

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Wednesday, 13th September, 2023 at 5.15 pm, 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) Update on Dfl funded projects: Active Travel Enablers and Grey to Green Demonstrator Project (Report to follow)
- (b) Housing Led Regeneration Programme Update (Report to follow)
- (c) Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2023/24 (Pages 1 - 10)
- (d) Quarter 1 Performance Zoo Update (Pages 11 - 16)
- (e) Quarter 1 Performance Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme (Pages 17 - 26)

3. **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**
 - (a) All Island Strategic Rail Review (Report to follow)
 - (b) Response from Department for Communities on Rent Controls (Pages 27 - 38)
4. **Positioning the City to Compete**
 - (a) Update on Music Strategy - NI Music Prize (Report to follow)
5. **Strategic and Operational Issues**
 - (a) Committee Plan 2023-24 and End of Year Report (22-23) (Pages 39 - 54)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
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Subject:	Response from Department for Communities on Rent Controls
Date:	13 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development 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 or Summary of Main issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the response received from the Department for Communities in relation to correspondence issued from the CG&R Committee regarding Rent Controls.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to note;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the correspondence received from the Department for Communities in response to a letter from the Committee regarding rent controls; • that the Department for Communities commissioned a report, undertaken by the Chartered Institute for Housing, to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and that this report was laid to the Assembly and published on the Departments website; • that the Department for Communities state that '<i>any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister</i>', and '<i>that bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly</i>'
3.0	Background
3.1	<p>At the special meeting of the CG&&R Committee in February 2023, it was agreed that a letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities, and the Head of the Civil Service to engage with the Council and other key stakeholders concerning rent controls in Belfast; and to support local community organisations and advocacy groups in their efforts to campaign for the introduction of rent controls and to ensure that the voices of renters and those affected by the housing affordability crisis were heard.</p>
4.0	Main Report
	Key Issues
4.1	<p>A letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Department Communities and the Head of the Civil Service on 24th March 2023 outlining the concerns raised by the members of the Committee at its special meeting in February 2023 (attached as appendix 1).</p>
4.2	<p>The letter outlined that the cost of privately renting a home in Belfast has risen significantly in recent years, making it increasingly unaffordable for many people, particularly those on low incomes and young families. The letter further commented that the Committee would like to see costs for renters reduced; Members recognise that legislation is required to protect renters from unfair rents, improve housing standards and end unfair letting fees; Members further recognise the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. Furthermore, the Executive needs to be back up and running and a Minister in place to progress this.</p>

4.3	<p>A response has been received from Mr. David Polley, Director of Housing Supply Policy (attached as appendix 2). In his correspondence the Director advises that Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 placed a duty on the Department to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and to lay a report before the Assembly.</p>
4.4	<p>The Director further commented that the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was subsequently commissioned by the Department to research and consult on these implications and the ensuing Report was laid in the Assembly and published on the Department's website. While a summary of the key findings of the CIH report is included within this Committee report, Members should note that the report is multi-faeted covering a number of complex issues and findings. A copy of the full report for Members review can be found at the link below:</p> <p>https://www.cih.org/media/n50no3ps/dfc-rent-regulation-in-the-private-sector-in-northern-ireland.pdf</p>
4.5	<p>Finally, the Director stated that, as already noted by the Committee, any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister. Moreover, bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly.</p>
4.6	<p>The final research report from the Chartered Institute of Housing for the Department for Communities as referenced in the response from DfC highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what existing evidence tells us about rent regulation • a baseline of current rent affordability and trends; plus the potential impact of rent control/regulation in Northern Ireland, and • the consultation feedback from landlords and tenants, their representative groups and district councils. • The report refers to research on the topology of rent control and that there are currently three 'generations; of rent control: • first generation rent regulation measures seek to impose a control on existing rent levels; they are typically called 'hard rent controls' or 'rent freezes' • second generation regulation governs rent increases within and between tenancies; an example is setting the very first rent at market levels with subsequent increases and rents for new tenancies being controlled, and

4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • third generation measures refer to restricting the increase of rent within the tenancy e.g. restricting the amount or frequency of increases for a current tenant. <p>The report concludes that the rent control approach contained under Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 gives the Department the power to freeze or cut rents by up to ten per cent for a period of up to four years. These rent controls are argued to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve initial affordability of rents • reduce real rents if rents cannot be adjusted to account for increased landlord costs • develop incentives for landlords to sell properties and leave the sector, especially at times of high house prices and strong property markets • reduce incentives for landlords to repair and renovate properties, and • incentivise ‘shadow’ or illegal rental markets or incentivise renters to stay in the property even if their needs change. <p>The report found that the rent control powers contained within Section 7 if enacted could have the following implications:</p>
4.8	<p>Improve affordability for some tenants</p>
4.9	<p>The report highlights that affordability issues for low-income households have been driven less by rent inflation, and more through punitive aspects of the social security system, such as freezes in local housing allowance rates and the use of the shared-accommodation rate for younger single people in one-bedroom homes.</p>
4.10	<p>The report comments that freezing and reducing rents to protect those in the lowest incomes is a very unpredictable and inefficient policy tool.</p>
4.11	<p>The report goes on to say that overall a rent freeze or reduction would largely benefit existing tenants who remain in their homes and whose landlords do not sell or repurpose their properties. However, because such a freeze or reduction would also reduce the size of the sector, other tenants would be evicted. Prospective tenants and people looking for new private rented accommodation would be faced with a further shortage of suitable housing options in an already tight housing market.</p>
4.12	<p>Between 41% and 60% of landlords would seek to exit the private rental market</p> <p>Over half of landlord respondents reported that they would seek to decrease the number of properties they let out across the sector and the report research indicates that between 41%</p>

	<p>and 60% of landlords would seek to exit the private rental market.. Some of these properties may be sold to landlords, keeping the property within the sector, However, some landlords may seek to withdraw and provide the property on the short-term holiday let / Airbnb market, where they are able to attract substantially higher rents.</p>
4.13	<p>Concern was raised about the impact of rent cuts on buy-to-let mortgages and the resulting supply of private rented accommodation. A decrease in rent levels would make more of these mortgages unaffordable for prospective landlords. Higher interest rates are already placing pressure on mortgage affordability and high inflation is increasing the cost of property maintenance and upkeep.</p>
4.14	<p>Other issues for consideration within the report</p> <p>For tenants who have their rent covered in full by local housing allowance, a rent cut would not improve the tenant's affordability but would instead result in a reduction in annually managed expenditure on welfare. However, there could be increased public expenditure elsewhere on rising homelessness levels resulting from the change. There is also risk of further adverse impact on homelessness through diminished ability to discharge the homelessness duty into the Private Rented Sector, in the context of rising levels of unmet need for social housing. There would also need to be a step-change in resourcing councils for effective enforcement of the policy.</p> <p>Alternative approaches to improve affordability were included in the conclusion of the report as outlined below.</p>
4.15	<p>Welfare control</p> <p>The report noted that a simpler and accurately targeted way to improve housing affordability is topping up Local Housing Allowance (LHA) claimants with a shortfall to the real 30th percentile rent through discretionary housing payments (DHPs) or welfare supplementary payments. Cuts to the LHA rates for tenants and adverse changes to the tax system for landlords have adversely affected the Private Rental Sector. The report notes that fiscal measures are an important tool to incentivise property improvements, which is crucial for progressing housing quality and for de-carbonising housing stock.</p>
4.16	<p>Enhancing rent control</p> <p>The report highlights that Northern Ireland now has a new system of third generation rent control that limits the frequency of rent increases to once a year and which has the broad support of</p>

4.17	<p>stakeholders tested through consultation; it would make sense to monitor and evaluate this new law as part of the normal policy making process</p> <p>If greater rent control is desirable, an additional option within the third generation is limiting increases during a tenancy to CPI or a similar indexing measure and allowing rents to reset to market levels at the end of a tenancy. Limiting increases during a tenancy in this way would seek to address the substantially large increases that occur in a minority of the NI market. Allowing rents to reset to market levels at the end of a tenancy would provide landlords with some assurance that increases in costs would be accommodated in rental prices.</p> <p>Supply</p> <p>The report highlights that the best way of relieving pressure on prices is by having enough housing supply. A variety of housing tenures and products are needed to meet people’s diverse requirements. Social housing, co-ownership, intermediate rent, private rent including from institutional investors, and owner-occupation all have a role to play in providing a home that is appropriate for people’s needs. There is a shortage of private rented accommodation at present; data from PropertyPal shows that the average stock of properties for rent on the website during June 2022 was 1,647 – a 57 per cent decrease from June 2019. At the same time there is increased demand for it, as the economic consequences of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has made saving for a deposit more difficult, placing home ownership out of reach for more people. Another long-standing factor driving the demand of private rented accommodation is the shortage of social housing. The report acknowledges existing work through the Housing Supply Strategy that aims to boost social housebuilding and address the deeprooted barriers to increasing supply, including infrastructure, funding, skills and capacity constraints.</p> <p>Committee should note that as yet a response has not been received from the Head of the Civil Service.</p>
4.18	
4.19	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.20	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
5.0	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Letter from Belfast City Council dated 24th March 2023</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Response from Department for Communities dated 29th March 2023</p>

Legal and Civic Services Department

Democratic Services Section



Your reference

Being dealt with by Ms Eilish McGoldrick

Our reference EMcG240322RCDfC

Email democraticservices@belfastcity.gov.uk

Date 24th March, 2023

Colum Boyle
Department for Communities
Permanent Secretary
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Rent Controls

At its special meeting in February, Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee passed the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor Duffy:

"The Committee notes the cost of privately renting a home in Belfast has risen significantly in recent years, making it increasingly unaffordable for many people, particularly those on low incomes and young families. The Committee: Wants to see costs for renters reduced; Acknowledges that legislation is required to protect renters from unfair rents, improve housing standards and end unfair letting fees; Recognises the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. Furthermore, the Executive needs to be back up and running and a Minister in place to progress this."

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to write to you, as Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities, and the Head of the Civil Service to engage with the Council and other key stakeholders concerning rent controls in Belfast; and to support local community organisations and advocacy groups in their efforts to campaign for the

Belfast City Council, Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
Tel: 028 9032 0202 Textphone: 028 9027 0405
Dx No.: 383 NR Belfast

introduction of rent controls and to ensure that the voices of renters and those affected by the housing affordability crisis were heard.

I look forward to receiving your comments on the issues raised by the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eilish McGoldrick', written in a cursive style.

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer

CC: *Dr. J. Brady, Head of the Civil Service*



From: David Polley
Housing Supply Policy

Level 3
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Telephone: 028 90 515286
E-mail: David.Polley@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our Ref: STOF-0201-2023
Date: 28 March 2023

Eilish McGoldrick
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Legal and Civic Services Department
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Via email: McGoldrickE@belfastcity.gov.uk

Dear Eilish

RENT CONTROLS

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 March 2023, addressed to the Permanent Secretary and Head of the Civil Service. As director for Housing Supply Policy, I have been asked to respond on you on their behalf.

You detail that the Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee have noted the rising cost of private renting in Belfast. You advise that the Committee wants to see the cost for renters reduced and considers that the introduction of rent controls is one way to help renters. You add that the Committee recognises that any decisions to progress this action would depend on the Executive being up and running and a Minister being in place.

As stated in a previous response your colleague (Sara Steele) on 16 February, Section 7 of the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 placed a duty on the Department to research and consult on the implications of a rent freeze or rent decrease and to lay a report before the Assembly. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) was subsequently commissioned by the Department to research and consult on these implications and the ensuing Report was laid in the Assembly and published on the Department's website. However, as already noted by your Committee, any further action on these issues is subject to a decision by an incoming Minister. Moreover, bringing any rent controls into effect would require further secondary legislation and therefore a functioning Assembly.

I trust you find my response helpful.



Yours sincerely,

David Polley
Director of Housing Supply Policy



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Subject:	CG&R End of Year Report (23-23) and CG&R Committee Plan (23-24)
Date:	13 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development 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"/>
Some time 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	To provide an end of year progress update (Appendix 1) on the key actions contained in the 2022-23 City Growth and Regeneration (CG&R) Committee Plan, as agreed by this Committee in June 2021.
1.2	To present to Committee the draft City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan for 2023-24 (Appendix 2).

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the content of the end of year report; • Approve the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2023-24; and • Agree to hold a committee workshop as part of the development of a new Corporate Plan 2024-28 during October 2023.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The 2022-23 Committee Plan End of Year Report (EOYR) and draft CG&R Committee Plan for 2023-24 were originally presented to, and agreed at the April 2023 meeting of the CG&R Committee. However due to a procedural error, they were referred back to Committee for further consideration and approval. The procedural error related to the roles and responsibilities of the Committee included within the introduction of the draft plan (attached at appendix 1). The functions have been updated to ensure they are consistent with Appendix 3 (Standing Orders) of the Council's Constituion.</p>
3.2	<p>The draft CG&R Committee Plan for 2023-24 has been developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-24 and the draft refreshed Belfast Agenda. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan, as agreed at August SP&R, and which fall under the duties of this Committee, and deliverables that have been agreed by CG&R Committee throughout the 22/23 period and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The Plan sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee is overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.3	<p>The 2022-23 Committee Plan End of Year Report (EOYR) and the draft Plan for 2023-24 were both developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and the draft refreshed Belfast Agenda. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan (agreed at the August meeting of SP&R and endorsed at the September council meeting), which fall under the duties of this Committee, and deliverables that have been agreed by CG&R Committee throughout the 22/23 period and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The Plan sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee is overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Progress Reports</u></p> <p>Following agreement of the draft Committee Plan, officers will bring a six-monthly progress report against all commitments in the Committee Plan in November 2023 and a further end of year report in April 2024.</p>

<p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p>	<p><u>New Corporate Plan 2024-28</u></p> <p>At the SP&R meeting on 18 August 2023, the Committee approved the proposed approach and timeline for the development of the 2024 –28 Corporate Plan and accompanying Committee and Departmental Plans for 2024-25. The proposed timeline identified that committee planning workshops should be held in October 2023, with a view to producing a draft plan by February 2024.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The draft Committee Plan 2023/24 and the subsequent annual programmes of work are aligned with the budget agreed by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 20 January 2023, namely a cash limit for the City Growth & Regeneration Committee of £20.45 million as set out in Appendix 2.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Strategies, programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council’s Equality & Diversity Officers and subject to appropriate equality, good relations and rural needs assessment.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – CG&R Committee Plan 2022-23 – End of Year Report</p> <p>Appendix 2 – draft CG&R Committee Plan 2023-24</p>

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CG&R Committee Plan 2022-23 – End of Year Report

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Cultural Strategy</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p> <p>Page 43</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the 'A City Imagining Plan' • Consult on, then launch, the Music Strategy • Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO 	<p>Belfast 2024 Year of Cultural Celebration for Belfast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2022's CG&R committee noted the principles, concept and work related to the development of a year of culture and Belfast Imagining. • Public consultation completed and the full Music Strategy was agreed in December 2022. • An OBC was developed in partnership with Grant Thornton to support the case for Belfast 2024's ambitious year of cultural activity. Engagement programmes are currently underway to pilot Co-Design Framework with various communities to develop projects for 2024. The official launch of Belfast 2024 is on hold until later in 2023 in consultation with BCC Marcomms. • Commissioning for Anchor Programmes is underway with key Signature Partners, Eden Project, Little Amal, Oona Doherty and BBC/ City of Music collaboration on dance music with Ulster Orchestra. • An Open Call Design Contest for Belfast 2024, a 4-stage process with a R&D phase was launched in December 2022. Full commissions coming from this scheme will be contracted by June 2023. • BCC became the first council in the UK to directly support individual artists on a non-project basis when it completed Year 1 of the Creative Bursary Scheme in August 2022. The Creative Bursary Scheme Year 2 opened for applications in January 2023 (closing March 2023) – 13 bursaries are available and particular target for creatives identifying with/working in Irish language, new migrant communities and LGBTQIA+ sector. • Belfast 2024 Brand Identity and Guidelines were developed in partnership with McCadden. <p>Festival 2022/UNBOXED – celebration of STEAM creative industries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MarComms and Education regional working groups were formed to advise on and support the delivery of Festival 22 across NI. • Supported the delivery of Dreamachine, Storytrails, Green Space and Dark Skies regional projects.

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseen and delivered Our Place In Space (OPIS) on behalf of SOLACE at Derry, Belfast, Cambridge, Liverpool, Cultra, including pivoting to incorporate a 5th site at Liverpool as the opportunity arose. Highlights included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 1M live visitors to the site App downloaded in 150 Countries 28,000 students and 2,200 teachers directly engaged with 5 new learning resources 1 new Minecraft world 1 World Record smashed! Note: above figures accurate at end of 4th site, the project is ongoing at 5th site, Ulster Transport Museum. The trail is gifted to NMNI to be displayed at the Ulster Transport Museum
<p>City Recovery, Reopening the City and support for businesses</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revitalisation Fund: Physical interventions 	<p>Delivery of a DfC funded Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme. A Mid-Term Covid recovery revitalisation programme Evaluation Report was presented to the August CG&R committee. A final report is currently under development and due to be complete by 31 March reporting into CGR Committee in June 2023. This will provide an annual review of all funded projects within the programme. An extension of time, subject to sign off has been granted in relation to Entries Phase 2 and Castle Place Kiosk until end of September 2023.</p> <p>We have also supported the 'Vibrant Business Destinations' scheme across the city, securing resources for and working with local business associations outside of the city centre.</p> <p>The Vacant to Vibrant Pilot Grant scheme was launched and is currently 8 months into a 24-month pilot timeline. Over 200 application packs were issued, and officers are currently working with a number of applicants, providing support to develop their proposals. A total of 6 applications have been approved (1 subject to Council ratification in April 2023), a further 26 applicants are actively engaging with officers to finalise their applications with an expectation that these will be submitted by Summer 2023.</p>
<p>City Development and Investment</p> <p>Senior Responsible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regeneration Programme Framework City Centre Investment Fund Institutional investment partner Provide Council input and strategic direction to major regeneration and development projects 	<p>Work is underway in relation to the commissioning of a Lobby & Advocacy Paper for Place Based Regeneration Funding and the development of a Regeneration Framework and Project Prioritisation Process. A wider engagement plan has been developed including Party Group Leaders, MPs, Permanent Secretaries and other stakeholders. This is aligned to the ongoing work via City & Organisational Strategy to develop a project pipeline for Council aligned to funding opportunities and city priorities.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to progress city wide strategic opportunities relating to the use of BCC assets • Progress the future use options for 2 Royal Avenue • Continue to promote the Sixth • Complete assembly of optimal site for development of Belfast Stories project • UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum 	<p>An Expression of Interest was launched mid-March 2023 to attract an Institutional Investment / Development partner in respect of Council lands for housing-led regeneration as part of the ongoing concept regeneration plans (including PADS).</p> <p>Officers continued to actively engage on major private sector led regeneration schemes through the established Project Reference Groups.</p> <p>While an application to the Levelling Up Fund (Round 2) was unsuccessful for 2 Royal Avenue, formal feedback was received, and work continues on the proposal of its long-term use including a focused piece on end user models and identifying potential funding. Work on the Sixth was also progressed via the BelTel LLP. The council continued to lead the UU Community Campus Regeneration Forum, including its transition in line with the opening of the Belfast campus.</p> <p>The council continued to work with DfI and DfC on the finalisation of the Bolder Vision Strategy with the emerging draft Strategy approved by the CG&R Committee in August 2022. Departments were engaged, in the absence of Ministers through the oversight and steering groups involving the CX and Perm Secs from DfC and DfI. DfI accelerated the Belfast city centre element of the BMTP to the Climate Action Plan to model options for the provision of the strategic transportation network and to help inform the emerging capital project list.</p> <p>Strategic Site Assessment for Council lands have been undertaken on a city-wide basis with an initial assessment for housing-led regeneration purposes. A similar exercise was undertaken (as part of a Housing-Led Regeneration Group with NIHE and DfC) in respect of other public sector lands. Proposals and next steps to be brought to a Members' Workshop.</p>
<p>Increase tourism spend through sustainable tourism products</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start delivery of the 10-year Tourism recovery plan "Make Yourself at Home" including: • Positioning Belfast • Sustainable Tourism • Deliver the Annual Events programme 	<p>We have delivered a number on initiatives to help Grow tourism sustainably in Belfast. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An Accessible Tourism Programme to improve the visitor experience and value of the 'purple pound'. ▪ Implementation of Food and Drink Tourism plan to increase associated spend and improve the experience, while strengthening Belfast's position as a food and drink destination. ▪ Ongoing scoping of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme to extend tourism's economic benefits to communities beyond the city centre. ▪ Working to improve our Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI). Belfast is now rated 8th in the world among 65 other destinations. ▪ Promoting the Green Tourism Certification, which has resulted in 80% of hotel rooms; and ensuring that sustainability is fully integrated in all tourism / event planning.

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 46</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery of Conference Subvention Programme to assist in winning conferences and business events for Belfast. Belfast was named the world’s best conference destination for a second consecutive year this year. ▪ Working to Position Belfast as an attraction tourist destination with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland. This ensures Belfast is positioned as a Gateway to Northern Ireland and a must-see urban destination. ▪ Tourism & Belfast Stories teams working together to support Neighbourhood Tourism organisations to tell the key stories of the city. ▪ Securing Tourism NI product development funding to support new products such as Ceili at the Castle, Music Tours and music workshops. ▪ Mapping Council-owned and existing tourism assets against the city’s ‘Belfast brand’ and Tourism NI ‘Embrace the Giant Spirit’ brand to deliver on experiential tourism in Belfast. ▪ Further development of the Neighbourhood Tourism Framework to bring to Committee in June 2023 for consideration. ▪ Catalyst 2: Make Yourself at Home ▪ Strategic and operational planning is ongoing for the delivery of the One Young World event in October 2023. ▪ Other major bid-for events have been progressed during the year including the Fleadh Cheoil (in partnership with the Ards Comhaltas) and the European Football Championships in 2028 (decision due Sept. 2023). ▪ Christmas 2022 was successfully delivered. The analysis, learning and future actions from the St Patrick’s Event pilot, were agreed by June’s CG&R committee, and the 2023 event is imminent. ▪ The Maritime Festival development continues, in consultation with partners, with the next edition planned for September 2023. The funding process for local sports events has recently concluded.
	<p>Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ‘Starting a Business’ services • Support social enterprises and co-operatives • Provide ‘Growing a Business’ services

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
John Greer		<p>Business start-up activity engaged 503 individuals, with 476 developing a business plan through 'Go For It', supporting the creation of 299 jobs. 70 had additional 1-1 mentoring and financial support to help kick start their business.</p> <p>Direct support for 60 Social Enterprises and Co-operatives included one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance. Four of these were new co-operatives. Overall Social Enterprise and Co-operative Support included 25 events/workshops with over 300 attendees. To increase awareness of the sector, we also targeted 50 young people in community settings. Our focused engagement with co-operative organisations also continued, this included 10 events, with 42 attendees.</p> <p>The £50,000 Social Economy Incentive Fund launched in September 2022 to support social economy businesses business growth plans. In recognition of these efforts, Belfast City Council won 'Council of the Year' at the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland Awards in October 2022.</p> <p>Through our business growth support, we have assigned mentors to over 246 businesses and delivered 20 workshops with over 265 attendees. Helped has bene provided for growth strategies, increasing resilient, enhance digital and online presence, improve tendering skills and accessing specialist support for businesses with high growth potential.</p> <p>We also delivered a large-scale Opportunity Export event with over 70 attendees and speakers from Invest NI, DIT and Intertrade Ireland. We also launched the Digital Surge programme with the other councils to help businesses with innovation and digital transformation. 22 Belfast-based companies have benefitted.</p> <p>In January 2022, we launched the Vibrant Business Destinations programme in partnership with DfC. This aims to drive footfall and create vibrancy in areas outside of the city centre. Four associations have now been supported to develop area-based action plans.</p> <p>The Innovation Factory is now at 77% occupancy (yearly average) and the operator has ambitious plans to increase those numbers in 2023/2024 with interest from sectors including TV/film, digital, engineering, and green tech. Over the year, 78 businesses engaged in masterclasses and events at the centre, 38 work placements were facilitated, and a series of school engagement activities took place involving 223 young people.</p> <p>The Way to Scale programme supported 40 individuals to transform their businesses and grow to turnover of more than £3million. 10 were supported to participate in a one week residential at MIT and access a peer-to-peer workshop series with Catalyst. We also put in place support for businesses in creative and digital industries and financial services sectors to build capacity and access opportunities for finance to support the growth and development of their businesses. 90 new companies will be supported through these services.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Promote and market the city internationally</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning the City to Compete Provide the Investing in Belfast service 	<p>Delivery of a public private Renewed Ambition Programme is on-going across the 5 pillared structure of activity aimed at marketing the city locally, nationally and internationally across events, engagement & advocacy, communications and repository.</p> <p>An Invest in Belfast website has been set up with information on Belfast, the key growth sectors and specific investment and development opportunities. A Marketing Prospectus of key public and private investment opportunities across the BRCD region has been prepared.</p> <p>A 'Building Impact' report on the social, environmental and wider economic impact of the built environment was completed and was presented to the Social Policy Working Group in August 2022. Work is on-going to develop an internal action plan to address the report recommendations relevant to BCC.</p> <p>Monitoring and analysis of valid planning applications to inform the City Development Tracker continues on an ongoing basis. Work has progressed on integrating the city investment narrative into the Invest in Belfast website to align the messaging with wider Council led initiatives and other stands of work. The new CRM system was completed and is currently being rolled out.</p> <p>Through our investor support activity, we continued to provide advice and connections to potential investors.</p>
<p>Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue development work with our seven partners arising from Dublin-Belfast corridor programme. 	<p>The strategy and action plan have been finalised. The partnership members have agreed to jointly fund two staff resources to drive delivery against priority actions in 2023.</p> <p>€150,000 funding was secured from the Shared Island Fund to conduct a feasibility study on regional Innovation Hubs. This was complemented by a successful joint application with Dublin City Council to the Shared Island Fund for a €250,000 award to conduct a feasibility study on circular economy facilities in both cities.</p>
<p>Future City Centre Programme and Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy</p> <p>Senior Responsible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to progress the Future City Centre Programme and priority areas under the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy Regeneration Projects Developer Contributions 	<p>We have developed Future City Centre Programme priority actions across the 6 pillars of Regeneration & Connectivity (including city centre living and Bolder Vision); Business & Investment; Positioning the City to Compete; Vibrancy & Culture; Innovation & Digital; Clean, Green, Inclusive & Safe.</p> <p>We have continued to work with city stakeholders through the Community Planning Partnership's City Development Board and relevant sub-structures. This included ongoing engagement with partner organisations and co-chairing the Community Campus Regeneration Forum (CCRF), including its transition in line with the opening of the Belfast campus.</p> <p>We established new City Centre Governance structures and continue to meet and progress priorities and address issues. This has included initial work to develop appropriate metrics and measurements for the overall Future City Centre programme. A cross-department was delivered to facilitate officer engagement</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p>		<p>on the scoping of this workstream to further scope and refine the pillars of the FCC programme and objectives.</p> <p>Externally the Future City Centre Leadership Group has considered the draft emerging action plan in respect of the FCC as part of the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and has agreed leads for delivery of associated actions.</p> <p>A number of priorities and projects identified within Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy continue to be progressed via BCC and other private /public sector partners. The 2022/23 regeneration tracker was presented to the CG&R Committee in March 2023.</p> <p>The Joint Regeneration Group (BCC, DfC, DfI, NIHE) met on a monthly basis to co-ordinate the public sector approach to Housing-Led Regeneration, A Bolder Vision, public realm projects and the FCC programme. DfI have provided Council with a Letter of Offer to fund the “Grey to Green” programme in March 2023 (subject to capital approvals), awaiting LoO in respect of Active Travel Enabling funding proposal and as reported to March 2023 CGR Committee the South West Quarter Revitalisation proposal has received a LoO (£250k) from DfC this project and subject to final approval works will commence shortly, along with the opportunities within the BCCG fund and proposals within the Linen Quarter BID 5 year business plan further investment is planned in the area, noting that the proposal Council submitted to DfI under the Blue and Green Fund has been withdrawn due to the information outline at Committee in March 2023.</p> <p>The council continued to lead the Community Planning Partnership’s City Development Board with a focus on the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated emerging draft action plans aligned to the newly identified priorities of the City Development Board, ie, Housing Led Regeneration; Future City Centre Programme and Citywide Regeneration; Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel.</p> <p>Developer Contributions (historical contributions) continue to be monitored and scheme proposals utilising the contributions are being progressed. This includes progressing the 5Cs public realm developer contributions catalyst project with DfC (with additional funding of £162k for a 5C’s Revitalisation Project underway), progressing to RIBA Stage 3 for Little York Street / Little Patrick Street for the utilisation of developer contributions, working with DfC on a proposal for a catalyst Blackstaff Square Public Realm project and progressing delivery of contributions aligned to the Great Victoria St/Shafsbury Sq Project.</p>
<p>City Infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take forward the findings from the Belfast Infrastructure Study 	<p>Ongoing work to finalise the Belfast Infrastructure Study. Continue to provide civic leadership and strategic input to the major city infrastructure projects and represent Council on citywide boards, enabling, facilitating, and influencing major infrastructure development and investment.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to champion the Council's preferred position for major infrastructure projects and Continue to represent Council and play a key role on city wide boards 	
Belfast Hills and North Foreshore Senior Responsible Officer: John Walsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast Hills (and Zoo) 	<p>A full restricted update was taken to CG&R committee in February 2023. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of Q3 the zoo had welcomed 184k visitors. This is 14k higher than the five-year average. The summer welcomed above average footfall, although September to November experienced lower footfall than expected. The current cost of living and fuel crisis may have contributed to lower footfall during off-peak season. The Zoo was open to the public as normal throughout Q3 and re-launched its Junior Keeper experience in November. Several zoo initiatives, including interactive animal experiences, unfortunately, continue to remain unavailable. In this quarter the zoo friend's community group celebrated their 25th anniversary and received charity status from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.
Belfast Stories Senior Responsible Officer: Wendy Langham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete OBC 1 Departmental Review Progress the acquisition of the 2 additional smaller properties Procurement and appointment of IDT / EDT to progress the concept design Progress the collection of Belfast stories Continue stakeholder and community engagement including consultation and EQIA Deliver 2022-23 communication programme Progress OBC 2 / RIBA 2 and Establish Benefits Framework and monitoring and evaluation system. 	<p>The assembly of the two remaining properties has been completed. Council is in ownership of all properties at the site. The next key step is to complete the abandonment of the adopted alleyway off Kent Street (which is in progress).</p> <p>The procurements for the professional services teams (Integrated Design Team (IDT), Interpretative Planning and Exhibition Design Team (IPEDT) and Project Management and Design Assurance Team (PMDAT) are underway, with the prequalification stage now completed. Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage is to commence in March with appointments of the teams expected summer 2023.</p> <p>A city-wide Stories Audit is underway and due for completion in May 2023. An update will be provided to key stakeholders, including elected members, on the audit findings.</p> <p>A 14-week public consultation exercise has been completed with the findings and recommendations, including feedback on the draft EQIA and Rural Needs Assessment, currently under review. A summary report will be prepared for and brought to CGR Committee in June 2023.</p> <p>An engagement plan and communications plan has been developed and updated in line with consultation feedback. The plan will include consultation and engagement activities in 2023/24.</p> <p>Belfast Stories social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) support ongoing online engagement.</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
		An action plan for 2023 to support Inclusive Growth has been developed to ensure this area of work is considered at the project development stage.
<p>Access, Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 51</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Travel and Connectivity • A Bolder Vision for Belfast • City Transport Plan • Belfast Urban Greenways (BUG) • Sustainable Travel Initiatives • Belfast Bikes • Car Parking Strategy • Access to the Hills/ Connectivity Programme 	<p>An update on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable travel was presented to the CG&R Committee in February 2023. This included the ongoing work across Council and with stakeholders in respect of the Committee’s strategic priority of Access, Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel as set out in the CGR Committee Plan, and alignment into the Corporate Plan and refresh of the Belfast Agenda including the new Connectivity, Active & Sustainable Travel subgroup. Work is underway to arrange an All Party Round Table regarding Connectivity, Active and Sustainable travel as agreed by the Committee.</p> <p>We have continued to engage with DfI on the development of the BMTP.</p> <p>Ongoing delivery of the DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation funded covered city-wide cycle stands, 21/22 DfI B&G funded Active Travel Enablers including the launch of secured cycle parking at CastleCourt in October 2022, and proposals submitted on Active Travel Enablers for DfI B&G 22/23 funding. The Active Travel Hub at QUB has been delivered and is now operating successfully. The Cathedral Quarter Active Travel Hub has been delivered and was launched in October 2022.</p> <p>The Sustainable Travel E- Cargo Pilot launched in the first half the year, with the operator presenting to Committee in September 2022.</p> <p>As agreed by CG&R Committee in June 2022 the refresh of the Car Parking Strategy is deferred pending the finalisation of the LDP & BMTP.</p> <p>BCC continues to work with DfI and DfC on finalisation of the Bolder Vision Strategy with the emerging draft Strategy approved by CG&R Committee in August 2022. Ongoing engagement with departments, in the absence of Ministers through the oversight and steering groups involving the CX, and Perm Secs from DfC and DfI. DfI have accelerated the Belfast city centre element of the BMTP to the Climate Action Plan to model options for the provision of the strategic transportation network and to help inform the emerging capital project list. Updates will be provided to CG&R as this work progresses.</p> <p>Council Officers continue to develop a pipeline of projects aligned to A Bolder Vision to identify, prioritise and work up catalyst connectivity projects to attract external funding.</p> <p>Belfast Bikes - Three new stations were introduced at Lisnasharragh and Olympia Leisure Centres and the Kennedy Centre. Work continues to install a new station at the Waterworks and develop additional stations in line with the directions from CGR and SP&R in June 2021.</p> <p>Final end of year figures will not be available until early in the new financial year, but there were 76,565 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q3. ‘Pay as you go’ (PAYG) remained the most</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
		<p>popular form of membership, accounting for 88% of users.</p> <p>Officers continue to engage with DfI on the delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network and the BMTP with regular updates provided to the CG&R Committee, and at the proposed All-Party Connectivity & Active Travel Workshop.</p>
<p>Educational underachievement</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p> <p>Page 52</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to engage in development work with partners/providers to refine support for those young people, most at need, to progress through education and into employment. ▪ Provide a Youth Support programme to assist young people to build confidence and develop capabilities to enter and progress on a career pathway. ▪ Continue to deliver our GCSE support programme to increase the % attaining grade C and above in English and Maths and ▪ Work with the Department for Education and the Education Authority to explore how the Fair Start report's recommendations can be implemented in Belfast. 	<p>Since September, our GCSE support programme has engaged 281 young people who had been identified as being unlikely to achieve at least Grade C in GCSE English and Maths without support. Through the entire 2022/23 academic year, this programme is expected to support 365 young people.</p> <p>We also supported 170 young people through our Youth Support Programme. These participants either already have or are at risk of dropping out of the education system, employment or training. So far, 87 have completed accredited training and 65 are undertaking essential skills qualifications. This programme is due to complete in summer 2024 with an expected 55% achieving a positive destination, either into training, education or employment.</p>
<p>Access to employment</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: John Greer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver Employment Academies in priority sectors ▪ Provide match-funding for ESF projects ▪ Deliver Enterprise Pathway with intensive, person-centred support for those further back in the labour market and ▪ Support job brokerage and career events. 	<p>Since April 2022, we have had over 700 places on Employment Academies, utilising Council's and additional resources through the Labour Market Partnership, Learning & Work Institute's New Futures programme and the Community Renewal Fund. On average, 93% of those who started an Employment Academy successfully completed, and for those, we achieved an into-work rate of 75%.</p> <p>The most attended academies were in logistics, education, construction and upskilling academies for people in traditionally low-paid sectors.</p>
<p>Upskilling opportunities</p> <p>Senior</p>	<p>Strategic Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver the Belfast Employability and Skills Action Plan as part of the Belfast LMP, including: 	<p>The Gateway to Choices Service is being co-designed with key stakeholders such as the JBO Network, Careers Service, VCSE sector etc. Engagement with the LMP partners identified the need for independent advice and guidance outside of mainstream JBO support for those who are out of work and non-job ready</p>

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
Responsible Officer: John Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quickly back to work: for those who have been or are risk of being made unemployed, especially as a consequence of the pandemic ○ Increasing Opportunities: Empowering those furthest from the labour market to succeed through quality support, especially those who will be considered long-term unemployed ○ No-one Left Behind: Targeting of those disadvantaged groups ○ Catching Up: Supporting access to careers pathways, re-skilling and upskilling for those unemployed as well as those on low incomes ▪ Implement a labour market observatory to review the impact of interventions and inform future investment. ▪ Build on the `test and learn` career pathway work for those furthest from labour market in digital and green sectors in support of BRCD and the wider 10x economic vision. ▪ Deliver the Digital Badges project to help recognise the non-accredited skills of individuals and support employers to think about how to broaden the talent pool by including those individuals ▪ Continue to ensure employability and skills issues are properly integrated into the Belfast Business Promise, Developer Contributions, Social Value Policy and the BRCD. 	<p>such as long-term unemployed and the economically inactive. The Gateway will support up to 1,200 people in the coming year. Participants will engage on a voluntary basis and delivery will commence in April 2023.</p> <p>Officers have now completed the scoping and preparatory work and secured additional resources from DfC to establish the Labour Market Observatory.</p> <p>All Employment Academies are now digitally badged as an alternative validation of achievement, with 779 badges issued to participants. In addition to this, the Council is working with 6 organisations in the city to use Digital Badging for their own participants/employees.</p> <p>Following December Committee’s approval, indicative funding awards have been issued to 6 providers to pilot Bridges to Progression schemes. These are for young people, aged 16-17 years who are at risk of disengaging from Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work due to their personal circumstances.</p>

COMMUNITY RECOVERY

Strategic Priority	2022-23 Deliverables	Progress at Year End
<p>Maximising housing development and regeneration opportunities</p> <p>Senior Responsible Officer: Cathy Reynolds</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 54</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCC Housing Led Regeneration Programme • City wide strategic opportunities • Strategic City Centre Cluster Sites • City Centre Living Vision 	<p>Detailed work has been completed on several city centre cluster sites (from the Strategic Site Assessment work) including Concept Regeneration Plans for each of the cluster sites; ongoing engagement with other public and private sector neighbouring landowners; the adoption of a placemaking approach to development and progress through the planning process through Pre-Application Discussions (PADs), as well as site and title due diligence. This forms part of the overarching Institutional Investor / Development Partner approach and the launch of the Expression of Interest in mid-March 2023.</p> <p>Work on the city-wide strategic site assessments was progressed via the agreed mechanism under the Housing Led Regeneration Group (established under the Community Planning Partnership’s City Development Board). To date, BCC, NIHE and DfC lands have been mapped via LPS and these have been overlaid with records from the Urban Capacity Study and Housing Monitor to identify those with housing potential. A number of these sites have been assessed at both organisational level (including Council assets) and via the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) subgroup to consider operational requirements, planning, title, etc and consideration as to how lands can best be assembled (including adjoining private sector ownerships). A Member’s Workshop is to take place to consider potential for identified BCC sites (and other public lands as appropriate). A similar mechanism for mapping of other public sector lands has also been progressed via the Housing Led Regeneration Group.</p> <p>This EoI process is seeking an institutional investor / development partner to fund, develop and manage as appropriate housing led regeneration schemes at scale, (including affordable /social) working in partnership with Council and with a placemaking approach.</p> <p>The City Centre Living Vision has been completed. This followed extensive consultation and ongoing engagement, and with recommendations and next steps to be brought back to CGR Committee shortly. Ongoing engagement with the private sector, NIHE, Housing Associations and BCC Planning Service to identify challenges to development, especially city centre residential development and consideration of options to address such challenges.</p>