

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 11th January, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Alderman Dorrian:
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Duffy, Ferguson,
Harvey, Heading, Hussey, T. Kelly, Lyons,
Maskey, McCabe, McDonough-Brown,
McLaughlin, Murray, Nelson, O'Hara,
Spratt and Whyte.

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

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 7th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th January.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following three 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 three 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.

**Future City Centre Programme:
Vacant to Vibrant**

The Committee was provided with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Grant Programme and an overview of the applications which had been completed, together with the recommendation from the assessment panel.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant pilot capital grant scheme; and
- Agreed to the recommended grant awards as outlined within Section 3.12 of the report.

**Business Cluster and Community
Grant Programme**

The Committee was provided with an overview on the Business Cluster and Community Grant Programme Tranche 3 and the assessment of applications for consideration.

The Committee:

- Noted the current status of the Business Cluster and Community Grant Programme Tranche 3;
- Approved the award of Business Cluster and Community Grants that had been assessed to date for Tranche 3 of the programme as outlined in Section 3.8 of the report; and
- Agreed that the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme would not be reopened to new applications, and that any realised underspend be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for reallocation.

Cathedral Buildings - Business Support

The Committee was provided with an update on the ongoing work to support the recovery effort following the recent fire at Cathedral Buildings.

The Committee:

- Noted the update and the work which had been undertaken to support the recovery efforts following the fire at Cathedral Buildings; and
- Approved funding for those tenants who were ineligible for the Department for Communities hardship support, a total of £50,000.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Update on Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor and Action Plan

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in August 2022, it had received an update on the progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), including finalisation of the strategy and action plan. Since that meeting, the work had continued, and the strategy had now been completed and agreed by all DBEC partners. It aimed to articulate a vision for the partnership to enable sustainable economic growth across the region and to provide an evidence base for action, identifying areas of focus for the partnership to address future opportunities and seeking to address any gaps in existing provision.

The Director of Economic Development reported that Members of the DBEC political advisory group had met in Dundalk on 14th October, 2022 to discuss the emerging findings and to consider the strategy and emerging action plan.

The strategy had a vision of becoming a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative research and development, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. This included an ambition to be world-renowned as a major international centre in growth sectors like Professional Services, Advanced Manufacturing, ICT, Life Sciences and Advanced Agriculture.

The strategy articulated a number of strategic objectives for the partnership, including;

- Increased skills and training to meet the labour requirements of the region, building on and expanding the existing workforce;
- Advocated for cross-border infrastructure to strengthen connectivity and access to markets and labour;
- Enhanced cross-border collaboration in Research and Development and Innovation, targeting investment in high growth sectors and the green economy;
- Promoted sustainable and climate conscious growth along the corridor, aligned with councils' development plans and wider policy objectives;
- Align with and support economic development partners to increase trade and investment along the corridor; and
- Market the region and elevate the DBEC brand so that the region becomes globally renowned as an attractive place to live and do business.

The next steps for this work were to develop a detailed action plan in order to focus resources and bring forward priority interventions. The partnership recognised that this would require dedicated resources and had agreed, in principle, to the recruitment of two staff resources (as previously advised). The recruitment process for these posts was currently under way and staff would be housed within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

The Director of Economic Development advised that, as with all elements of the work to date, the eight councils had been co-funding the research activities. The indicative budget for development work and resourcing in 2023 was €260k. In line with previous agreements, this would be resourced by the eight councils based on population share. The Belfast proportion was £35,805.83. The Committee were reminded that, at its meeting in April 2022, a budget of £15,000 had been agreed as an initial contribution. In order to progress the action plan, the Committee was asked to approve a further allocation of £21,000. The budget would be held by Newry Mourne and Down District Council through their role as Chair and Secretariat of the DBEC partnership. Belfast City Council's contribution would be allocated from existing budgets.

Shared Island Fund update

It was reported that the strategic objectives for the DBEC work included enhancing cross-border collaboration in Research and Development and Innovation, targeting investment in high growth sectors as well as infrastructure that strengthened connectivity and access to markets and labour. To progress this work, the partnership had applied for funding through the Irish Government's Shared Island Initiative. They were successful in attracting funding of €150,000 in September 2022 to carry out a feasibility assessment to develop a network of regional innovation hubs within the corridor region. These locations would support current or emerging business clusters in particular locations, to the benefit of the entire region. The project would look at pairing up locations based on sectoral strengths and clusters, such as Fintech in Dublin and Belfast.

The Director of Economic Development highlighted that the proposal also incorporated an ambition identified by the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission to support growth sectors such as Fintech and capitalise on linkages with cities such as Dublin.

He stated that a procurement exercise was underway to secure external expertise to carry out this work, aiming to commence in January 2023. This was being led by Fingal County Council and Belfast City Council officers would participate in a project steering group.

In addition, Dublin and Belfast City Council were awarded €250,000 to carry out feasibility research on capital projects to support the circular economy. There had been extensive work with colleagues from both councils involved in preparing the terms of reference for a procurement exercise, with Dublin City Council as lead partner. This was expected to be finalised in January and Belfast City Council would work closely with Dublin officials at all stages.

The Director of Economic Development pointed out that opportunities for funding from the Shared Island Fund, as well as other interventions such as Peace Plus, were being actively explored in order to bring forward some of the interventions identified through the DBEC strategy and emerging action plan.

The Committee:

- Noted the progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor; and
- Approved Belfast City Council's contribution of £21,000 to Newry Mourne and Down District Council to enable the delivery of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor Action plan in 2023.

**Belfast Positioning - Tourism Ireland US
City of Music Showcase & Fleadh Cheoil
Showcase**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update members on the international cultural showcase Council is delivering in partnership with Tourism Ireland taking place in two major US Cities, Boston, and New York in February 2023. This showcasing opportunity will highlight Belfast’s music, as well as our city’s wider contemporary cultural offering to a range of influencers, major tour operators, media, and other travel operators. This activity is part off our UNESCO City of Music commitments and provides an opportunity to showcase Belfast artists on an international stage.

1.2 Elected Members will be aware that in September 2022, Committee approved permission for Council to proceed for a bid for the Fleadh Cheoil in 2024. In March 2023 a vote takes place to confirm the location for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann for 2024. Several voting members are resident in the United States being part of the executive committee for the United States Comhaltas. As part of the bidding process, it is normal that bidding towns and cities visit the US Comhaltas as well as the Great Britain Comhaltas in conjunction with their bidding partners to discuss their bid with the voting members. To benefit from efficiencies, we are seeking members approval for the attendance of Ards CCE members and Council officers to organise and attend an event in New York to discuss our bid with US Comhaltas vote holders as part of the US Tourism Ireland Showcase schedule.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Provide permission to financially support accommodation, event, and travel costs for the 8 Members of Ards CCE relating to Belfast City Councils bid to host the Fleadh. This will be funded from existing departmental budgets up to a value of £20,000

2.2 Approve the attendance at the US Showcase by the Lord Mayor (TBC) and the following Council Officers/Chief Officers,

- John Walsh, Chief Executive (TBC)
- John Greer, Director of Economic Development
- Erika Clark, Creative Programme Manager 2024

3.0 Main report

3.1 Purpose & Context

In May 2021 Council agreed for the submission of an application for Belfast to receive the UNESCO City of Music designation. This reflected our commitment within our 'A City Imagining' Cultural Strategy to bid for UNESCO City of Music status by 2021.

3.2 Our 'City Imagining' strategy commits to recognising the transformative power that music has to spark a new relationship with ourselves as individuals, within our communities and with the city

3.3 In developing our Music Strategy an economic impact assessment was completed by specialist consultancy, Sound Diplomacy. It found the Gross Value Added (GVA) for the cultural and creative industries in 2017 was £1,088 million in 2017, representing 2.7% of Northern Ireland's total GVA, accounting for 25,000 jobs, representing 3.1% of total employment. The jobs created by the sector in Belfast in 2019 reached 7,376, representing 3.22% of total employment in the city.

3.4 The music sector in Belfast generated a direct output of £180 million and an estimated direct GVA of £84.3 million and it was responsible for 1,781 direct jobs. When including the indirect and induced effects, music supported 3,130 total jobs, output of £346.8 million and a GVA of £171.4m.

3.5 Belfast's music, cultural, hospitality and tourism organisations have been damaged by the restrictions stemming from COVID-19. There is a recognition that these sectors require ongoing support and investment to minimize the potential long-term damage to them.

- 3.6 After extensive engagement we have received an offer from Tourism Ireland to partner with Council to deliver a US sales mission and showcase Belfast music and culture in February 2023. The cultural showcase will be accompanied by a tourism sales mission to highlight the rich tourism offering in Belfast and will take place in Boston & New York. This offer provides an opportunity for Belfast to benefit from Tourism Irelands extensive resources, international networks, organisational capacity and to share the costs for the showcase with Tourism Ireland.
- 3.7 The aim of the showcase is to celebrate Belfast's cultural vibrancy, our up-and-coming year of culture in 2024, new and up and coming artists and the awarding of UNESCO City of Music Status to Belfast and highlight contemporary Belfast to an audience of media, VIPs, tour operators and selected guests. In addition, the showcase will also provide an opportunity to highlight upcoming tourism and civic projects such as Belfast Stories. The proposed artists attending will also benefit from a dedicated industry showcase where they will have an opportunity to meet with US agents, producers, distributors, and labels to promote their work

Alignment to strategic objectives

- 3.8 Council launched their ambitious new strategic plans – *A City Imagining* Cultural Strategy and *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism plan – in 2020 and 2021 respectively. To coincide with this Council has undergone a staff restructure to create a new approach to delivering on Culture and Tourism for the city of Belfast, the new Culture and Tourism unit are working together to position Belfast as a culturally vibrant city, both nationally and internationally.
- 3.9 **Make Yourself at Home – Positioning Belfast, Tourism Plan:** The Belfast Agenda sets out the belief that Belfast can be a city that people dream to visit. A place that is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable. Our Tourism Plan sets out long-term goals to grow the value of tourism exponentially and to recognise that tourism plays a vital role in the city's economy, its employment opportunities, especially for the young, and its support for small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- 3.10 **A City Imagining – A City Exploring, Cultural Strategy: A City Exploring** is a core pillar of our cultural strategy and aims to strengthen our place in the world by building upon our cultural networks and partnerships locally, regionally, and internationally. Belfast will facilitate, support, and maintain

international networks and collaborative partnerships on a range of levels to ensure our connected city welcomes inwards investment and visitors whilst also supporting our creative and cultural entrepreneurs to make their own global connections.

3.11 **Belfast 2024** – our celebratory year of culture will be the manifestation of our strategic determination to showcase the cultural vibrancy and creative ambition of our city. It will focus on principles of co-design, public space, pushing creative boundaries as well as inclusivity and sustainability. This year will showcase to the world what Belfast has to offer, attracting a high number of out-of-state visitors.

3.12 **UNESCO City of Music** – After 3yrs of co-design and development with the city and sector Belfast was granted membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network with our new City of Music Status in November 2021. A core ambition of our UNESCO bid was to celebrate our contemporary music offer internationally and raise our international profile, through music, via the UNESCO Creative Cities Network globally. This status carries significant acclaim and recognition internationally.

3.13 **Concept & Approach**

Tourism Ireland and Belfast City Council partnership will deliver a cultural showcase, via a contemporary and vibrant lens. As City of Music Patron for Belfast, Hannah Peel as agreed to act as our Curator for the showcase. Hannah Peel is Northern Ireland's most successful contemporary musician and composer, having won an Emmy for her work on Game of Thrones and being nominated for the Mercury Music Prize in 2020.

Hannah Peel's approach to this showcase is to create a truly unique and contemporary experience for the attendees – showcasing the best we have to offer culturally by mixing stories, literature, food, and music into an immersive experience.

3.14 **Us Showcase Line Up**

- Curator: Hannah Peel (Emmy Winner, Mercury Prize Nominee) Curator & Headline Performer

- Host: Tara Lynne O’Neill – Derry Girls/ award winning Belfast actress
- Robocobra-Quartet (NI Music Prize winner 2022, represented NI at Glastonbury) Contemporary Jazz Performance
- Winnie Ama (BBC Radio Ulster artist of the year/Presenter/ NI Ghanian DJ) Contemporary R&B & electronica
- Joshua Burnside (NI Music Prize Winner 2018) Irish Folk Singer/Songwriter
- Kwame Daniels (BBC Radio Ulster DJ) Ambience DJ pre-post showcase

Date		Itinerary
Monday 20th February	Fly out	Delegation fly to Boston – from Dublin or London
Tuesday 21st February	Boston	Showcase at Langham Hotel Boston 6pm – 9pm
Wednesday 22nd February	Boston – NYC	Travel via coach from Boston to New York
Thursday 23rd February	NYC	Showcase at Virgin Hotel Manhattan New York 6pm – 9pm
Friday 24th February	NYC	Industry Networking Event at Dead Rabbit 5pm – 8pm
Saturday 25th February	Fly back	Delegation fly back to Dublin/London

3.15 Benefits

The showcase provides an opportunity to continue to re-position Belfast as a city synonymous with music, culture, food, and unique authentic experiences. In addition, it is envisaged that the showcase will support the recovery of the sectors by,

- Supporting our local tourism and hospitality organisations to return to pre-pandemic levels and eventually to grow beyond those levels
- Provide opportunities to grow jobs for those that are furthest from the labour market.
- Provide a showcasing opportunity for local musicians, artisans, and artists, and provide opportunities for them to develop their businesses

Fleadh Cheoil na Éireann partnership with TI US Showcase

- 3.16 Members will be aware that in September 2022, Committee approved permission for Council to proceed for a bid for the Fleadh Cheoil in 2024.
- 3.17 On 3rd December, members of the Ulster Comhaltas visited Belfast to review proposed venues and performance locations. A visit of the Comhaltas Executive Committee is to be scheduled for early February, ahead of the final bid in March.
- 3.18 A further event identified for attendance at September Committee was the North American Convention (New York) - April 2023. It has now become clear that this event will take place too late to garner support for the Belfast / Ards vote. Consequently, and ahead of the final vote, we are now seeking Member's permission to send a delegation of 8 from Ards CCE to the US as part of the Tourism Ireland showcase event planned for February to maximise use of resources.
- 3.19 The proposed dates of the visit are Wednesday 22nd to Saturday 25th February.

The proposed itinerary is as follows:

- Travel out to New York
 - Day 1 – Northern Ireland Bureau event
 - Day 2 - music event either 'Dead Rabbit' or Irish Cultural Centre with invitations to be extended to Fleadh Voting members
 - Day 3 –Irish Ambassador Event
- 3.20 This visit will provide an opportunity for Ards CCE/BCC to meet and network with voting members of the Ardchomhairle who will travel to New York from across the US. This is critical to building support for the Belfast / Ards bid.
- 3.21 At September Committee, permission was also granted to allow Council / Ards CCE to attend at a range of events key to the ongoing bid ahead of the vote.

Council also agreed to provide a Letter of Offer of £7,500 to Ards CCE recognizing that the Ards Comhaltas is a voluntary organisation. This funding was to cover costs including travel and subsistence associated with our bid. However, this funding will not meet the costs of the US trip. Consequently, we are seeking Member's permission to financially support accommodation, event, and travel costs

for the 8 Members of Ards CCE. This will be funded from existing departmental budgets up to a value of £20,000.

3.22 The Director of Economic Development will also be attending a meeting with members of the GB Comhaltas in Glasgow, Scotland on Saturday January 14th in advance of the deciding vote in March. This activity will also be attended by Ards CCE and funded via the previously agreed £7,500 of funding supplied by Council.

3.23 **Finance and Resource Implications**

The allocation of up to £20,000 for the opportunity to showcase Ards CCE and network with US based members to support our Fleadh Cheoil bid will be drawn from existing departmental budgets approved by this committee in March 2022.

Costs associated with the US showcase will be drawn from existing departmental budgets.

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

The cultural strategy, A City Imagining has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development answered questions in relation to the bidding process, the economic return of hosting the Fleadh, work which had been undertaken with tourism stakeholders and the timeframe of the showcase events.

During further discussion, several Members raised concerns in relation to the number of officers that had been recommended to attend the showcase and the need for estimated travel costs for officers' attendance. The Director of Economic Development explained further the financial support required for the 8 Members of Ards Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the process for officers to travel and attend the showcase.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Whyte,
Seconded by Councillor Heading,

The Committee agrees that the proposed attendance at the US Showcase of 4 Council representatives be reduced to two representatives.

On a vote, four Members voted for the proposal and fifteen against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Agreed to provide financial support for the accommodation, event, and travel costs for the 8 Members of Ards Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann relating to the Council's bid to host the Fleadh. This would be funded from existing departmental budgets up to a value of £20,000; and
- Approved the attendance at the US Showcase by the Lord Mayor (TBC) and the following Council Officers/Chief Officers:
 - John Walsh, Chief Executive (TBC)
 - John Greer, Director of Economic Development
 - Erika Clark, Creative Programme Manager 2024

and noted that the associated costs would be drawn from existing departmental budgets.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notices of Motion Quarterly Update

The Committee was provided with a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion that it was responsible for, in line with the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that all standing committees receive regular updates.

It was reported that there were currently 11 Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which the Committee was responsible for and it was recommended that the Committee agree to close the following 3 motions and note the status updates for the remaining 8 motions which remained open:

Category 1 Recommended Closures

- Cut in Student Places announced by Queen's University (ID = 252); and
- Presentation: Community Finance Ireland (ID = 263)

Category 2 Recommended Closure

- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (ID = 293).

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion that the Committee was responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1; and

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- Agreed to the closure of 3 Notices of Motion, as referenced in [Appendix 1](#) and noted in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

Chairperson