

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th February, 2022

REMOTE MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 12th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McMullan declared an interest in respect of item 5(a) on the agenda, under the heading 'External Market Application - Banana Block', in that he was on the Eastside Partnership Board.

Restricted Items

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following five items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

**Continental Market -
Proposed Procurement Approach**

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee of the contract status of the Continental Market and the intention to issue a new procurement exercise in the coming months and gave the Members an overview of the impact the 2021 Christmas Market had on the city.

The Committee:

- Noted the contract status of the Continental Market and the intention to issue a new procurement exercise in the March 2022, subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- Noted the early feedback on the 2021 market and performance in previous years; and
- Noted the emerging issues for consideration as part of the upcoming procurement exercise and agreed with the proposals included in the report.

A City Imagining Investment Programme Update

The Director of Economic Development and the Culture and Tourism Senior Manager provided the Committee with an update on the outcome of the most recent two-year cultural multi-annual grants funding process.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and agreed to the recommendations for cultural multi-annual grants 2022-2024 and extension of Pathfinder grants; and
- agreed to operate and exercise Delegated Authority for small grants including Arts and Heritage Project Funding and Community Festivals Fund 2022/23.

Matters referred back from Council

**Notice of Motion - Free Public Transport for
Young People - Responses**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reported that correspondence had been received from the Minister for Infrastructure and Translink in response to a Motion which had been passed by Council at its meeting on 10th January, which requested the implementation of a pilot scheme of free public transport for young people in Belfast.

The Committee:

- noted the correspondence as set out in the report; and

- agreed to write to the Finance Minister, with reference to the Council's ambition for a greater allocation of funding towards public transport infrastructure.

Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy referred to the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) which had been produced by Belfast City Council in 2015 and had, subsequently, been adopted by the Department for Communities and represented the agreed regeneration policy for the city centre and outlined the aspirations for continued growth and regeneration.

He informed the Committee that the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker provided a snapshot of regeneration activity during 2021 and provided the Members with a presentation which outlined progress linked to each of the undernoted eight core policies of BCCRIS:

- Increase the residential population;
- Increase the employment population;
- Manage the rental offer;
- Maximise the tourism opportunity;
- Create a regional learning and innovation centre;
- Create a green centre, accessible to cyclists and walkers;
- Connect the surrounding city; and
- Enhance shared space and social impact.

The Committee noted that a further comprehensive summary report on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy would be brought back to the Committee, which would provide a detailed update on the various thematic areas, projects and Special Action Areas as identified within BCCRIS.

All Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation Process

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reported that the Infrastructure Minister, Nichola Mallon, and the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan T.D., had announced the launch of an all-island Strategic Rail Review in April 2021 and that a consultation paper had been subsequently published in November, which aimed to consider how the rail network on the island of Ireland could improve sustainable connectivity between major cities, enhance regional accessibility and support balanced regional development.

She pointed out that the New Decade New Approach Deal, which had been published in 2020, to restore the power-sharing Executive included a commitment to achieve greater connectivity on the island of Ireland, by road, rail and air, and that officers had, through the Department for Infrastructure and the initial consultancy team, provided the outworkings from the pre-feasibility stage into the Strategic Rail Review and would continue to engage through these forums and report back to the Committee at the appropriate stages.

She referred the Members to the Council's consultation response to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review which invited respondents to rank a number of policy opportunities that a better connected and high-speed rail network would present for an island economy. She informed the Committee that the Council response ranked the policy opportunities in the following order:

1. Improve All-Island connectivity between major cities;
2. Foster economic activity;
3. Contribute to decarbonisation;
4. Encourage sustainable mobility;
5. Achieve economic and financial feasibility; and
6. Enhance regional and rural accessibility.

She stated that, in line with the timeframes of the consultation, the response had been submitted with a caveat that the response would remain subject to agreement by the Committee and subsequent ratification by full Council at its meeting in March.

The Committee:

- Approved the Council's consultation response submission to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review;
- Noted that the response had been submitted by the closing date of 21 January 2022, on the basis that it would remain subject to the approval of this Committee and subsequent Council ratification in March; and
- Noted that the expansion of rail halts along the Shore Road, previously agreed by Council in its response to the BRT Phase 2 - Draft Consultation, would be included in the final response.

DfC Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's response to the public consultation by the Department for Communities (DfC) in relation to the Draft Housing Supply Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note that DfC has published a consultation on the Draft Housing Supply Strategy with a closing date of 9th February 2022 for responses.
- Approve the draft response to the consultation for submission to DfC, noting that this has drawn upon the extensive Call for Evidence Council submission from July 2021 (as per Council ratification in September 2021), as well as comments from Members at the CG&R Committee Housing Led Regeneration Workshop on 26th January 2022. Given the deadline for submission the response will be submitted as draft pending Council ratification in March 2022.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Draft Housing Supply Strategy

Members will be aware that the Communities Minister announced in her statement to the Assembly on 3rd November 2020 that officials were to commence work on the development of a fundamental Housing Supply Strategy (HSS), as a key part of the housing programme to help meet Programme for Government commitments to reduce housing stress and increase housing supply.

3.2 In May 2021, the Minister launched a public Call for Evidence (CfE) to inform this new Housing Supply Strategy. Council submitted an extensive response to the Call for Evidence in July 2021. This response was brought via Party Group Leaders and CG&R Committee in August 2021 and the final response ratified by Council in September 2021.

3.3 Members will recall that the Department outlined the development of HSS would be delivered in six phases as follows:

Phase 1 - Pre-development work (completed)

Phase 2 - Call for Evidence and Research Review (completed)

Phase 3 - Engagement (completed)

Phase 4 - Data synthesis (completed)

Phase 5 - Triangulation of Evidence/Policy Options (completed)

Phase 6 - Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy

3.4 This current and final phase, phase 6 Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy, emphasises the central role of people, places, and communities in considering and delivering on housing needs and demands. The Department have advised that collaborative working across central and local government and with the private and voluntary and community sectors, as well as the lived experiences of a range of users, have been used to help shape solutions to help ensure the Strategy will make a difference to the

challenges facing the housing supply system. Responses to the questions within this consultation will be analysed, along with any other sources of evidence and information to help finalise the Housing Supply Strategy

- 3.5 The department published the consultation on the Draft HSS on 8th December 2021 with a closing date of 9th February 2022. The Department has highlighted that it welcomes and encourages responses from all interested parties, and they are keen to hear from a wide range of bodies, groups, and individuals from within the housing and related sectors as well as more generally across society.
- 3.6 The publication of this draft Strategy has been supported by a series of focused engagement events held throughout the duration of the consultation period, including public workshop sessions. This included a session held virtually on Friday 14th January 2022 attended by a number of Council Officers, as well as by representatives from other local Councils and community planners. Officers highlighted various issues which have also been reflected in the current draft response as appended. It is intended that the final Strategy will be published in March 2022.
- 3.7 The draft Housing Supply Strategy, informed by the Call for Evidence exercise in 2021 and other evidence, sets out a pathway and framework for action until 2037. DfC has indicated that this is the first step in a 15-year journey that will set a direction of travel to transform supply while recognising that the range of housing supply 'whole system challenges' identified require 'whole system solutions'. This approach recognises that housing is an integrated system, with what impacts on one sector often having a ripple effect across the whole housing market. The key components of the Strategy are:
- **Strategic Context** - where we are now in terms of housing supply, where we need to be and how we are going to get there. This covers the Whole System Approach, the Strategy vision and objectives and potential indicators that will be used to measure our progress.
 - **Creating Affordable Options** - how we will supply the right number and type of affordable homes in the right places to meet our housing needs and demands. This section addresses key issues including how we address our infrastructure constraints, optimise

funding opportunities and create the right policy and legislative framework to support housing supply.

- **Prevention and Intervention** - how we can prevent homelessness and reduce housing stress, as well as providing the right housing solutions and support for those most in need. This section focuses on providing more diverse housing types and alternative models of housing to meet different housing needs and recognising the importance of a holistic approach to housing.
- **Quality and Safety** - how we will improve the quality, efficiency, and design of homes, to ensure a high standard for everyone regardless of the type of home. Consideration is given to diverse range of areas, including building regulation, work to improve the private rented sector and protect our social housing.
- **Better Places** - how we will build and maintain thriving and inclusive communities and places with community wealth building at the heart, which prioritises a people-centred approach to rebuilding our local areas into places that support the wellbeing of those who live there. The section considers options around mixed tenure, place-shaping, and the role of Local Development Plans in achieving this.
- **Decarbonisation** – sets out how the construction of new housing and the retrofitting of existing homes will play a key role in meeting our carbon reduction targets. Also set out is how we will support people in delivering these ambitions and ensure a just transition for everyone.
- **Delivering the Strategy** – how we will deliver the Strategy over its lifetime, including a focus on doing things differently and the role of action plans in achieving our objectives.

3.8 The Consultation consists of 14 questions under the following themes:

- Strategic Framework
- Measurement
- Delivery and Oversight
- Action Planning
- Citizen Engagement
- Equality
- Rural
- General

3.9 Council's draft response highlights a number of key considerations relevant in developing and delivering the Housing Supply Strategy to ensure the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda are realised in relation to Housing Supply, to meet the demands of attracting 66,000 additional residents to the city. The draft response is attached and it worth highlighting a number of key points made in the response:

- **There are currently a number of policy, financial and structural challenges to delivery of placemaking housing regeneration schemes via public /private partnerships and this is significantly impacting on the ability to delivery of regenerative housing at scale. Council would propose that a Task Group be set up to undertake a sharp, short, and focused review of these challenges and the mechanisms to overcome. This is critical to understand and deliver on optimal ways of working and delivery vehicles that involve the public sector working with the private sector and funders to bring forward appropriate housing development opportunities in a more agile way thus ensuring the required processes, delivery vehicles, funding and supporting infrastructure are aligned to deliver agreed outcomes to provide for appropriate housing development at scale whilst ensuring proper integrated placemaking.**
- **Homeless Demographic – According to NIHE figures at the end March 2021 at least 11,781 Belfast households were on the waiting list for a social home. At least 8,689 of them were living in housing stress, and of this group, at least 6,851, equivalent to 4.8% of Belfast households, were recognised as Full Duty Applicant homeless. It is therefore important to highlight that Housing supply is not just about mixed tenure (social, affordable, private) but the homeless demographic has an increasing level of unmet need also. There is a pressing need to articulate how this will be reflected within the Housing Supply Strategy.**
- **Infrastructure - There is a need to ensure that the resourcing deficit with required wastewater infrastructure including exploration of the potential for alternative funding models, is urgently addressed to ensure this does not prohibit housing development. The HSS should demonstrate that there is a clear route map to show how the housing growth ambitions can be facilitated in terms of all the requisite infrastructure requirements and particularly in relation to the wastewater infrastructure.**

- **Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission: ‘Reset for Growth’ Report** – highlighted a number of key points which are relevant to the development and delivery of the Housing Supply Strategy and of particular note are the strong recommendations around the need for structural models to support public-private collaboration and Housing Investment Funds, with relevant extracts as below:
 - ***Renewed Future City – Housing:*** There are a number of levers required to action the commitments of the Belfast Agenda at the pace and scale necessary to make an impact, which are not currently in place. A number of key gaps have been identified, principally in terms of the structural models required to support public-private collaboration and access to finance to bring forward developments. The Commission propose the establishment of a number of new institutions, namely Strategic Land Partnerships and Housing Investment Funds. The Commission feel that the scale of the task will require further intervention, particularly in stimulating private sector development, including affordable housing provision. For this reason, they suggest that the regional government and the Treasury should consider developing a Housing Investment Fund. This model has been successful in stimulating new housing construction at scale across a range of classes in many UK cities.
 - **Key Proposition:** Create sustainable, vibrant communities in the city centre, delivering 11,500 new homes by 2035. The Commission’s proposals to accelerate delivery include Council, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Department for Communities (DfC) establishing a delivery vehicle to utilise public sector land and undertake land assembly to facilitate new low carbon housing at scale across the city centre. (Note – as Members are aware a Housing Regeneration Group has now been set up under the Community Planning Partnership: City Development Board with BCC, NIHE, LPS and DfC, with a key focus of the group in identifying and utilising public sector lands). Vehicle should also develop housing mix, amenities, and neighbourhood development plan

for city core. Target: 11,500 new homes in 10 years. Create new financial instruments including Housing Investment Funds to address market challenges related to risk and yield.

- **Funding – Council advocate for consideration of how FTC and the Northern Ireland Investment Fund, Levelling Up Funds or other funding can be best utilised or refocused to support housing led regeneration priorities and unlock development. Of critical importance, particularly where there are viability issues and to underpin proper placemaking, there is a need for funding to facilitate enabling infrastructure for housing development. Specific funding for this should be prioritised in order to bring forward housing led regeneration schemes at scale.**
- **Collaboration – There is a need to ensure commitment to a collaborative public - private sector approach to unlocking key challenges with identified major city housing led regeneration schemes, recognising that these will not only contribute to housing supply but can act as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth. Council would advocate for optimal stakeholder/delivery vehicles for progression. This includes the need for the Department to continue collaboratively working with the Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Associations, and the private sector to bring forward mixed tenure residential development across the city, and particular exemplar schemes within the city centre, including the strategic use of public sector lands and addressing current policies which inhibit Housing Associations to maximise housing led regeneration delivery.**
- **Planning Policy –the submission does question the credibility of the HGIs and the proposed regional housing target. Although the Strategy refers to the Review of the Planning Act and reform in planning, which are undoubtedly important to housing delivery, the evidence doesn't seem to support this overly simplistic assertion given the degree of extant permissions that exist as illustrated in the housing monitor annually.**
- **Current Policy and Legislation – in relation to ensuring the appropriate policy frameworks are in place to accelerate housing supply, it is understood**

that there are issues with the current Housing Association Guidelines, which strongly need addressed. Our current understanding would suggest that the following issues need to be addressed:

- **Land:** These require a housing association to have acquired land ownership prior to award/payment of grant assistance (land purchase, construction). However, where the land is currently in public ownership then there is scope, utilising the Development Brief process, for reflecting this public ownership of land as distinct from privately owned thereby potentially negating the need for the housing association to initially acquire a site. This ties directly into when a housing association would be expected to then pay to acquire publicly owned land and to explore potential for deferred terminal payment or equity ground rent payment approaches which will also assist with de-risking development.
- **Delivery of private sector tenure as part of a mixed tenure development is also currently impeded by Article 15 of the Housing Order with limitation on delivery of private housing by housing associations to the existing co-ownership model only (i.e., no private sales or rentals).** With the desire for city centre development to be delivered across all three housing tenures there is an urgent need to address this policy issue if this objective is to be advanced.
- **Barriers:** BCC have commented through the Call for Evidence response that the 3 main barriers to delivery of the Housing Supply are Funding, Delivery Vehicles & Land. Delivery of joined up policies and having supported and properly joined up infrastructure, with all 3 having to be overcome to support the development and growth ambitions of the Belfast Agenda, will be required.
- **Current lack of a policy on affordable housing, aligned to the revised definition of affordable housing, represents a risk to housing associations developing a business case in absence of affordable housing products.**
- **Whilst not policy per se – lack of a city centre waiting list impacts on clarity for housing associations on latent demand.**

- Rent Levels – welcome clarity on whether the housing supply strategy will cover rent levels and controls, however mindful that this may be picked up in other legislation.
 - **A Bolder Vision – which has ‘Promote City Centre Living’ as one of its 4 key moves aimed at encouraging city centre living by ensuring the enabling infrastructure is in place to facilitate city centre living with place making at its heart. It highlights the importance of providing greater quality, choice and affordability of accommodation and of critical importance is establishing a city-wide network of people friendly routes and city parks to create and underpin a liveable city centre. Council believes that the delivery of A Bolder Vision priorities via the joint BCC/DfI/DfC approach will be critical to the successful delivery of city centre living. From a Belfast perspective therefore, Council would highlight that the future delivery of A Bolder Vision is intrinsically linked to the HSS and should be embedded within Central Government /Executive priorities.**
 - **High Street Task Force – city centre living is critical to the reimagining and future sustainability of the high street / city centre and should be central to the High Street Task Force recommendations and embedded within Executive funding priorities. Increased City Centre Living is also a key area within the Council’s Future City Centre Programme which is charting the way forward for the diversification and sustainability of city centre uses. The Future City Programme is a multi-faceted programme that seeks to bring together a number of strategic initiatives and projects within one overall programme approach to address the issues impacting upon the city centre. It includes projects and interventions across various pillars of work centred on regeneration and connectivity, increased city centre living, investment, inclusive economic and cultural growth.**
- 3.10 Responses have been coordinated from across Council and draw on the Call for Evidence submission from July 2021, which was ratified by Council in September 2021, as well as comments from Members following the Housing Led Regeneration Workshop on 26 January 2022.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.

**3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.”

Councillor Ferguson indicated that, although she would not dissent from the recommendations within the report, to allow submission of the response in accordance with the timelines of the consultation, she intended to make representation around additional issues in relation to addressing waiting lists and public housing on public lands.

The Committee:

- Noted that DfC had published a consultation on the Draft Housing Supply Strategy, with a closing date of 9th February 2022 for responses;
- Approved the draft response to the consultation for submission to DfC, noting that it had drawn upon the extensive Call for Evidence Council submission from July 2021 (as per Council ratification in September 2021), as well as comments from Members at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Housing Led Regeneration Workshop on 26th January 2022; and
- Noted that, given the deadline for submission, the response would be submitted in draft, pending Council ratification in March 2022.

Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations: Update

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the work that was being carried out to support local commercial districts through the Supporting Vibrant Businesses Destinations Programme.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in October 2021, the Members had been advised that, following discussion with the Department for Communities, an opportunity had been identified to secure resources through the DfC Revitalisation Programme and that the Enterprise and Business Growth Team had subsequently secured funding of £475,000. He reported that the funding would be supplemented by a £30,000 contribution from Council resources for the delivery of advice and support to assist with the scheme and that the pilot initiative aimed to support up to ten business association to a maximum of £40,000 each for expenditure on a range of eligible activities.

He reported that the initiative would operate over a 21-month period and would have a two-stage application process and outlined the basic eligibility criteria to the Committee.

He informed the Committee that the Enterprise and Business Growth Team had been coordinating the programme of work in partnership with the City Regeneration and Development Team with input from officers across the Council, DfC and DfI.

He added that Communications and marketing activity had commenced to raise awareness of the scheme and that officers had been receiving expressions of interest and were engaging with applicants, offering guidance and advice, as required.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the work to support the delivery of area-based Vibrant Business Destinations;
- Noted that the pilot initiative was currently open to Expressions of Interest from local business/traders groups located outside the city centre and Business Improvement Districts; and
- Noted that this work intended to complement a wider programme of support and activity that was taking place within the city centre, including the targeted interventions to address vacancies and previous business support interventions through the Revitalisation Programme.

City Place-Making and DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Committee on the ongoing DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme including an Extension of Time to the Programme and the reallocation of underspends. To also update Members on upcoming Ministerial Advisory Group Design Review Workshops and the ‘*Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City*’ Seminar being organised by Healthy North Belfast

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee Members are asked to:

- **Note that an Extension of Time has been formally granted for the DfC Covid -19 Revitalisation Programme until September 2022.**

- Note the current level of underspend within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and reallocation of funding to the Church Lane & Linen Quarter schemes.
- Agree the reallocation of underspend from the Council funded (Non-Recurring money agreed at June 2021 SP&R) from the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme underspend to the previously agreed Linen Quarter Bid projects, with the remaining underspend to be allocated to the wider Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme.
- Agree that given timescales, and in line with the CG&R Committee approval in August 2021 that future underspends realised within the programme are utilised to meet additional costs on previously agreed and committed projects, that this Committee delegate authority to the Director of City Regeneration and Development to reallocate the remaining unallocated underspend and any further underspends to meet cost increases on previously agreed and committed projects and to report back to this Committee retrospectively.
- Note the proposed Ministerial Advisory Group Design Review Workshops and agree the attendance of the CG&R Chair and Deputy Chair or their nominated representatives.
- Note the upcoming '*Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City*' seminar which is being held on 9 February.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The CG&R Committee have received regular updates and provided approvals relating to the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, providing updates on the £4.039m capital programme including providing approvals on time and budget implications. In August 2021 Members were updated on the Extension of Time to the programme from September 2021 to March 2021, and Members agreed that any further underspends realised within the Programme are utilised to meet any additional costs incurred on previously agreed and committed projects with updates on these reallocations to be brought to this Committee at a future date.

3.2 Main Report

Extension of Time

A summary status update of the projects within the Programme are included within Appendix 1 of this report. Members are asked to note in particular the status of the Castle Place Kiosk and the Entries Phase 2 which are at risk of overrunning the Programme deadline of March 2022 due to ongoing Statutory Process. While officers are working with the Statutory Agencies to bring these issues to a close Members are asked to note that an Extension of Time until September 2022 has been requested and approved by DfC to enable these matters to be addressed. The remaining elements of the programme are expected to be complete by March 2022 although this is still very much dependant on ongoing Covid-19 and supply chain issues.

3.3 Reallocation of Underspend

The following underspends have been realised within the DfC Covid 19 Revitalisation programme:

- Covid-19 Business Grants – an underspend of £57,284 realised following applications withdrawing from the process or differences in awarded amounts vs actual spend as previously reported to Committee.
- Thrives Project – an underspend of £8k due to funding contribution from DfI.
- In addition to the underspend a overspend of £7,548 was realised in the Public Safety Signage and Messaging project.

3.4 In order to keep schemes on programme, and in line with the approvals of this Committee in August 2021, £50k of the DfC Revitalisation underspend has been reallocated to the Church Lane project to provide additional lighting, murals and planting along Church Lane, and also encapsulating Coles Alley to address substantial ASB issues in the area, following ongoing engagement and development work with BIDOne and the areas stakeholders. It is also proposed to reallocate £7,736 to the Linen Quarter suite of projects as further defined in item 3.6 of this report.

3.5 In additional to the DfC funding for the programme it was agreed at SP&R in June 2021 that Council would allocate a further £450k from Non-Recurring Monies to meet the outstanding demand of the Business Cluster & Community Grant scheme. All applications have now been assessed and notified, with 51 successful applicants. This process resulted in a £81,631 underspend within the Councils Non-Recurring allocation.

3.6 With regard to the remaining underspend Members are asked to approve the reallocation of Council provided Non-Recurring money from the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme to the wider Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme. It is proposed that this reallocation, in combination with the remaining identified Revitalisation underspend, will:

- Provide additional funding (£32.3k) to the suite of projects currently been brought by the Linen Quarter Bid (the Brunswick St Hub, the Linenhall Parklet and the Linenhall Boardwalk) to meet cost escalations and additional works provisionally agreed with Council Officers. This will be added to the £7.7k from the Revitalisation Fund as item 3.4 above to provide additional funding to the Linen Quarter projects of £40k. It should also be noted the Linen Quarter Bid have provided, through private funding, a total of £176k to meet the overall project costs.
- Be reallocated by Officers to meet any further cost escalations within the agreed and committed projects to ensure that the projects remain on track, with reports to be brought back to this Committee at a future date.

3.7 Members are also asked to note that the Belfast Entries Project won the 2021 Excellence in Place-making Award for the Ulster Region, recognising the extensive public-private partnership work across over 60 stakeholders, funders and contributors to bring forward a truly iconic project on our historic lanes and entries.

Ministerial Advisory Group Workshop

3.8 The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) have recently contacted Councils advising on proposals that they recognise can assist in delivering on net zero commitments through the influence of Briefing and Design Reviews.

3.9 Over the last year, MAG has been focussing its efforts on ways of increasing the impact that they can have on delivering positive outcomes of better urban and rural places across the region. Participation in the Design for Planet event as part of COP26 further emphasised the requirement for us all to re-double our efforts, putting Climate Change at the forefront of our attention.

- 3.10 MAG are now proposing to roll out a series of workshops with each Council to discuss how the Design Review processes can be optimised to deliver best outcomes. They are keen to run a series of sessions for key decision-makers/influencers in Councils, combining Elected Members and officers. They have expressed that they are keen for Belfast City Council to participate in such a session (hosted virtually), which is being planned for early this year.
- 3.11 MAG advise that to enable building capacity quickly across the region, they are planning to have two Councils per session. To enable sessions to be participatory, they are anticipating limiting numbers to 7 or 8 per council. It is proposed that Belfast City Council nominate two Elected Members (CG&R Chair and Deputy Chair or nominees) and six officers to participate. It is felt that the Council's participation in this series will help strengthen the work which Council are bringing forward in the built environment.

Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City Seminar

- 3.12 As reported to this Committee in January 2022 Healthy North Belfast, in conjunction with Ashton are bringing forward a seminar 'Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City' (previous working title was 'Joining the City' Seminar). This seminar will also include representatives from DfI, Ulster University and Council. This seminar will be specifically aligned to community-based discussions of major regeneration and infrastructure schemes, including the new Ulster University and the York Street Interchange, and how these projects and the outworking's of the Bolder Vision can be maximised or proactively designed and implemented to restitch communities to the city centre and in particular to maximise the positive impacts of these projects on the people who live closest to them. This workshop is now confirmed for the 9th February, 9:15am – 12:30pm, with log-in details as per this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/connecting-communities-in-north-belfast-to-wider-regeneration-of-the-city-tickets-251299111407>

- 3.13 **Finance and Resource Implications**

All costs associated with this paper will be met from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Capital Programme, and, subject to Committee approval, the reallocation of the SP&R agreed

(June 2021) Non-recurring underspend from the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme to the DfC Revitalisation Programme.

Any further underspends realised within this programme are proposed to be reallocated under delegated authority to the Director of City Regeneration and Development to meet any additional costs on previously agreed and committed to projects and will be reported back to this Committee retrospectively.

**3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening is complete on the overall programme with mitigating actions agreed and implemented.”

The Committee:

- Noted that an Extension of Time had been formally granted for the DfC Covid -19 Revitalisation Programme until September 2022;
- Noted the current level of underspend within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and reallocation of funding to the Church Lane and Linen Quarter schemes;
- Agreed the reallocation of underspend from the Council funded (Non-Recurring money agreed at the June 2021 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) from the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme underspend to the previously agreed Linen Quarter Bid projects, with the remaining underspend to be allocated to the wider Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme;
- Agreed that, given the timescales and in line with the Committee’s approval in August 2021, that future underspends realised within the programme be utilised to meet additional costs on previously agreed and committed projects;
- Agreed to delegate authority to the Director of City Regeneration and Development to reallocate the remaining unallocated underspend and any further underspends to meet cost increases on previously agreed and committed projects and to report back to the Committee retrospectively;
- Noted the proposed Ministerial Advisory Group Design Review Workshops and agreed the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair, or their nominated representatives; and

- Noted the upcoming 'Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City' seminar which was held on 9 February.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

External Market Application - Banana Block

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee that an application had been received on behalf of Firefox Events for a market to be held in Banana Block at Portview Trading Centre, Newtownards Road, and that the application requested that the market be held monthly from February to December 2022, involving up to 40 traders at each event.

He pointed out that the purpose of the market was to showcase the range of food and drink produced in Northern Ireland and that it would operate on Saturdays, from 2pm to 7pm, therefore, it would complement and not compete with the offer at St. George's Market.

He advised the Committee that the organisers had a strong working relationship with Eastside Partnership and other local stakeholders and that the businesses and residents in the area were fully supporting of the application.

The Committee granted a market licence to Firefox Events to hold monthly Saturday afternoon markets in the Banana Block, Portview Trade Centre, between March and December 2022

City of London Visit - 8th March 2022

The Director of Economic Development reported that, as part of the City of London Corporation's (COLC) regional strategy, it had committed to engage with cities across the United Kingdom, of which Belfast was one. Since the launch of the strategy, Belfast City Council had been working collaboratively with COLC to cultivate a positive working relationship and partnership to foster innovation, growth and economic prosperity.

He reported that a series of events had been delivered to showcase Belfast as a location of choice for the Fintech sector and that a further event had been scheduled to take place on 8th March, 2022 at the Guildhall, London. He informed the Committee that the aim of the event was to publicise Belfast and the region's leading role in Financial Services and Fintech, and to highlight future investment opportunities stemming from City Deal investments, such as, the Global Innovation Institute and Digital Twin.

He stated that event attendees would include senior representation from key stakeholders across the sector, fund managers and representatives from financial services and fintech businesses from Belfast and London.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Howard,

That the Committee agrees to note the update on the aim of the event and the broad itinerary and approves attendance at the event by the Lord Mayor, Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or their nominees.

On a vote, sixteen Members voted for the proposal and one against and it was declared carried.

Cultural Strategy Update - Artist Studios and Maker Spaces

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the investment model for the cultural strategy and to set out proposals for a dedicated programme of work to support artist-led organisations in the city.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Agree to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support as set out at 3.7 subject to officer recommendations being approved at a future meeting of Committee.
- Agree to develop long-term options for the sustainable provision of artist studios in the city aligned to the priorities of the cultural strategy to be presented to a future meeting of Committee.
- Agree to write to the Department for Communities and Arts Council of Northern Ireland to request that a joint response is taken forward to the current crisis in studio provision.
- Agree for officers to operate a rolling support programme of micro-grants to artist-led organisations as set out at 3.13 to be approved by delegated authority.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 *A City Imagining* cultural strategy for Belfast recognises the need for long-term commitment over a decade in order to

drive transformation. It presents a dynamic model for change to ensure resilience to external factors and potential social, economic and environmental shifts. While the full impact of Covid-19 still remains unknown and the level of change to the city's cultural and community infrastructure is uncertain, the strategy remains valid presenting a strong framework for a robust and long-term recovery plan

3.2 In support of the ambitions set out in this strategy an Investment Model was agreed with phased implementation. To date this has resulted in the introduction of a number of funding strands and employment opportunities for cultural organisations and practitioners. These have included:

- Cultural multi-annual grants
- Small grants including Community Festival Funding
- Micro-grants and Leadership Awards
- Creative Bursaries
- Pathfinder Development Awards

3.3 The diversification of the investment model recognised that the one sizes fit all model of funding does not deliver the best outcomes for the city and fails to increase the sustainability of the sector. Therefore, the design of these new programmes has been based on engagement with the sector and learnings from other cities. However, from the outset it was recognised that a targeted programme of support was required for artist studios and maker-spaces. This in part is due to the value of artist-led spaces not being effectively captured through traditional metrics such as income generated through ticket sales or audience figures. With the cultural multi-annual grants (4 year and 2 year) being agreed in February 2020 it was agreed that an alternative form of funding would be developed for artist-led spaces with the latest audit identifying 17 studios/ artist-led organisations in Belfast directly supporting an estimated 450 artists. Belfast City Council's current support programmes do not include any of these organisations as annual or multi-annual clients. Therefore, as Council is due to enter into another two-year cycle of funding, it is proposed that a complementary three strand programme for artist-led organisations is introduced and is detailed below.

3.4 The need

The need for this programme has accelerated with the further decline in security of tenure for these groups with no organisation having a tenancy agreement for 3 years or more. Of the 17 organisations identified, 15 were on agreements for less than a year with 7 of these less than 9

months and many on month to month rolling contracts including licenses and tenancy at will agreements. (Source: Jane Morrow, PhD Researcher: the precarity of artists' studios in Belfast).

- 3.5 Case study: The Council has been working with Flax Art Studio and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland since 2014 to develop an artist and needs led solution to the provision of sustainable, affordable and appropriately specified studio space in the city. These studies demonstrated the potential for growth and the economic and social impact of studios as well as recommendations to address challenges relating to governance, capacity building, financing and acquisition. This work considered examples from elsewhere including:
- WASPS Artist Studios, Scotland
 - Broadstone Studios, Dublin
 - Fire Station Artist Studios, Dublin
 - National Sculpture Factory, Cork
 - ACME Studios, London
- 3.6 From 2004 to 2018, Flax Art occupied premises on Corporation Street amounting to 1320 m2 of space that accommodated seven large and 11 smaller studios for 21 visual artists. It also accommodated a space for international residencies and a small workshop area. When Flax was required to vacate the premises in 2018 and in the absence of funding to acquire new premises, the organisation took the decision to take on 5200m2 at Havelock House as an opportunity to demonstrate proof of concept in relation to viable growth in provision. Since 2018, this pilot has confirmed many of the principles captured via the review of best/existing practice. It has confirmed that need exists, that visual artists are reliable tenants, and that Flax has the capacity and skills to diversify its income base through introducing new income streams. The result has been a main location at Havelock House where Flax provides subsidised studio space for almost 100 artists in Belfast. 31 emerging artists are supported at a temporary satellite site on North Street and 15 artists at a second satellite space on High Street. They also provide space for 7 production resident artists, 20 workshop members and 1 film-maker in residence, and co-working space for Nerve Belfast, the NI Screen Curator in Residence, Dumbworld and OGU Architects. However, in January 2022 Flax received notification of that their lease would not be extended and they must relocate their artists by the end of March 2022.

3.7 Cultural Mapping

As part of the implementation of the cultural strategy, the Council commissioned a cultural mapping of the city to assess current assets and gaps in infrastructure. The full draft of this report will be presented to Committee in quarter one of 2022/23 year. However, the draft report identifies *Space to Work* as the highest priority under short term recommendations as well as a key strategic priority for long-term action. Building on these recommendations and the investment model included within the cultural strategy a three-strand programme is proposed.

3.8 Proposed Programme

Strand one: organisational funding

The purpose of this strand of work is to provide financial and developmental support to organisations similar to the support offered under cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG). CMAG focuses on supporting wide ranging public facing programmes with criteria designed to assess impact against all of the themes of the cultural strategy. The most recent outcome of this process, with the failure of any studio or artist-led organisation to secure funding, reinforces the need identified in the wider investment model to establish more target schemes of funding. The criteria for a new programme will focus on the specific priorities within the strategy focused on supporting the cultural ecosystem of the city. Given that successful applicants will be in receipt of public funding, it is proposed that funding is accompanied by a health audit that identifies additional requirements in relation to a number of areas such as:

- Governance and management
- Sustainability including environmental planning and policies
- Inclusion including accessibility

3.9 Where organisations require assistance to identify potential premises there is scope to align this to the existing work programme being undertaken by City Regeneration and Development.

3.10 It is proposed that this scheme opens in March 2022 with recommended awards to be presented to Committee for approval in May 2022.

3.11 Strand two: strategic review

In line with the cultural mapping and the work undertaken to date it is proposed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast is undertaken with a number of long-term recommendations presented to Committee. The scope of this work will include:

- analysis of existing strategies, studies and reports as well as primary research, to ascertain resource needs.
- review of benchmarking with other cities with a focus on models of sustainability such as forms of financing.
- analysis and mapping of current and potential availability, quality, and suitability of sectoral accommodation within the city.
- recommendations on the role of artist spaces in city development with investment models to include public sector, private sector and partnerships.

3.12 This work will be aligned to key priorities with the cultural strategy, in particular:

- Priority 5: Embedding cultural impact in city development and local placemaking.
- Priority 6: Investing in connected, resilient and sustainable infrastructure of quality cultural spaces across the city.

3.13 This strand of work will be taken forward with the sector through an agreed programme of co-design to be agreed through a series of initial engagement sessions.

3.14 Strand three: Micro-grants rolling programme

Consultation and engagement with the sector have demonstrated a need for more agile funding schemes that are available year-round and operate at a micro-grant level. It is proposed that a scheme offering a maximum of £1000 is introduced to support career development and support for individual artists working within artist-led organisations.

3.15 As part of cultural multi-annual grants, organisations are required to demonstrate how they provide training and support for those artists that work with them. The fact that many artist-led organisations either do not receive funding or have much lower levels of funding, often managed on a voluntary basis, means that their business model does not allow for re-investment in infrastructure, equipment or skills development. The criteria for this fund will align to theme three of the cultural strategy: *A City Exploring*.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

The existing departmental budget for Culture and Tourism includes provision for sector support. It is proposed that £150,000 is allocated to this programme as follows:

Strand One - Organisational Funding: £100,000
Strand Two - Strategic Review: £30,000
Strand Three – Micro Grants: £20,000

3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

Officers will work with partner organisations to ensure that engagement includes a wide range of groups, artists and individuals across the city and criteria for funding will respond to the Equality Impact Assessment carried out as part of the cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*.”

The Committee agreed:

- to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support, subject to officer recommendations being approved at a future meeting of the Committee;
- to develop long-term options for the sustainable provision of artist studios in the city aligned to the priorities of the cultural strategy to be presented to a future meeting of Committee;
- to write to the Department for Communities and Arts Council of Northern Ireland to request that a joint response is taken forward to the current crisis in studio provision; and
- for officers to operate a rolling support programme of micro-grants to artist-led organisations, to be approved under delegated authority.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notice of Motions - Quarterly Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Committee with an update on the Notices of Motion which had been assigned to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and referred the Members to five Motions which had been recommended for closure.

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion that the Committee was responsible for; and
- Agreed to the closure of five Notices of Motion.

**Consultation Response: The Local Government
(Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment)
Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 Members will be aware that, as part of Local Government Reform in 2015, responsibility for business start-up and support for under-represented groups in the field of enterprise support transferred to councils.

1.2 The Department for Communities (DfC) has recently launched a consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022. This consultation outlines proposed changes to how business start-up activity is measured. The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the consultation, identify the impact for Belfast City Council and set out a proposed response to the consultation on behalf of the council. The response will be submitted, subject to full Council approval.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note the current consultation process and the implications for Belfast City Council
- Approve the outline response to the consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, as set out in section 3.8.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that, as part of the transfer of functions and Local Government Reform, responsibility for business start-up and support for under-represented groups in terms of enterprise support transferred to councils. With the transfer of responsibility came a nominal financial allocation deemed appropriate to support delivery of the relevant services and based on existing budget allocations.

- 3.2 At this time, DfE set the job targets based on the 2011-2015 Programme for Government (PfG) target for the existing start-up programme ('Go for It'). This was to create 6,500 local jobs, or 1,625 jobs per year. These jobs were then split across each council area, based on an economic appraisal carried out at that time. These job targets have remained in place since that date. For Belfast City Council, the annual performance target through the Go For It programme is 325 jobs created through the development of a client-led business plan.
- 3.3 The Department for Communities has now launched a consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, to take account of proposed changes to these targets. The consultation period runs to 28 February 2022. The purpose of this consultation is to align targets with activity being delivered through the Regional Business Start-up Programme 2021-2023.
- 3.4 For Belfast City Council, there is no amendment to the annual job target figure, with the target remaining as 325. This is in line with the current annual programme targets in the Go for It Programme. As such, we have no specific objection to the current proposal, on the understanding that it is a short-term measure that will be reviewed in 2023. However we consider that there is an opportunity to use the existing consultation exercise to formally raise a number of concerns about the methodology associated with target setting, in order to ensure that there is alignment with the work underway across all councils to take a new approach to business start-up support when the current programme ends in March 2023.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that, as a council, we have acknowledged the shortcomings of the current start-up support programme. Among the issues that we have identified is the mechanism for measuring impact. Success is currently measured through a jobs outcome approach and the methodology for assessing the job outcome is to count the number of business plans generated through the Regional Business Start-Up Programme ('Go for It') and apply a proxy to determine the likely number of jobs created as a result. In our view, this approach is significantly flawed.
- 3.6 In May 2021, we presented to this Committee our vision of a future model of support that had the potential to drive more people towards self-employment, increase business survival rates and help more businesses to grow and scale. Building

on that model, we have been working with the other 10 councils to develop an options appraisal that can demonstrate how a revised approach can help us achieve a substantial shift in business start up activity aligned with our Enterprise Framework, the Belfast Agenda, the Belfast Region City Deal and the 10x Economic Vision. In November 2021, we secured funding from Invest NI to develop a business case based on this model and this will be used as a basis to engage with DfE, Invest NI and other funding bodies in order to support delivery post-March 2023.

- 3.7 In parallel with this work, we have also commenced our engagement with DfE on the findings of the research, given that they are working on an Entrepreneurship Strategy aligned to 10x.
- 3.8 In light of this work and the commentary around the shortcomings of the current methodology for target setting, it is recommended that officers develop a brief response to the consultation that focuses on a number of key points:
- Identifies the inappropriateness of using business plans as a proxy measurement for jobs created
 - Recommends a wider range of metrics alongside jobs created, (e.g. total early-stage entrepreneurial activity, levels of female engagement in entrepreneurship, number of registered start-ups, 1 and 2 year business survival rates and numbers of scaling businesses)
 - Identifies the need for the targets to reflect those identified in 10x – rather than being seen in isolation of wider government ambitions
 - Need for government to review the financial settlement around the statutory functions transferred to councils – ensuring that it is reflective of changed economic circumstances and an articulated ambition around a globally-competitive economy. The financial transfer needs to acknowledge that councils have statutory responsibility for this area of work
 - Consider how the targets are aligned to performance – with a degree of accountability built in to make the link between resources allocated and delivery
 - Acknowledges that, given the timings, a more radical review is not appropriate at this point but asks that early consideration is given to the above points in order to ensure a more appropriate approach to standards and performance targets from the financial year 2023.

3.9 At a recent meeting of the SOLACE Economic Recovery Group, council officers agreed that there was considerable consensus across all council areas on these issues and that it would be appropriate to produce a joint response to this consultation. The commentary broadly reflects the points identified above. The response recommends that a longer-term review is carried out on the targets, including removing the link to a business planning programme and having a consistent approach across councils for allocating the target, taking account of the work that is ongoing to develop an approach to future delivery as highlighted above.

3.10 **Financial and Resource Implications**

No specific financial implications associated with this report.

3.11 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

The Enterprise and Business Growth team is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.

3.12 **Equality and Good relations will be considered as part of the business case development and a rural needs assessment will also be factored into this work.”**

The Committee:

- Noted the current consultation process and the implications for Belfast City Council; and
- Approved the outline response to the consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Late Item

Request for Presentation – Visit Belfast.

The Director of Economic Development requested that the Committee would agree to receive a presentation from Visit Belfast at its meeting in March 2022.

The Committee acceded to the request to receive a presentation from Visit Belfast.

Chairperson