p>would receive a specific update in relation to at the meeting. The final project, the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology was expected to be submitted in late May/June 2021.</p> <p>Stephen Reid explained that all projects within the Tourism & Regeneration pillar had been formally submitted to NI Government for review ahead of the scheduling of Casework Committees for the most advanced projects.</p> <p>A digital innovation programme business case had been submitted to NI and UK Government in January 2021 and detailed and constructive engagement with Government had been occurring in recent months ahead of an updated programme business case being completed in May 2021.</p> <p>In relation to the Infrastructure pillar, one OBC, relating to the Lagan Bridge had been approved and interim OBCs for the Belfast Rapid Transit Phase II and Southern Relief Road projects had been completed.</p> <p>Stephen Reid explained that employability & skills had also been progressing well, with positive engagement with the private sector taking place in recent months. A final draft Employability & Skills proposition would be brought to the Employability & Skills Advisory Board during May.</p> <p>Stephen Reid set out the recent positive engagement that had taken place with a range of senior political representatives, including Executive Ministers, regarding the BRCD and noted the support for City & Growth Deals which had been included within the Department for Economy Economic Recovery Action Plan. Stephen Reid explained that plans for enhanced business engagement were also being progressed.</p>
5.2	<p>Deal Document</p> <p>Stephen Reid explained that positive progress had been made in relation to development of the draft Deal Documentation, including the development of an overall draft Deal Document. Progress had also been made on a draft Implementation Plan and Financial Plan. Work on the Deal Documentation was taking place in parallel to the development and submission of Outline Business Cases – and members were reminded that a signed deal document was required in order to establish the Accountable Body and allow funding to flow to projects which had OBCs approved.</p> <p>Stephen Reid outlined the contents of the Deal Documents and explained the approach taken by the BRCD, including that there has been a recognition of the impact of Covid-19 across the programme and projects. The Deal Document has been based on best practice from other Deals across the UK and a draft governance framework has been developed which builds on existing structures and includes the BRCD Council Panel remaining as an important element, providing political leadership for the next phase of the Deal.</p> <p>Stephen Reid also outlined progress on a draft Implementation Plan which focuses on key milestones, risks and benefits of projects and explained that the next step was further engagement with NI Departments in relation to the Deal Documentation.</p>

Alderman Kingston noted the long-term nature of Belfast Rapid Transit Phase II and Southern Relief Road projects and asked for assurances that these could be delivered within the BRCD timescales. Damien Martin explained that that these projects were being led by the Department for Infrastructure and were still in early stages of development and there are ongoing discussion with officials on next stages which would include updated timescales.

Alderman Ewart requested clarification around the submission of OBCs and the timescales for Casework Committees. Damien Martin explained that 4 projects within the Innovation pillar (the Screen Media Innovation Lab, the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, I-REACH and the Global Innovation Institute) had either attended the Casework Committee or had a date scheduled during May. The final innovation project, the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology, was also expected to be submitted for Casework by June.

In relation to Tourism & Regeneration, the Carrickfergus Regeneration and Newry Regeneration projects were expected to attend Casework Committee in the next month with the most advanced Tourism projects progressing to Casework during June. Damien Martin further explained that the Belfast Destination Hub and Destination Hillsborough, had produced OBC1s and therefore would not attend Casework Committee but would be reviewed by a Departmental Panel.

Alderman Ewart asked how a project moved from a Project Type B to a Type A. Damien Martin explained that a Project Type B reflected the current stage of development of a project and an OBC1 would demonstrate the strategic and economic case of a project, with further work required, for example relating to commercial and operating/management models which are required for a full OBC. Damien Martin noted that an approved OBC1 would still release capital BRCD funding to support further development of the project (such as detailed design), but an OBC2 would be required before the project could move to procurement of a construction contractor.

Cllr Casey stated that Southern Relief Road was a key project for their Council area and welcomed the clarification on the process provided.

Cllr Hanvey noted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our economy and welcomed that the BRCD has been conscious of this in its development of projects and programmes. Cllr Hanvey urged expenditure to be released as soon as possible due to the criticality of City & Growth Deals to NI. Cllr Hanvey asked for clarification of the role of CPD in the BRCD.

Damien Martin welcomed Cllr Hanvey's comments and stated that a lot of work had gone into developing approaches which can also help in the short-term, pre signing of Deal Document, including the Digital Futures programme. He further explained that CPD were currently engaged in providing cost validation advice on

	<p>BRCD projects to the NI Departments and that the Executive had agreed to fund these costs. CPD will also have a role in advising on procurement going forward – but more clarity will be provided in due course.</p> <p>Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, highlighted that there remained an affordability issue in relation to delivery of all of the projects, at their current scale, within the NI Executive funded Tourism & Regeneration and Infrastructure pillars – and wished to highlight that there may be some difficult decisions to be made by partners – with discussions ongoing with DoF, DfI, DfE and DfC.</p> <p>Members noted the programme update and the next steps- proposed by Alderman Henderson and seconded by Cllr Smart.</p>
6.0	Impact of Innovation Investment- example of Screen Media Innovation Lab
6.1	<p>Cllr Trevor Cummings introduced Professor Frank Lyons, Professor of Music and Associate Dean of Research and Impact in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University.</p> <p>Professor Frank Lyons provided a detailed presentation outlining the impact of BRCD investment within the innovation pillar, through the Screen Media Innovation Lab, a project focused on virtual production which could place NI as a world leader, leveraging significant private sector investment and providing local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne welcomed the presentation, stating that the benefit for the whole Belfast Region and beyond is extremely exciting and that projects like this should be highlighted more strongly.</p> <p>Cllr Casey also strongly welcomed the presentation and thanked Prof Lyons.</p> <p>Alderman Henderson reiterated the views of Cllr Byrne and Cllr Casey, strongly welcoming the presentation and exciting project.</p> <p>Alderman Kingston emphasised that the project was an excellent example of future proofing and stated that he agreed with the comments of others in their support.</p>
7.0	Press Release
7.1	<p>Cllr Cummings asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Proposed – Ald Kingston</p> <p>Seconded - Ald Henderson</p> <p>Members agreed the press release.</p>

8.0	Schedule of Meetings
8.1	The next meeting would be hosted by Belfast City Council and it was noted that a date would be agreed and circulated amongst Members.

BRCD Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Council Panel
Date:	9.30 am, 4 November 2021
Councillors in attendance:	<p>Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Barra O’Muirí – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p>
Officers:	<p>Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCD Programme Director, Belfast City Council Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Ursula O’Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Theresa Slevin, Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Lorraine Beggs, Lesley Holmes – BRCD Programme Office</p>

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	Cllr McLaughlin welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Belfast City Council and outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.
2.0	Apologies
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Cllr Glenn Finlay - Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Richard Smart - Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robert Logan – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council</p>

	<p>Alderman Philip Brett – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Eric Hanvey – Belfast City Council Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council Councillor SORCHA Eastwood – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>Suzanne Wylie – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Cllr McLaughlin asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Cllr McLaughlin asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Ald Kingston proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Seconded – Cllr Byrne</p> <p>Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Deal Document
5.1	<p>Ronan Cregan, BRCD Senior Responsible Officer, delivered a presentation summarising the Deal Document and Governance Framework, the timeline of its development and the approval process currently underway. It was noted that approval is now in place from BRCD partners, the NI Delivery Board and NI Executive. Approval from the UK Government is outstanding, however this is expected to be provided in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>The content of the deal document was outlined, its funding structure and its expected outcomes. Governance arrangements for the delivery of the deal were outlined; these will be similar to current arrangements with the current Executive Board and Pillar Board structure. It was reported that the role of the Finance Directors Group will be enhanced reflecting the increasing role for financial oversight and management of funding. The Council Panel will continue to fulfil a key role in overseeing the implementation of the deal, as well as providing leadership on further collaboration opportunities beyond the city deal.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne queried the plans for the promotion and launch of the overall deal, stressing the importance of promoting the collective package of investment.</p> <p>Ronan Cregan outlined plans to hold a launch event at the end of Nov/start of December, subject to UK Government approval of the deal, to profile the complete programme of investment and all partners will be involved in this event. Damien Martin commented that the scale of the event will be significant, but it will be delivered in line with covid guidelines and. it is hoped that the date for the event will be agreed within the next week.</p> <p>Cllrs Byrne, McLaughlin and Casey stressed the importance of scheduling the event as close to deal approval as possible to maximise the PR potential and avoid the risk of communication being leaked in advance.</p> <p>Members noted the report on the Deal Document and the Government Framework.</p>
6.0	BRCD Programme Update & Next Steps

6.1	<p>Damien Martin, BRCD Programme Director, delivered a presentation on the progress of the overall BRCD programme of activity and outlining the key next steps. Whilst securing the deal is a critical milestone further work is required to develop key documentation to enable funding to flow .The PMO have developed the financial and implementation plan for the deal and are currently working with government departments to agree grant letters of offer and advance the approval of business cases for projects that are at an advanced stage of development.</p> <p>It was highlighted that significant work has been undertaken over recent months to progress business cases. To date four business cases in the innovation pillar have been approved by Ministers and two projects within the tourism and regeneration pillar have progressed through casework (Mourne Mountain Gateway and Carrickfergus Castle & Regeneration), with the latter also securing DfE ministerial approval. The Digital innovation Programme Business Case has also been approved and further work is required to develop individual Outline Business Cases (OBC) for the projects contained within this aspect of programme. It was stressed that whilst the deal signing is a welcome stage to unlock funding, further work is required to advance many of the projects through the business case process, the approval of which is also required to enable funding to start to flow to individual projects.</p> <p>It was reported that beyond the capital investment pillars, joint working across the partners continues to take place through the employability and skills programme and reference was made to digital graduate programmes that had been developed as a result of the BRCD, research undertaken on apprenticeship pathways and exploratory work to identify means to increase inclusion and diversity within high growth sectors.</p> <p>Cllr Dunlop enquired as to the current position with regard to funding for two infrastructure projects (Newry Southern Relief Road and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2) and the funding commitment for the innovation hubs.</p> <p>Damien Martin responded highlighting that across the tourism and infrastructure pillars the decision of partners was made to prioritise tourism and regeneration projects and that there are therefore some funding constraints within the infrastructure pillar. However, funding is in place for Newry Southern Relief Road and funding is also available for enabling investment in Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2, as detailed within the Deal Document, and engagement is taking place with government departments as to how the scheme can be fully delivered. It was also confirmed that funding for innovation hubs has been secured through the overall Digital Programme but individual business cases will need to be developed for each hub, as per the approach for the i4C project.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne queried the timeline for the approval of OBCs, specifically from the completion of casework through to ministerial and DoF approval.</p> <p>Damien Martin reported that experience to date suggested that it has been around 3-months. However, it is difficult to be definitive as caseworks often result in additional queries, impacting upon the speed of approval. Ronan Cregan followed up by highlighting that individual project budgets have been ringfenced. Therefore the allocation of funding is not determined by the speed of approval through the casework process.</p> <p>Cllr Cathcart congratulated everyone involved in the progress achieved to date, highlighting key projects including the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Scheme and emphasising the importance of the innovation hubs to job creation.</p> <p>Damien Martin reported that the partners are working on advancing the OBCs for the innovation hubs, highlighting the complexity of developing robust, sustainable financial models for these projects. Reference was made to the progress of the i4C project in helping to develop a pathway through the approval process.</p>
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	Members noted the report.
7.0	Communication & Engagement
7.1	<p>A video produced for the Digital programme was showcased and Damien Martin outlined the key communication products being developed for the launch, including a summary deal document and a refreshed look and feel for the deal signing. Plans are also underway to develop a new website for the delivery phase.</p> <p>It was reported that significant engagement work has been underway across the partners aligned to specific projects. In recent months a key focus for engagement activity has been focused upon government partners to secure approval of business cases and approval of the deal. However, recently strategic engagement has also been taking place with key business representative bodies. A draft communication protocol outlining the arrangements between partners and government departments has been developed and this is currently with departments for review.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne welcomed the creation of the video, referencing its ability to promote the collective programme of investment and the benefits it will deliver.</p> <p>Members noted the report and plans for further engagement with government department on the draft communications protocol.</p>
8.0	Schedule of Meetings
8.1	<p>Cllr McLaughlin highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council in February; the date for the meeting is to be agreed and will be circulated amongst Members.</p>



Subject:	PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022 Report: Taking Action on Levelling Up
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Marie Miller, Marketing Manager, City Regeneration & Development

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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, 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

	<p>'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.</p>
3.2	<p>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.</p>
3.3	<p>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</p>

	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:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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
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	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Document attached
4.1	PwC Good Growth for Cities 2022: Taking action on Levelling Up report

Industry in Focus

Good Growth for Cities

Taking action on levelling up

#IndustryInFocus #GoodGrowth



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As we emerge from the pandemic, one of the country's priorities must be the delivery of a fair recovery – one that benefits all people and places.

Though damaging in so many ways, the pandemic does appear to have driven a shift in public preferences, which now presents an opportunity. Building on the increased emphasis many people are placing on their communities and the environment, we now have the chance to reset and address some of the regional inequalities that have characterised our country for generations.

The recently published Levelling Up White Paper is a welcome start, but as the analysis in this year's Good Growth for Cities report demonstrates, the Government, businesses and local leaders will need to work together if we are to capitalise on this once in a generation opportunity to create successful places right across the UK.”

Carl Sizer, Head of UK Regions, PwC

Executive summary

As the pandemic loosens its grip on the UK, we are beginning to understand how it has exacerbated already deep-rooted inequalities in our society. The more we understand what drives these inequalities, the better our prospects of securing a fair economic recovery for all.

For the last decade, our annual Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index has measured the performance of cities and regions right across the country. The Index looks beyond performance against purely economic indicators, and focuses on additional measures of wellbeing, such as access to jobs, income, health, skills, work-life balance, housing, transport and the environment. In addition, and to reflect some of the more obvious issues highlighted by the pandemic, this year's Index includes two new indicators¹ covering safety and the vibrancy of local high streets.

As in previous years, we asked members of the public to provide their views on the measures they think matter most. This year, the results of our survey were stark. There has been a marked shift in public preferences, with greater weight being placed on issues such as work-life balance, income distribution and the environment.

Though it is possible we will see a shift back to a more predictable pattern of preferences in future years – one in which access to employment and skills re-emerge as the measures on which the public place the greatest importance – there is a clear emphasis being placed on the need to press for a fairer deal for all regarding income, protection of the environment and having the time to enjoy it safely. There would appear to be significant support for a nationwide programme to improve equality and level up.

While it is difficult to be precise about the extent to which the pandemic has driven these changes, it is reasonable to argue that the way we have all been living over the past two years, along with relatively strong confidence in the employment market, has caused a proportion of the population to reflect on the things they value. The data included in this report suggests this is having a significant impact on the relative fortunes of different places – the cities that perform well against this year's Index have strong local economies but are also characterised by strong environmental and safety credentials.

Our analysis also suggests some city dwellers have been moving to commuter belts or rural areas amid the growing focus on wellbeing, the environment and income distribution. In some cases, this is prompting a faster economic recovery in provincial cities. Based on total population count for each city, we estimate that many of the smaller cities in our analysis – such as Bournemouth, Exeter and Plymouth – will see stronger Gross Value Added (GVA) growth rates in 2021 and 2022 compared to the larger metropolitan cities.

Though the improved performance of some smaller and provincial cities is to be welcomed in the context of the levelling up agenda, it is also clear that the majority of places benefitting from the trends referenced above are in the South of the country. Many of the issues underpinning the relative underperformance of cities in the Midlands and the North have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Though the economies in some of these cities are in reasonably good shape, they have been unable, as yet, to capitalise on the changing nature of public preferences and may need further help or intervention to catch up with those moving more quickly.

Nevertheless, our analysis indicates there are numerous opportunities for cities and other areas to benefit from the changing nature of the way we live and bring greater precision to their plans to deliver Good Growth. This year, we interviewed several different local leaders at the heart of the place-shaping agenda, to explore how they plan to take action to drive economic growth in their areas. Included in the case studies throughout our report are examples of how investment in townscapes, support for community cohesion, efforts to foster local pride and attract new types of businesses are being used to boost growth in these places.

While the pandemic has exacerbated many of the more systemic challenges in our society, shifting public preferences, coupled with the political will to deliver levelling up signalled by the publication of the White Paper, present a window of opportunity to reset and deliver Good Growth across the UK. Achieving this will require imagination, bold action and collaboration by government, businesses, and local leaders. Only by working together will we secure Good Growth now and for the future.

1) For this reason, it is not legitimate to compare the relative performance of cities in this year's report with their performance in previous years.

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A widespread shift in public priorities has been triggered by the pandemic – people want to be more connected to their communities and to live in greener, fairer places. This shift has led to a change in how and where people live and work – altering the makeup of the UK economy, and the shape of growth prospects for every city and region across the nation.”



Public priorities for growth

Living through two years of a pandemic has challenged the work, home and social framework of people across the UK. It has prompted the public to reassess their lives, and adjust their priorities and ways of living accordingly. In recognition of this, we have taken the opportunity to re-engage with the public and refresh our research approach.

We published our first Good Growth for Cities Index with the think tank Demos a decade ago², measuring the performance and characteristics of cities and regions in a composite 'Good Growth' Index. The Index seeks to recognise that if growth is essentially about improving the prosperity, opportunities and wellbeing of the general public, the focus must go beyond traditional measures of economic success, such as GDP or GVA.

Our annual Index covers a list of broad measures of economic wellbeing – factors the public identifies as most important to their work and finances, and are therefore essential for judging economic success. This year, we worked with Demos to understand if these factors remain relevant – and to explore what else the public may now prioritise.

We found that all our original measures of economic success are still consistent with public views. But our research revealed that low crime rates, having a safe neighbourhood and a vibrant local high street are also core topics of public interest.

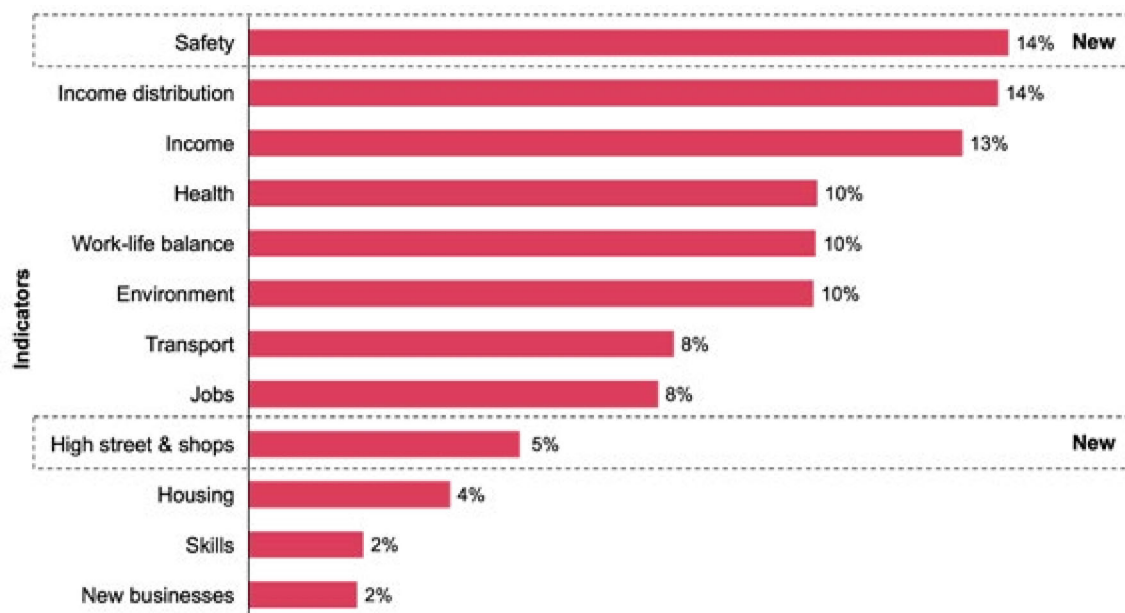
The popularity of these topics, and the emphasis placed on it in our analysis of public priorities, prompted us to update the Index. We now include two new measures of economic success the public feels strongly about: high streets and safety.

² We published our first Good Growth Index in 2011. The first Good Growth for Cities report was published in November 2012.

³ The Good Growth for Cities Index measures life expectancy, this was selected to give an overarching portrayal of the state of health outcomes.



Figure 1: Measures of economic success, ranked highest to lowest in terms of their weightings, rounded to nearest whole number



Source: Demos / PwC Analysis (2021)

Compared to 2020, the weightings for our variables this year see a significant shift in their importance relative to the other and new variables. **Table 1** outlines our weightings from last year's Index and compares them to our weightings this year.

Jobs and Skills, two of the most important variables in our Index last year, see significant decreases in

their relative importance in our updated Index, most likely due to current confidence in the employment market. In contrast, income, environment and income distribution see significant increases. It is possible this change of emphasis is a temporary response to the pandemic and we may see the relative weightings even out in future years.

Table 1: Our revised Good Growth weightings compared to 2020

%	Jobs	Income	Health	Work-life balance	New businesses	Housing	Transport	Skills	Environment	Income distribution	Safety	High Street & Shops
2020	14	12	14	8	6	10	8	12	8	8	N/A	N/A
2021	8	13	10	10	2	4	8	2	10	14	14	5
Change	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬆️	⬇️	⬇️	—	⬇️	⬆️	⬆️	—	

As in our previous reports, our variables are weighted according to their level of relative importance. This year, the weights of each variable were determined via a public polling run by Demos. We used a robust stated preference approach through conjoint analysis in order to deduce these weightings. Further details can be found in the Appendix section.

Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

Responding to public priorities

Our [Future of Government](#) research has consistently highlighted our view that for the levelling up agenda to succeed, it needs to reach beyond geographic inequalities and better respond to the public's priorities and concerns around the inequalities within regions and communities.

With the publication of the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) on 2 February 2022, we now have a clearer understanding of the Government's vision. Though this vision focuses exclusively on geographic inequality, it recognises there are multiple inequalities which affect people and acknowledges the need for more rounded strategies of economic recovery.

The White Paper outlines 12 national levelling up 'missions' and sets out plans to:

- expand devolution across England
- increase pay, employment and productivity
- commit to domestic investment outside London and the South East
- upgrade infrastructure and public services
- reduce crime
- improve health, wellbeing and pride in local communities

The variables we captured as part of our Index refresh fall broadly in line with the Government's 12 well-rounded missions (as demonstrated by **Table 2** opposite). As cities and regions across the UK develop their levelling up plans, they will need to adopt a similar well-rounded approach. They may find it helpful to consider their performance on the Good Growth Index this year, in order to identify the most and least successful indicators within their geography.

It is interesting to note that in the White Paper's 12 missions, the environment is omitted (in relation to sustainability / climate change). Environment continues to be an important measure of economic success according to our analysis, and our view is that cities and local leaders should consider this indicator in their levelling up plans.

Inequality within London and the South East

While the Levelling Up White Paper turns its attention to improving the economies outside of London and the South East, it is important to recognise there are areas within these regions which experience significant challenges. We explore this further on page 23 in the section on 'Economic recovery as indicated by employment'. The case for focusing on inequality within London and the South East is stronger if other types of inequalities are referenced, such as those between different ethnic groups, men and women, and different generations. Though the focus on regional disparity is critical, so is addressing inequality within regions.



Table 2: Comparison of the 12 missions in the Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) with Good Growth indicators

Missions / Focus Area in the Levelling Up White Paper	How we measure each LUWP mission in Good Growth for Cities 2021
Living Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs – Unemployment rate Income – GDHI per head scaled by regional price indices Income distribution – Ratio of median to mean income
Transport & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport – Average commuting time to work
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills – Skills (16-24)
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills – Skills (25+)
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health – Life expectancy
Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work-life balance – % in employment working more than 45 hrs per week
Pride in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High streets & shops – Retail store openings & closures New businesses – New businesses per head of population
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing – Housing price to earnings ratio and owner occupation rate
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety – Total crime count discounting fraud & cybercrime per head of population
Research & Development (R&D)	-
Digital connectivity	-
Local leadership	-

Work-life balance drives Good Growth

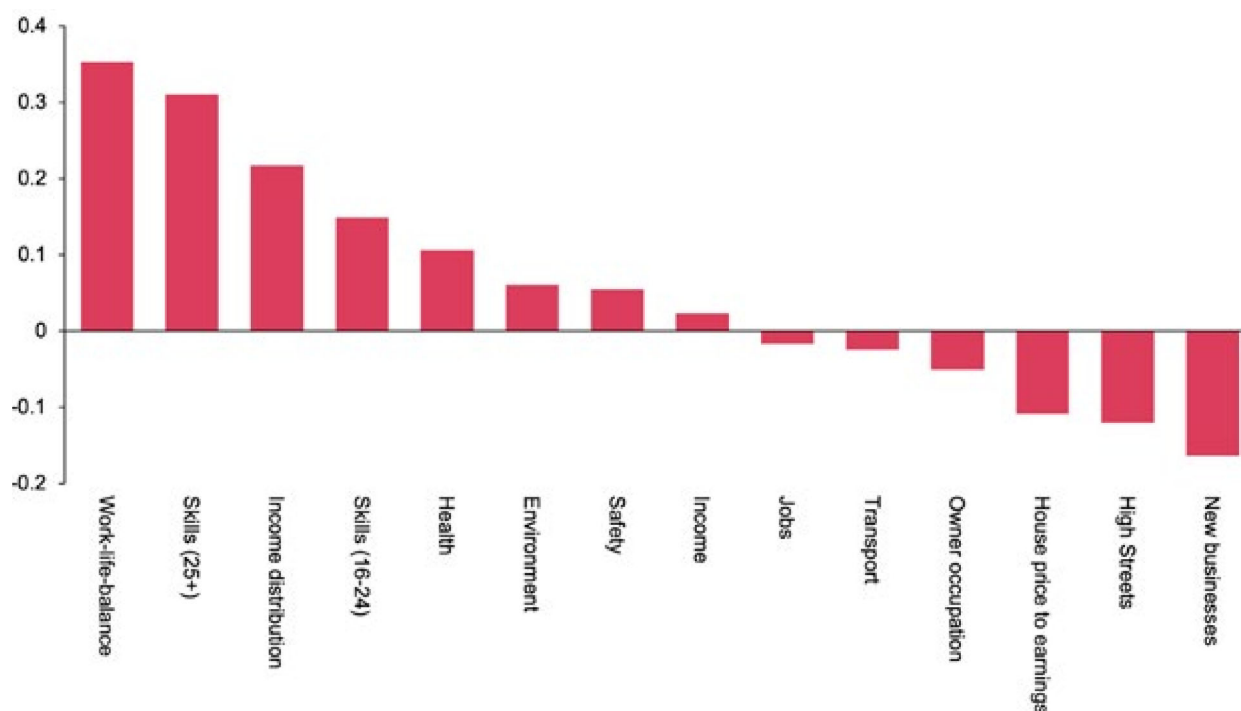
Though there are significant hurdles to be faced on the path to a fair recovery, most cities continue to see improvements in their Good Growth scores⁴. It is also encouraging to see the pandemic has levelled the playing field to some degree between the highest and lowest ranked cities, with the gap narrowing slightly this year.

The 12 variables in this year's index consist of 14 indicators, with housing composed of owner-occupation and house price to earnings ratio, and skills consisting of youth skills and adult skills. Of these 14 indicators, the biggest driver of improvement between 2017-19 and 2018-20 is work-life balance (**Figure 2**). There are also broad improvements in the skills of workers (aged 25+), as well as income distribution and life expectancy, perhaps

reflecting the rise in flexible working patterns.

However, there are signs of declining high streets and new business openings, with the pandemic putting pressure on businesses to find new ways to generate cash. Housing has also been impacted, with a sharp decline in the house price to earnings ratio, highlighting how housing affordability and owner-occupation rates have fallen since the start of the pandemic. Despite efforts from the Government to address housing affordability, through schemes such as the Stamp Duty exemption, the historic increases in house prices are still very much apparent⁵. We expect prices to continue to rise in 2022, though at a slower rate than in 2021 as economic conditions return to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 2: Average change in score since 2017-19, by indicator of the Index



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

4) Since we have added two new indicators in our composite Index and have an entirely new weighting system, we have rebased our analysis to 2017-19. This enables us to understand the annual changes that we would usually see with the Index.

5) PwC comments on ONS November house price figures



Figure 3: 2018 - 2020 Good Growth Index results by city, ranked highest to lowest



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

Good Growth scores by city

Oxford and Bournemouth are the two highest performing cities in this year's Index. Oxford performs well on income, health, safety, new businesses and skills (25+), helping to secure its first place position. Bournemouth was last year's highest ranked city, but slipped to second place this year due to a poor performance on jobs and house price to earnings in 2020. Swindon is in third place, performing relatively well across the board on all metrics, with jobs performing particularly strongly this year. Reading rounds off our top four, performing strongly on income and skills (25+).

Figure 3 presents the overall distribution of cities' scores, defined by travel to work areas (TTWAs) and our baseline over 2017-19.

Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

Spotlight on Edinburgh:

Scottish capital focuses on the ‘missing middle’

The raw assets of Edinburgh give it an undeniable headstart for Good Growth. As a capital city, it is home not only to extraordinary natural and architectural beauty, but to keystone institutions, such as the Scottish Parliament, three universities, a slew of private sector headquarters and its own financial district in the West End.

Yet local leaders are aware that the legacy of the past may not lend itself well to the future. Edinburgh’s rich history and creative scene means it continues to attract workers from surrounding areas, and will always draw tourists. But in the short-term, COVID-19 has hit the tourist sector hard, and more broadly it may have prompted inequalities to widen, leading to a polarised workforce.

The city has a great deal of high paid jobs and low paid jobs, but there is a big gap in between – pointing to a missing middle in Edinburgh’s workforce. The local authority and its partners are **focusing on reskilling opportunities to support workers to progress in their careers, and to bridge the growing labour market gap.** But this reads across another constraint: encouraging a balanced labour market and innovation led growth is putting pressure on supply of the right office and workplace offer.

Unlike many other large metropolitan cities, such as Manchester or Birmingham, Edinburgh does not have large numbers of brownfield sites left vacant by the demise of industrialisation that it can build upon. The city needs to offer more space for businesses to scale up and grow sustainably.

Another key challenge is **transforming Edinburgh’s city centre environment to be fit for the future.** A key priority is to address traffic congestion in the city and improve the quality of the public realm in key locations. While the city is confident of a strong economic recovery, it believes that prospects for progress rest on the quality of its workforce, reducing inequalities, and enhancing the extraordinary legacy of some of Europe’s greatest spaces and places.

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Edinburgh is working to establish a better relationship between innovation growth and the commercial property sector, in order to provide opportunities for indigenous companies and anchor institutions to stay close and to scale up.”

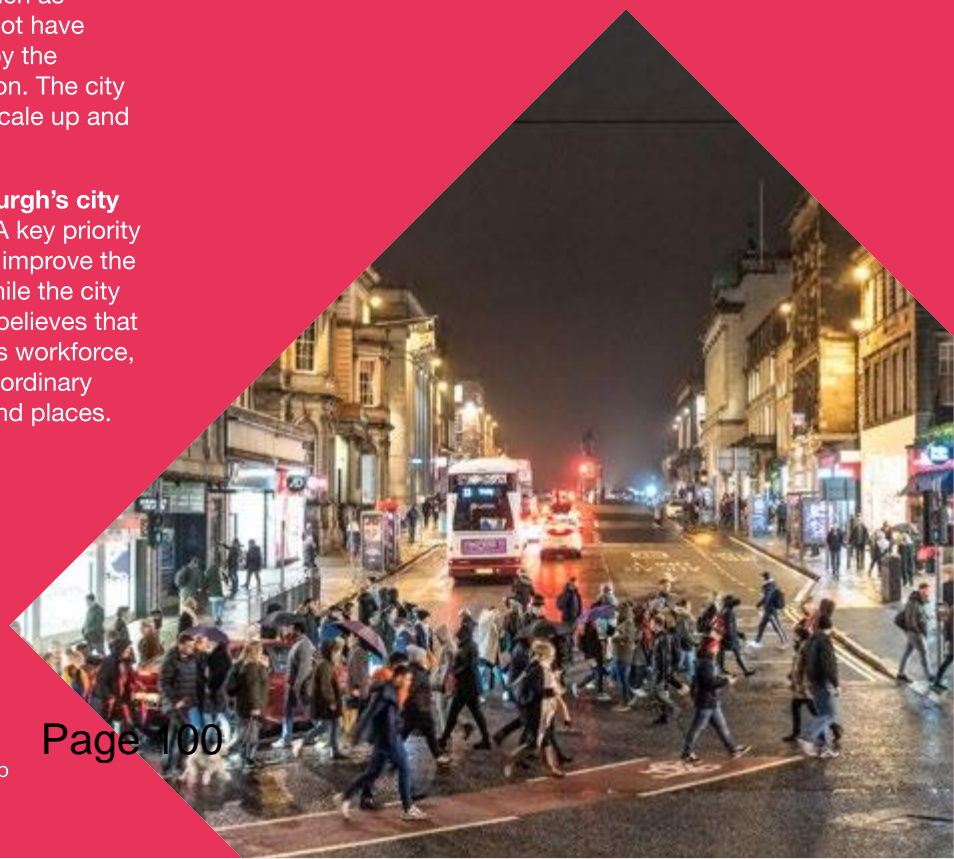
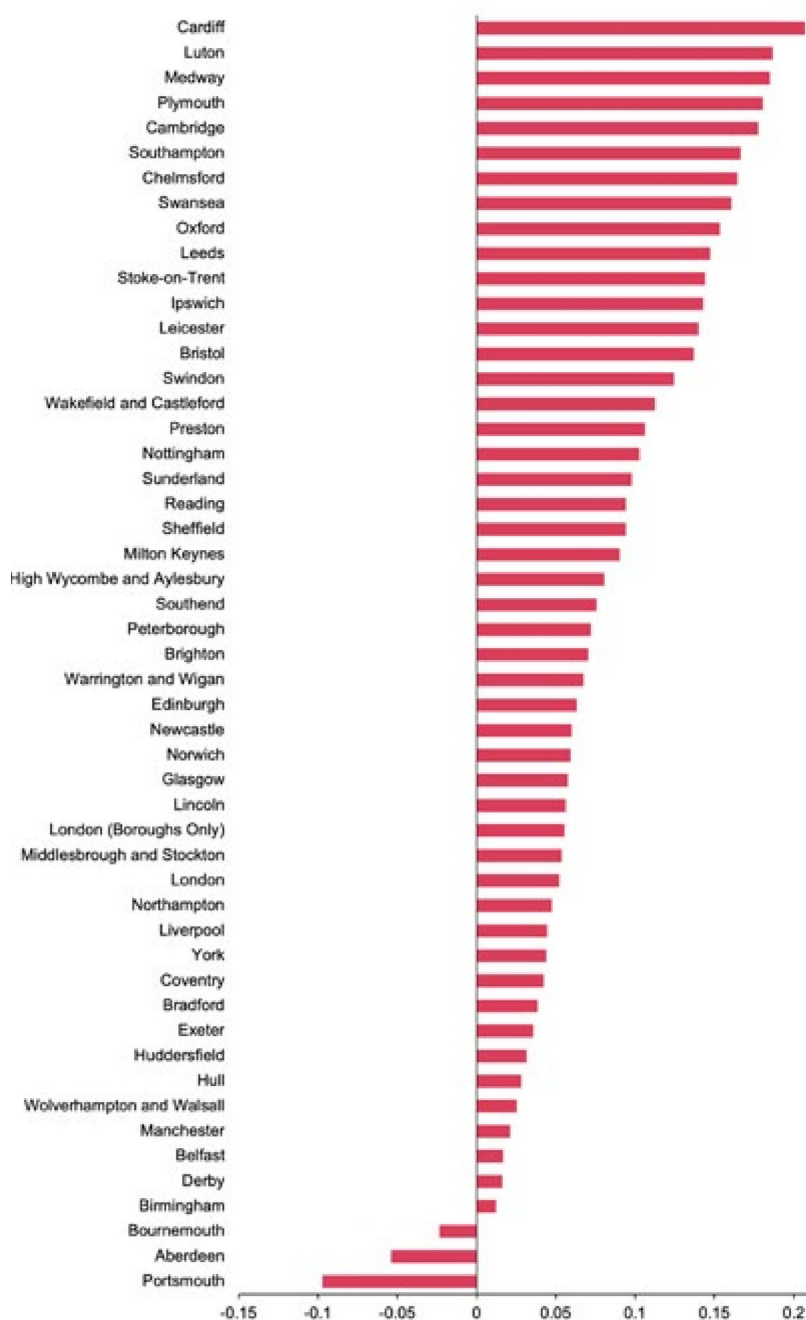




Figure 4: Change in Good Growth Index score by city, from a new 2017-19 baseline index to 2018-20 Index, ranked by highest to lowest change



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

As shown in **Figure 4**, we observe a marked improvement for Cardiff this year, thanks to improvements in jobs, income and health. Luton and Medway also make significant gains, stemming from improvements in jobs, income distribution and work-life balance.

Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible

This graph shows the difference in Index scores between this year and last, had we used our refreshed methodology for the period 2017-2019.

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

Spotlight on Belfast:

City targets holistic connection with surrounding communities

Belfast takes a **balanced and deliberately interventionist approach to regeneration**. Local leaders are pro-development in the city core, but believe that any development has to be right for the communities surrounding it. This includes diversifying the city centre to offer more residential accommodation, house greater numbers of students and provide more hotel rooms, office space and improved cultural offerings. All the while, local leaders are investing in place-making, open and green spaces, community infrastructure and connectivity, to create a more attractive, accessible, safe and vibrant city centre – a people focused city centre which draws the wider community in.

City investment plans include a citywide commitment to invest in Belfast's wider neighbourhoods with strategies that **integrate physical regeneration with cultural, social and environmental regeneration, and elongating the city / civic spine**. The city has invested heavily in neighbourhood assets, such as community centres and sports facilities, and will continue to do so through funds at neighbourhood level. These funds allow local organisations to apply for support, in return for allowing the local community to access facilities. Over the last few years, for example, Belfast has invested c.£105m in new leisure facilities for communities.

Central to plans for the city centre is creating a cleaner, stronger and more resilient city core. This is underpinned by the Bolder Vision for Belfast, which aims to rethink how the city's streets and places are used to build sustainable and inclusive growth. The vision sets out the importance of safe, accessible and vibrant local places, and offers a call to action for the council, civic partners, local businesses and the wider local community.

Looking ahead, Belfast is working to establish the city as a cultural centre in order to realise its global cultural and economic ambitions. As part of a **10-year cultural programme** to 2028, it is focusing on providing the right cultural offering, including encouraging independent retailers, unique pubs and art projects. Plans for a Year of Culture in 2024 are already underway, bolstering Belfast's position as a UNESCO City of Music and developing a £100m landmark tourism anchor in the city centre – an authentic experience with Belfast's people and personality at its heart.

For business, Belfast's ambition extends from tourism to financial services to research and development (R&D). The city's innovation and inclusive economic growth plans seek to capitalise on its dual market access, supported by a **£1bn Belfast Region City Deal investment**. Engagement so far has led to Belfast becoming the number one city for global FinTech investments and top European city for new medical software development. This further investment in digital connectivity, funding innovative industry solutions and supporting centres of excellence is intended to drive Belfast forward as a global digital and scientific centre and globally significant destination for innovation.

“

Belfast's regeneration plans include accelerating city centre residential development, with ambitions fixed on encouraging the unique cultural offerings the city can present to the world.”





Good Growth scores by Combined Authorities

Figure 5: Good Growth Index scores by Combined Authority area, ranked by highest to lowest 2018-20 score⁶

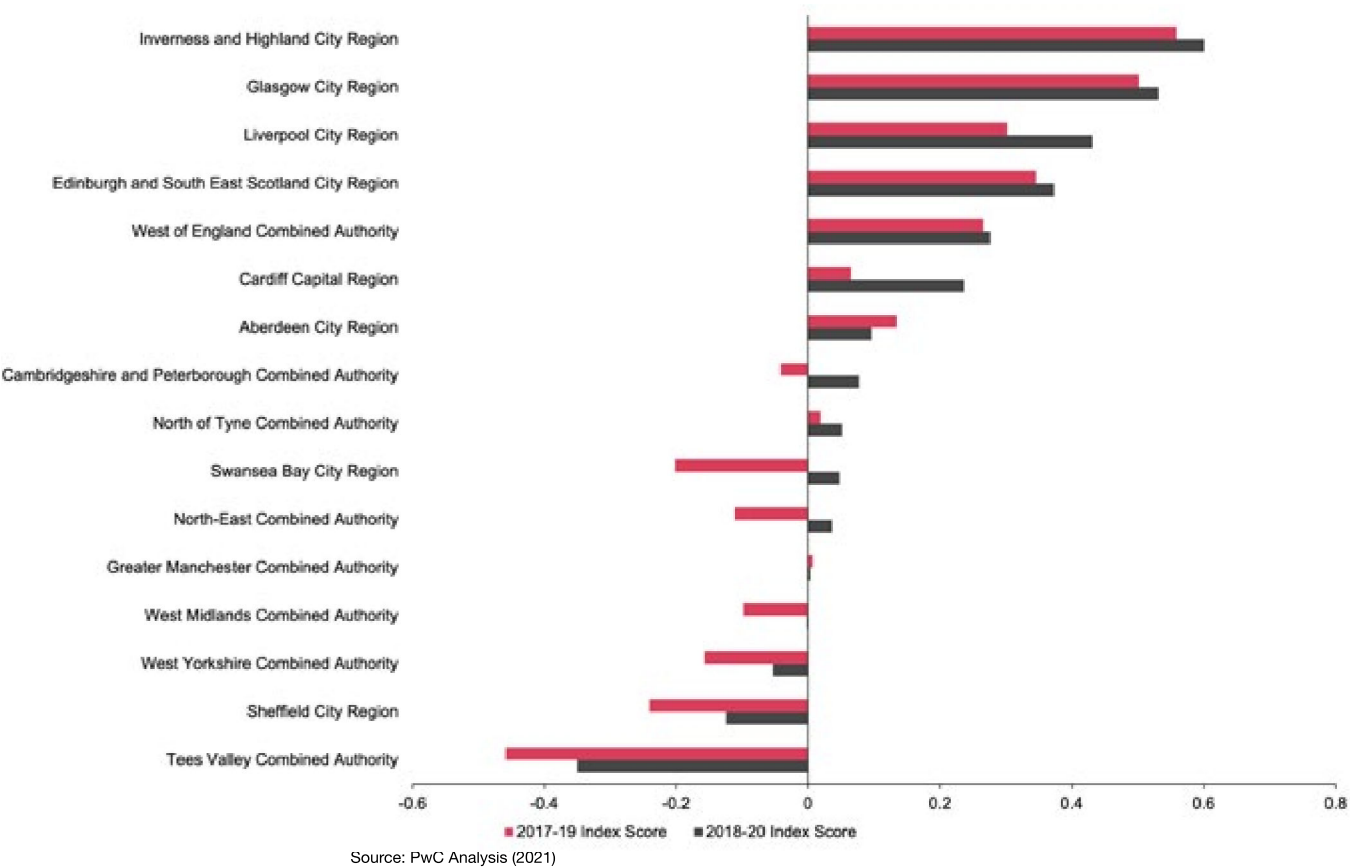


Figure 5 shows the Good Growth Index scores for combined authorities in England and equivalent areas in Scotland and Wales between 2017-19 and 2018-20. Almost all Combined Authorities show an improvement over this time period, with Cardiff Capital Region's significant improvement most notable.

Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

6) Combined authorities are typically more similar in size to LEPs than cities, and hence LEPs have been chosen as a more appropriate group for comparison. This comparison sheds light on how combined authorities perform relative to other areas across the country.

Spotlight on Cardiff:

Welsh capital renews focus on private sector partnerships

Looking back at the decade leading up to the pandemic, Cardiff's workforce grew by more than 20% – boasting growth of around 5,000 new jobs a year. That's a faster rate than all but one of the core cities in this report. While the city's economy grew across the board, the financial services sector grew the fastest – adding 2,000 new jobs every year and accounting for two-fifths of all new net jobs growth.

Looking ahead, the city's challenge is to share the opportunities around – to develop sustainable communities that **build a workforce for the future**. The local authority wants to connect the right kind of jobs and opportunities in the growth sectors to young people and those in poverty.

With this in mind, the city is **renewing its focus on links with private business and the education sector**. It has secured multi-billion pound investments and private business partnerships for Central Square, Wales' first Central Business District of scale, which is now home to the new headquarters of BBC Cymru. This comes amid investments from Cardiff University in its innovation campus developments and the University of South Wales in its School of Creative Industries.

The city is taking a **sector-focused approach to growth**, targeting key sectors including FinTech, the creative industries and advanced manufacturing and technologies like compound semiconductors. It has given rise to a number of homegrown start ups, such as Delio and Wealthify in the FinTech cluster and the TV production studio Bad Wolf in the creative sector.

As part of its recovery strategy, the local authority is investing in reinvigorating its city centre as it emerges from the pandemic. Footfall in Cardiff has returned to pre-pandemic levels already and the investment in and around Central Square means the city is well placed to lead the economic recovery for Wales. In addition the local authority is also looking at development outside of Cardiff city centre – prioritising investment in infrastructure that will **connect the wider region to the city**. The **£1bn plans for the Metro** aims to cut journey times across the network and more than double the frequency of services on some routes. Further investment is planned to link with the improved Metro

and develop a comprehensive urban public transport system. It is hoped this infrastructure will support the new £150m Arena in the Cardiff Bay waterfront development, which the council sees as an anchor for the wider regeneration of the Atlantic Wharf site.

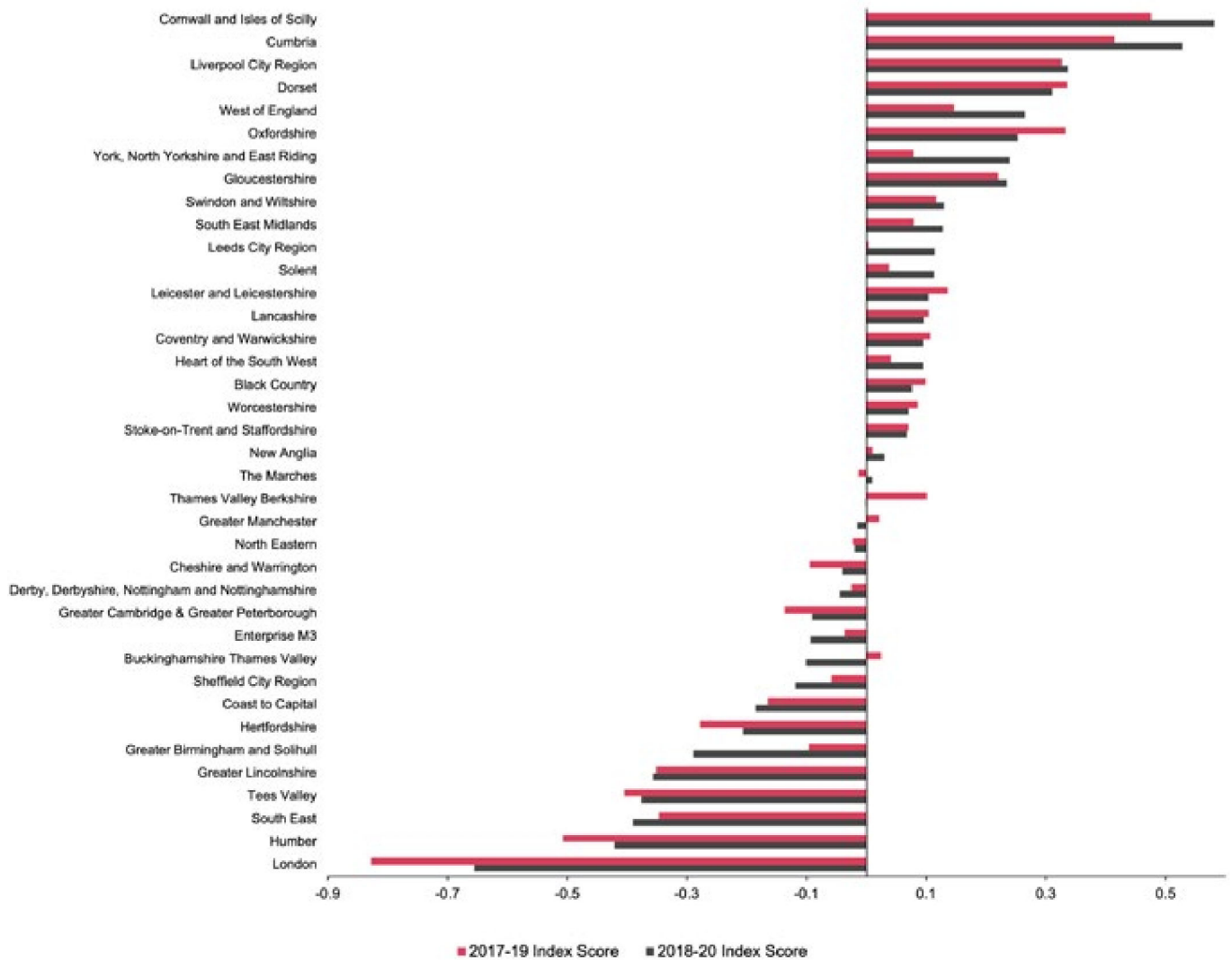
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Cardiff's use of assets to attract and sustain private sector investment has led to strong partnerships, including one with a large insurance firm that is considered the most successful regeneration project in Wales.”



Good Growth scores in England's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas

Figure 6: Good Growth Index score by LEP, ranked by highest to lowest 2018-20 score



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

We have also analysed the Good Growth Index scores for the 38 LEP areas in England. **Figure 6** represents the score for each LEP, relative to the average score for all English LEP areas in 2017-19.

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly is the highest ranked LEP this year, outperforming Cumbria which has a similar high score when looking at the 2018-20 baseline index. London and York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEPs are the biggest improvers from the 2017-19 baseline index.

Important note: Comparison to last year's report is not possible

Due to the extent of the Index refresh, we would not advise making a comparison between the scores in this year's report and those included last year.

Spotlight on Cornwall:

Region plays to strengths with green growth agenda

While Cornwall may not feature in our list of Good Growth cities, it attracts attention for **challenging the concept of a traditional city**. The region gained global recognition as host of the 2021 G7 summit at Carbis Bay, and is currently in the running for 2025 City of Culture. Local leaders often describe it as an exploded city, while maintaining that regions and rural populations can also be engines for growth, not just urban cities.

The Council and Local Enterprise Partnership have made very **deliberate decisions around the type of growth they want to pursue**, exploring opportunities to power growth nationally with clean renewable energy for example. By playing to its strengths as a region rich in natural resources, Cornwall's decarbonisation agenda works with industry and academia to attract investment and kickstart new industries, such as the geothermal energy industry. Cornwall has invested large sums in the first geothermal wells in the UK, including £1.4m in a 4.5km deep well which will heat the Eden Project's iconic Biomes, as well as other greenhouses and offices.

Beyond geothermal energy, Cornwall is focusing on **promoting other renewable energy sources**, developing lithium and critical tech metals, tackling agricultural methane and supporting horizontal satellite launches. In a first for Europe, horizontal satellites will be launched from **Spaceport Cornwall** this year, as part of the UK's pioneering National Space Strategy.

These local growth priorities are driven largely by putting the voice of residents at the heart of both the Council's plans and the 2050 vision for Cornwall shared by all partners. Major listening campaigns have revealed a striking demand among the public for action on climate change, and on housing. As a result, any decisions now made in the region are based on doughnut economics – which incorporate a visual framework for sustainable development. In this case, all assessments are backed by the local authority's 'decision wheel', which ensures **social and environmental considerations** inform all decisions, not just economics alone.

“

Behind the picturesque postcards and reports of soaring house prices, Cornish communities are grappling with inequalities that strike at the heart of the nation's levelling up agenda, such as low wages and a housing supply crisis.”



Small cities lead UK recovery

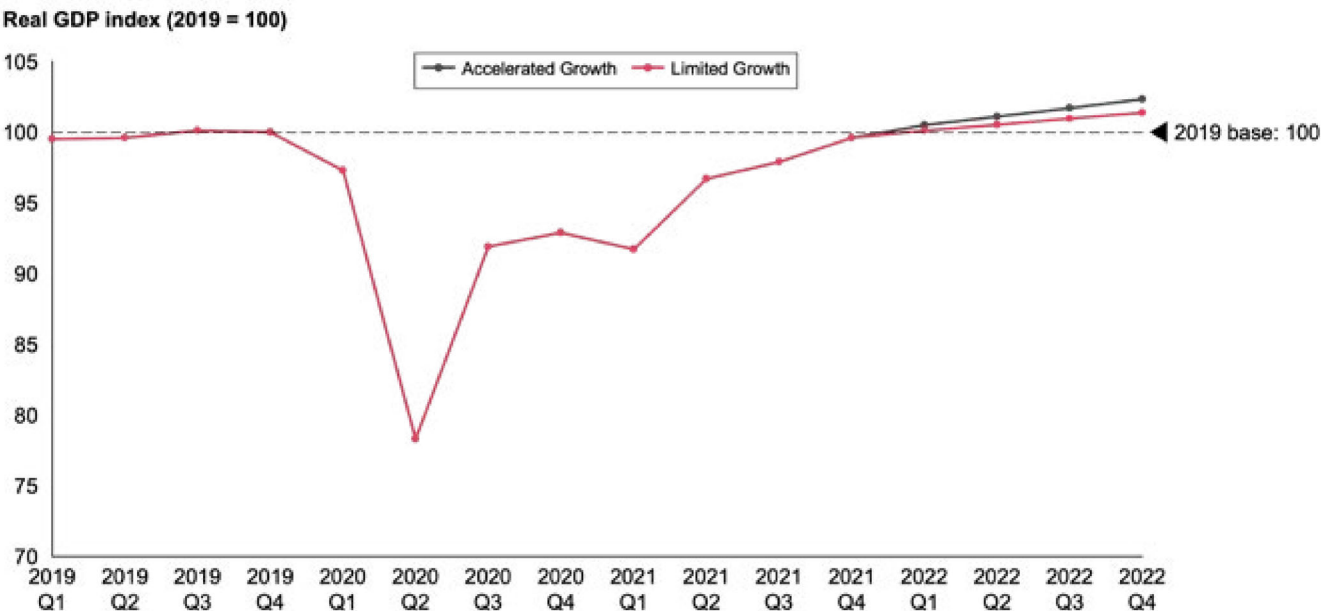
Just as the pandemic has played out unevenly across sectors, regions and households in the UK, we expect this trend to continue to impact the nation’s economic recovery and progress with the levelling up agenda, at least in the medium term.

Our analysis points to stronger growth in smaller cities, which we believe is largely driven by the rise of hybrid or home-working patterns. Cities such as Plymouth and Exeter, for example, are expected to see stronger GVA growth rates in both 2021 and 2022 than larger cities more generally. Meanwhile, the South West is estimated to see the highest GVA growth rate over the same time period.

UK’s economic recovery from COVID-19

Figure 7 demonstrates our forecast for the UK economy over the 2019 - 2022 period⁷. Based on our latest estimates, the UK economy will reach its pre-pandemic outputs at around 2022 Q1. Figures published by the ONS in February 2022 show the UK economy grew by 7.3% in 2021. We expect the UK economy to continue growing at 5.1% under the ‘Accelerated Growth’ and 4.5% in the ‘Limited Growth’ scenario in 2022.

Figure 7: Quarter-on-Quarter growth for UK Real GDP (2019 Q4 = 100)



It is important to note that our annual forecasts are based on the economic activity in previous years (base-year effects). In 2020, certain sectors felt the impact of nationwide lockdowns more so than others. Industries such as ‘Accommodation & Food services’ and ‘Arts, Entertainment and recreation’

were hit hard (42.4% and 25.9% decrease in 2020 compared to 2019 levels respectively). These sectors therefore, began 2021 on the backfoot more so than others and significant upturns should be expected if more normal consumption patterns return.

⁷ PwC UK Economic Update, December 2021



How well positioned are UK cities for economic recovery?

The sectoral mix of a city or region, coupled with its demographics, will impact its economic recovery. In response to the significant downturns we saw in 2020, we estimate some sectors will see sharp recoveries as consumers begin to return to more normal spending patterns. In the latest *PwC Hotels Forecast*, we estimate hotels in London will be earning 43%-86% of their pre-pandemic revenues per available room (RevPAR) and hotels in the regions to be earning 64%-100% of their RevPAR by the end of 2022.

We have reviewed our wider forecasts for sectors in 2022 by exploring key economic data, events and information published over the past year, and the existing expectations we have for the forthcoming recovery.

2021 / 2022 Sector recovery rates

The PwC UK *December 2021 Economic Outlook* outlines our GVA estimates on recovery rates by sector for 2021 and 2022. Since then, the ONS has published the UK-wide annual GVA impacts to each sector in 2021. It notes the retail sector is now almost 10% ahead of where it was before the pandemic, while our latest *Consumer Sentiment survey* confirms consumer confidence has returned quickly to reach levels above pre-pandemic average. Retail sales recovered quickly after lockdowns or enhanced restrictions, leading to a strong bounce-back for the sector in 2021.

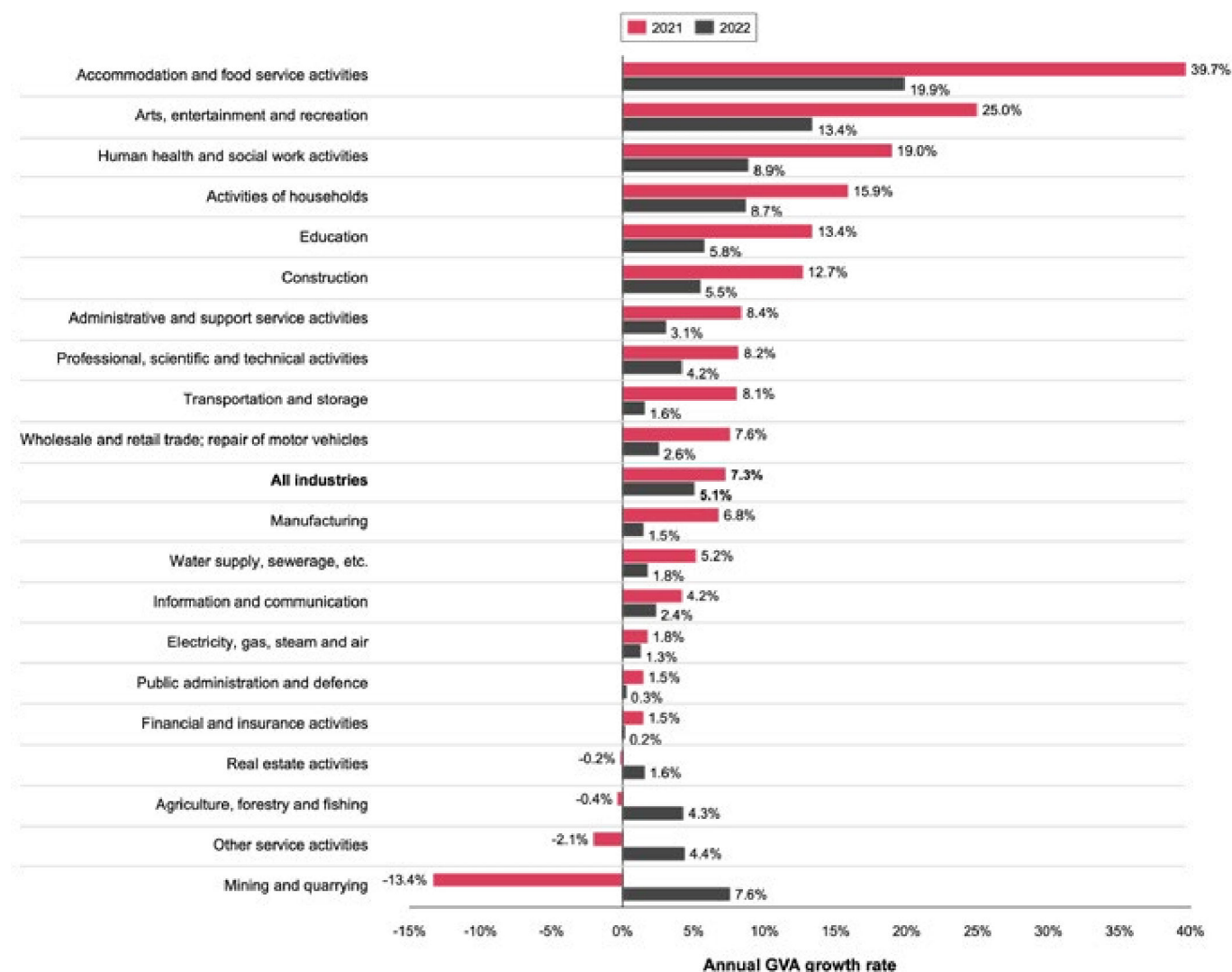
Meanwhile, other sectors are expected to see slower recoveries from the pandemic due to supply chain effects. Real estate, for example, declined slightly in 2021 by 0.2% but we estimate the sector will see a stronger recovery of 1.6% in 2022 as consumer confidence returns in the year⁸. Sectors such as Mining and quarrying, for example, saw significant supply side effects in 2021, prompting continued decline as the sector contracted by 13.4%. We expect these effects to reverse in 2022 with the sector growing by 7.6% in 2022.

Our full estimates by sector are in **Figure 8**.

8) PwC – December UK Economic Outlook



Figure 8: Actual & Projected GVA growth rate by industry sector. 2022 projections under 'Accelerated growth' scenario, % annual change in 2021 and 2022⁹



Source: ONS Gross Domestic Product: chained volume measures, PwC UK Economic Outlook, December 2021

This national level analysis is one of the inputs we use when calculating the GVA impacts to each city's economy in the Index. The other components of the GVA calculation

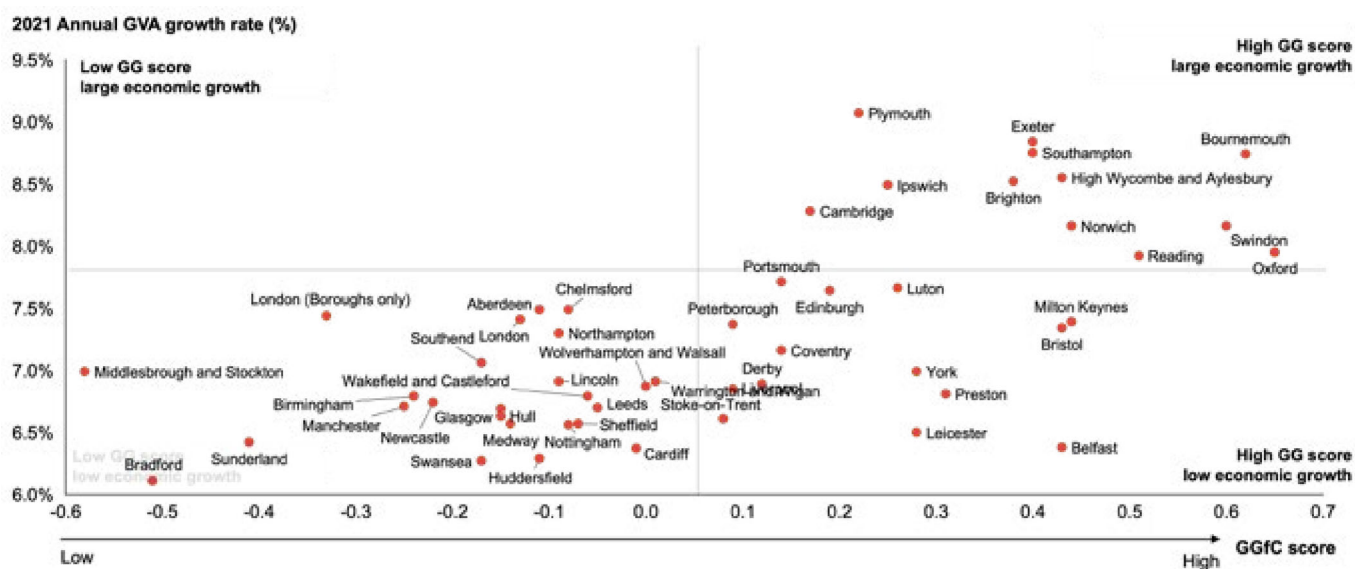
include the COVID-19 local infection rates, the Google Mobility index and Universal Claimant Count statistics (see the Appendix for further details).

⁹ Given current conditions, our projected GVA growth rate is based on a 'Accelerated growth' scenario. However, in our UK Economic Outlook, we also include a 'Limited growth' scenario where the GVA growth rates are lower to each sector in the economy.

Figure 9 illustrates where each city lies in terms of its annual change in GVA growth rate in 2021 and its score in the Good Growth for Cities Index. It is clear that cities will

have very different opportunities as they recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Figure 9: 2021 annual GVA growth rate (%) and Good Growth for Cities Index score



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)



Generally, cities that perform well in the Index are expected to see stronger economic recoveries in 2021 (our GVA analysis is indicative of full year figures for 2021 and 2022 as local authority data has not been published yet, see the Appendix for details).

Cities along the south coast of England are projected to see the strongest GVA growth rates in 2021: Plymouth, Bournemouth and Southampton all have recovery rates of more than 8.0% in 2021. This is largely due to the higher proportions of high-growth sectors in these cities than the UK city average – such as Accommodation & Food Services, which grew by 39.7% in 2021 according to the ONS.

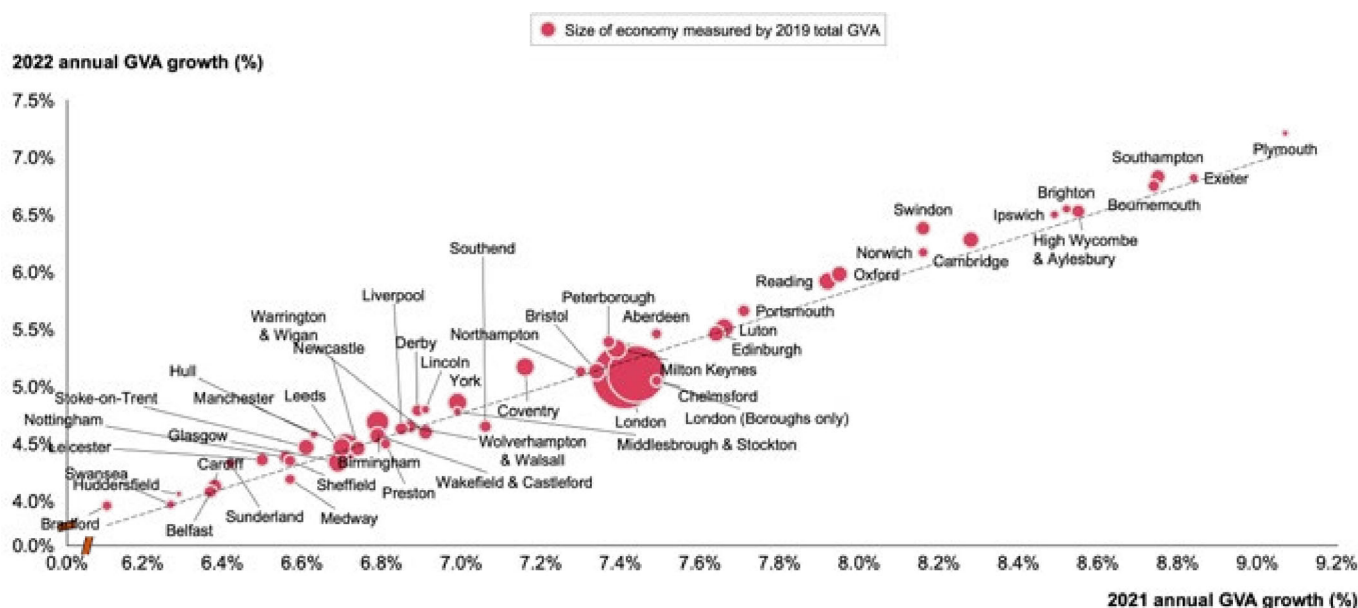
Conversely, cities that perform poorly in the Index are expected to see slower economic recoveries in 2021.

Bradford, Huddersfield and Sunderland all perform poorly in the Index and are expected to recover more slowly in 2021 relative to other cities.

London, meanwhile, is expected to grow by 7.4% which is largely in line with the UK average rate in 2021. Though it is too early to be certain, there is anecdotal evidence that a boomerang effect could be driving better than expected growth in London to some extent. It is possible that, as the pandemic eases, more people will return to the city than some commentators have previously suggested.

Figure 10 highlights the 2021 GVA recovery rates with the 2022 GVA impacts. As 2022 begins, we can expect GVA growth rates to range from 4.0% (Bradford) to 7.1% (Plymouth), with an average GVA growth rate in 2022 of 5.0% across all cities in the Index¹⁰.

Figure 10: 2021 and 2022 annual GVA growth rates



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

Economic recovery as indicated by employment

Employment continues to be one of the most important indicators in the Index ('Jobs' and 'Income' variables alone account for around a fifth of our Index when combined). Higher levels of employment naturally lead

to an increase in consumer spending which provides a boost to the overall economy. Measuring levels of unemployment therefore, allows us to see how economic recovery rates are faring across the country.

¹⁰ Note: This differs to the UK wide GVA forecast of 5.1%. This is due to not all local authorities being under consideration in our cities for the Good Growth Index

Impact of the furlough scheme

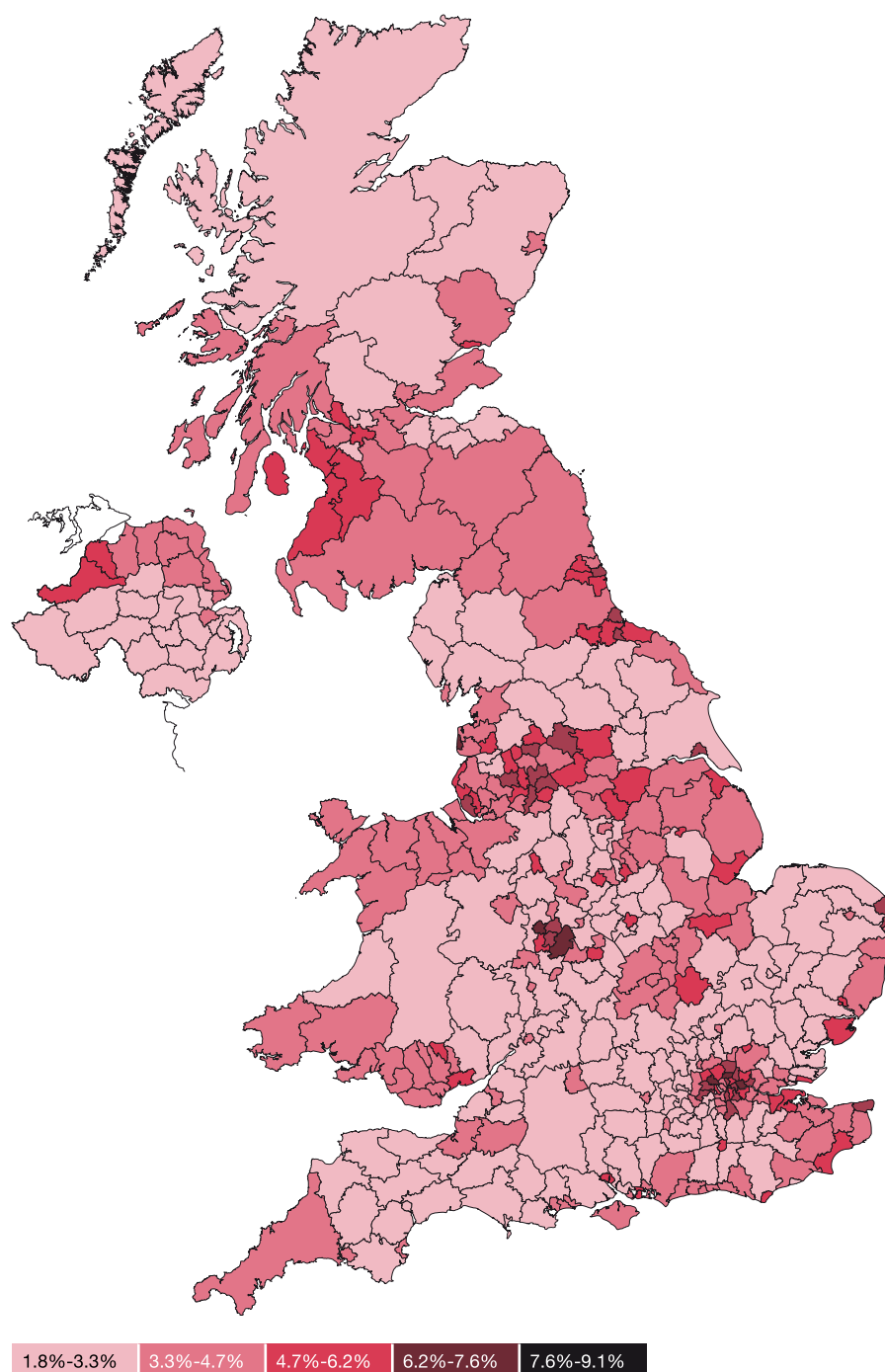
We included statistics from the UK Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in our economic analysis last year, in order to see how reliant each region was on the furlough scheme. Following the end of the scheme in September 2021, we reflect that:

1. Emerging evidence suggests the end of the scheme has not set back the labour market recovery
2. It will take time to understand the full impact of the end of the scheme
3. The short-term outlook for the labour market is cautiously optimistic
4. There will inevitably be a period of adjustment over the coming months

Overall, we are yet to see the end of the furlough scheme have a substantive impact on the economic recovery across UK cities. However, whether businesses will survive without the support may be called into question as we continue to recover over the next few months. Further lockdowns for new variants could challenge businesses in generating revenue, affecting workers as businesses aim to minimise future business impacts.

As **Figure 11** demonstrates, there continues to be a high unemployment rate in the larger cities in our Index, indicating that recovery is being negatively impacted by Universal Credit claim rates in Birmingham, Bradford, Liverpool, Leeds and London.

Figure 11: Percentage of population aged from 16 to 64, based on mid-year 2020 population estimates, claiming Universal Credit, UK, correct as of 19 February 2022



Source: CC01 Regional labour market: Claimant Count by unitary and local authority (experimental) – January 2022



According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the percentage of those on Universal Credit fell by 1.6% across the UK between November 2020 - November

2021, which we see relatively consistently across our cities.

Table 3: Top 10 and bottom 10 city claim rates of Universal Credit, correct as of 19 February 2021

Highest Universal Credit claimant city	Jan 2022	Jan 2021	Lowest Universal Credit claimant city	Jan 2022	Jan 2021
Birmingham	6.8%	8.5%	Bristol	3.1%	4.7%
Bradford	6.3%	8.1%	Chelmsford	3.0%	4.7%
London (Boroughs only)	5.7%	8.1%	Norwich	3.0%	4.2%
Leeds	5.5%	7.4%	Southampton	2.9%	4.4%
Liverpool	5.5%	7.5%	Swindon	2.9%	4.1%
Manchester	5.3%	7.2%	High Wycombe	2.8%	4.3%
London	5.3%	7.5%	Cambridge	2.8%	4.4%
Middlesbrough	5.1%	7.1%	Oxford	2.8%	4.1%
Wolverhampton	5.0%	6.8%	Reading	2.7%	4.2%
Sunderland	5.0%	6.8%	Exeter	2.5%	4.0%

Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

Table 4 shows that the largest and smallest decreases in the claim rate of Universal Credit. We see the greatest decrease in London (Boroughs only), where the claim rate fell from 8.1% in January 2021 to 5.7% in January 2022. Meanwhile, Swindon has seen the lowest decrease since

January 2021, largely because the city's labour force was less impacted by the pandemic originally. This is signified by the change of 4.1% to 2.9% of the working age population claiming Universal Credit in Swindon.

Table 4: Top five and bottom five city increases in the Universal Credit claimant rate, by percentage point (pp), January 2021 to January 2022

Greatest decrease since January 2021		Lowest decrease since January 2021	
London (Boroughs only)	-2.4pp	Leicester	-1.3pp
London	-2.3pp	Belfast	-1.3pp
Liverpool	-2.0pp	Oxford	-1.3pp
Glasgow	-2.0pp	Norwich	-1.3pp
Southend	-2.0pp	Swindon	-1.2pp

Source: CC01 Regional labour market: Claimant Count by unitary and local authority (experimental) – February 2022

Spotlight on Birmingham:

City focuses on those left behind by rapid development

While Birmingham has been very successful in attracting inward investment for development in recent years, city leaders are acutely aware that the growth has not been sufficiently inclusive. The city has a young and growing population, but unemployment is double the national average, and there is a decade's gap in life expectancy between the poorest and most affluent areas. During the pandemic, these widening gulfs have become even more real and more urgent, with the rising cost of living a particular worry.

The city plans to tackle these inequalities with a **decade of inclusive growth** – which will be driven by an ambitious levelling up strategy and a focus on five strategic 'levelling up accelerators'. This decade will be sandwiched between two major events for Birmingham: the **Commonwealth Games** in summer 2022 and the **opening of HS2** in the early 2030s.

To drive the growth agenda, Birmingham is pursuing a levelling-up strategy that aims to **boost the city economy by £9bn a year**, creating c.75,000 jobs. This strategy is built around five key accelerators that will drive change at scale:

1. Longer-term, more efficient **single pot funding** and increased devolved powers for the city to enable increased freedom for investment.
2. The **East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy**, an approach to drive regeneration and tackle deprivation for a quarter of a million of Birmingham's poorest residents.
3. Birmingham's **early intervention and prevention model** to offer support services to residents across the age range that prevent them needing crisis services.
4. **Regional connectivity**, including both green and digital infrastructure, and a comprehensive, affordable transport network.
5. **Retrofitting of social housing at scale** across the three cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton to decrease carbon emissions, improve housing standards and create green jobs.

The local authority is also making efforts to better understand the strengths and challenges the city and its people are facing by creating a **City Observatory**. The observatory will publish and share data and insight on Birmingham, including a baseline of the current state of the city and tracking of progress on levelling up. Insights will be used to understand key issues in the city, the causes of those issues and to drive potential solutions and partnership approaches.

“

Birmingham's challenge is putting the engine of growth to work for those who need it most – the poorer communities that live right up alongside the rapid growth but can't yet feel the benefits.”





Regional recoveries

Based on our mapping of UK cities to regions, **Table 5** illustrates the weighted 2021 and 2022 GVA growth rates by region. The South West is estimated to see the highest GVA growth rates in 2021 and 2022, chiefly

based on the underlying performance of the cities in the region. The South West includes cities estimated to see strong recoveries in both years: Plymouth, Exeter and Bournemouth to name a few.

Table 5: 2021 and 2022 GVA growth rate by region¹¹

Region	2021 GVA growth rate	2022 GVA growth rate
South West	8.2%	6.1%
South East	7.9%	5.9%
East of England	7.8%	5.7%
London	7.4%	4.7%
Scotland	7.1%	4.9%
East Midlands	6.9%	4.8%
West Midlands	6.9%	4.8%
North West	6.8%	4.5%
Yorkshire and The Humber	6.7%	4.5%
North East	6.7%	4.5%
Northern Ireland	6.4%	4.1%
Wales	6.3%	4.0%

Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

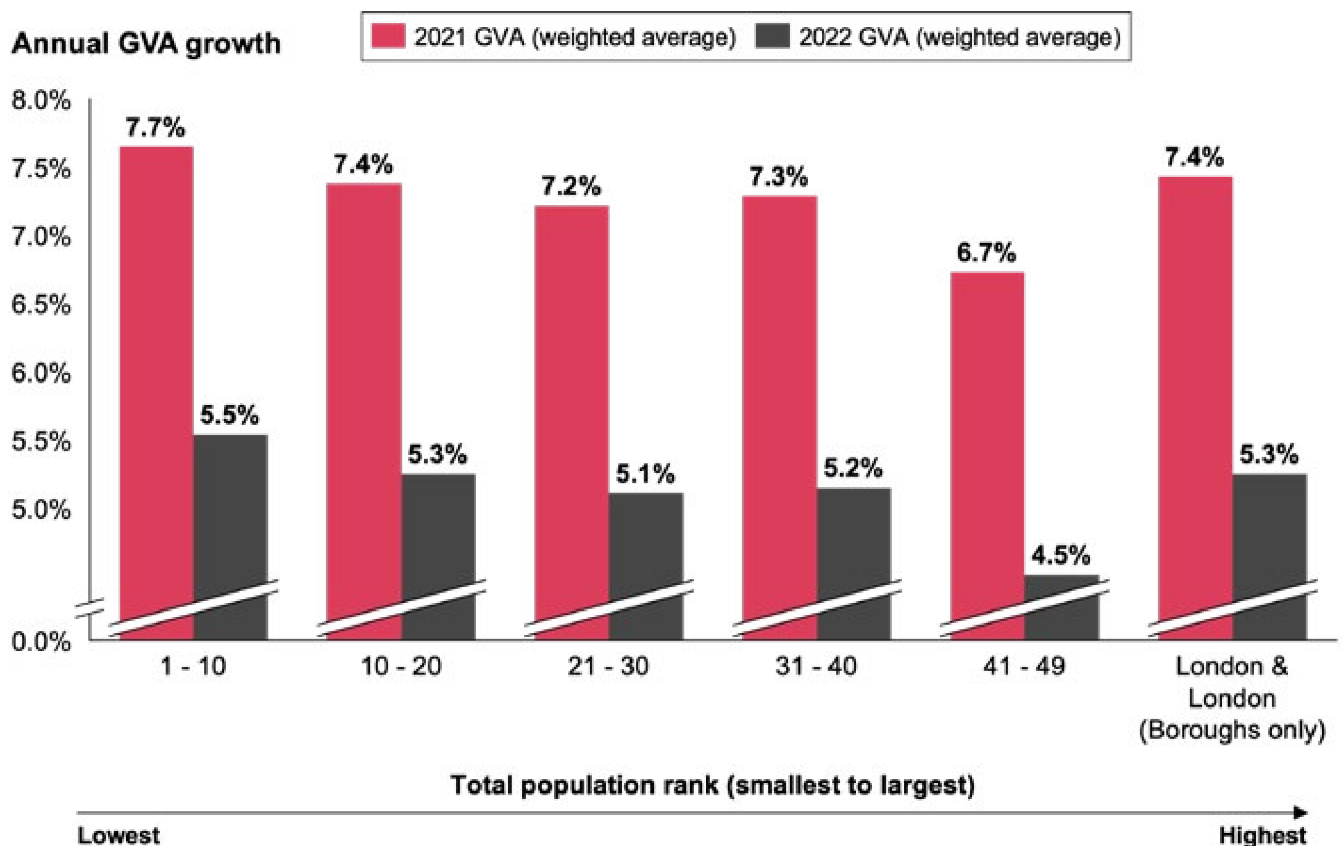
¹¹ Regions are not exhaustive of all local authorities in the region. The weighted GVA growth rates are based only on the cities and proportions of local authorities that constitute the region. Some local authorities in each region are excluded as a result of the mapping.

Economic growth between smaller and bigger cities

Figure 12 outlines the 2021 and 2022 GVA growth rates by total population count (smallest to largest). Based on total population count for each city, the smallest sized cities in our analysis, such as Plymouth and Bournemouth (ranks 1-10), are estimated to see stronger GVA growth rates in both 2021 and 2022 than larger cities generally, with the exception of London & London (Boroughs only). This is likely due to a number of factors, but we believe the main driver is the shift in working patterns caused by the pandemic.

We believe that smaller, provincial cities with lower population counts are benefitting from an increase in hybrid or home working patterns. As people spend less time commuting to larger urban cities, a rise in local spending can be expected, boosting the recoveries of smaller, city economies more so than larger cities. However, it is too early to know if this trend will be sustained – London sees a slightly above average recovery rate in 2021 which could suggest that migration away from some larger cities could be temporary.

Figure 12: 2021 and 2022 weighted average annual GVA growth rates ranked by smallest to largest cities in our Index



Source: PwC Analysis (2021)

Recovery among different social groups

While it is important to track the recovery of cities and regions, it is also vital that we understand how different demographics and societal groups are set to benefit from the recovery.

As previously mentioned, the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) focuses on inequalities between geographical areas, but government, businesses and local authorities would do well to take it a step further and look at the broader inequalities found within each region. This will help to embed fairness in the structure of local policies going forward.

Young workers

Despite the disproportionate impact on young workers during the pandemic, we are seeing indications that the economic recovery for young workers is relatively strong.

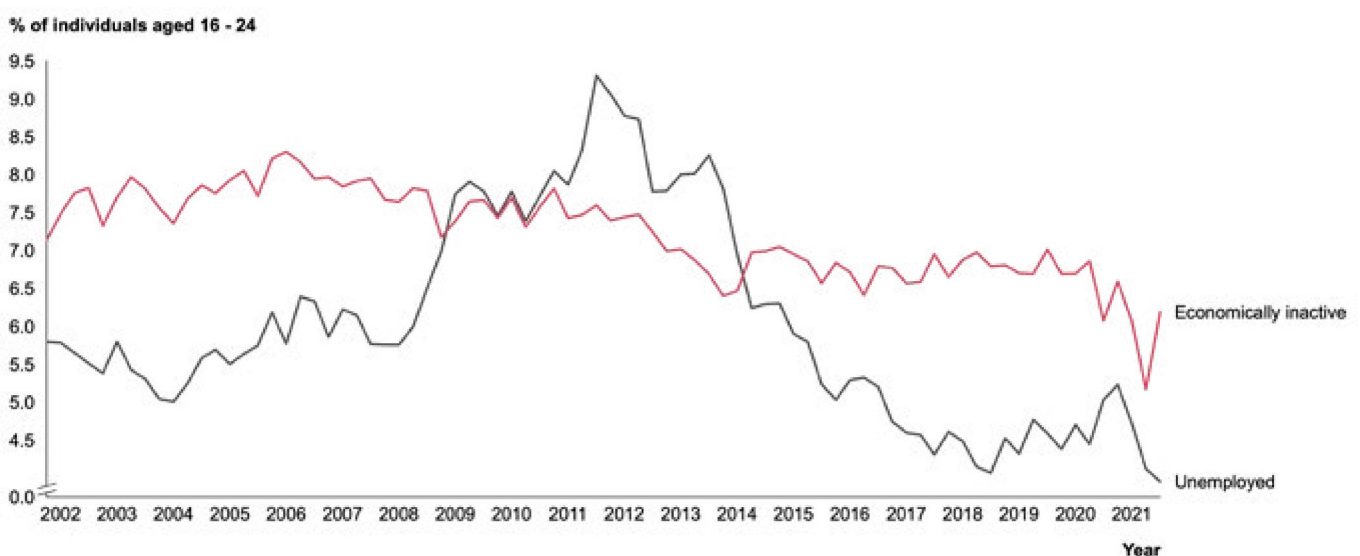
As **Figure 13** highlights, 2021 Q3 saw the lowest relative unemployment among 16-24 year olds since records

began in 2001. The quarter saw unemployment levels for this group drop below 4% of total 16-24 year olds for the first time in 20 years, signalling the success in the measures that the government implemented to shield youth unemployment from the pandemic.

In the same quarter however, we also saw the largest quarter on quarter increase in economically inactive young adults. This could partly be explained by the reported rise in further education or early career breaks. The perception of a pandemic stricken economy, where job demand is perceived to be relatively low, is likely to have driven this increase in economically inactive young adults.

While these individuals are not currently contributing to the economy, this should not necessarily be perceived as a poor sign of economic recovery. Rather, adoption of further studies will benefit the economy in the future, as a more upskilled workforce enters the labour market with greater training, making them more productive when they do ultimately enter the economy.

Figure 13: Percentage of young people economically inactive and unemployed from 2001 Q4 – 2021 Q3



Source: ONS – Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) November 2021

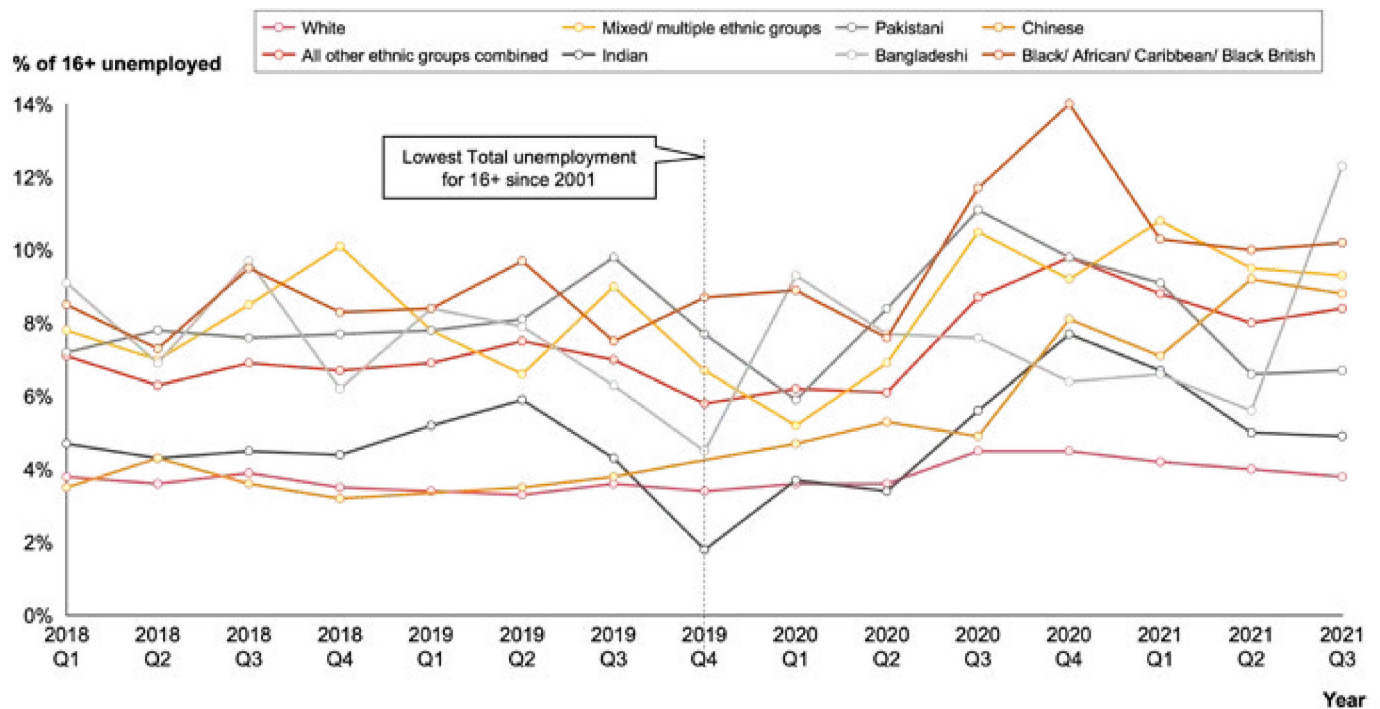
Ethnic groups

The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on racial and ethnic minority communities¹² has been well documented. In the UK, these individuals are reported to be more vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic than their White counterparts. A number of studies since our report last year have explored the likely causes, and in summary it is largely due to racial and ethnic minority groups:

- Coming from poorer socio-economic backgrounds on average;
- Having a higher representation of workers in frontline sectors (such as hospitals); and
- Tending to work on insecure contracts rather than full-time contracts^{13, 14}

The extent of the economic recovery for individuals from different racial and ethnic groups is mixed. **Figure 14** reveals unemployment figures by ethnic group for people aged 16+.

Figure 14: Unemployment by ethnic group, based on people aged 16+ (2018 Q1 to 2021 Q3)



Source: A09: Labour market status by ethnic group – Unemployment by ethnicity: People (not seasonally adjusted). Latest released on 16 November 2021.

12) For the purposes of this report, we define racial and ethnic minority communities as those people who are non-White

13) [House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee: Unequal Impact? Coronavirus and BAME people – December 2020](#)

14) [UNISON – October 2020](#)

According to the latest figures, all ethnicities are seeing higher unemployment rates than their pre-pandemic levels. However, comparing the difference in unemployment levels between each ethnic group from pre- to post-pandemic paints a more striking picture regarding economic recovery.

White individuals have the lowest unemployment rate of all ethnic groups – with 3.8% of those aged 16+ across all groups categorised as unemployed in 2021 Q3, compared to 3.6% of White individuals. The differences in percentage of people 16+ that are unemployed is summarised in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Percentage of unemployed 16+ people, (2018 Q3 - 2021 Q3)

	2018 Q3	2019 Q3	2020 Q3	2021 Q3
Total	4.3%	4.0%	5.1%	4.4%
White	3.9%	3.6%	4.5%	3.8%
Mixed / multiple	8.5%	9.0%	10.5%	9.3%
Indian	4.5%	4.3%	5.6%	4.9%
Pakistani	7.6%	9.8%	11.1%	6.7%
Bangladeshi	9.7%	6.3%	7.6%	12.3%
Chinese	3.6%	3.8%	4.9%	8.8%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	9.5%	7.5%	11.7%	10.2%
Other	5.5%	7.4%	7.0%	9.6%

Source: A09: Labour market status by ethnic group – Unemployment by ethnicity: People (not seasonally adjusted). Latest release on 16 November 2021.

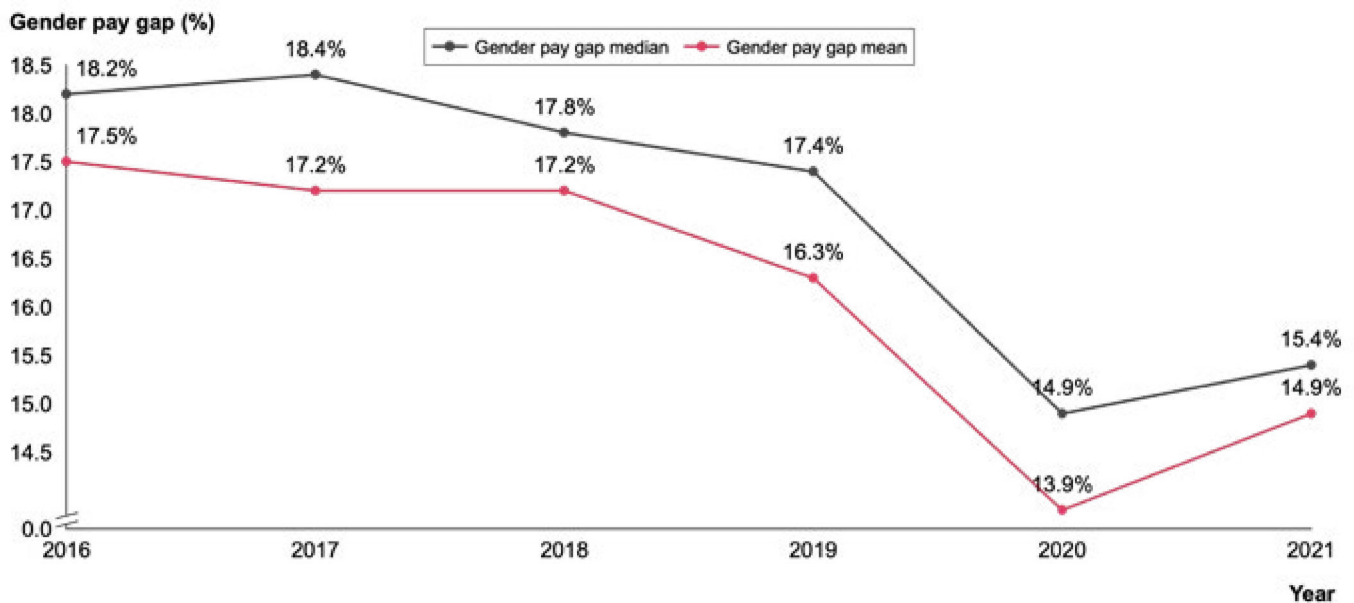
Meanwhile, our [Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2021](#) shows ethnicity pay penalties have remained stubbornly high over the past seven years in the UK. There are significant differences in the pay between ethnic groups that are magnified once you factor in gender and region, and have worsened during the pandemic. It is evident the economic recovery is not playing out evenly across the major ethnicity groups, and is more supportive for individuals from White backgrounds than those from non-White backgrounds.

Women

Finally, **Figure 15** illustrates the differences in gender pay gap¹⁵ between men and women in the UK. The pay gap has generally improved over a six year period, with the gender pay gap perhaps surprisingly improving in 2020 despite negative impacts of the pandemic on women.

15) For clarity, we define gender pay gap in line with the ONS's definition of the terminology. It is defined as the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings as a percentage of men's earnings.

Figure 15: Median & Mean gender pay gap at UK-wide



Source: ONS – Earnings and hours worked, place of residence by local authority: ASHE Table 8.12 – Gender pay gap

However, since the furlough scheme came to an end, we have seen the gender pay gap increase. Caution therefore needs to be taken when assessing whether women are benefitting from the economic recovery. The shift towards hybrid working, alongside new and growing industries, has the potential to increase wellbeing and productivity for both men and women in the workforce. Yet our Future of Government [research](#) shows there is a risk women will not benefit as much as men. Targeted measures will be required in order to support the economic recovery for women going forward.

Green jobs: an opportunity to embed gender equality in the future workforce

According to our Future of Government report, [Targeting gender equality](#), most women believe they are ill-equipped for green jobs, lacking the right skills and opportunities to benefit from the green economy revolution. Just 21% of women are aware of opportunities for green jobs, compared to 32% of men. Similarly, just 20% of women feel they have the right skills to work in a role in the green economy, compared to 31% of men.

Our research supports the view that targeted measures by the government would help women to apply for roles in the green economy. Career support schemes, improvements in parental leave and flexible working patterns are all measures that can be applied to roles in the green economy in order to make the roles more appealing for women.

Agenda for action

As central government, businesses and local leaders come together to think innovatively about how the UK adapts to the impact of the pandemic and moves forward, they should do so in a way that does not leave people, or places behind.

We believe that efforts to secure a fair economic recovery and build sustainable growth should focus on the following:

1) Levelling up and the reality of regional inequality

It is well documented that the UK is one of the most geographically unequal countries in the developed world, and that despite the presence of deprivation within the region, productivity is highest in London and the South East.

Actions for central government

The Levelling Up White Paper announced a package of 12 missions for levelling up for the UK to achieve by 2030. The Government may wish to now focus on the detail of how these missions will be delivered at pace, and should look to:

- Work with local leaders and industry to develop a roadmap for the delivery of each of the 12 missions, including outlining measurable and achievable targets to translate goals into visible outcomes.
- Establish a UK-wide outcomes framework, encompassing a broad definition of economic success, and gather hard evidence against this framework, to track the impact of government funding and deliver targeted interventions to support levelling up.
- Leverage the funding packages referenced in the White Paper with a view to addressing the fragmented nature of how some investment decisions are made, refreshing the processes associated with decision making and resourcing to use the available funds as efficiently as possible.

Actions for local leaders

Our research shows the public's priorities for levelling up go beyond investment in infrastructure and transport. Local leaders should consider responding to the public's concerns in order to deliver Good Growth for their region. We suggest that local leaders look to:

- Invest in relationships across the public, private and third sectors as a foundation for developing comprehensive strategies for place-based transformation, facilitated by a frictionless and enabling planning system.
- Focus on providing high quality employment through sector-focused investment, including investment in human capital, to boost available jobs and match these to local skills, particularly for young people.
- Develop and implement integrated programmes of investment in infrastructure and local services, including investment into high streets, to create safe, sustainable and vibrant local communities.

Actions for businesses

Our previous research shows businesses have the opportunity to build public trust by playing a greater role in the levelling up agenda – improving the opportunities, social mobility and equality in the places they operate. Businesses can look to:

- Take a proactive role in developing local economic strategies, in partnership with local and regional leaders, to identify strategic priorities to boost productivity and support innovation.
- Play a greater role in delivering a fair recovery across the UK, with a particular focus on reskilling and upskilling, to ensure people are equipped with the right tools for future jobs, particularly in green growth industries.
- Seek collaborative ventures, including partnership and coordination roles, with central and local government, charities and community groups to create business opportunities and improve the effectiveness of levelling up interventions.



2) Capitalising on growth outside larger metropolitan cities

The Government's levelling up agenda focuses on inequalities between regions, but inequalities within regions can be just as challenging, particularly when comparing urban and provincial areas. The latter are commonly challenged by low wage levels, connectivity issues, and skills deprivation.

Yet strong interdependencies exist between urban and rural areas. Almost 16% of England's GVA in 2019 was attributed to predominantly rural areas – highlighting the need to maintain traditional rural produce, and propel new technologies, such as agri-tech and energy generation.

Actions for central government

The Government should continue to recognise the potential in provincial areas and the interdependencies that exist between urban and rural. Provincial areas are at risk of greater social and economic exclusion without serious improvement and investment from the Government in digital connectivity.

- The Government has made progress in combating the digital divide through initiatives such as Building Digital UK – with Project Gigabit aiming to reach 85% coverage by the end of 2025. When it comes to levelling up initiatives such as these, the Government may wish to be transparent about how budgets will be allocated, and set realistic targets in order to maintain trust.
- Government policy should aim to help places help themselves. Business and local growth requires sustained support at a local level which is sensitive to local opportunity and context. The Government could reassure local leaders that its proposal for capital investment and development is worthwhile, by building on the principles it has announced for county deals, and providing a 'devolution framework' which sets the parameters within which deals will be agreed.

Actions for local leaders

Local leaders should explore the opportunities and inequalities that exist within their regions. They have the opportunity to capitalise on the recent success of rural or provincial areas through sustainable Good Growth that can power neighbouring cities and bring economic and social benefits back to the rural areas. Understanding these interdependencies will be the first step for regions, as a whole, to build Good Growth.

- As stated previously, almost 16% of England's GVA came from predominantly rural areas in 2019, and there are many examples of successful rural environments capitalising on their rural assets, such as Cornwall (see Spotlight on Cornwall). Regions and local leaders must seek alternative opportunities to power growth nationally and benefit their communities through investment.
- The pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of people's living and working arrangements in urban areas, and placed greater value on surrounding green and/ or garden space. Local leaders may wish to emphasise their offerings of greater work-life balance as viable alternatives for city living, by creating affordable housing options, shared working spaces, and improving transportation links between urban and rural areas.
- Building an intra-region circular economy could be a focus for local leaders, in a way that incentivises green growth and shopping locally, promoting the consumption of produce from within the region.



Actions for businesses

Businesses have a vital role to play in managing the gap between urban and provincial areas by recognising and capitalising on the potential in local areas, from skill retention and asset building to pioneering the future of flexible working.

- Provincial economies typically experience a deprivation of skilled workers as a result of low wages or better opportunities being offered in more urban areas. Businesses can improve this by investing in the development of talent, through retraining and apprenticeship programmes.
- Businesses should continue to explore ways to increase flexibility for their employees in a hybrid working environment. Greater flexibility and the opportunity to decide when and where to work may encourage more employees to help support rural and provincial economies, at the same time as helping larger metropolitan areas recover.
- In partnership with local leaders, businesses can push forward the circular economy and green growth agenda by exploring opportunities to localise supply chains as much as possible, reducing excessive carbon emissions from production and transportation and capitalising on local assets.

Spotlight on Northumbria:

NHS Trust sets sights on becoming regional powerhouse

In its response to COVID-19, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation pushed the boundaries of its expected role. It set up a PPE factory which not only revived the local textile industry, but is now set to become the country's leading PPE supplier for NHS Trusts.

While the Trust does not operate in a city, it is inextricably linked to the economics and culture of both the Newcastle City region and the North of Tyne Combined authority, pointing to the important role it plays in both rural and urban communities across Northumbria. The Trust was the first in the UK to formally commit in 2021 to tackling the issues that drive health inequality – the **Community Promise package** reaches across six broad pillars: poverty, education, economy, environment, wellbeing and employment.

In a bid to **improve resilience and skills in the community** the Trust has set up the Northumbria Manufacturing and Innovation Hub. During the pandemic, the hub set up the PPE factory in order to guarantee a PPE supply for local healthcare workers and reduce costs. By the end of 2020, the factory had produced more than two million gowns, and expanded into other products such as isolation gowns, scrubs, masks and even pillows.

The expansion of the factory has brought the **local textile industry back to life** – initially re-engaging retired seamstresses as volunteers, the hub now trains a paid workforce as part of a high-tech future textile industry and offers facilities and equipment such as a clean room, lasers and branding machines.

There are plans to go further, to train a future workforce in healthcare as well as textiles. It has committed to a **30% increase in apprentices**, with programmes offering opportunities to Looked After Children and people from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds. Through its outreach programme, the PPE factory is also producing miniature scrubs to send to schools to engage children with the NHS and to widen participation in local communities.

“

Northumbria Trust seeks to use its position as an anchor institution to drive a strong local supply chain – increasing local jobs for local people and providers, rather than defaulting to national providers.”



3) Driving social mobility and addressing intergenerational inequality

The pandemic has set back social mobility in the UK, deepening divides between generations in particular, with younger generations hit hard over the last two years. The impact of the pandemic, coupled with rising inflation, cost of living, and house prices, will continue to widen the prosperity gap between the old and the young, unless significant action is taken.

Actions for central government

Central government should continue to seek ways to alleviate the housing crisis. Our Future of Government report [Driving social mobility](#) found that only 27% of young people consider home ownership to be representative of social mobility, compared to 41% of older people, highlighting the fact that home ownership has become largely unattainable for many young people.

- Despite responses from the Government to address housing affordability, through schemes such as the Stamp Duty exemption and ‘Help to Buy’, neither of these have seen significant improvements in lower-price housing access due to an unresponsive housing supply in areas with greater job opportunities, such as Greater London. The Government should seek alternatives to increasing the access of housing in desirable areas.
- Central government can work with local authorities to boost housing growth in commutable locations, in order to boost levelling up and development outside London and major metropolitan areas.
- Amending policy to allow the building of new houses on green belt land with no environmental or amenity value has been successfully pursued in some areas¹⁶.

Actions for local leaders

Young people (employees under 25) were the primary receivers of the furlough scheme¹⁷ during the pandemic, as a result of the large impact on the hospitality and retail sectors. Looking ahead, respondents to the [Social Mobility Barometer 2021](#) said boosting employment should be a top priority for the Government’s recovery programme (47%)

followed by addressing mental health issues (46%) and improving access to education (33%)¹⁸. Local leaders can support in actioning this in the following ways:

- Local leaders work with central government to shape local education requirements, build partnerships and highlight opportunities to assist the Government’s devolution agenda.
- Local leaders may wish to engage with schools early in the education cycle to help share insights on varied employment options and encourage networking and mentoring programmes (see Spotlight on Northumbria for how the Healthcare NHS Foundation has engaged young children with the NHS).

Actions for businesses

This year’s Good Growth Index shows a significant difference in how 16-25 year olds rank the importance of skills compared to those 25+, with younger people placing lower importance on skills compared to other Index measures, such as income. Businesses should engage with this shift and actively engage with young people and the skills system.

- Businesses should recognise the cost that the pandemic has had on the upskilling experience for young people, whether that be virtual fatigue and the perception of online training, or that new hybrid ways of working have made it increasingly difficult to learn from colleagues on the job.
- Businesses can begin to reimagine the upskilling journey, but first they may wish to increase their involvement with education and training providers, as well as apprenticeship schemes, to understand where improvements can be made to reinvigorate the learning experience.
- Businesses should look strategically at the skills system, focusing on skills that will enable the capabilities of the future.

16) [LSE: The UK housing crisis](#)

17) [Job retention statistics](#) – Furlough by age

18) Social Mobility Barometer

Spotlight on Cambridge:

City looks beyond ‘best in class’ to deliver fairness

Cambridge is renowned for its historical and intellectual assets, which draw more than eight million visitors from across the world every year. Since the 1960s, growth in Cambridge has been driven by the ‘**Cambridge phenomenon**’, a boom in innovation and industry focused around technology and the life sciences. This rapid growth continued throughout the pandemic, with Cambridge ranked as the leading regional technology city in the UK last year.

Demand for ‘best in class’ research and development space in the city this year was three times the available capacity, as the city attracted more than £1.3bn in investment for companies rich in intellectual property. Cambridge’s growth, however, has brought challenges, in the form of **widening inequality in the city** and a lack of social mobility – with the city among the lowest 20% of local authority areas for social mobility.

In response, Cambridge’s strategy for the city focuses on **delivering fairness and holistic growth**. This includes committing to £70m funding for social housing, and £100m for affordable housing in the wider devolution area, as well as setting out a five year plan to end homelessness. The latter includes innovative initiatives, such as working with SoloHaus, to provide 18 safe and sustainable pods as a stepping stone out of homelessness.

The city aims to **create a sustainable, connected region** to support these housing initiatives. As part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, £500m has been earmarked for transport infrastructure, particularly green public transport and cycleways, up to 2030. Further investment is destined for green infrastructure, in areas such as waste and energy. Some £227m in government investment is being used to support the relocation of Anglian Water’s wastewater treatment plant to create a zero-carbon plant nearby. In its place, the city is seeking to **build a new sustainable district for the city**, consulting with local residents to design a low-carbon site with space for nature.

Cambridge’s growth will continue to attract inward investment, new jobs and innovative businesses. To support plans for fairer, greener growth the city council has kicked off a conversation with residents and

businesses around corporate citizenship. Many local businesses are developing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies and recognise that they can make an important long-term contribution, with public and third sector partners, to help address social inequality, achieve net zero and promote greater biodiversity.

“

There is a pressing need for more affordable housing, with Cambridge consistently ranking among the top five least affordable cities in the UK, as well as being deemed the most unequal UK city for income.”



4) Green growth to provide a basis for all future action

The appetite for green growth continues to expand amid increasing calls from the public for the Government, businesses and local leaders to prioritise sustainability. Our [Green Jobs Barometer](#) has built an evidence base to track the relative performance of UK regions and industry sectors on their progress in developing green jobs over time. As the country works towards net zero and a greener economy, regional differences are emerging. It is clear support and investment is needed to ensure accessible green employment grows in the places it is needed most.

Actions for central government

Sustainability continues to climb the Government agenda, with Glasgow hosting COP26 in 2021 and the publication of the Government's Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. Central government needs to deliver against sustainability targets, while ensuring the green economy acts to decrease, not widen, inequalities. The Government should look to:

- Outline a bold approach to delivering its Net Zero Strategy, using investment to drive change at the forefront of innovation and incentivise local leaders and businesses to prioritise green initiatives.
- Integrate equality measures into green objectives to ensure the legacy of the green transition is not a reduction in economic opportunity for regions that have yet to capitalise on green opportunities.
- Prioritise investment into accessible green technologies and infrastructure, such as electric charging infrastructure, to provide jobs, increase resilience and promote use by the general public.

Actions for local leaders

Over the last year, the number of local authorities declaring a state of climate emergency rose by 13%. Delivering green growth will require the right decision-making processes, investment and skills. Local leaders should look to:

- Embrace the green opportunity by updating regional industrial strategies to focus on emerging green sectors, such as renewable energy supplies, green transport and low-carbon infrastructure.
- Embed sustainability at the heart of local and regional development through the creation of holistic decision making frameworks, accounting for social, environmental and economic considerations.
- Boost productivity by investing funds and resources into green upskilling, to match workforce skills with emerging green jobs.

Actions for businesses

Our [25th Annual CEO Survey](#) reveals that commitments to purpose and environmental, social and governance (ESG) are on the rise. There is a growing focus among business leaders on trust, transparency and personal accountability. Successful strategies, as referenced in our report [ESG and Growth: A New Way of Thinking](#), are grounded in an honest assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, with an eye on the future. With this in mind, businesses should look to:

- Craft a coherent and actionable strategy to deliver sustainable growth by breaking down ESG considerations into a set of manageable actions and selecting the areas in which they want to compete.
- Make use of innovation hubs and grants to collaborate across public and private institutions, to embrace innovative ways of working and disruptive technologies.
- Unlock efficiencies through incentivising better use of resources, including decreasing waste and energy usage.
- Drive social mobility, as well as racial and gender equality, in green sectors by offering accessible educational pathways, including skills programmes and apprenticeships, and increased support for career progression.

Appendix

Good Growth Index methodology

In developing the Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index this year, we have used the same methodology as in previous editions. This year, we have made our usual minor adjustments to the periodic data that we assess, but have made more significant changes to our geographic definitions and have included two new variables in our Index. The way we have included our two new indicators remains consistent with the method observed in our first edition. The variables, and the weights applied to them, are outlined in Table A1 below.

Due to the differences in the way we have captured the analysis this year, we caution against drawing comparisons to our report last year as the underlying methodology is inconsistent. Our overall approach to developing the Index is summarised in **Figure A1**.

Where local authority level data is missing gaps have been benchmarked to an appropriate local or regional alternative. However, this has not had a material impact on the results.

Figure A1: Our Approach

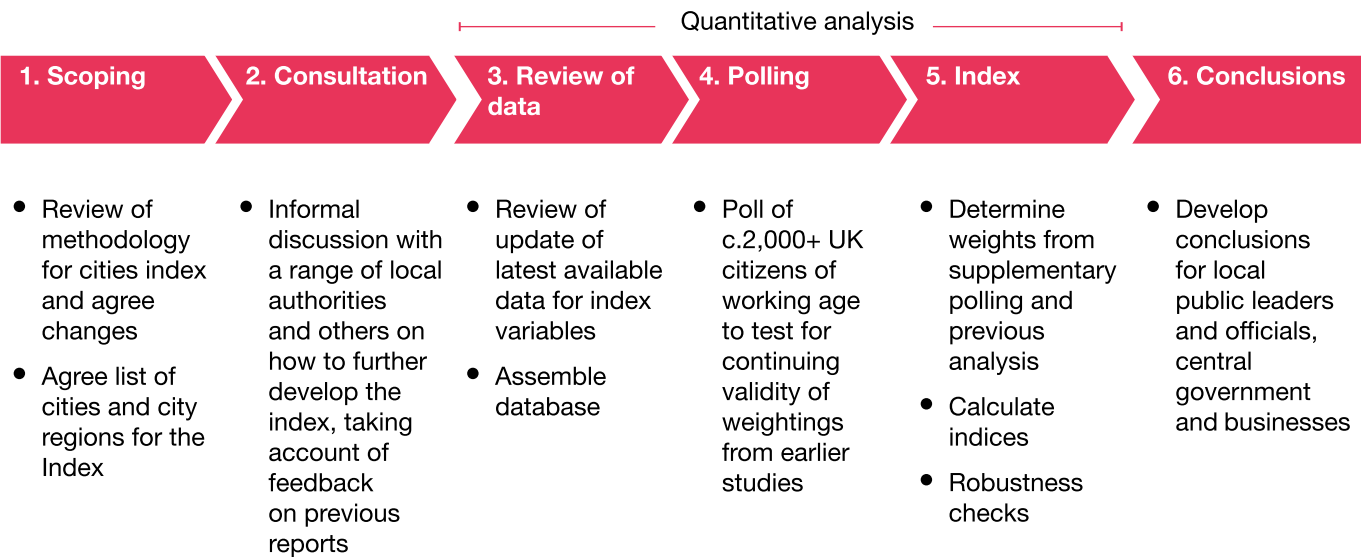


Table A1: Index variables, geographical areas and weights

Category	Measure	Time period	Geography	Weight
Safety	Violence against the person, weapons and drugs offences	2017-2020	LA	14%
Income distribution	Ratio of median to mean income	2017-2020	LA	14%
Income	GDHI per head scaled by regional price indices	2017-2020	LA	13%
Health	Life expectancy	2017-2020	LA	10%
Work-life balance	% in employment working more than 45 hrs per week	2017-2020	LA	10%
Environment	Carbon emissions: gCO2/£ GVA	2017-2020	LA	10%
Transport	Average commuting time to work	2017-2020	LA	8%
Jobs	Unemployment rate	2017-2020	LA/TTWA	8%
High street & Shops	Stores openings & closures	2017-2020	LA	5%
Housing	Housing price to earnings ratio and owner occupation rate	2017-2020	LA	4%
Skills	Share of population, aged 16-24 & 25-64, with NVQ 3+	2017-2020	LA	2%
New businesses	New businesses per head of population	2017-2020	LA	2%

Measure refresh: Health

With health remaining an important indicator, in this iteration of the Index, the health metric has been updated from the proportion of the workforce not working due to long-term sickness, to the more widely used life expectancy at birth. This has resulted in a re-ranking of cities in terms of health outcomes in the Index, but ultimately represents a better measure of health outcomes, with life expectancy being linked to living standards, lifestyle and health services¹⁹.

Constructing the Index

The scores for each city are given relative to a base period of 2017-19 (i.e. a score of zero means that a city's Index score in 2018-20 is equal to the 2017-19 average score for all UK cities in the Index). For each element of the Index, a city receives a score equivalent to the number of standard deviations it is away from the mean score on that indicator for all cities. As a result, a score of +0.2 means a city performs 0.2 standard deviations better than the sample mean for that element of the Index in the base year. The scores for each element are then weighted and summed to create the overall Good Growth Index score for that city. The approach is the same for the analysis of different geographies, such as those covered by Combined Authorities. This is the same approach that we have taken in previous reports and is standard practice when constructing such indices.

¹⁹ <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/life-expectancy-at-birth.htm>

Our list of cities

Alongside refreshing our Index this year with new public priorities, we have also refreshed our framework of how we decide which cities we include or exclude from our analysis. Our refreshed decision criteria is outlined below.

- **Population size:** all cities contain 350,000 or more people, based on 2019 population data²⁰.
- **Mix:** one of the most important criteria for any city list is to ensure there is a mix of economies in order to provide interesting good growth comparisons.

- **Spread:** we ensure we have a good geographical spread, including cities in the devolved nations.

The use of this new methodology has meant that the total list of cities in our index has increased from 42 to 50 cities²¹. The full list of cities included in this year's Index is set out in **Table A2** below. It is important to note, the use of our new framework has led two cities from last year's Index, Doncaster and Birkenhead, to be excluded.

Table A2: All 50 cities included in our index). *indicates new entry

City	City	City	City	City
1 London	11 Nottingham	21 Medway	31 Middlesbrough and Stockton	41 Ipswich*
2 Manchester	12 Leeds	22 Southend	32 Exeter*	42 Huddersfield*
3 Birmingham	13 Warrington and Wigan	23 Reading	33 Derby	43 Lincoln*
4 Glasgow	14 Cardiff	24 Oxford	34 Preston	44 Peterborough*
5 Newcastle	15 Wolverhampton and Walsall	25 Portsmouth	35 High Wycombe and Aylesbury	45 Bournemouth*
6 Liverpool	16 Luton*	26 Bradford	36 Swansea	46 Plymouth
7 Leicester	17 Cambridge	27 Stoke-on-Trent	37 Aberdeen	47 Wakefield and Castleford
8 Belfast	18 Edinburgh	28 Hull	38 Swindon	48 York*
9 Sheffield	19 Southampton	29 Chelmsford*	39 Sunderland	49 Brighton
10 Bristol	20 Coventry	30 Norwich*	40 Milton Keynes	50 Northampton*

²⁰ Based on mid-2019 Small Area Population Estimates

²¹ We engaged the ONS to understand what the proportion of each local authority was in each TTWA in June 2021. Source: ONS (2021), "Listing of 2021 UK local authorities by component 2011 travel to work areas based on mid-2019 Small Area Population Estimates"

Cities included in the Demos-PwC Good Growth Index (defined as TTWAs).

A full list of local authorities covered in the TTWA definitions is available on our website.

We also apply the Good Growth Index methodology to:

- **10 Combined Authorities:** Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North of Tyne, North East, Sheffield City Region, Tees Valley, West of England, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. We also look at the performance of six city regions in Wales and Scotland, including Aberdeen City Region, Edinburgh City Region, Inverness City Region, Glasgow City Region, Cardiff Capital Region and Swansea City Region.
- All 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) areas in England

Economic impact analysis methodology

Our economic analysis assesses the economic growth rates of cities in our Index. We have predicted the economic impacts based on Gross Value Added (GVA).

The core modelling we have used to determine GVA impacts at a city level is the application of nation-wide sectoral impacts to each city's local authorities. Using the latest data available at the time of writing from the ONS, we have applied the sectoral impacts and forecasts to all local authorities in the UK, to understand and predict the economic growth rate of each city. We have used our [UK Economic Outlook: December 2021](#) sectoral forecasts under the 'Accelerated Growth' scenario to the [ONS 2019 Regional GVA by industry figures](#) from 2020 to 2021. Based on the proportion of each city's industry relative to the entire UK economy, we applied the sector impacts to each local authority from 2019 and mapped these to the cities included in the Good Growth Index.

Additionally, we have used other measures as proxies to further refine our economic analysis. This includes the Google Mobility Index, the Universal Claimant count and the case rate of COVID-19 at local authority levels in the UK.

We have weighted each proxy in order to account for all proxies, but have more strongly weighted proxies that we feel are the most accurate measures of GVA. In this instance, we have weighted the sectoral analysis as the most accurate measure of GVA at the city level.



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Subject:	NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee - Planning in Northern Ireland
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer(s):	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer(s):	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management) Keith Sutherland, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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 paper provides an overview of the PAC report and recommended response from the Council. The proposed response was considered by the Planning Committee on 12 April 2022 for notation. A full copy of the PAC report is provided at Appendix 1 . The Council's proposed response is provided at Appendix 2 .
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note this report and agree the proposed response to the PAC report at Appendix 2 .

3.0	Background
3.1	<p>In February 2022, the Planning Committee considered two recent reviews of the NI planning system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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.</p>
3.4	<p>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:</p> <p>https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=167&MId=10643&Ver=4</p>
	Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI
	<u>Overview</u>
3.1	<p>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</p>

	<p>someone independent from the Department for Infrastructure, to bring about the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose.</p>
3.2	<p>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.</p>
3.3	<p>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.</p>
3.4	<p>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 <i>Application Checklist</i> 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 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).</p>
3.5	<p>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.</p>

3.6	<p>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.</p> <p><u>PAC Recommendations</u></p>
3.7	<p>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).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 provided at Appendix 2 for agreement 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 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.
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.

	Financial and Resource Implications
3.14	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.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.15	No adverse impacts identified.
4.0	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee report (March 2022)</p> <p>Appendix 1a – Press Release</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Proposed Belfast City Council response to PAC report</p>

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Public Accounts Committee

PLANNING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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Ordered by the Public Accounts Committee to be published 22 March 2022

This report is embargoed until 00.01am on 24 March 2022

Report: NIA 202/17-22 Public Accounts Committee

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Powers and Membership

The Public Accounts Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Standing Orders under Section 60(3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is the statutory function of the Public Accounts Committee to consider the accounts, and reports on accounts laid before the Assembly.

The Public Accounts Committee is appointed under Assembly Standing Order No. 56 of the Standing Orders for the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has the power to send for persons, papers and records and to report from time to time. Neither the Chairperson nor Deputy Chairperson of the Committee shall be a member of the same political party as the Minister of Finance or of any junior minister appointed to the Department of Finance.

The Committee has 9 members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Chairperson: Mr William Humphrey MLA

Deputy Chairperson: Mr Roy Beggs MLA

Mr Andrew Muir MLA²

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA

Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Mr William Irwin MLA^{1 4}

Mr David Hilditch MLA

Ms Cara Hunter MLA^{3 5}

¹ With effect from 17 February 2020 Mr Harry Harvey replaced Mr Gary Middleton

² With effect from 31 March 2020 Mr Andrew Muir replaced Mr Trevor Lunn

³ With effect from 19 May 2020 Mr Matthew O'Toole replaced Mr John Dallat

⁴ With effect from 21 June 2021 Mr William Irwin replaced Mr Harry Harvey

⁵ With effect from 18 October 2021 Ms Cara Hunter replaced Mr Matthew O'Toole

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report

C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General
DAERA	Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PAN	Planning Advice Note
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
The Act	Planning Act (NI) 2011
The Committee	Public Accounts Committee
LDP	Local Development Plan

Executive Summary

1. The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) met on 10, 17 and 24 February and 10 March 2022 to consider the Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) report "Planning in Northern Ireland". The main witnesses were:
 - **Mrs Katrina Godfrey**, Department for Infrastructure
 - **Mr Angus Kerr**, Department for Infrastructure
 - **Ms Julie Thompson**, Department for Infrastructure
 - **Ms Alison McCullagh**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland (SOLACE)
 - **Ms Kate Bentley**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland
 - **Councillor Steven Corr**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
 - **Councillor Robert Irvine**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
 - **Ms Karen Smyth**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
 - **Mr Kieran Donnelly**, Northern Ireland Audit Office
 - **Mr Stuart Stevenson**, Department of Finance
 - **Ms Nuala Crilly**, The Gathering
 - **Mr Dean Blackwood**, The Gathering
 - **Ms Anne Harper**, The Gathering
 - **Mr George McLaughlin**, The Gathering
2. Performance issues within the planning system are widely known and are a source of considerable concern for this Committee. 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 Committee is appalled by the performance statistics. It is simply unacceptable that almost one-fifth of the most important planning applications aren't processed within three years. Such poor performance has an impact on applicants, developers and communities and is risking investment in Northern Ireland.
3. Progress on Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been equally poor - seven years into the process these plans are yet to materialise. The Committee heard of the potential for LDPs to shape communities and make decision-making processes

easier, but the process has been stymied by a complete underestimation of the complexity and volume of work required, a lack of key skills and resources within councils, compounded by a series of unnecessary “checks and balances” implemented by the Department. The Committee 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. Issues with quality at all stages of the planning process are pervasive, affecting applications, statutory consultation, plan-making and the appeals system. The Committee is concerned about the long-term, cumulative effect of widespread quality issues. A planning system that allows poor quality applications risks poor quality development, which will only lead to further issues and additional costs for the future. The Committee heard that there are opportunities to improve application quality, but these have not been taken either centrally or locally. The Committee simply cannot understand the reluctance to implement change in this area.
5. Whilst these performance issues are concerning, and must be addressed, it is the Committee’s strong view that the problems presented are symptomatic of a planning system that is beset by more fundamental issues.
6. The Committee was alarmed by the volume of concerns around transparency that were presented during the course of its inquiry. In the Committee’s view, a planning system that lacks transparency leaves decision makers ill equipped to defend themselves against allegations of impropriety and contributes to public mistrust. This, in turn, damages the reputation of the system and places Northern Ireland at a huge disadvantage to other regions when competing for investment.
7. The Committee heard concerns about the lack of transparency from witnesses and through submissions received. The basis for making key decisions was often absent and this is extremely worrying. In particular the Committee are seeking urgent remedial action to ensure better transparency for those planning applications called in and for applications overturned by a Planning Committee contrary to the recommendation of the planning officers. The Committee are also seeking more transparency as to how councils exercise enforcement powers given the considerable variation across councils.

8. Having discussed its concerns with the Department, SOLACE and NILGA, the Committee was struck by the lack of accountability for poor performance. A system that allows all those involved to miss targets, without seeking improvements, is a system in chronic failure. The Committee is worried by the Department's misunderstanding of accountability, and was left with the impression that it is more interested in talking about issues, than taking the action needed to address them. This cannot continue, and the Committee expects the Department to provide the Committee with a radical action plan and provide the successor Committee with an update on the improvements made in six months time.
9. In the Committee's view, the Department is not currently providing the strong leadership needed drive transformational change within the planning system. The Committee is very concerned that the Department does not grasp the severity of issues facing the planning system, does not recognise the urgent need for change and has a poor understanding of its role in implementing change. The Committee urges the Department and the Head of the Civil Service to consider how leadership could be significantly strengthened so as to exercise an effective oversight role.
10. The operation of the planning system is one of the worst examples of silo-working within the public sector that this Committee has encountered. There is fragmentation at all levels - between central and local government, within statutory consultees, amongst the local councils and even the Department itself appears to operate in functional silos. The Committee believes that there is an urgent need for a radical cultural change in the way in which central and local government interact. If the planning service is to improve, the Department and councils must start to collaborate as equal partners. This will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way.
11. The Committee were astounded to hear of the case of Knock Iveagh where a wind turbine was granted planning permission on the site of an historic monument. Whilst the planning permission was granted by the Department of the Environment before planning powers passed to local government, there have been many opportunities since where the Department and the local council could have worked collaboratively to find a solution. The council are now in a legal dispute with the Department regarding this. The Knock Iveagh case clearly demonstrates the enormous damage caused by an incorrect planning decision and also the inability of the Department and

council to work together to rectify the position in an expedient way instead of wasting valuable resources and causing extreme distress to those affected.

12. The planning system in Northern Ireland is clearly not working. Given the widespread, severe and entrenched nature of the issues outlined, the Committee is calling for a fundamental review, led by someone independent from the Department, to identify the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

13. The planning system should act as key economic driver for Northern Ireland and has a crucial role in leveraging investment, protecting the environment and delivering places that people want to live and work in. However, on the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee, it is clear that the system is failing on delivering its key functions - major applications take years to decide, plan-making is incredibly slow, and enforcement is inconsistent. Given such obvious issues, the Committee believes that a significant programme of reform is needed.

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.

Recommendation 2

14. Whilst there are widespread, systemic issues affecting planning in Northern Ireland, the Committee could not understand the reluctance, amongst many of those it heard evidence from, to initiate changes that could improve performance within a shorter timeframe. This inaction is stifling the system and cannot be allowed to continue.

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.

Recommendation 3

15. In the course of its inquiry, it became clear to the Committee that the planning system lacks robust accountability arrangements. Missed targets and poor performance have become accepted as the norm. The Committee was alarmed by the Department's misunderstanding of accountability. Publishing data is not accountability. The Committee is also concerned that the Department has been more focussed on talking about performance than implementing the significant actions that are so clearly needed.

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.

Recommendation 4

16. Northern Ireland's planning system is intended to be a plan led system. Despite this, the production of Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been both slow and expensive. Whilst there was an initial expectation that plans would be completed within three and a half years, seven years following the transfer of planning powers to local government no council has an approved LDP.

17. Current projections mean that it will be 13 years into the 15-year cycle before all councils have a completed plan in place. Without these, many councils are relying on outdated area plans to guide decisions, which in some cases are over 30 years old.

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.

Recommendation 5

18. Core to much of the Committee's work has been the promotion of the highest ethical values in public services. During the inquiry into planning the Committee heard a number of concerns around record keeping and the transparency of decision making. Given planning decisions are often amongst the most contentious decisions that will be taken within the public sector, adherence to the highest ethical standards are essential. Monitoring the level of transparency will be key going forward to engender trust in the planning system.

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.

Recommendation 6

19. Confidence in the planning system is low. Members of the public feel excluded and often believe they have no choice but to launch legal proceedings, in the form of judicial reviews, to challenge decisions that impact their communities. This is expensive, time consuming and confrontational for all those involved. Greater engagement is needed.

20. 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.

Recommendation 7

21. Planning must play an essential role in helping to address many of the issues being experienced with housing in Northern Ireland. In particular, the Committee is concerned by the evidence it has heard in relation to rural development. The level of variation in how this policy is being applied across Northern Ireland is of particular concern, along with what appears to be a disproportionate interest in this area from some planning committees.

22. The Committee is also concerned that work to clarify this policy had been commenced by the Department but was abandoned only two months after the Planning Advice Note was published. It is essential that this work be resurrected urgently, but accompanied with proper engagement between central and local government.

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.

Recommendation 8

23. The Department told the Committee that amongst its responsibilities within the two-tier system in Northern Ireland was oversight. However, the Committee heard evidence that the Department was overwhelmingly focused on matters of process rather than on the strategic issues which require strong, decisive leadership. The Department told us it was challenging to identify when it was appropriate to intervene - the Committee believes the Department has got this balance wrong.

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.

Recommendation 9

24. The planning system should be key to providing places that people want to live and work in. Whilst timely decisions are essential, it is perhaps even more important that development that is approved is of high quality. Allowing poor quality applications into the system will only result in poor quality development. Despite this, the Committee heard that the system has been incredibly slow to implement relatively simple changes which could improve the quality of applications. This cannot be allowed to continue.

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.

Recommendation 10

25. Without any review of past decisions, it is hard for those who make decisions to properly understand how the outcomes of those decisions impact on the communities around them. A key means of improving the quality of future decisions must be to reflect on the consequences of planning decisions.

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.

Recommendation 11

26. If the planning system is to deliver its key functions, it must be properly resourced and financially sustainable. However, at local council level, the planning system has been running at an ever-increasing shortfall since the transfer of functions in 2015. The Committee believes the current funding model does not recognise the importance of the planning system, and needs to be revised. Current planning fees, set by the Department, do not reflect the needs of the system. If developers are willing to pay higher fees for a better service, then at least part of the solution to financial sustainability is obvious. The Committee cannot understand why this hasn't been progressed.

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.

Recommendation 12

27. Underpinning many of the issues that the Committee found hampering the planning system was a lack of joined-up working. The Committee has stressed the importance of joined-up working in many of its inquiries, but the planning system is amongst the starkest examples of the negative consequences when public bodies don't work together.

28. Changing this will require leadership - but will also require both central and local government to step up and work together in the interests of the planning system and its users rather than individual bodies. This will require a cultural change, but is essential to allow a more responsive, effective planning system.

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.

Introduction

29. The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) met on 10, 17 and 24 February and 10 March 2022 to consider the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report “Planning in Northern Ireland”. The main witnesses were:

- **Mrs Katrina Godfrey**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Mr Angus Kerr**, Department for Infrastructure
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- **Mr Stuart Stevenson**, Department of Finance
- **Ms Nuala Crilly**, The Gathering
- **Mr Dean Blackwood**, The Gathering
- **Ms Ann Harper**, The Gathering
- **Mr George McLaughlin**, The Gathering

Background

30. A properly functioning planning system should proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland.

31. The Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the Act) established a two-tier system for the delivery of planning functions in Northern Ireland. The planning system has three main functions: development planning, development management and enforcement. Under the Act, responsibility for delivering the majority of operational planning functions passed to local councils in April 2015.

32. The Department for Infrastructure (the Department) retained a central role in the planning system in Northern Ireland and is responsible for preparing regional planning policy and legislation, monitoring and reporting on the performance of councils' delivery of planning functions and making planning decisions in respect of a small number of regionally significant applications.
33. A number of central government organisations provide specialist expertise to council planning officials on technical matters. The main organisations that councils consult with are Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads, Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), DfI Rivers, NI Water and the Historic Environment Division within the Department for Communities.
34. There were around 11,000 planning applications processed in Northern Ireland in the 2020-21 year. Of these, around 95 per cent were approved.

The planning system is in need of fundamental improvement

35. Evidence presented to the Committee is clear that the current planning system simply isn't working. It is slow, fails to provide certainty for those involved in it, and lacks the confidence of those both inside and outside the system. These are significant deficiencies given the importance of the planning system - it should be acting as a key economic driver, helping to leverage investment into Northern Ireland whilst protecting the environment and delivering places that people want to live and work in.
36. On the basis of many key metrics, the system is simply inefficient. Almost half of major applications, those likely to have significant economic social and environmental implications, take more than a year to decide upon. Three years after application, one in five of these major applications is still not decided. The Committee heard that even the target timescales were "eye-watering", and the system must aim for better. In comparison with elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the system is much slower.
37. Performance in preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been incredibly slow. The most recent projections provided by councils suggest that it will be 2028 before

there is an LDP in place in each council area, 13 years into a 15-year cycle. The Committee also heard concerns around the effectiveness and equity of enforcement across Northern Ireland. Taken together, the Committee was left with the impression of a system that can't plan for the future; isn't doing well on deciding today's applications; and doesn't appear to be properly enforcing the decisions it made in the past.

38. Some of the underperformance undoubtedly relates to the transfer of functions in 2015. The Committee heard that the budget that transferred was inadequate, the staffing model was inappropriate and the future funding model needs to change. Most concerning of all appears to be the widespread recognition that the system isn't working. The Committee is clear that change is now needed and 'a sticking plaster' will not suffice. Given such obvious criticism, it is hard to understand why action hasn't been taken until now.

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.

39. Whilst there is an obvious need to look again at the structure and operation of the planning system, the Committee have been struck by the number of changes that could be made now to improve performance. In our view, there has been an inertia throughout the system and many of those involved appear reluctant to make much needed changes. This cannot be allowed to continue.

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

No one has been willing to take responsibility for the overall performance of the planning system

40. The Committee has discussed concerns around the performance of the planning system with the Department, SOLACE and NILGA. No one was able to explain how poor performance is addressed. It is now clear to the Committee that there is no accountability for poor performance. Statutory consultees, councils and the Department have all missed targets with impunity and without seeking improvements. This is a serious failing.
41. The Committee was also alarmed by what appears to be the Department's fundamental misunderstanding of what accountability is. The Committee was told that the Department felt there was accountability in the system because "we are publishing more now than we ever published before". The Department also told the Committee that, "data just gives you the questions to ask". However, the Committee can't see evidence of the Department actually asking those questions, be it on variation in performance, overturns, enforcement or delegation.
42. The Department also said, "the more you talk about performance, the more focus there is on improving it" - the Committee sees no evidence that this has been true for the planning system, and is concerned that the Department is focussed on talking, rather than on the significant action the system so clearly needs.

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.

43. There is a clear need for many organisations to work together to deliver an effective planning system. This is not happening. Whilst the Committee heard that planning is provided by a number of "autonomous public bodies", this cannot be used as an excuse for bodies to act in narrow self-interest. Public bodies exist to provide a public service - not to defend their own role. At this most basic level, the committee expects

all of those involved in the planning system to act in the interests of the public, not themselves.

Progress on Local Development Plans has been slow and the Department's input has led to further delays

44. Northern Ireland's planning system should be plan-led. However, the expectation that all councils would have a fully completed LDP within three and a half years of beginning the process has proved completely unrealistic. The Committee heard that a combination of inadequate funding, a lack of plan-making skills within councils and insufficient understanding of the complexity of the LDP process at the point of transfer has resulted in no council having an approved LDP seven years later.
45. The Committee is also concerned that the Department has implemented an excessive range of "checks and balances" at either side of the Independent Examination which have contributed to delays, and do not happen in other jurisdictions. The Committee did not get any sense of the value added by these checks and is concerned that this level of interference is symptomatic of the culture within the Department, and its approach to the planning system in general. The system has become so legalistic and bureaucratic that professional planners are tied up in processes, not adding value or place-making. This is expensive for public bodies and discouraging for staff.
46. The Committee was left with the impression that plan-making is excessively process driven and unlikely to deliver what is needed any time soon. Indeed, the current projections show that it will be 13 years into the 15-year planning cycle before all councils have an LDP in place, and there is now a risk that plans will be out of date by the time they are implemented. Whilst the Committee does not want the work done so far on LDPs to be wasted, attention must now be turned to streamlining and speeding up the remaining processes.

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.

There is a lack of transparency around key decision-making processes, undermining confidence in the planning system as a whole

47. Openness and transparency are at heart of the credibility of any public service, yet during its inquiry, the Committee received a large number of concerns about the lack of transparency in the planning system, and how hard it is for the public to engage. The Department itself told the Committee that it had concerns around record keeping and the transparency of decision-making processes at council level, but the Committee got no sense of any actions it has taken as a result of these concerns. In the absence of any real accountability the onus appears to have fallen on members of the public to call out poor practices and ensure process is followed.

48. A number of concerns around transparency were presented to the Committee, across every evidence session, with both central and local government and members of the public. Whilst there is a need to improve transparency across the system, the Committee believes urgent remedial action is needed in three specific areas:

- Call-in procedures;
- Overturn of planning officials' recommendation; and
- Enforcement.

49. Whilst each planning committee has a Scheme of Delegation setting out the applications to be decided by the planning committee, and those which are delegated to officials, elected members retain the right to "call-in" applications from the delegated list, for consideration and decision by the planning committee. The Committee was presented with evidence that call-in procedures vary considerably, and it is not always clear, even to members of the same planning committee, why certain applications are called in. Whilst there may be valid reasons for calling in applications, such variation in process and lack of detail leads to speculation and a lack of trust, particularly when planning committees appear to take an interest in

particular types of development. In this context, the Committee was especially alarmed to hear that lobbying is happening, even though it shouldn't be.

50. The NIAO's report found that one in eight decisions taken by planning committees was made contrary to the advice of the planning officer. Whilst the Committee understands that planning committees are not expected to agree with official recommendations in all cases, it expects so-called "overturns" to be supported by robust planning reasons which are publicly available. Witnesses agreed that this was not always the case, and that record keeping processes vary considerably across planning committees.
51. The Committee views enforcement as crucial to the integrity of and confidence in the planning system, however evidence suggests that this is another area where there is considerable variation across planning authorities. For example, in one council, a quarter of enforcement cases was deemed not expedient to pursue, compared to less than one in ten in another council. The Committee was told that enforcement is a discretionary function, but cannot understand why outcomes are not more consistent, and is concerned that discretion is being used as an excuse not to carry out enforcement action in some cases. Such large variations in key planning processes and outcomes do not lead to public confidence, and warrant more attention from both the Department and local government.
52. Finally, the Committee also heard frustrations that the Department is particularly difficult to engage with. However, the Department told the Committee that it is leading on the Planning Engagement Forum and wants to engage the public more. The Committee is concerned that the Department is completely disconnected from the reality of the system, largely as a consequence of its hands-off approach since the transfer of functions.
53. The extent of concerns around transparency and openness are causing reputational damage to the Northern Ireland planning system. The Committee has been made aware of developers who are unwilling to risk investment in Northern Ireland, and this has the potential to undermine development, such as housing, that is so badly needed. The Committee is concerned perception of a dysfunctional planning system places Northern Ireland at a huge disadvantage to other regions when competing for foreign direct investment.

54. Witnesses told the Committee that, although they were aware of a perception of ethical issues within the planning system, they did not believe these existed in practice. However, in the Committee's view, the planning system lacks transparency, leaves decision makers ill-equipped to defend themselves against allegations of corruption and contributes to mistrust. The Chief Planner remarked that there is "more work to be done" on transparency. The Committee feels this is a massive understatement. Transparency around decision-making is key to enabling accountability and public confidence in the planning system.

55. The Committee recognises the importance of making planning decisions within a framework of high ethical standards. It is therefore important that both planning officers and decision makers are constantly reminded of the required standards and that there are adequate checks and balances within the system to ensure such standards are adhered to.

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.

Members of the public feel excluded from planning and more meaningful access to the system is needed

56. The Committee heard a range of concerns from members of the public who felt excluded from the planning system. The Committee is clear that whilst it is important that the system works for applicants and developers, it must also work for those communities in which development takes place.

57. Many of those that the Committee heard from criticised the overly legalistic atmosphere that had been created around the planning system. However, by strictly limiting access, the system is currently contributing to this culture. Third parties are

left with no option to challenge decisions, other than by pursuing judicial reviews. This is expensive, time consuming and confrontational for all those involved.

58. Many of the responses to the Department's Review of the Planning Act reflected a desire for more access to the planning system, potentially through a new appeals system, or allowing for third party challenge. The Department was not persuaded of the need to make any amendments to the planning appeals process. The Committee recognises that there will be a trade-off between allowing access to the system for third parties and the speed of decisions - but currently the Northern Ireland system appears to have the worst of both worlds.

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.

The Committee is concerned by how planning is operating for rural housing

59. Much of the evidence heard during the Committee's inquiry centred on decisions around rural development and housing. In the Committee's view, some council planning committees appear to be excessively involved in decisions around the development of new single homes in the countryside. The NIAO report notes that, despite often being relatively straightforward, rural housing accounts for 16 per cent of all planning applications but comprises 40 per cent of all overturns. This represents a disproportionate use of planning committee time and resources.
60. The Department told us that the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) sets out how applications for rural housing should be approached. However, they are concerned that so many of these decisions are not delegated, or overturned and that different decisions are reached.
61. The Committee is concerned, based on evidence presented to it, that there appears to be an increasingly fine line between planning committees interpreting planning

policy and simply setting it aside. As a result, these differing interpretations are threatening to create a patchwork of varying rural planning policy across Northern Ireland. The Committee is simply not convinced that what is relevant in one rural area is considerably different to what is relevant in another.

62. The Committee heard about the Department's Planning Advice Note (PAN) which was issued in August 2021 and subsequently withdrawn just over two months later. This was prepared without consultation between the Department and councils. As a result of the Department's approach, relationships have been damaged, confidence in the planning system undermined and inconsistency has been allowed to persist.

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.

The Department's leadership of the planning system has been weak

63. The evidence provided to the Committee by witnesses and in the NIAO report makes it clear that leadership is desperately needed to improve the planning system. The Department isn't providing this. The Committee is very concerned, based on the evidence it has heard, that the Department does not grasp the severity of issues facing the planning system, does not recognise the obvious need for change and has little understanding of its role in implementing change.

64. The Department's evidence to the Committee was overwhelmingly focused on process - it highlighted that it had completed 19 out of 30 actions in relation to the planning forum and processed 55 responses for the Planning Review to identify the 16 key issues. The Committee was surprised to learn that the Department has around 80 staff assigned to planning matters. Evidence provided by others noted that the Department exercised a number of checks and balances which appeared to only delay decisions, frustrate the system and its users, and fail to add any value.

65. However, at no point did the Department seem to have considered what impact any of this would have on the planning system itself. Rather than providing transformational leadership which would drive the change that is so badly needed, the Department is overly focused on process. Reviewing the Department's role in respect of planning might reduce the need for the large number of staff.

66. There are some areas where it is obvious that the Department must take a more proactive leadership role. For example, the Committee heard that legislative change is required on a number of areas, and that the Department is the only body capable of taking this forward, but has made no efforts to do so. The Committee shares some of the witnesses' views that the recent review of the Planning Act was ineffective and that many important issues raised as part of the consultation were not adequately considered by the Department. The Committee notes that because of the timing of the Department's review, any legislative changes will need to wait until the next mandate. Therefore, even the limited changes that the Department has accepted are necessary will not be implemented soon. The Committee urges the Department to drive forward legislative change as a matter of urgency.

67. Having heard the Department's evidence, this Committee considers that the Department has been too remote in its oversight of the planning system and is not confident that the Department is providing the leadership that will drive the necessary transformational change.

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.

The planning system has been slow to respond to quality issues

68. The Committee has significant concerns around the evidence it heard of widespread issues with the quality of applications entering and progressing through the planning system. Allowing poor quality applications into the system risks poor quality development. This is storing up issues for Northern Ireland's future. A poor planning

system will not only cost Northern Ireland today, but will have a long-lasting negative impact over many years to come.

69. The Committee can see little evidence of changes implemented to improve the planning system to date, and often there has been inertia on effecting change that would improve the system. An example of this is the validation checklist. Councils have been asking the Department to put this on a legislative footing since 2016, and yet nothing has happened. The Committee, however, was unconvinced by evidence provided by local government representatives that councils were unable to take independent action on this issue.

70. The Committee heard that there is strong evidence that validation checklists will improve the quality of applications, however most councils haven't attempted to implement these as they would be voluntary. The Committee can't understand the reluctance around making basic changes, despite the positive experience of the one council who had implemented a checklist. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Department's inaction is being used as an excuse and councils are pre-empting reasons for failure rather than learning from good practice elsewhere and trying to implement it.

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.

71. As well as allowing poor quality applications in, the system as currently designed, allows serial amendments at every stage of the process, right up to appeal. The Committee heard that dealing with poor quality applications clogs up the system and professional planners are constantly "firefighting". Addressing these issues could free up staff time to process applications in a more timely manner.

72. The Committee believes that a properly functioning planning system should encourage quality, however as it stands, there is no mechanism at either end of the system to do so. In addition to there being no robust mechanism to stop poor quality applications entering the planning system, the Committee heard that planning authorities do not review the outcomes of past decisions, despite this being Departmental guidance. The Committee was therefore left with the impression of a

system that has little interest in the impact of its decisions and learning from experience.

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.

The current funding model does not recognise the value of the planning system and is not financially sustainable

73. The planning system plays a key role in economic development, shaping communities and protecting the environment and its value should be assessed in this context. It is therefore vital that it is financially sustainable. The Committee heard evidence that the current funding arrangements do not properly recognise the potential of the planning system as an economic enabler and public service and that the gap between income and expenditure has grown so large that the system is becoming financially unsustainable.
74. Local government witnesses told the Committee that, despite assurances, planning did not transfer to councils as a cost-neutral service in 2015 and that the funding package was insufficient to meet the costs of running the planning service. The shortfall in funding has continued year-on-year, with additional costs borne by councils, as opposed to any additional central government funding or meaningful uplift in planning fees. The NIAO reported that the gap between costs and income has risen from £4.1 million in 2015-16 to £8.2 million in 2019-20. The Committee was also concerned to hear that the true costs of the LDP process have not yet been fully realised, and this will also have an impact on councils' finances.
75. The Committee was disappointed to hear that the devolution of planning to local government hasn't yet achieved any economies of scale. Witnesses told the Committee that insufficient budgets and inappropriate staffing models from the point of transfer made this almost impossible and that funding models needs to be overhauled before any improvement will be seen.

76. Since 2015, planning fees have increased once, by around 2 per cent. Any further changes to planning fees will require legislation to be brought through the Assembly. The Committee heard that applicants are generally willing to pay higher fees in return for a better and more efficient service. The Committee was also told that resources are one of the major constraints in processing applications. The solution is frankly self-evident and the Committee struggles to understand how this hasn't been progressed by the Department. In the Committee's view, the Department has paid insufficient attention to ensuring that the planning fees it sets reflect the needs of the system. It is hugely frustrating that there will not be a chance to address planning fees until the next mandate. Bringing forward this legislation should be an urgent priority for the Department.

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.

The planning system is badly fragmented and this hampers effective delivery

77. The Committee views the operation of the planning system as one of the worst examples of silo-working that it has come across. Despite an urgent need for better performance, there appears to be a lack of joined-up working between central and local government, silos within statutory consultees, a lack of co-operation amongst local councils, and even silos within the Department itself. Despite this, the Committee was surprised to hear from the Department's evidence that it felt it had been working collaboratively on multiple levels and multiple aspects. In contrast, councils told the Committee that they felt there was a level of mistrust and, that seven years into the system, this needed to change.

78. Departmental witnesses frequently referred to the work of the Planning Forum, however there was little evidence presented of tangible outcomes achieved. The Committee was surprised to learn that only three councils were represented on the

Forum, and that they were only invited to participate a year after it was established. The Committee is also concerned that the Department believes they have already brought everyone involved in the system together despite there being no representation from many of those who are essential to the system - councillors, developers or local communities. This is not an inclusive, joined-up approach to service improvement and must improve.

79. The Committee was disappointed to learn that one of the poorest performing statutory consultees, DfI Rivers, is part of the Department for Infrastructure. Such a failure within the Departmental boundary gives the Committee reason to question whether the Department fully grasps the consequences of its own actions or indeed the importance of the planning system. More generally, the Committee is concerned that, despite what it was told by the Department about the significant work ongoing with statutory consultees, there is no improvement in performance. The existence of a silo culture amongst consultees is also a significant concern, particularly the evidence that some consultees are protecting their own organisation's performance to the detriment of the overall system. This is not acceptable and urgent remedial action must be taken.

80. Within both statutory consultees and local government, we have also seen silo thinking predominate. The Committee has heard that some consultees have sought to protect their own performance, at the expense of the performance of the system as a whole. Likewise, the Committee remains highly concerned at one council implementing its own IT system and the consequences this will have for the rest of the planning system in Northern Ireland.

81. The consequences of silo working were laid bare in the evidence provided to the Committee. Professional planners were spending much of their time dealing with enquiries and chasing responses to applications that should have been progressed. Unbelievably, the Committee heard evidence that this was likely to represent much more than 40 per cent of planners' time. This is bad for the users of the system, bad for those employed by the system and bad for Northern Ireland. It must improve.

82. The Committee has also been left with the belief that not only is there a silo-mentality, but a strong sense of "us" and "them". The Committee was particularly alarmed by the case of Knock Iveagh where the council and the Department are in the midst of a

legal dispute. This is a stark example of where two parts of the planning system are at odds with each other rather than working in the interests of the system as a whole. This could and should have been avoided. The Committee is incredulous to learn that the costs of legal action to date, between two public sector bodies, have significantly exceeded what it may have cost to resolve the issue at the very outset.

83. The Committee believes that there is an urgent need for a cultural change in the way in which central and local government interact. The successful delivery of any service, but especially planning, will necessitate both the Department and councils collaborating as equal partners. More effort is needed from all those involved to work in a more productive way.

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.

Links to Appendices

Appendix 1: Printable version of Report

Download a printable version of this report [SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

Appendix 2: Minutes of Proceedings

View Minutes of Proceedings of Committee meetings related to the report
[SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

Appendix 3: Minutes of Evidence

View Minutes of Evidence from evidence sessions related to the report
[SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

Appendix 4: Correspondence

View Correspondence issued and received

Appendix 5: Other Documents relating to the report

View other documents in relation to the report [SELECT TEXT AND INSERT LINK]

Appendix 6: List of Witnesses that gave evidence to the Committee

- **Mrs Katrina Godfrey**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Mr Angus Kerr**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Ms Julie Thompson**, Department for Infrastructure
- **Ms Alison McCullagh**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland (SOLACE)
- **Ms Kate Bentley**, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Northern Ireland
- **Councillor Steven Corr**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
- **Councillor Robert Irvine**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Ms Karen Smyth**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- **Mr Kieran Donnelly**, Northern Ireland Audit Office
- **Mr Stuart Stevenson**, Department of Finance

- **Ms Nuala Crilly, The Gathering**
- **Mr Dean Blackwood, The Gathering**
- **Ms Anne Harper, The Gathering**
- **Mr George McLaughlin, The Gathering**

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PRESS RELEASE

23 March 2022

PAC 08/21/22

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2022

COMMITTEE SAYS PLANNING SYSTEM NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE

The Northern Ireland Assembly Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) has today published a report, entitled *Planning in Northern Ireland*. The report examines how the Department for Infrastructure (the Department) and local government has delivered planning decisions since 2015, when the two tier planning system was established.

Chairman of the Committee, William Humphrey MBE MLA said, **“We recognise the importance of a properly functioning planning system which should contribute towards a more socially, economically sustainable Northern Ireland. The Committee is therefore very concerned at the failure of the planning system to deliver.**

“The Committee was both alarmed and appalled at the performance of the planning system. Planning decisions are unacceptably slow; nearly one fifth of the most important planning applications are not processed within three years. Not only does this have an impact on applicants, it also risks investment in Northern Ireland.

“We also were shocked that seven years on, no council has been able to produce a local development plan. The Department underestimated the complexity of progressing Local Development Plans. These plans should make a real difference to local communities, but have been hampered by a lack of key skills and resources within councils, compounded by a series of unnecessary “checks and balances” by the Department.

The report also highlighted concerns about transparency around planning decisions. Not only is this against best practice, it can also contribute to public mistrust in any decisions taken.

Mr Humphrey said: **“The basis for making key decisions was often absent and this is extremely worrying. There needs to be urgent remedial action to ensure better transparency around decision making and how councils exercise enforcement powers given the considerable variation across councils.**

“What is even more troubling is that there appears to be a lack of accountability for poor performance. This is a serious concern and demands immediate change. We have made it clear that the Department must provide the Committee with a radical action plan. We also expect the Department to provide the successor Committee with an update on improvements made in six months.

Mr Humphrey said: **“The planning system is one of the worst examples of silo-working within the public sector that we have encountered. There is an urgent need for a radical cultural change in the way in which central and local government interact. If the planning service is to improve, the Department and councils must start to collaborate as equal partners. This will require a concerted effort from all those involved to work in a more productive way.**

“The planning system in Northern Ireland is clearly not working. We are calling for a fundamental review, led by someone independent from the Department, to identify the long-term, strategic changes needed to make the planning system fit for purpose”.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The full Report, *Planning in Northern Ireland*, can be found on the Assembly website:

The Committee's recommendations from the Report are:

Recommendation 1

The planning system should act as key economic driver for Northern Ireland and has a crucial role in leveraging investment, protecting the environment and delivering places that people want to live and work in. However, on the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee, it is clear that the system is failing on delivering its key functions - major applications take years to decide, plan-making is incredibly slow, and enforcement is inconsistent. Given such obvious issues, the Committee believes that a significant programme of reform is needed.

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.

Recommendation 2

Whilst there are widespread, systemic issues affecting planning in Northern Ireland, the Committee could not understand the reluctance, amongst many of those it heard evidence from, to initiate changes that could improve performance within a shorter timeframe. This inaction is stifling the system and cannot be allowed to continue.

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.

Recommendation 3

In the course of its inquiry, it became clear to the Committee that the planning system lacks robust accountability arrangements. Missed targets and poor performance have become accepted as the norm. The Committee was alarmed by the Department's misunderstanding of accountability. Publishing data is not accountability. The Committee is also concerned that the Department has been more focussed on talking about performance than implementing the significant actions that are so clearly needed.

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.

Recommendation 4

Northern Ireland's planning system is intended to be a plan led system. Despite this, the production of Local Development Plans (LDPs) has been both slow and expensive. Whilst there was an initial expectation that plans would be completed

within three and a half years, seven years following the transfer of planning powers to local government no council has an approved LDP.

Current projections mean that it will be 13 years into the 15-year cycle before all councils have a completed plan in place. Without these, many councils are relying on outdated area plans to guide decisions, which in some cases are over 30 years old.

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.

Recommendation 5

Core to much of the Committee's work has been the promotion of the highest ethical values in public services. During the inquiry into planning the Committee heard a number of concerns around record keeping and the transparency of decision making. Given planning decisions are often amongst the most contentious decisions that will be taken within the public sector, adherence to the highest ethical standards are essential. Monitoring the level of transparency will be key going forward to engender trust in the planning system.

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.

Recommendation 6

Confidence in the planning system is low. Members of the public feel excluded and often believe they have no choice but to launch legal proceedings, in the form of judicial reviews, to challenge decisions that impact their communities. This is expensive, time consuming and confrontational for all those involved. Greater engagement is needed.

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.

Recommendation 7

Planning must play an essential role in helping to address many of the issues being experienced with housing in Northern Ireland. In particular, the Committee is concerned by the evidence it has heard in relation to rural development. The level of variation in how this policy is being applied across Northern Ireland is of particular concern, along with what appears to be a disproportionate interest in this area from some planning committees.

The Committee is also concerned that work to clarify this policy had been commenced by the Department but was abandoned only two months after the Planning Advice Note was published. It is essential that this work be resurrected urgently, but accompanied with proper engagement between central and local government.

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.

Recommendation 8

The Department told the Committee that amongst its responsibilities within the two tier system in Northern Ireland was oversight. However, the Committee heard evidence that the Department was overwhelmingly focused on matters of process rather than on the strategic issues which require strong, decisive leadership. The Department told us it was challenging to identify when it was appropriate to intervene – the Committee believes the Department has got this balance wrong.

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.

Recommendation 9

The planning system should be key to providing places that people want to live and work in. Whilst timely decisions are essential, it is perhaps even more important that development that is approved is of high quality. Allowing poor quality applications into the system will only result in poor quality development. Despite this, the Committee heard that the system has been incredibly slow to implement relatively simple changes which could improve the quality of applications. This cannot be allowed to continue.

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.

Recommendation 10

Without any review of past decisions, it is hard for those who make decisions to properly understand how the outcomes of those decisions impact on the communities around them. A key means of improving the quality of future decisions must be to reflect on the consequences of planning decisions.

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.

Recommendation 11

If the planning system is to deliver its key functions, it must be properly resourced and financially sustainable. However, at local council level, the planning system has been running at an ever-increasing shortfall since the transfer of functions in 2015. The Committee believes the current funding model does not recognise the importance of the planning system, and needs to be revised. Current planning fees, set by the Department, do not reflect the needs of the system. If developers are willing to pay higher fees for a better service, then at least part of the solution to financial sustainability is obvious. The Committee cannot understand why this hasn't been progressed.

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.

Recommendation 12

Underpinning many of the issues that the Committee found hampering the planning system was a lack of joined-up working. The Committee has stressed the importance of joined-up working in many of its inquiries, but the planning system is amongst the starkest examples of the negative consequences when public bodies don't work together.

Changing this will require leadership – but will also require both central and local government to step up and work together in the interests of the planning system and its users rather than individual bodies. This will require a cultural change, but is essential to allow a more responsive, effective planning system.

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.

For media enquiries, please contact:

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Office of the Chief Executive



Belfast City Council

Your reference

Our reference JW/lc

Date April 2022

William Humphrey MLA
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Northern Ireland Assembly
By email: Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

Dear Mr Humphrey

NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee Report on Planning in NI

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

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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 focus 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: 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 10 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.

I am 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 11 councils. As sovereign local authorities, the other 10 councils may also wish to make separate representations to the Committee.

Please let me know should the Committee require any further information, insight or assistance.

Yours sincerely

John Walsh
Chief Executive

Copied to: SOLACE NI
Other 10 councils in NI
Department for Infrastructure



Subject:	Asset Management i) Shankill Shared Women's Centre - Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority ii) Land at Grampian Avenue Children's Playpark iii) 2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use iv) 2 Royal Avenue – Lease for bins stores and an electricity cabinet. v) Ballysillan Playing Fields - Deed of Partial Surrender of land leased to Iceland Foods Limited vi) Site 10 Union Street – Renewal of a short-term licence for a bin store to Sunflower Belfast Limited.
Date:	15th April 2022
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison, Estates Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition and estates matters.

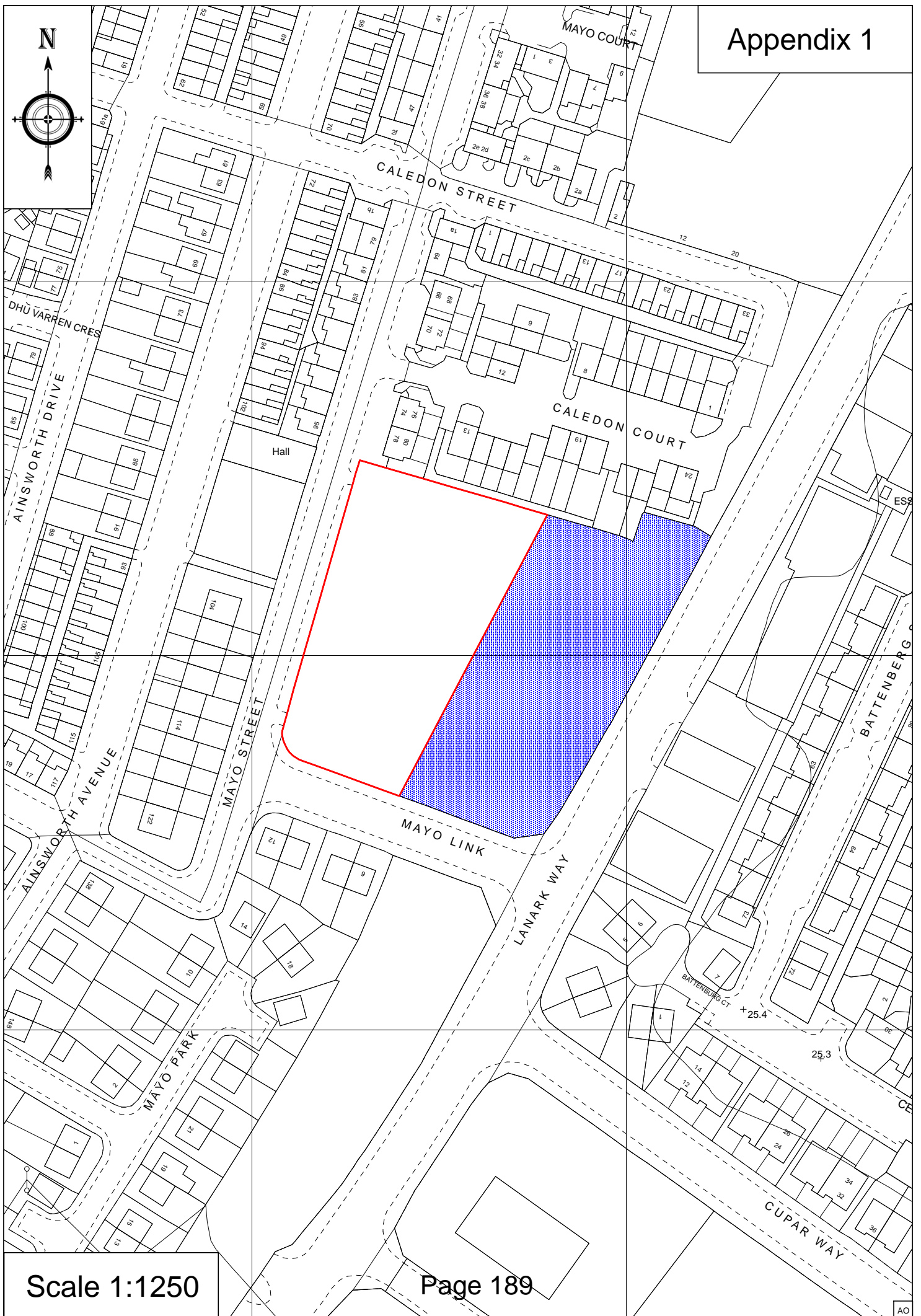
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Shankill Shared Women's Centre- Permission to Enter Agreement - approve the completion of a Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority to complete the boundary realignment and subsequent construction works. ii) Land at Grampian Avenue Playground - note the updates on the land acquisitions previously agreed by the SP&R Committee for the playground. iii) 2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use- approve retrospectively an Addendum to the existing Contract with Small World Music Limited, extending their services to 19 April 2022. iv) 2 Royal Avenue – Lease for bins stores and electricity cabinet - approve entering into a Lease with DfC to regularise the arrangement for bins stores and an electricity cabinet which encroach onto Council owned lands at 2 Royal Avenue. v) Ballysillan Playing Fields - Deed of Partial Surrender of Land - approve the surrender of a 1.56-acre plot of land which is currently part of lands leased to Iceland Foods Limited to facilitate the redevelopment of the Playing Fields. vi) Site 10, Union Street – Renewal of a short- term Licence for a bin store - approve 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 9 months from 4 May 2022.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>i) Shankill Shared Women's Centre - Permission to Enter Agreement with the Education Authority</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Shankill Shared Women's Centre (SSWC) is a £5.6 million purpose-built shared space for women and their families that will open in 2023. The new facility will be on Lanark Way adjacent to Edenderry Nursery School which is owned by the Education Authority (EA). See map at Appendix 1 showing the SSWC lands outlined red and EA lands highlighted blue. The Council's design team have noted that the boundary fence between the SSWC lands and EA lands needs re-aligned to facilitate adequate fire escape from the new building as per the approved planning drawings. The boundary realignment works will be completed by the Council's Contractor in April 2022 with the construction works on the SSWC building to commence in May 2022 and run until end August 2023. The EA have agreed to provide the Council with a Permission to Enter agreement to complete the boundary re-alignment and subsequent construction works. The Permission to Enter Agreement shall be in place for the boundary works in April 2022 and for the duration of the contract to build the SSWC project.</p>

	<p><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></p> <p>The Council's Contractor will realign the boundary fence and complete the subsequent construction works under the agreed contract.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
3.2	<p>ii) Land at Grampian Avenue Playground</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>In June 2018, the SP and R Committee approved the acquisition of two plots of land from DFI and Radius Housing Association (shown on Appendix 2) within the Grampian Avenue playground. Following further due diligence and engagement with both landowners Committee is asked to note that DFI has agreed to grant a sublease for 99 years for their lands (as shown outlined in blue) and Radius Housing Association have agreed to assign the residue of their long leasehold interests land (shown in green at Appendix 2) to the Council. Radius Housing are providing qualified possessory title to the lands coloured yellow as shown in Appendix 2. Members are asked to note these updates.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Acquisition of the leasehold interests by the Council will be subject to two payments of £1500. Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit will complete the acquisitions.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
3.3	<p>iii) 2 Royal Avenue – Extension of the Meanwhile Use</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Following the acquisition of 2 Royal Avenue, Council appointed Small World Music Limited to facilitate a Meanwhile Use. The existing Contract expired on 31 March 2022 however it provided for an option to extend subject to Committee approval. A short-term extension of the Contract from 1 April to 19 April 2022 is proposed. Legal Services prepared an Addendum to the Contract extending the Contract period. All other provisions of the Contract remain unchanged. Retrospective Committee consent is being sought to ensure the building remains open and there are activities during the Easter period.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Small World Music Limited fee of £4,000+vat per month shall continue to be paid.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>

3.4	<p>iv) 2 Royal Avenue – Lease for Bins stores and an Electricity Cabinet</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>DfC owned bin stores and an electricity cabinet located within Bank Square encroach onto the lands now owned by the Council at 2 Royal Avenue (see Appendix 3). No formal arrangement was in place with the previous owner of 2 Royal Avenue; therefore, a Lease is required to regularise the situation. The proposed Lease would be for a term of 25 years and would provide for a mutual 6-month break option at any time throughout the term. DfC would retain responsibility for repairs and maintenance and will continue to sublet the bins stores.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Officer time from Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
3.5	<p>v) Ballysillan Playing Fields– Deed of Partial Surrender of land leased to Iceland Foods Limited</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>In May 2001, the Council leased a 5.37-acre site in Ballysillan Playing Fields to Iceland Foods PLC (whose successor in title is Iceland Foods Ltd) for the construction of an Iceland retail store, two shop units and associated car parking (as shown outlined in red at Appendix 4). The site was fully developed with the exception of a plot adjoining the Iceland car park which was reserved for future expansion. A planning application was submitted in January 2022 for a major redevelopment of the Playing Fields as part of a £ 5.3m project jointly funded by Urban Villages, DfI and DfC designed to enhance the overall area by means of extensive landscaping with new facilities including new pitch, upgraded pavilion and new play area. To complete the scheme and provide an improved access from the Ballysillan Road, negotiations have taken place with Iceland Foods Limited to secure the surrender of the area they had retained for future expansion. Iceland have agreed to surrender the lands shaded green as shown in Appendix 4 subject to a reduction in rent to £8,000 pa from the date of surrender to reflect the retained land. The surrendered lands will be restricted in use to provide public open space, parkland and recreational/sporting facilities in line with the project funding. Detailed terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and Legal Services.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Deed of Partial Surrender to be agreed by Legal Services and Estates with Iceland Foods Limited. Renegotiation of the rent in line with the surrender of land to facilitate the Playing Fields upgrade.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>

3.6	<p>vi) Site 10, Union Street – Renewal of a short- term Licence for a bin store to Sunflower Belfast Limited</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>On 1 October 2021 the Council acquired Site 10 at Royal Avenue/North Street/Union Street/Kent Street for the development of the Belfast Stories project. A small area of land on Site 10 (c4m x 5m) accessed off Union Street, is currently licensed to Sunflower Belfast Limited for use as an area for storing bottle bins. This area is required by Sunflower to enable them to free up space adjacent to the Sunflower Bar (located directly across Union Street), to provide a larger outdoor seating area during COVID restrictions. (See site map at Appendix 5 showing the property outlined in red). Sunflower Belfast Limited has requested a renewal of the Licence Agreement for a period of 9 months from 4 May 2022 at a nominal fee.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resources Implications</u></p> <p>The Licence Agreement to be prepared by Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Shankill Shared Women’s Centre - Map showing the SSWC lands and EA lands at Lanark Way</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Grampian Avenue playground - Site location map</p> <p>Appendix 3 – 2 Royal Avenue - Map showing location of DFC bins stores and electricity cabinet</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Ballysillan Playing Fields – Iceland Site Map</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Site 10 - Site Map Union Street showing proposed area of land required for the bin store.</p>

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Car
Park





GRAMPIAN AVENUE

UPPER NEWTOWN

Scale 1:500

Bloomfield
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Page 191

-  BCC Playground
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-  RadiusHousing
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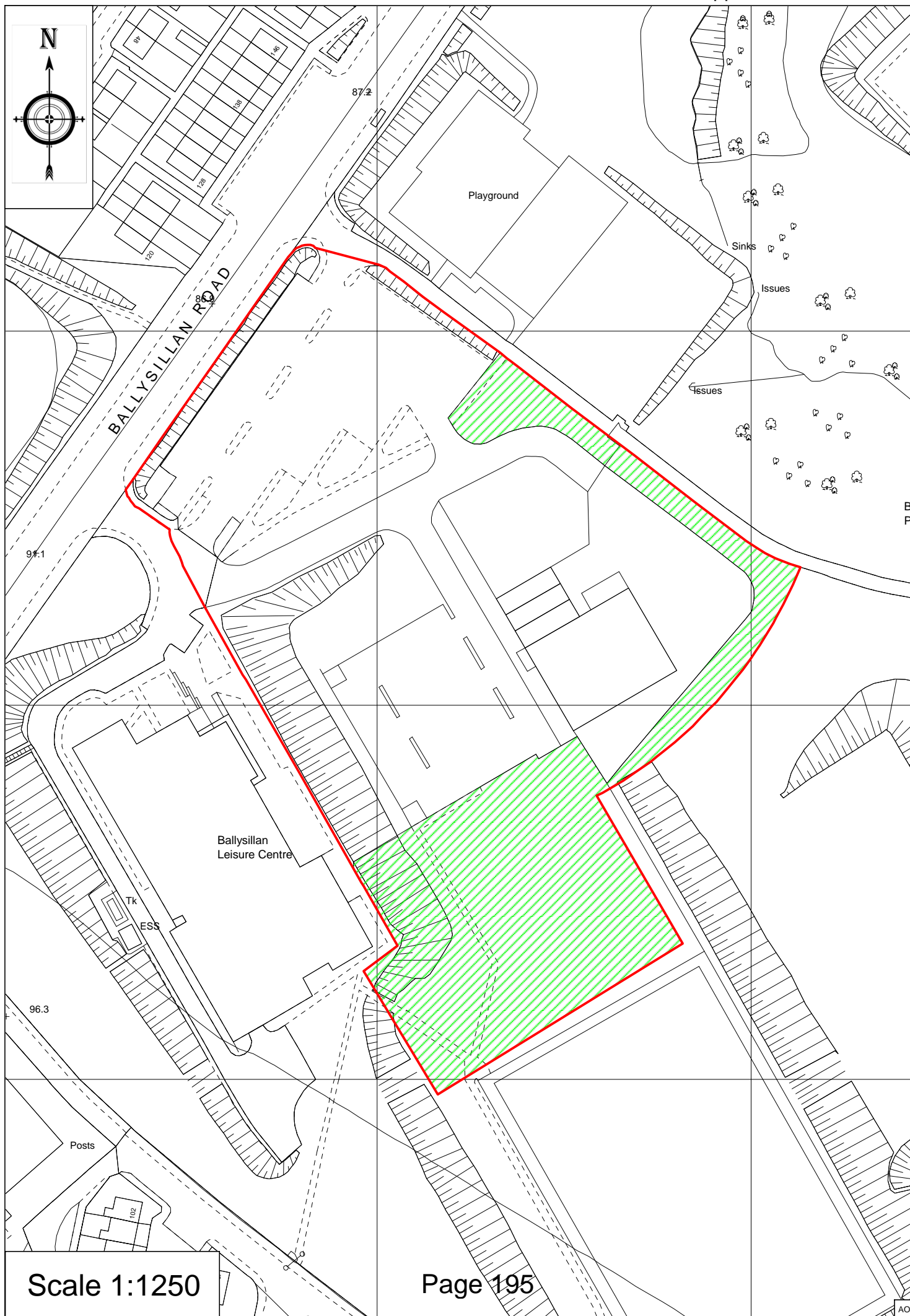
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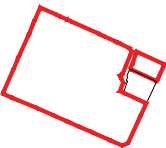
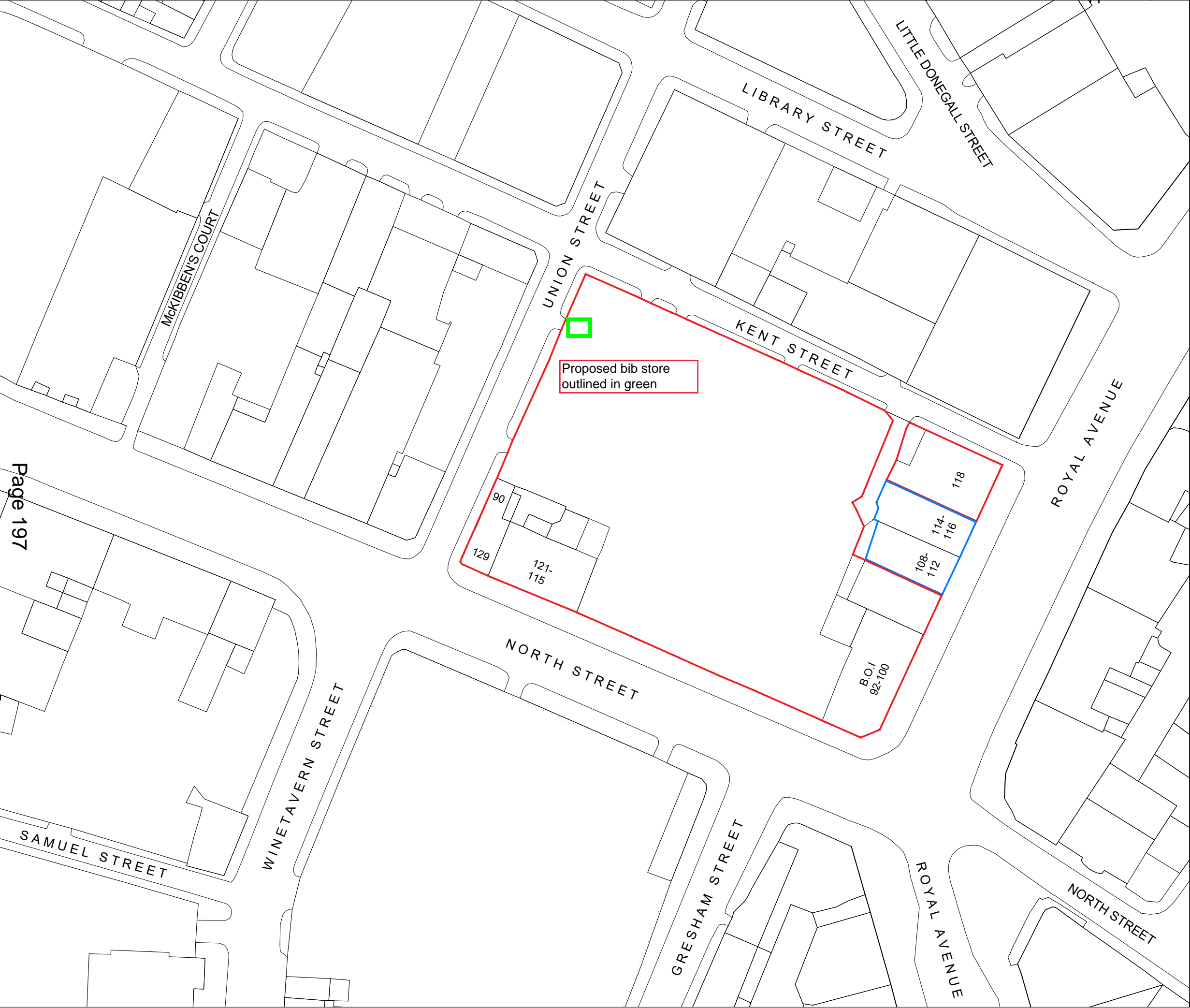
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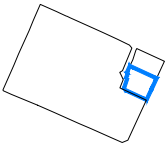
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LAND OWNERSHIP
BOUNDARY LINE



PROPERTIES NOT
OWNED

TOTAL AREA WITHIN LAND
OWNERSHIP BOUNDARY
(WITHIN RED LINE)

- 4,920 sqm
- 52,955 sqft
- 1.216 Acres

TOTAL BLOCK AREA

INCLUDING;

- Land within ownership boundary line (in red)
- Properties not owned (in blue)
- Communal Service Lane

- 5,293 sqm
- 56,970 sqft
- 1.464 Acres

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Subject:	Update on Area Working Groups
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Shauna Murtagh, Programme Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To seek Members' approval of the minutes of the most recent AWG meeting.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve and adopt the North Belfast AWG minutes of 30th March, as attached. • Physical Programme – agree the recommendations in respect of BIF projects and reallocations from the North AWG, as laid out in paragraph 3.2 below.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>KEY ISSUES</u>
3.1	<p>Area Working Group Minutes</p> <p>Members agreed, in June 2016, that the Area Working Group minutes would be taken into the</p>

	<p>SP and R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups.</p> <p>Members are asked to approve the most recent AWG minutes, as attached.</p>
3.2	<p>Project Updates</p> <p>North AWG – The Committee is asked to note the following project updates, as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 30th March:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIF34 Basement/Elim project – agree the new option which involves 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 – agree an additional £150,000 to the Midland Boxing Club project from the £600,000 reallocation from the Basement/Elim project - BIF20 Malgrove - agree 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 – note the movement to Stage 3 – Committed <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.3	<p>As above</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.4	<p>None</p>
4.0	<p>Document Attached</p>
	<p>Minutes of the meeting of the North Belfast Area Working Group</p>

North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 30th March, 2022

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McCullough (Chairperson);
Councillors Bradley, Cobain, Magee, Maskey, McCusker,
Murphy, O'Hara, and Pankhurst.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. N. Mulrine, Regeneration Project Officer;
Ms. E. McCullough, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager;
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd February, 2022 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Physical Programmes Update

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

"1. Introduction

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, LIF, BIF, SOF, the new Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), and the projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies.

On 23rd February 2022, Members of North AWG have agreed to hold a special meeting in relation to their BIF projects and potential reallocations.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the updates in respect of each BIF project as outlined in this report. In considering the detail in this report Members may wish to consider if they still wish support the current status of each project.

Members are asked to:

Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline:

- Note that final accounts have been confirmed, and;
- To consider the reallocation of up to £71,412 under the BIF Programme.

Basement Youth Club / Elim Church - £1.5m allocation from BIF:

- Confirm their ongoing in principle commitment, and;
- To agree the new option which involves 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.

Midland Boxing Club - £400,000 allocation from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates,
- Note that the procurement of a contractor is underway, and;
- If agreed to endorse officers to continue the discussions with other partners to bridge the shortfall of approximately £150,000

Malgrove - £500,000 from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates and funding deficit for the changing pavilion of approx. £450,000,
- Agree that planning is submitted for the whole sporting hub proposal
- Note that phasing of the project may be required as budget becomes available, and;
- If commitment is confirmed, then further recommend that officers continue to engage with DfC and other partners to bridge the funding gap

Marrowbone Millennium Park - £750,000 allocation from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment
- Note that procurement of contractor is underway, and;
- Agree to recommend that the project moves to *BIF- Stage 3 – Committed*.

Cultural Community Hub - £350,000 allocation from BIF:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment, and;
- Note that the due diligence process is underway.

3. Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline – final accounts

Members will recall that at their meeting of 25 November 2020, it was recommended that £250,000 of the anticipated underspend under the BIF Programme of £305,183 from Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline be reallocated to the Marrowbone Millennium Park Project. This was agreed at SP&R Committee on 18 December 2020. The final accounts for both Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline have now been processed and the total underspend across both projects is confirmed as £321,412 (£246,707 and £74,705 respectively) an increase of £16,229 on the anticipated underspend amount reported at that time. Of that total, £250,000 was allocated to the Marrowbone Millennium Park project, leaving a balance remaining of £71,412 available for reallocation.

For Grace Family Centre and Cancer Lifeline, Members are asked to:

- Note that final accounts have been confirmed, and
- To consider the reallocation of up to £71,412 under the BIF Programme.

4. Basement Youth Club / Elim Church (Old Grove)

Date approved:	April 2015	Funding allocation & stage	£1.5 million BIF- Stage 3
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The original proposal for this project was a £2m new build youth centre on the Old Grove Baths site. Following ongoing and in-depth discussions with the project partners for the scheme (Basement Youth Club and Elim Church Ireland) it was noted that this option would not get through the Council's due diligence processes due to ongoing sustainability issues. Given this in Spring 2021 officers presented a new option scaled back project involving the demolition and rebuild of an existing Elim Church asset at Gainsborough Drive. The demolition is required due to issues with asbestos related to the present property.

At present, the Department of Education have indicated support for the scheme with £500,000 of funding initially allocated and subject to ongoing discussions. The overall project costs are estimated at £1.38 million which would require £900,000 from BIF to deliver – based on the DE still contributing £500,000. The project is currently undergoing Due Diligence considerations by the Department of Education and the Departmental Solicitors Office. Council officers will continue to support the group through these processes and keep the Area Working Group updated in relation to progress.

For Basement Youth Club / Elim Church, Members are asked to:

- confirm their ongoing in-principle commitment, and;
- to agree the new option which involves a scaled back building with the demolition and rebuild of 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.

5. Midland Boxing Club

Date approved:	October 2020	Funding allocation & stage	£400,000 BIF - Stage 2
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The project aims to deliver an extended boxing facility at Cultra Street in the Tigers Bay area of North Belfast. Outside of boxing the Club also supports the delivery of youth outreach programmes in North Belfast as well as a range of programmes for older people. Planning Permission has been obtained in December 2021. The land transfer was approved by Council in February 2022. Officers in Legal Services are liaising with Northern Ireland Housing Executive to complete the acquisition of land for the extension. The pre-tender estimates show the project may require further funding (approx. £150,000) and project officers are working with group to address this, including approaching other funders. Some external funding has been secured for equipment, however a funding deficit remains. The tender package for main contractor was issued in March 2022 however a tender can only awarded if a full funding package is in place. Officers aim to bring back the project to Due Diligence in April 2022.

For Midland Boxing Club, Members are asked to:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates and cost deficit,
- Note that procurement of contractor is underway, and;
- If commitment is confirmed, then further recommend that officers continue discussions with other partners to bridge the shortfall (£150,000)

6. Malgrove

Date approved:	April 2015	Funding allocation & stage	£500,000 BIF- Stage 2
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The Malgrove (Malachians and Grove United FCs) BIF project is for a changing pavilion at the Shore Road Playing Fields with the preferred option being for a 4-team combined changing facility. The current approx. cost of the pavilion is £950,000 however like

any construction project this is subject to change. The wider ambition in terms of the overall site is the creation of a sporting hub and with this in mind the business case has been developed on the basis of a 4-team combined changing facility with 3G pitch and associated works for parking spaces. With the current £500,000 BIF funding, a significant funding deficit remains in relation to the changing pavilion. Avenues are being explored including with DfC to bridge the gap as well as looking at options for the wider sporting hub. The positioning of the pavilion and associated parking will be determined by the availability of land to accommodate the buildings access and parking. A positive response has been received from NIE regarding the availability of a portion of their land to accommodate an element of project car parking requirements. Officers are awaiting confirmation of the boundary which will inform the site design layout. The scheme will require a planning application and it is recommended that any planning application submitted should be for the wider sporting hub proposal including the changing facility with 3G pitch and associated works for parking spaces. This could then allow the ability for the project to be delivered in phases subject to funding becoming available. At present, the project cannot progress until there is confirmation of scope, agreement on the land available and the full funding package is secured or committed to the project.

For Malgrove, Members are asked to:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment,
- Note updated cost estimates and funding deficit for the changing pavilion of approx. £450,000,
- Agree that planning is submitted for the whole sporting hub proposal,
- Note that phasing of the project may be required as budget becomes available, and;
- If commitment is confirmed, then further recommend that officers continue to engage with DfC and other partners to bridge the funding gap.

6. Marrowbone Millennium Park

Date approved:	June 2018	Funding allocation & stage	£750,000 BIF- Stage 2
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The proposed redevelopment of Marrowbone Millennium Park was approved in June 2018 and project is at BIF Stage 2– Uncommitted. The project involves a range of capital improvement works to the park. This is a partnership project with Urban Villages and DfC. The UV Letter of Offer was agreed in November 2021 and governance structures are in place. The lease agreement between NIHE and the Council is also progressing. Planning permission has been secured. The procurement of main contractor is underway with

appointment anticipated in the coming weeks. An update on the procurement will be brought to the next meeting of the North AWG.

For Marrowbone Millennium Park, Members are asked to:

- Note that procurement of contractor is underway, and;
- Agree to move the project to *BIF Stage 3 – Committed*.

7. Cultural Community Hub

Date approved:	February 2019	Funding allocation & stage	£350,000 BIF- Stage 2
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The project involves developing a new cultural hub community facility at Crumlin Road. It will comprise of a 130sqm permanent brick facility on derelict Orange Lodge owned site. Project feasibility and business plan had been completed, and initial project cost estimates is within budget. As Upper Crumlin Road Cultural Association is a newly constituted group, it was proposed that the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast will be project guarantor. Legal Services is currently reviewing documents and the aim is to bring project to Due Diligence in April 2022.

For Cultural Community Hub, Members are asked to:

- Confirm ongoing in principle commitment, and;
- Note that the due diligence process is underway.”

The Members noted the update provided and, in respect of the Basement /Elim project:

- agreed to progress the with the scaled back option as presented.
- agreed , out of the £600,000 approved BIF budget available for reallocation from the scaled back Basement/Elim Church project, £450,000 be allocated to Malgrove and £150,000 be reallocated to Midland Boxing Club to enable both projects to be completed; and
- agreed that the Marrowbone project be moved to Stage 3- Committed and that planning for the wider sporting hub proposal be submitted for Malgrove.

The Working Group thanked the Director of Physical Programmes and her team for the outstanding work they had done for North Belfast through the Area Working Group.

Chairperson



Subject:	Update on Contracts
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek Committee approval for tenders and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000; and • ask the Committee to note retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs)
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1) • approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2) • note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3)

3.0	Main Report
	<u>Competitive Tenders</u>
3.1	Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender
3.2	Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
	<u>Single Tender Actions (STAs)</u>
3.4	<p>The following STAs are being submitted for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract for £50,000 (funded), for up to 6 months, awarded to Hays Recruitment for for 1 x Environmental Health Officer required for 24hr shift rota cover for essential service delivery within the Port Health Service. There is a legal requirement for the Council to fulfil responsibilities under EU and UK food import control legislation in respect of NI Protocol. Staffing costs for this function are currently fully funded by Food Standards Agency. External recruitment has been unsuccessful and the existing agency contractor, Matrix SCM, is unable to fulfil the requirement.
3.5	<p>The following retrospective STAs were awarded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract for £57,000 (funded), for up to 3 months, awarded to Score Draw Music Ltd for 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. Project was issued as a quotation but with allocation of additional funding from ACNI and Tourism Culture and Arts means spend now exceeds £30k. Contract for £110,000, for up to 7 months, awarded to Community Foundation NI, for the requirement of a supplier to develop and deliver a Queens Jubilee fund to support constituted charitable organisations within the BCC local government boundary. There is currently no capacity within the organisation to deliver an additional funding

	<p>programme. CMT have agreed to engage with a suitable qualified organisation to deliver this fund on BCCs behalf. Due to the tight turnaround for this programme, CFNI have been identified as the only suitable company who can deliver this work within the short timeframe available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract for £60,000 (funded), for up to 2 months, awarded to Belfast International Arts Festival to deliver a largescale outdoor event at Titanic Slipways called Cristal Palace - 2 Royal Ave. Belfast International Arts Festival are named in the SLA with Tourism NI and the commission will be fully covered by funding.
	Financial and Resource Implications
3.6	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or Departmental budgets
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	None
4.0	Document Attached
	Appendix 1 Table 1 - Competitive Tenders Table 2 - Single Tender Actions Table 3 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

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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 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

Appendix 1

				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.

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

Appendix 1

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
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Subject:	Race Champion and Race Action Plan
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Tully Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Head of HR

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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 Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Canavan, 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	<p>In addition, at the Council meeting on 4th April 2022, the following notice of motion was proposed by Cllr Kyle and seconded by Cllr McMullan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>The Committee is asked to agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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	<p>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.</p>
3.3	<p>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.</p>
3.4	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<p>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.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Business in the Community's Race at Work Charter</u></p> <p>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:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>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.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

Minutes of Meeting of Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

8th April 2022

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Billy Hutchinson

Councillor Cllr Emmet McDonagh-Brown (*for Councillor Nuala McAlister*)

Alderman Brian Kingston

Councillor Ryan Murphy (*for Councillor Ciaran Beattie*)

Alderman Jim Rodgers (*for Alderman Sonia Copeland*)

Councillor Áine Groogan

Councillor Mal O'Hara

Councillor Brian Heading (*for Councillor Donal Lyons*)

Apologies: Councillor Ciaran Beattie, Councillor Nuala McAlister, Councillor Donal Lyons, Councillor Fiona Ferguson and Alderman Sonia Copeland.

Officers:

John Walsh, Chief Executive

Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources

Christine Sheridan, Head of Human Resources (for Item 1)

Joanne Delaney, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator (secretariat)

1. Covid Update

The Head of HR provided an update on the number of staff who are reporting as Covid positive and unable to work and advised that services continue to monitor impacts on service delivery reallocating staff where required. She advised that this has resulted in minimal impact on delivery of critical services. Members noted that the Workforce Testing programme, through which council access supplies of Lateral Flow Tests will cease with effect from 22 April 2022, following this staff with symptoms will need to request home tests in order to end self-isolation.

The Head of HR also provided an update on the approach for organisational recovery and outlined the proposals for a phased return to the office for those staff still working from home. She stressed that social distancing requirements and other mitigations are still impacting full recovery of front-line service delivery. Regular meetings continue with the management and trade union working group and the recovery of customer related services will be prioritised in

the first instance. A report will be presented to April SP&R Committee with further detail on the approach outlined.

2. Audit and Risk Panel Attendance

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources highlighted to Members that, at its meeting in March, the Audit and Risk Panel (A&RP) approved the statement of purpose and terms of reference of the A&RP and the Audit Assurance Board along with the indicative programme of business for 2022. He advised that as part of this item, the Panel discussed attendance of Members at the meetings, and it was agreed to highlight to Party Group Leaders the importance for each Party's representative to attend these on a consistent basis. In relation to some queries raised by Members, the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance and Resources advised that whilst nominees can attend, members of the A&RP require specific training. Members to follow up with their Party representatives in advance of the next meeting in June.

3. Ukraine Evacuee Support Scheme

The Chief Executive provided an update for Members on the Ukraine evacuee support scheme in Northern Ireland. He advised that work is ongoing with the Executive Office who are leading on the planning and preparation with Local Government. The Chief Executive outlined for Members the proposed approach for community advice centres and detailed the plans for the Belfast Community Advice Centre including the location, proposed opening date, and the support services that will be represented at the centre. In relation to some queries raised by Members in relation to translation services and a designated council point of contact for Members it was agreed that a point of contact would be circulated imminently. Members will be kept informed as the plans progress.

4. Planning Update

The Chief Executive updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in April. In relation to the Local Development Plan, he advised that officers continue to engage with DfI and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) in order to address ongoing concerns.

Members noted that the NI Assembly, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published a report and recommendations in relation to Planning in Northern Ireland in March 2022. An overview of this report and the recommended response from Council will be presented to April SP&R Committee.

5. AOB

Official visit of Martin Walsh, Secretary of Labour for the US Administration

The Chief Executive highlighted an upcoming official visit of Martin Walsh, Secretary of Labour for the US Administration in May. He outlined the requests sought from the Council including a request to address a full Council meeting. It was noted that a report outlining the specific requests sought would be submitted to April SP&R Committee for Members consideration.

Levelling up Fund Round 2

The Chief Executive outlined the timeframes for Round 2 of the UK Levelling Up Fund, a capital fund announced as part of the UK Government's agenda to invest in local infrastructure and uplift communities and local areas that have fallen behind. He briefed Members on potential bids for Round 2 and it was noted that a further update would be brought to the next Party Leaders Forum meeting.

arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Plant

The Chief Executive provided an update for Members following the recent planning permission decision made by the Infrastructure Minister. He advised that legal opinion is being sought and Party Group Leaders will be briefed once this process is complete.

Industrial Action

The Head of Human Resources provided an update on the recent industrial action by members of Unite trade union which took place week commencing Monday 21st March. Members noted that should further industrial action take place the processes followed during this action would be reinstated. Some Members advised that if any further action was to be taken that any Council meetings during that period be rescheduled. A report will be presented to SP&R committee in April to include a full update should the industrial action materialise.

Belfast Multi Cultural Association Building

The Chief Executive referred to a fire at the Belfast Multi Cultural Association Building which had occurred earlier that morning, the second in the space of 14 months. Whilst there were few details available at this stage, he advised that officers in City and Neighbourhood Services were working to provide support where possible.

Recruitment of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty

The Head of HR raised an issue in relation to the constitution for the selection panel for the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty. The details of the recruitment process to be circulated for Members to further consider.



Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall Grounds
Date:	15th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider two requests for the use of the City Hall grounds during the month of July.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. approve the use of the City Hall grounds on the dates outlined below; and 2. authorise the events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1.1	Members will be aware that requests for the use of City Hall are normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using

	<p>criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally however, it is necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the requests set out below falls into this category.</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>3.2 Several requests have been received for events over the summer period and this report seeks to update Members on the recovery of functions using the grounds, increasing demand for this venue space. Also due to the larger scale of activities involved it is deemed necessary to seek Committee approval.</p> <p><u>The Proposed Events</u></p> <p>3.3 The two proposed events would take place on the front lawns only. Areas such as the Titanic Garden and Cenotaph will remain open to the public and access to the City Hall itself will not be affected.</p> <p>3.3.1 Each event would be free to enter. In each case, the organisers would be providing all stewarding/marshalling staff and first aiders and would of course have to comply with the usual conditions including indemnities for damage and submission of a formal event-management plan.</p> <p><u>22nd July, 2022 - Belfast Pride Family Fun Day</u></p> <p>3.4 This event would take place on the front lawns would include a radio roadshow, various performers on a stage, food stalls and children's attractions. The event would last from 12 noon to 5.00 pm, although access would be required earlier and later in the day for set ups and strip downs. The event would be free and the organisers estimate that up to 5,000 people would be in attendance.</p> <p><u>30th July, 2022 Féile Rock's Pride Concert</u></p> <p>3.5 A request has been received from Feile and Phobail to use the front lawns for the 'City Hall Rocks Back' event, featuring local young and emerging bands from all sections of the community and the type of music played includes Rock, Blues, Heavy Metal, Rap Ska and Reggae. The organisers require use of the grounds between 8 am and 7.30 pm for stage and sound set ups and strip downs. The event itself takes place between 1 pm and 5 pm.</p>
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	<p>Depending on the weather the event could attract up 2,000 people. The profile of those attending includes family and followers of the bands, plus local and overseas visitors in the city for the day. plan etc. Previous events have taken place in the grounds without incident.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There would be no costs for the Council as the various organisers would bear any/all stewarding and equipment costs etc themselves. The utilities costs on the day are of a very minor nature and the normal event support in the form of electrical and water provision in the grounds will be provided.</p> <p>There are no concerns from an asset management point of view, although the organisers would be required to provide the usual insurances, indemnities and obligations.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality
Date:	8th April, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	This report, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function rooms received up to 1st April 2022 which appear to the Function Management Unit to comply with the criteria previously established by the Committee and are recommended for approval.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 1 April 2022 as set out in the attached appendix; and • review options for the future delivery of hospitality for functions and approve one recommendation.

3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	Members will be aware that the Committee, at its meeting on 6th January 2017, agreed to modify the criteria governing access to the City Hall function rooms for external organisations.
3.2	The Committee also agreed to the implementation of room-hire charges for some categories of function, and also revised the approach to the provision of civic hospitality for functions on foot of the agreed efficiency programme. Some further modifications to this approach were agreed by the Committee on 24th March and 23rd June 2017 and 23rd June and 25th October 2019.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.3	The existing revised criteria and scale of charges have been applied to the various requests received and the recommendations herein are offered to the Committee on this basis for approval.
3.4	The schedule attached covers 3 applications for functions, scheduled for 2022.
	<u>COVID implications</u>
3.5	In managing and delivering future functions, liaison with and guidance for organisers will be provided by officers to ensure compliance with any relevant social distancing guidelines at the time of their function. Committee approval for their function to take place in City Hall is recommended on the basis of their compliance to this caveat and what is permissible and feasible in City Hall function rooms.
	<u>Hospitality for Functions</u>
3.6	For many years, the Council has offered hospitality for certain functions as a welcome to the City Hall. In October 2019, the Committee agreed in lieu of hospitality to offer complimentary room hire and waive any room charges to all conference organisers supported by Visit Belfast wishing to host a dinner or reception in the City Hall. This policy has provided very successful and greatly assisted function organisers.
3.7	In recent years hospitality for functions has been discretionary and recommendation is sought from the Committee for future plans. Complimentary hospitality currently offers £500 towards delivery of tea/coffee/biscuits reception or wine/ soft drinks reception. This can cause a number of operational challenges:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for larger functions, the £500 contribution does not cover the catering for all guests at the drinks reception, meaning that organisers need to supplement this hospitality which causes confusion for the client and catering team. changes in resourcing in recent years means that staff who provided these receptions are no longer in the Council and the functions team has been honouring approved receptions using external catering companies.
3.8	<p>Options for the future functions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> to continue to offer hospitality/support for organisations celebrating a significant anniversary – 25th, 50th, 75th, 100th anniversaries. This support would be a monetary contribution of £500 (<i>guests up to 250</i>) or £750 (<i>guests 250 up to 500</i>) provided to the organiser to assist in the delivery of their celebratory function in City Hall. This financial support would be acknowledged on function promotional material – menus, invitations. OR to honour existing hospitality approved and cease offering hospitality at future functions; however, the City Hall continue to offer complimentary room hire to charities, community and voluntary groups to welcome and support their function at City Hall. <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.9	<p>The implementation of charging for external functions has commenced, in line with the Committee's decisions in the matter. Hospitality for functions will be funded out of the existing civic events budget.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u></p> <p>There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.</p>
4.0	Document Attached
	Schedule of function requests received up to 1st April, 2022

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APRIL 2022 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

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 COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of each event.*

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