

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 13th March, 2024

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nic Bhranair (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff, Councillor S. Douglas;
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Bunting, Canavan, Duffy, Flynn,
Garrett, Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe, McCormick,
McDowell, McDonough-Brown, McKay, I. McLaughlin,
Murray and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. A. Ferguson, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager – Economy;
Ms. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor McMullan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 31st January and 7th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th March.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Douglas, Nic Bhranair and Walsh declared an interest in item 2.a) Visit Belfast Business Plan 2024-25, as they were on the Board of Visit Belfast but as this was a Council appointment, they did not leave the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

In relation to item 5.a) Draft response to ACNI strategy consultation, Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in that his mother worked for the Arts Council Northern Ireland and left the meeting while the item was under consideration.

Presentations

Visit Belfast Business Plan 2024-25

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. G. Lennon, CEO Visit Belfast, and Ms. M. McGivern, Chair of Visit Belfast, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

The representatives provided a summary of the Visit Belfast Business Plan 2024 - 25 which had been submitted in advance of the Committee for consideration. He summarised the tourism market in Belfast, together with community regeneration and strategic investment across the city. He explained the overall economic performance and highlighted that Belfast was ranked the 11th most sustainable destination in the world (GDS Index 2023), in the Top 5 destination to visit in the UK 2024 (Time Out), and Best conference destination in the world (C&IT Awards 2021, 2022, 2023)

He explained the consumer trends of the market included:

- Short shoulder season breaks;
- City breaks are back;
- Tech savvy and value driven consumers;
- Seeking digital simplicity;
- Escaping stress and monotony;
- Physical and mental wellbeing;
- Keen to meet the locals; and
- Conscious spenders expecting sustainability.

He described the positive growth outlook for tourism in Belfast and the three year growth targets. He pointed out that growth would not happen without investment; attracting business events, working with the cruise industry and driving off-peak demand. He advised that growth relied on an excellent visitor experience in order to maximise spend when visitors were in Belfast, and to drive repeat visits. He highlighted that growth should be managed responsibly, with minimal environmental impact.

He summarised their three year strategy 2024–2027 as follows: Grow - the value of tourism to the Belfast City region and its communities; Position - the Belfast City region as a front of mind destination for leisure visits, business events and days out; Experience - the experience for visitors by showcasing Belfast City region as a diverse and welcoming destination with a unique neighbourhood offer; Sustain - its approach to championing sustainability, pioneering impactful initiatives and celebrating Belfast's story.

Mr. Lennon advised that the key strategic focus areas included:

- Neighbourhood tourism;
- New ways of measuring impact;
- Belfast 2024;
- Accelerating digital innovation;
- Data driven decision making;
- Enhancing perceptions of Belfast amongst visitors;
- Increased collaboration;
- Telling Belfast's sustainability story; and
- Enhancing the visitor experience and touchpoints.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to neighbourhood tourism, local transport, Casement Park, staff training, social media, data capture, cruise ships and their sustainability, and the marketing of Orangefest.

The representatives noted the suggestions from the Committee to include Lagan Valley Regional Park in its marketing brochure, and the promotion of neighbourhood Parks.

During further discussion, the representatives advised that they would explore external marketing guides and follow-up on the suggestion to engage with the North Belfast Heritage Cluster.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee then considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the request for funding from Visit Belfast for the 2024-2025 financial year and to set out the organisation’s strategic development and operational delivery, focused on supporting tourism growth.**

Members should note that Visit Belfast will be in attendance at the Committee to present the detail of its 2024-25 plan.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the draft Visit Belfast business plan 2024-25. The overall funding requirement for Visit Belfast in the coming financial year has been taken account of in the revenue estimates that have already been approved by Council.**
- Approve and agree a funding allocation of £2,076,424 for 2024-25, subject to the development of a funding agreement, priority areas of activity and agreed targets.**

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Visit Belfast was established by Council as the principal destination marketing and visitor servicing organisation for the city of Belfast. Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities and targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It is a membership organisation with more than 460 partner businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works on behalf of its funders and partners and with a range of public and private partners including Tourism NI,**

Tourism Ireland and Belfast Chamber to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.

- 3.2 Visit Belfast is a public / private partnership. It's current Chairperson is *Marie-Thérèse* McGivern and Belfast City Council has four Councillor representatives on the Board: Councillor Sammy Douglas, Councillor Eric Harvey, Councillor Clíodhna Nic Bhranair and Councillor Séanna Walsh. Also represented on the board are members from the private, public and community sectors.
- 3.3 The tourism and hospitality industry in Belfast had been going from strength to strength as Belfast continued to drive the regional tourism economy. In 2019, in the last - published Local Government District tourism statistics by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), Belfast hosted 1.9m trips accounting for one third of all tourism trips to Northern Ireland and tourism spend amounted to £417m, 40% of Northern Ireland tourism spend. Council has worked with Visit Belfast over the past three years to rebuild city tourism which has resulted in Belfast's visitor economy re-emerging stronger and more competitive in a market context that has been challenging.
- 3.4 The inclusion of tourism as a key growth sector in the City Region Deal, acknowledged the fact that the sector is already a significant economic generator but recognises the need for significant additional investment in order to sustain growth. The Council's 10-year plan for tourism in the city: "*Make Yourself at Home*" sets out a vision for the future of tourism in the city that is centred on a people-based and sustainable model of development with a focus on: increasing the coherency of the Belfast experience; supporting quality authentic products; developing skills; and strengthening the city's position through marketing and communications.
- 3.5 Belfast's *Make Yourself at Home*, Tourism Plan recognises both the challenges to increase tourism and to maximise the positive impact that it can have on the city; whilst the updated Belfast Agenda has set a target to double the value of tourism from £400m to £800m per year by 2030. As the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) for Belfast, Visit Belfast has an important role to play in realising the vision for tourism. It is in this context that Visit Belfast has developed its new three-year strategy (2024-2027) and 2024-25 business plan to support and promote tourism activity in the city region in a way that enriches the visitor experience, encourages longer stays and achieves meaningful economic

and social impact for local people. Plans to promote and encourage the exploration of Belfast's neighbourhoods by visitors, thereby adding to our city-wide destination proposition, is a primary aim of Visit Belfast's new strategy. Further details of activities that will be undertaken as part of this plan with associated targets will be set out in the presentation to the Committee and are included at Appendix A.

3.6 Visit Belfast's new three-year strategy (2024-2027) and one - year business plan (2024-2025) are aligned to the four themes of Belfast's Tourism Plan: *Make Yourself at Home*, focused on delivering for the city:

- Grow the visitor economy in the Belfast city region in an inclusive and sustainable way
- Position the Belfast city region as a front of mind destination for leisure visits, business events and days out;
- Enhance the Experience for visitors by showcasing Belfast city region as a diverse and welcoming destination with a unique neighbourhood offer, and;
- Sustain its approach to championing sustainability, pioneering impactful initiatives, inspiring sustainable choices amongst visitors and clients and telling Belfast's sustainability story.

3.7 Tourism Outlook – despite the outlook being far from certain, tourism can contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the city with high potential to create jobs quickly and provide the economic impetus for the wider economy. The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local level continues to be impacted by the delayed resumption of surveys and statistics by NISRA. While tourism related surveys including passenger and household travel surveys have resumed, it remains unclear when we will see a full return of annual government tourism statistics particularly at a local level. However, a range of data analytics from a number of sources have provided valuable metrics illustrating recovery has been stronger than expected including for example:

3.8 The accommodation sector has seen strong performance, with hotel room occupancy between January and October 2023 at 79.2%. This represents 5.5% growth compared to 2022 and 5.1% growth compared to 2019. Furthermore, weekday occupancy during this period was 77% (seeing an increase of 7.1% on 2022 and +5.7% on 2019), while weekend occupancy was 84.9% (+2.1% on 2022 and +3.8% in 2019), pointing to the recovery of the leisure market in the city.

- 3.9 With two airports, Belfast Harbour as well as road and rail links, the city is driving overall tourism growth in Northern Ireland. This, combined with its extensive leisure and business offer, is attracting visitors. 52% of all visitors to Northern Ireland came to Belfast. Overall, the city accounts for 32% of all overnight stays in NI and the city generates 40% of the region's tourism spend. Since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourist consumer spend within Belfast has increased by £82 million (88%).
- 3.10 During and since the pandemic, tourism on the island of Ireland has performed particularly strongly, helping to mitigate the shortfall of international visitors. This has been particularly noticeable among visitors from ROI to NI. In fact, residents from the Republic of Ireland took over 1.1 million overnight trips to Northern Ireland in 2022 (51% increase from 2019 levels), staying for 2.6 nights (42% increase) and spending £233 million (65% increase). This is significant for Belfast because 3 in 4 visitors from the Republic of Ireland state that a 'City Break' is their preference when travelling to Northern Ireland.
- 3.11 The city has charted a strong recovery, yet challenges such as staffing, higher costs of doing business within the tourism and hospitality sector and the knock-on impact on hospitality opening hours in the city remain.
- 3.12 Priorities outlined in Visit Belfast's business plan 2024-25 include:
- Directly deliver on the ambitions and priorities set out in *Make Yourself at Home* tourism plan for Belfast through key strategic focus areas of Neighbourhood tourism; new ways of measuring impact; Belfast 2024; Accelerating digital innovation; Data driven decision making; Enhancing perceptions of Belfast amongst visitors; Increased collaboration; Telling Belfast's sustainability story; and Enhancing the visitor experience and touchpoints.
- 3.13 Operational Targets for 2024-25: based on projected levels of growth in 2024-25, Visit Belfast is proposing the following targets for 2024-25 as agreed by their board:

<u>Total Output</u>	<u>Target</u>
Leisure Tourism Bed nights	350,000 bed nights
Leisure Tourism Day trips	200,000 day trips
Business Tourism Bed nights	95,200 bed nights
Business Delegates	34,000 delegates
Cruise Visitors	296,000 pax & crew
Visitor Enquiries	766,000 enquiries

<u>Economic Impact</u>	<u>2024-25 Target</u>
Leisure Tourism	£60m
Business Tourism	£35m
Cruise Tourism	£20m
Visitor Servicing	£18m

Visit Belfast Economic Impact £133m

Budget £4.5m

3.14 A detailed business plan has been submitted and reviewed by officers. The targets outlined will form the basis of key performance indicators for Council's 2024-25 funding agreement with Visit Belfast. Regular monitoring against targets will be included and these key performance indicators will relate to the trajectory for growth and align with the implementation phases for Council's tourism plan. This provides a basis for more effective monitoring of performance.

3.15 Financial & Resource Implications

In the current financial year, Belfast City Council's funding arrangement with Visit Belfast is £2,035,710. The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 9 March 2022, approved a multi-annual funding agreement for the 3 years from 2022-25 and an inflationary increase of 2% in Year 3 of the Business Plan which results in a funding allocation of £2,076,424 to Visit Belfast in 2024 / 2025

3.16 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

No specific equality or good relations implications. Visit Belfast also works with councils outside of Belfast, as part of the Regional Tourism Partnership."

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in the report.

Request to Present - Translink: Belfast Grand Central Station

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from Translink on the Belfast Grand Central Station at its meeting on 10th April to which all Members be invited to attend.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following six 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 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 3 Update

The Committee considered a report on the Quarter 3 financial position for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee including a forecast of the year end outturn.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Belfast Zoo - Quarter 3 Update

The Director of Economic Development summarised the Zoo performance during Q3 (October to December) of the 2023-24 financial year.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development advised that further details in relation to the capybara animal collection and the analysis of Social Media figures would be provided to the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the Zoo performance update report for the period October to December 2023; and
- Approved the inspection visit associated with the elephants’ transfer.

Belfast Bikes - Quarter 3 Update

The Director of Economic Development provided an update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in quarter three (1st October, 2023 – 31st December, 2023) of year 8 of operation.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development answered a range of questions on relation to vandalism, bike replenishment in busy areas and local distance marketing. He noted that further information would be provided on the new sponsor in due course.

One Member suggested that a list of current and planned docking stations in each area would be helpful.

The Committee noted:

- the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for Year 8 Quarter 3 (October - December) of the financial year;
- the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion;
- the update that the tender would be prepared for a procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme;
- the current status of appointing a new sponsor for the Public Bike Hire Scheme; and
- that a list of current and planned docking stations in each area would be collated and shared with the Committee.

A City Imagining Investment Programme: Cultural multi-annual grants Amendment

It was reported that a correction was required to the appendices which had been presented to the Committee on 10th January, 2024 relating to the award of cultural multi-annual grants funding.

The Committee noted the correction to Appendix 3 of the original report and approved the updated version.

Markets Update and St. George's Market business plan

The Senior Manager – Economy provided the Committee with an overview of the high-level annual business plan for St. George's Market for the coming year, together with the quarterly performance and financial update for the period to end December 2023, and information on the operation of the Christmas Market at the City Hall.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on city markets and note the progress against target on the St George's Market Business plan agreed at June 2023 Committee; and
- Approved the St George's Market business plan for 2024/25.

Euros update - official observer programme

The Committee noted the contents of report and approved the travel arrangements for the UEFA Official Observer Programme and the Champions League - Host City Activation as outlined within the report.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Housing Led Regeneration All Party Roundtable

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To seek approval in convening All Party Round Table meetings, across Members, on various strands of the Housing Led Regeneration programme.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked:

- i) to approve convening an All-Party Round Table regarding Housing Led Regeneration work strands across the city that will provide an opportunity for Members to have a focused and informed discussion around this strategic priority, with representation from Party Group Leaders or their nominees.**
- ii) Note the updates below in relation to the Inner North West Development Brief; the procurement of a Development Partner / Institutional Investor for the delivery of £630m GDV housing led placemaking regeneration at scale in the city; city wide strategic site assessments and the City Centre Living Vision.**

4.0 Main Report

4.1 All Party Round Table discussions

Members will be aware that Housing Led Regeneration is a strategic priority of this Committee as set out in the Committee Plan under ‘Maximising Housing Development and Regeneration Opportunities’, which aligns into the Strategic Priority of ‘Maximising Housing Development and Regeneration Opportunities’ as set out in the Corporate Plan. Of relevance to highlight is the further synergy to the refreshed Belfast Agenda and the priority theme of ‘Housing Led Regeneration’ under the area of ‘Our Place’. This strategic priority involves the commitment and input from a diverse array of stakeholders, including Council, DfC, other Government departments, NIHE and importantly

communities. This includes the work being taken forward by the Community Planning structures via the Housing Led Regeneration Group as part of the Belfast Agenda and via the City Development Board.

- 4.2 Following recent discussions between officers and Elected Members regarding various matters associated with housing led regeneration including city centre living and given how it cuts across various Committees and via the Community Planning process, it has been proposed that it may be helpful for Members to convene an All-Party Round Table meeting (with PGL or their nominees) to ensure they can see all this work holistically, which is not always possible via the current structures. It will provide an overview of the various streams of work underway including the work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group; NIHE, Housing Association, developer and investor discussions; planning; funding issues etc and where they feed into Council's strategic priorities and governance structures.
- 4.3 Members will be aware of various updates brought to Committee in relation to housing led regeneration activities and by way of very brief update on some of these, the following is highlighted:
- As reported to this Committee in September 2023 (subsequently SP&R Committee 2023) the Inner North West Development Brief for lands at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St was being reissued following input from DfC (as landowner of part of the lands) and NIHE. Members will recall that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decisions of September '23 the reframed Brief has now been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return in June 2024.
 - Development Partner / Institutional Investor: Following the Housing Led Regeneration Programme update to this Committee and agreement at SP&R Committee in September 2023, Council launched the process which seeks procurement for a long term partner for the delivery of £630m GDV housing led placemaking regeneration in October 2023. As Members will recall this includes the inclusion of significant identified Council lands in the city centre, as part of a multi-site

residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity, with the potential for further sites across the city to be identified over the course of the partnership. Through this process Council are seeking a long-term partner to fund, develop and where appropriate to own and manage assets delivered through the partnership as part of a comprehensive regeneration scheme. The process is in line with the scheduled procurement programme. The Selection Questionnaire and de-selection stages have recently concluded, with 3 bidders now progressing through to the imminent Competitive Dialogue stage. The process is continuing in line with the procurement programme and is currently on schedule, with recommendations to be brought back to Members later in the year and with prior updates as this progresses.

- **City Wide Strategic Site Assessments (SSA Phase 2):** feasibility assessment including planning appraisals are currently being undertaken and as previously agreed by Members these will be brought to Area Working Groups, with updates to Area Working Groups from May onwards. It is worth noting that this forms part of wider work with the Housing Led Regeneration Group which is also assessing other public sector lands inc NIHE and DfC lands and this wider assessment work will also be brought to Members aligned to the governance mechanisms for the other public sector bodies.
- **City Centre Living Vision:** As reported to this Committee and referenced also to the Committee Workshop in January 2023 on City Centre Living, the City Centre Living Vision work has now completed. This is supporting an evidenced based approach to building a sustainable city centre residential vision; producing clear recommendations acknowledging the role of Council and its partners in delivering this vision; recognising the current and emerging social, demographic, economic and political landscape of the city and region; considering demand, supply, community and social infrastructure, urban design, viability and case studies from elsewhere. The summary findings and recommendations on this City Centre Living Vision will be brought to the proposed All Party Round Table.
- It is worth highlighting that there are a significant number of consented residential units / schemes that have come through the planning system in the city centre particularly, and that these have not progressed

- for various reasons including issues around policy, viability, infrastructure etc, many of which are out with Council's responsibility, however the proposed roundtable will provide an opportunity to discuss these matters with Members.

4.4 There are internal and external plans that aim to drive forward housing led regeneration in the city and the Belfast Agenda is key to focusing on these priorities and setting out measurable actions that will be delivered by Community Planning partners. As Members are aware the refreshed Belfast Agenda and supporting action plans were endorsed recently by Council at the beginning of March 2024, and that under the auspices of Community Planning a Housing Led Regeneration Group was established with the purpose of; *Supporting integrated planning and greater collaboration across partners in relation to the assessment and identification of city-wide public-sector lands to facilitate housing led regeneration, as well as identifying potential strategic private sector land opportunities, either on their own or in conjunction with adjoining public sector owned lands, as well as;*

Exploring mechanisms to establish partnerships for development of homes and ways of investing in housing throughout the city, as well as identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions and to assign route map and parties to help overcome these identified barriers.

4.5 This Group currently includes representatives from BCC, NIHE, SIB, DfC and LPS and is chaired by the Chief Executive of the NIHE. The proposed Roundtable will provide an opportunity to update on the work of this HLRG and including barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

4.6 Key to the successful delivery of the of the priorities for Housing Led Regeneration as set out in the Belfast Agenda and Council's Corporate Plan is the ability of Council to collaboratively work with external public and private sector partners in relation to strategic opportunities and overcoming challenges. It is important to note that whilst housing led regeneration is a strategic priority of this Committee and of Council, the powers and responsibility for a significant amount of delivery lie with DfC, including for example, housing, urban regeneration, community and voluntary sector development, social legislation.

4.7 Subject to Members approval, it is proposed to convene an All Party Round Table meeting focused on housing led regeneration, which will provide an opportunity for Members to have a focused informed discussion and to consider ongoing activity, potential opportunities and the work of the Community Planning, Housing Led Regeneration Group. This will build on the engagement of previous City Growth and Regeneration workshops on Housing Led Regeneration which took place in January 2022 and January 2023 and allow an opportunity for specific Committee Plan priority updates on for example City Centre Living, City Wide Strategic Site Assessments, City Centre Living Vision and Inner North West Development Brief etc, and wider issues around barriers and opportunities in respect to driving forward housing led regeneration.

5.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None

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

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

The Committee:

- i) Approved convening an All-Party Round Table regarding Housing Led Regeneration work strands across the city that would provide an opportunity for Members to have a focused and informed discussion around this strategic priority, with representation from Party Group Leaders or their nominees; and
- ii) Noted the updates in relation to the Inner North West Development Brief; the procurement of a Development Partner / Institutional Investor for the delivery of £630m GDV housing led placemaking regeneration at scale in the city; city wide strategic site assessments and the City Centre Living Vision.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Draft response to the Arts Council Northern Ireland strategy consultation

The Committee was reminded that the Arts Council Northern Ireland (ACNI) had opened a consultation on their [Draft 10 year Strategy for Northern Ireland](#), with the consultation period closing on the 5th April, 2024

It was reported that this was ACNI's first ten-year strategy and it had been developed over the course of 2023, including five months of extensive engagement with artists, arts organisations, key representatives across government, businesses and the wider public sector.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the strategy looked to address the challenges facing society and the sector. Some of the key issues facing the sector identified in the strategy included:

- Standstill funding;
- Return on investment;
- Short term funding cycles;
- Public value placed on arts and artists;
- Attendance and participation;
- Climate emergency;
- Representation and EDI;
- Employment in the arts; and
- Digital economies.

He advised that the draft Strategy outlined the ACNI's mission, visions and values aligned to delivery and the document had identified the key challenges and opportunities for growth with outcomes aligned to both the arts sector and society:

1. A more financially stable arts sector;
2. A sector that develops, looks after its people and is more inclusive;
3. A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation;
4. A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits and cares about the environment;
5. More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences; and
6. A sector that is more valued across society and government.

The Director of Economic Development stated that ACNI now wanted all interested parties to consider the draft proposal and saw the consultation as an opportunity to help shape the final strategy and next steps.

He highlighted that a summary of the questions posed and draft responses to each of these was attached in [Appendix 1](#) for consideration. He pointed out that the strategic alignment between Belfast City Council and the Arts Council Northern Ireland was essential for realising our shared vision of a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich Belfast. As a result, the draft response recognised the Council's ambition to support continued innovation, collaboration and partnership in advancing our mutual goals for the arts sector. He advised that the Council welcomed the recognition within the strategy that took cognisance of cross cutting objectives and shared resources that focused efforts and facilitated effective delivery.

During discussion, Members raised the importance of collaboration across the sector. The Director of Economic Development advised that he would include this in the consultation response.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of report and agreed to the submission of the draft response to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1, subject to the addition of the potential to foster collaborations with Arts Councils and cultural bodies across Ireland and the UK to increase participation in shared initiatives.

Chairperson