

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 10th August, 2016

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Graham (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, McGimpsey, Patterson and Spence; and
Councillors Beattie, Boyle, Craig, Dudgeon,
Hargey, Howard, Kyle, Magee,
Mullan, O'Hara, Reynolds and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor Collins.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Ms. N. Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development;
Mrs. L. Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives and
International Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Carson, McAteer and McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 8th and 27th June 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 July.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mullan declared an interest in Item 5a, viz. Lagan Canal Trust - Financial Support, in that she was a Member of the Board.

Matters Referred Back from Council/Notices of Motion

Verbal Update - Western Quarter

(Mrs. A. McGlone, Urban Development Officer, attended in connection with this item)

In response to a query which had been raised at the Council meeting on 4th July 2016, in relation to controlled leases, the Urban Development Manager provided the Committee with an overview and explained that, while it was not a defined term, controlled leases were often used to ensure that certain kinds of shops or bars were contained within one area of a city, such as the Temple Bar area in Dublin.

The Members were advised that, for controlled leases to be an option for the Council with regards to city centre development, it would have to own a large amount of land and that this was not the case.

Noted.

Support for Small and Medium Size Enterprises

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 At the Council meeting on 4th July Councillor McVeigh raised a Notice of Motion regarding support for small businesses which, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an overview of the support provided by the Council to new and existing businesses;**
- outline a number of emerging pieces of work, aligned to the Belfast Agenda, which aim to address the city’s deficit in business start-up rates and foster business growth by providing support to small businesses to help them become more productive and competitive; and**
- assist Members in considering the Notice of Motion.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the suite of support currently available from Council to support entrepreneurs and small businesses across the city and the plans to develop this activity further in order to address the start-up deficit and business competitiveness challenges for local companies**
- Consider the Notice of Motion raised by Councillor McVeigh at the July Council meeting and proposed actions to progress the key issues**
- Agree the proposed activities to take forward the key issues raised in the Notice of Motion (as set out in 3.19-3.30) and to receive further updates on progress at future meetings of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that the Belfast Agenda comprises four inter-related priority themes which will form the focus of work to help the city achieve its long term ambition for 2030 to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the city. Growing the Belfast economy, creating more and better jobs and improving skills and employability in the city have been identified as key priorities by stakeholders and residents in the development of the Belfast Agenda.

3.2 The ‘Business and Economy’ priority theme provides the focus for programmes of work that include the City’s role as the regional magnet for inward investment; the need to secure long term economic growth; the importance of our city centre not only for the city but for the entire region; the issue of skills and employability; the need to continue to build on the potential of tourism. This approach aims to support inclusive economic growth and social regeneration in the city. A key element of the programme focuses on indigenous business start-up and growth, including the development of the social economy.

3.3 Addressing the challenge

By way of context,

- NI business start-up rates are below both UK and Republic of Ireland.**
- At a regional level, business start-up rates in Belfast rank 9th out of the 11 Council areas**
- There are more than 10,000 businesses in Belfast (around 9,000 of which are VAT registered). More than 80% of these are micro businesses (less than 10 employees) and around 95% have 50 employees or less.**
- Current business start-up rates in Belfast are estimated at around 900 each year. A number of years ago, there were more business ‘deaths’ than ‘births’ – leading to a depleted stock of indigenous companies. However the figure has now stabilised and, in the last three years, the business stock has been growing.**

3.4 Members will be aware that, on 1 April 2015, Councils assumed statutory responsibility for a range of business start-up and growth functions. This meant that the budget attached to a number of programmes and activities previously run by Invest NI was transferred to the 11 Councils. Belfast City Council attracted £411,000 per annum of that funding to support activity to encourage enterprise. Recognising the challenge of low business start-up rates in the city, these resources are being used, along with Council funding and possibly EU funds, to develop a range of new

initiatives to help address the current deficit in business start-up rates.

3.5 The funding will also support indigenous businesses to become more competitive. Productivity levels in Northern Ireland constantly lag below other parts of UK and Europe. While some of this can be attributed to high levels of public sector investment in the region, there is a need to encourage local businesses to explore new markets, develop new products and invest in new ways of working in order to increase their productivity, which, in turn, will have a positive impact on regional statistics.

3.6 Overview of support currently provided by the Council is available on modern.gov.

The majority of the direct support to businesses is provided through the Development Department but the Council also interacts with and supports businesses across a range of operational areas including food health, licensing, building control and planning.

3.7 There is a range of business support available through the Council, from pre-enterprise (thinking about starting a business) through to support for start up and support once operational, depending on growth needs (export development, marketing support etc.). The table below provides an overview of current support from Council to businesses to enhance competitiveness and sustainability. Further details of these programmes is available on modern.gov.

| State of Development (Start-up/ growth) | Pre-enterprise | Business Start-Up | Business Growth Support (Generic) | Business Growth Support (Sector Specific) |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Council Support Activity | 'Start by Doing': city-wide programme open to 400 participants with the objective of signposting 200 to start-up activity | 'Go for it' programme: mainstream start-up programme to be delivered across all of Northern Ireland. Target of around 400 business starts annually in Belfast through this programme. | Business Growth Programme: multi-sector support programme for businesses in the early stages of development (including social enterprises). Indicative participant numbers each year: 135. Indicative new job creation target: around 70 each year | High Growth Sectors: support programme for 40 companies at early stage of development, focusing on job creation and new market development. |
| | | | Procurement Support Initiative:30 businesses (including social enterprises)> Helping companies to secure new business opportunities arising from public sector tendering. | Social enterprise: support available for up to 50 new/ existing businesses, including intensive 1-2-1 mentoring support for up to 30 participants |
| | Belfast Enterprise Academy: 25 participants annually, target of 10 participants to | | Innovation Factory £9million investment opening by September 2016. Accommodation space for up to 382 | Creative and Digital Industries: currently supporting 50 companies across two programmes aimed at early stage and |

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|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| | take part in business start-up support on completion | | employees: capable of housing more than 100 small businesses. Tenants will also receive intensive business support to help them grow. Exploring innovative was of packaging business space and business support e.g. free access for hot-desking space for time limited period for some new starts. | more advanced businesses. Focus on creating new business and growing markets for existing businesses. |
| | | | Link to employability Support: exploring opportunities to provide work placements and employment within small companies for individuals on our employability programmes | Retail: targeted support for neighbourhood-based retail groups (representing over 600 local businesses) as well as support for city centre retail groups through Belfast One, BCCM etc. |
| | | | BEN (Belfast Entrepreneurs' Network): monthly events on a range of topics of interest. Attendance by +30 micro businesses and those interested in starting a business | |
| Annual Participant Targets | 425 participants, of whom 210 to take part on start-up support | Targets of around 400 business starts in Belfast each year (subject to final appraisal to Invest NI) | Working with up to 300 businesses annually through targeted support interventions and more than 400 businesses annually attend BEN and other business events | Targeted intervention to support around 140 companies in key growth sectors. Also supporting more than 600 traders through local business associations outside of the city centre |

3.8 Specific issues to support small businesses

Taking account of the current support provided and plans to develop this, moving forward on the specific proposals in the Notice of Motion will require input and engagement with a range of partners. These issues are likely to form key elements of the engagement and commitments contained within the emerging Belfast Agenda and the ambitions to

grow the economy. The proposed way forward for each of the specific issues is outlined below.

3.9

1. Create a substantial citywide investment fund to incentivise start up and growth, for example, through low interest loans. The Council will engage with the Executive and Invest NI to see if the central government will match fund this initiative

A range of options is currently available to new and small businesses seeking finance to start or grow their business and there is an opportunity to promote and sign-post this support. This includes low interest loans promoted by professional bodies such as NI Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise NI and Federation of Small Business (FSB) through their banking relationships. Raising awareness of the opportunities is facilitated through local economic development stakeholders such as Invest NI, The Prince's Trust, Business in the Community, Belfast City Council and Enterprise Agencies.

3.10 To take this proposal forward, it is recommended that Council Officers engage with Invest NI to consider the viability of this proposal and the potential parameters for such an initiative. This might include:

- Consideration of future indigenous growth sectors for potential financial support, bearing in mind the longer-term sustainability of businesses and the more limited local pool of demand for some sectors and services
- Consideration of tiered levels of financial support to businesses based on growth potential, linking to priorities in the Programme for Government (PfG) (e.g. export activity)
- Consideration of governance mechanisms and potential displacement as a consequence of public interventions
- Potential to link start-up and business support programme participants more directly with financial institutions to help build relationships.

3.11

2. Engage with the Department for Finance and Land and Property Services on the potential to offer rates incentives, such as time limited rates holidays, to start ups or expanding SMEs

Members will be aware that LPS currently operates the Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) Scheme which is currently

under review. The Committee approved the Council's response to the consultation at their meeting in May 2016. The Council identified the value of a more targeted rates relief scheme in supporting regeneration – while encouraging business growth – and it recommended that officers continue to work with DoF colleagues to explore how this might develop.

3.12 Rates income is important in generating revenue to enable the Council to deliver its wider services. Work is currently underway to look at how technology can be used to reduce the amounts lost to the Council through issues such as non-collection of rates, which should help increase the overall income from business rates. One such project is the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition which the Council launched in June 2016, in partnership with the Department of Finance Land & Property Services (LPS) and Future Cities Catapult. The aim 'is to encourage the development of timely, accurate, cost effective and equitable solutions which can be implemented to maximise business rate revenue for the city.' The competition closing date is 28 August 2016.

3.13 There are other ways to look at how rates or overheads can be waived, particularly in the early days of a business's operation. One potential model is the one that is currently being explored at the Innovation Factory under the 'Pioneer 10' programme highlighted above. This would provide a fee waiver for a time-limited period to selected businesses to help them mobilise. It is proposed that this is kept under review and that we work with the operators to review the impact of this pilot programme. It is further proposed to review collaborative workspace provision in the city, to identify the need for additional investment in this area with the view to create new subsidised workspace and/or to consider ways in which the Council could add value to existing provision by encouraging the acceleration of business growth through subsidised support services.

3.14

3. Engage a number of experts, e.g. dealing with legal/financial issues, who can be loaned to a start-up or expanding SME free of charge for a 12-month period. Again, the Council will engage with the Executive to see if they will match fund this particular initiative

The Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) Committee meeting in June 2016, endorsed the Employability and Skills Framework and year one action plan. This includes a

commitment to working with the current Social Investment Fund (SIF) projects across the city to identify the learning from some of their investments, including the placement programmes operating in the West Belfast SIF area where long-term unemployed individuals undertake a paid 12 month work placement within a business. There is Council Officer and Member representation on the assurance groups for these programmes and an external evaluation of the programme is currently underway. Officers are engaging with the evaluators to draw out the early lessons learned, particularly in terms of how this is helping small businesses. It is proposed that this learning, as well as wider development work on the Employability and Skills Framework, is used to inform the development of a potential scheme of this type. Engagement with the Executive will take place to explore potential funding sources for the scheme.

3.15

4. Appoint a full-time Belfast Small Business/Social Economy Commissioner who will proactively work to help grow this crucial sector of our economy. This person must have extensive knowledge and direct experience of SME creation and expansion.

Officers have been working with colleagues in Dublin City Council to understand the rationale, process and impact of appointing a Small Business Commissioner in 2014. The Dublin project had a number of objectives:

- Promoting Dublin as a great start-up city and attract new investors, talent, start-ups and media attention to Dublin.
- Strengthening Dublin's character as a great place to start and scale a business through data and metrics, and by building more purposeful collaborations between stakeholders across the city
- Helping start-ups to internationalise more effectively by strengthening connections to diaspora, leading international accelerators, funding sources and soft landing zones.

The Commissioner and her work is supported by Dublin City Council and Enterprise Ireland, with private funding from the Ryan Academy.

3.16

It is proposed that further work is undertaken to consider programme evaluations and how other cities have used a 'champion or figure-head' role to lead on small business development and growth issues. This type of role would

provide a real focus and driver for change. Officers will also engage with Invest NI and other key partners (universities, Belfast Metropolitan College, Catalyst Inc) to ensure this would support their activity. This will also include consideration of the resource required to support the role and activity. It is proposed that, following this research phase, a report is brought to a future Committee meeting for information and agreement on the way forward.

3.17 Financial Implications

The approximate cost for providing the combined range of activities already in place is approximately £1.1 million annually. This is funded through the transferring budget from Invest NI (£411,000) along with Council resources and EU funds (decisions are still outstanding on a number of funding applications).

Any new activities will be financially appraised and will be considered as part of future reports to the Committee and the rates setting process.

3.18 Equality and good relations implications

Programmes have been designed to help remove barriers to participation and promote equality of opportunity. Future programmes and proposals will be developed in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Officer."

The Chief Executive provided the Committee with a brief overview of the support which the Council currently provided to support entrepreneurs and small businesses across the city.

The Head of Economic and International Development described to the Members the plans to develop the Council's activity further since assuming statutory responsibility for a range of business start-up and growth functions which had previously been delivered by Invest NI.

In response to a Member's question regarding the success of the recently appointed Small Business Commissioner for Dublin, it was agreed that the interim evaluation report would be circulated to the Members.

In response to a further Member's question regarding the wording which would be used in relation to the size of the businesses which were to be the intended focus, it was agreed that a future report would seek to clarify that.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report and agreed:

1. the proposed activities to explore the key issues raised in the Notice of Motion (as set out in 3.09-3.16) and to receive further updates on progress at future meetings of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee, including the implications for the rate setting process;
2. that officers would circulate the interim evaluation report on the Small Business Commissioner for Dublin;
3. that officers would seek to clarify, as part of future reports, the most appropriate wording to be used with regards to the size of the businesses which were to be the focus of the scheme; and
4. that party group briefings would be made available on the proposals before the end of October.

Regeneration

City Centre Development Team Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- **Update Members on the proposed community engagement strategy for the City Centre Development Team.**
- **Update Members on the City Centre Development Team staffing structure and ongoing commissioned work.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Comment on the proposed consultation approach and agree to the recruitment of a Community Engagement Manager (Officer) within the City Centre Development Team and extend the existing strategic advisory commission on a month by month basis until such times as the directorate has full operating capacity and;**
- **Note the staffing structure which is available on modern.gov.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 In April 2015 the SP&R Committee received an update on the development of City Centre & Regeneration Strategy, pending the creation of a dedicated team to ensure its effective delivery. The role of the City Centre team is to:

- **Implement the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy**
- **Drive the development of the city centre by leading and coordinating the delivery of projects and**
- **Input on strategic planning and policy matters relating to the city centre, ensuring Belfast is a prominent and resilient European city for investment.**

3.2 The Strategy is based on the following core principles:

- **Increase the employment population**
- **Increase the residential population**
- **Manage the retail offer**
- **Maximise the tourism opportunity**
- **Create a regional learning and innovation centre**
- **Create a green, walkable, cyclable centre**
- **Connect to the city around**
- **Shared space and social impact**

3.3 The Committee will be aware that the City Centre Strategy has been developed in the context of our new responsibility to produce a community plan for the city. The community plan, known as the Belfast Agenda, will provide the vision for Belfast created in partnership with key city partners, residents and community organisations.

3.4 The City Centre Strategy will play an important part in achieving the social, environmental and economic goals of the Belfast Agenda. The Council is committed to ensuring inclusive growth for the city and to ensure that people living in and around the city centre feel part of and benefit from city centre regeneration with commercial growth being balanced with social impact.

Proposal

3.5 To help ensure that people living in and around the city centre feel part of and benefit from the regeneration of the city, it is proposed that a Community Engagement post be recruited to the City Centre Team.

- 3.6** The main purpose of the role will be to;
- Develop, manage and implement the Community Involvement Strategy for the City Centre development area and the neighbouring communities;
 - Provide leadership, vision and direction to the Community Involvement Strategy including developing and implementing a range of local consultation exercises, ensuring effective engagement with local elected members, residents, stakeholders and partners;
 - Lead on capacity building of local residents to enable them to be fully involved in the regeneration and future development of defined projects within the Belfast City Centre;
 - Ensure that projects developed within the city centre connect with the surrounding neighbourhoods and ensure that opportunities for residents are realised.
- 3.7** The post holder would work across the council and in particular with the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department to seek to ensure all sections of the community are reached, and with the Economic Development and Belfast Employability teams to ensure that community residents can be signposted to the appropriate contacts for job opportunities.
- 3.8** The role will also connect with Planning and Place and Property and Projects and Strategic Planning units, linking to their community engagement processes. The role will support communities in the consultation processes around significant physical and social impact projects in the city centre, assisting in providing technical support to communities, to ensure that the project has maximum impact on the social, economic and environmental outcomes for the surrounding communities.
- 3.9** Key themes of the role will be neighbourhood connectivity and working to address both physical and perceived barriers between the city core and its surrounding neighbourhoods and ensuring that the social benefits of city centre developments are fully realised and captured. Underpinning this entire approach will be the concept of shared space and how it becomes inherent in the development of any policy or project.

City Centre Development Team

3.10 The Director of City Centre Development took up post in June 2016. In addition to the proposed Community Engagement Manager, a number of posts within the previously agreed functional model for the City Centre Development Team will be recruited in the coming months, with all appointments anticipated to be in place by December 2016. The posts include a Marketing Manager, a Finance Manager and two Senior Area Managers.

3.11 Committee previously received information about the commissioning/continuation of temporary resources via the Consultancy One framework to take forward city centre development initiatives until such times as a full in-house team is put in place, within the budget set for regeneration. This included the provision of real estate expertise through Deloitte and the production of various project proposals, economic analysis, going to market strategies, investment propositions, etc. As the team becomes populated over the next few months, the use of external support will not be required at the same level and hence the current arrangements will be phased down accordingly. However in order to maintain momentum and continuity, it is considered prudent during the next few months to enable some of these services to continue through the appropriate procurement frameworks.

3.12 Financial and Resource Implications

A budget exists within the City Centre Development function for the proposed posts and support as outlined above.

3.13 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.”

In response to a Member's question regarding the use of external consultants in progressing the city centre development initiatives, the Chief Executive advised the Committee that the Council needed expert assistance to develop financially viable projects, proposals, understand economic analysis, build and market investment opportunities in the city centre but that the use of consultants would decrease substantially when the Director of City Centre Development had a full complement of staff. In respect of the costs she confirmed that these had been included within the budget agreed during the rate setting process.

A Member queried whether the boundary for the city centre had been finalised. In response, the Chief Executive advised that, as part of the Belfast City Centre

Regeneration and Investment Strategy, an arc had been drawn around the city centre to include inner city communities, but agreed that a map would be provided for members at a future meeting.

A Member welcomed the recommendation to recruit a Community Engagement post within the City Centre Development Team, stating that it would help to connect the local communities which bounded the city centre with the ongoing regeneration works within it.

During discussion, a Member expressed concern that, given the final overall structure for the Council had not yet been agreed, they did not see the need to recruit another middle management post. At that point, the Director of City Centre Development clarified that there was an error within the report, and that she was asking for the Committee to agree to the recruitment of a Community Engagement Officer.

The Member questioned the need for such a post and suggested that the role of community engagement should be integral to all posts.

Moved by Councillor Reynolds,

Seconded by Councillor Dudgeon,

That the Committee agrees not to recruit a Community Engagement Officer within the City Centre Development Team.

On a vote by show of hands ten Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared carried.

After further discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the proposed consultation approach;
2. agreed not to recruit a Community Engagement Officer within the City Centre Development Team;
3. noted the staffing structure (without the Community Engagement post); and
4. agreed to extend the existing strategic advisory commission on a month by month basis until such times as the directorate had full operating capacity.

City Infrastructure Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to commission specialist support to develop a technical specification for the creation of a**

Strategic Infrastructure Plan for Belfast City-Region which will identify and prioritise future investment needs in key physical city infrastructure.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Agree that specialist support be secured to assist the Council to develop a technical specification for the commissioning of a Strategic Infrastructure Plan for Belfast City-Region;
- Note that a further report will be brought back to Committee in due course setting out a costed proposal for the commission of the Strategic Infrastructure Plan.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Infrastructure planning is a key element of creating sustainable communities and city centre, ensuring that appropriate provision is made for transport, communication and utilities networks, important community resources, tourism and business growth. It is also critical in supporting the continued growth of the Belfast City-Region, accommodating future development potential and realising the city's aspirations.

3.2 The term infrastructure has a very wide meaning and relates to all facilities and services which are necessary for successful communities and the city to function and compete. For the purposes of this work, it is suggested that the focus is 'physical city infrastructure' (e.g. transport; utilities including water, waste, flooding and energy; informational technology, telecommunications and digital provision; physical development schemes, environmental including open space/public realm etc). The actual scope of the Infrastructure Plan will be further defined as part of the detailed specification taking account of the linkages and synergies with the Local Development Plan.

3.3 There have already been numerous assessments undertaken around specific infrastructure needs within the City (e.g. Living with Water Programme) albeit there has not as yet been a supporting financial strategy put in place to deliver what is required. It is therefore intended that the proposed Infrastructure Plan will capture the work undertaken to date and seek to take a holistic assessment of what may be required over the next 10-20 years in the context of current pressures and future city growth aspirations. It will also set out planned investment proposals. A key element of the

Infrastructure Plan will be deliverability. The infrastructure plan should identify as far as possible:

- (i) Infrastructure needs and costs
- (ii) Phasing of development
- (iii) Responsibilities for delivery

- 3.4 The Director of Finance is also seeking permission at the August meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to commission a specific piece of work in relation to the financing of city infrastructure projects which will sit alongside and reinforce the deliverability of the Infrastructure Plan.
- 3.5 It is important to recognise the significance of developing a robust infrastructure plan for the city in terms of complementing and supporting the soundness of the emerging Local Development Plan. The importance of such an approach has already been demonstrated in other cities including Cardiff, Manchester, Leeds, and London in terms of ensuring that infrastructure planning and investment aligned with predicted levels and locations of growth.
- 3.6 It is not the intention to create a freestanding Infrastructure Plan which duplicates the function of existing organisations or plans, and which infrastructure providers would not be bound to deliver. Instead, it is a mechanism to ensure infrastructure providers – individually and collectively – are planning for broadly the correct level of future development. It is important that mechanisms are in place to ensure that good communication and engagement takes place between developers, NI Executive and Department for Infrastructure, the Council and funding partners to discuss the development of strategic sites.
- 3.7 As part of the pending series of meetings between a Council deputation and the new NI Executive Ministers, the Council will seek to secure the involvement of the new Department for Infrastructure in taking forward this work given their statutory remit for delivering key city infrastructure. It will also be important that engagement takes place with the private sector and key utility providers.
- 3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

The initial scoping work to develop a specification will be funded through the existing City Centre Development budget. On completion of this work, a costed proposal for the actual

commissioning of the Infrastructure Plan will be brought back to Committee for consideration and approval.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

The Chief Executive outlined to the Committee that expert assistance would be essential in order to develop a technical specification for the creation of a Strategic Infrastructure Plan for the Belfast City Region.

In response to a Member’s question in relation to the area which would be included within the Belfast City Region, she explained that it would be based on the economic geography of the city, that being the Belfast City Council area and the Council areas which bordered it, that is ‘the travel to work area’. She advised the Committee that there had already been engagement at a Chief Executive level with those Councils, and that a workshop was being planned for engagement at a political level. She highlighted to the Members that, while the scoping exercise had a low level of cost associated with it, they might wish to seek support from the other Councils involved when it came to the larger piece of work.

In response to a further Member’s question regarding how the implementation of the Infrastructure Plan would be financed, the Chief Executive outlined that the intention would be for the Council to use it as a lobbying tool to seek investment from both the Northern Ireland Assembly and the private sector. She provided the Committee with an example of the proposed Transport Hub, which relied on funding from the European Investment Bank, over which there was now less certainty. She explained that the Strategic Infrastructure Plan would illustrate that the Hub would be vital for the future growth of the economy of the Belfast City Region.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance and Performance

Financial Report - Quarter 1, 2016 - 2017

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the 2016/17 Quarter 1 position for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee was an underspend of £144,000, with the year end position being forecast as an overspend of £86,000. She explained that this was well within the acceptable tolerance, which was 3%.

She advised the Members that officers were reviewing the terminology used in future financial reporting to the Committees.

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

Corporate Risk Management

(Mr A. Harrison, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services, attended in connection with this item)

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services advised the Committee that the Chief Officers had recently undertaken a comprehensive review to identify and assess the main risks which existed in preventing the Council from realising its various objectives. He advised the Members that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had since agreed key actions which needed to be taken in order to manage those risks to an acceptable level and that they had been captured in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

He highlighted that the risk which was of particular relevance to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee was 'failure to deliver the City Centre Regeneration Strategy', and advised the Members that an update report on how that risk was being managed would be submitted to the Committee in December 2016/January 2017.

The Committee was advised that the enhanced process ensured that the Members were informed of the key corporate risks and that they were assured that those risks were being managed.

The Committee noted the report and the proposed process for risk reporting.

Tourism and Events

Lagan Canal Trust - Financial Support

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask Members to consider a request for funding from the Lagan Canal Trust for 2016/17.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider a funding request of £17,000 for 2016/17 from the Lagan Canal Trust, in support of its ongoing developmental work along the Lagan Canal.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

In 2006, Members approved the establishment of the Lagan Canal Trust, which had the long-term aim of re-opening the

canal from Belfast to Lough Neagh. The Trust engaged with a range of stakeholders including the Lagan Valley Regional Park, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the local authorities through whose areas the Lagan Canal runs, which includes Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

- 3.2 The Trust has highlighted the organisational activities in relation to the Belfast parts of the Lagan Canal, which is available on modern.gov.
- 3.3 Financial support from local government had previously been calculated by the Trust on the basis of the number of miles of canal within each authority's area. Prior to 2015, this was 18% of the total for Belfast and now stands at 22% following boundary changes (35% is within the Lisburn and Castlereagh area). This would equate to around £40,000 for Belfast.
- 3.4 Given funding constraints, Belfast City Council was only able to offer funding of £17,000 in the 2015-2016 financial year. It is proposed the financial contribution from the Council is retained at this level for 2016/17. It is anticipated that increased assistance from BCC officers can off-set some of the implications of the shortfall in funding.
- 3.5 The work of the Lagan Canal Trust aligns to the priorities set out in the Tourism Strategy.
- 3.6 This identifies:-
 - The core objective of the Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy is doubling the economic value of tourism by 2020. A fundamental element of this will be increasing the duration of visitor stays i.e. converting the day visitor to an overnight stay and increasing the number of nights spent in the City. A key element of this will be better connectivity and packaging across the City. Projects such as the Lagan Canal give visitors another reason to extend their stay in the City and add to the visitor experience.
 - The need to build capacity, especially in terms of improving accessibility. The Lagan Corridor, especially with the extended city boundary and connectivity to both the city centre and Titanic Quarter, has much potential to give visitors access to important cultural assets as well as a stunning historically important rural landscape.

- A 'city' approach – utilising the potential to increase opportunities or day trips for tourists based in the city. The Lagan Corridor is of the correct scale and interest to enable this.
- Urban sports – there is already substantial usage for both the gentle leisure pursuits, such as walking and cycling along the towpath and for more adrenalin sports like slalom kayaking, mountain biking linked to already developed trails. These are likely to appeal to the 'Mature Cosmopolitans'/'Time Together' and 'Young and Lively' market segments, respectively.

3.7 Financial Implications

£17,000 was allocated in the Development Department budget as part of the estimate setting process for 2016/17.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications

No specific Equality or Good Relations Implications.”

The Committee agreed to accede to the request for funding.

International Relations: Stakeholder group representation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to secure agreement on political representation on a number of Stakeholder Groups focusing on international relations activity.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the work underway and the timing and development of a new International Relations Framework
- Agree to invite the appointed consultants to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 14 September to discuss the draft framework and agree to wider engagement with the consultancy team, and organise a specific workshop for Members, in order to ensure that all views are reflected in the new framework
- Agree to the re-configuration of a number of Stakeholder/Working Groups on international activity, as set out in 3.12, in order to move ahead with existing

commitments and ensure partner buy-in to new activity.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that, in 2012, the Development Committee approved the development of a new, three year International Relations Framework. This framework identified a number of priority markets that Council should focus on, as well as a series of key objectives and activities within each market. The focus was on education, business and cultural linkages, collaboration and promotion.

3.2 Given the convening role played by the Council, and its new powers in relation to economic development, and in recognition of the need to ensure that the linkages were multi-layered, a number of Stakeholder Groups were established. These involved key representatives from business, academia, government and tourism sectors, who were working in and interested in the respective markets. Stakeholder Groups generally met on a quarterly basis and focused on both information sharing and collaborative planning for key events and were effective in market delivery of a range of events and initiatives.

3.3 The Stakeholder Groups currently operational include:

- *Boston Stakeholder Group* – currently chaired by the previous Lord Mayor (has not met since May 2016)
- *Nashville Stakeholder Group* – currently chaired by Councillor Carole Howard (nominated by Councillor Deirdre Hargey, as previous Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee). The group was also attended by Councillor Niall Ó Donnghaile and Alderman Guy Spence
- *China Stakeholder Group* – no political representation. Chaired by EU & International Relations Manager
- *India Stakeholder Group* – no political representation. Chaired by EU & International Relations Officer
- *Friendship Four Planning Group* – previously chaired by former Lord Mayor. Planning work for November 2016 event underway. The current Lord Mayor has committed to Chair this group.

3.4 In addition to these Stakeholder Groups, the EU Unit team previously brought together a cross-party grouping of Members to raise awareness of EU funding opportunities and policy issues. This led to opportunity for Council Members

to represent Belfast on European panels on best practice policy approaches. This group has not met since 2015 due to the fact that decisions on the key EU Structural Funds had already been taken by central government (with the exception of the Peace IV programme which is managed separately).

- 3.5 Work is currently underway on the development of the new International Relations Framework. As part of the commission, the consultancy team will engage with a range of key partners to help advise on how the Council can add value to the work of a range of strategic partners in terms of its international relations work.
- 3.6 Members will be central to this consultation and engagement. While the consultancy team will engage directly with the Chair and Deputy Chair, as well as any other Members as required, it is proposed that the appointed consultants are invited to the September Committee and that a Members' workshop be convened to identify and agree priority areas of focus for the new framework. A draft framework is due to be in place in early September and the final document will be completed at the end of September, with a view to presenting this to the October meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
- 3.7 Pending the outcome of the International Relations Framework, there are a number of existing commitments to which this Committee has agreed. These include Boston, Nashville and Shenyang Sister City Agreements and actions, as well as the MOU with Dublin and engagement in Eurocities. Likewise, recent visits to Sister Cities as well as visits to Belfast by our partner cities have generated a number of activities and it is critical that we engage with our local partners to ensure the effective delivery of these actions.

Some examples of ongoing BCC activity are as follows:

3.8 Education

- coordinating a group of schools, universities, Belfast Met College and Invest NI to look at developing an agreed approach to internationalising education to increase the number of foreign students to the city
- working with the local Boarding Schools in Belfast to link to the Shenyang Education Bureau for attracting Chinese students
- secured additional resources for the Confucius Institute in NI
- coordinating work placements and an overseas stay in Belfast for three Nashville College students.

3.9 Tourism

- joined the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) and will have the opportunity to promote Belfast, tourism business and leisure at the WTCF global events and bid to host one of these in coming years
- hosted, and is scheduled to further host, Chinese tour operators to promote Belfast as a destination in partnership with Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI and Visit Belfast
- facilitated a link between Visit Belfast and the Boston and Nashville Visitor and Convention Bureaus to exchange staff, information and opportunities to bid for conferences.

3.10 Business

- hosted and is scheduled to host groups of Chinese investors in partnership with Invest NI
- will host a business and education inward mission from Boston and Nashville from 13 – 18 October 2016 following the successful Sister Cities Summit held in Belfast and Dublin in April 2016.

3.11 Culture

- is working with the Nashville Music Hall of Fame founder to advise on the development and funding of the Belfast Cultural Hub
- is partner and co-host for the 2nd annual Friendship Four Festival of Ice on 24-26 November 2016
- has helped secure the first ever NCAA Basketball Tournament for Belfast in December 2017

3.12 It is therefore proposed that, in the absence of any substantial changes presented through the new International Relations Framework, the Stakeholder Groups are re-configured as follows:

- *USA Stakeholder Group*: to take on work previously led by Boston and Nashville groups, as well as wider US-based activity (e.g. inward and outward missions, participation in US events such as SXSW and the Technology Mission to the West Coast). It is proposed that the group be chaired by Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominee. Co-Chair / Deputy Chair to be identified from partner

organisations (e.g. British Council, universities, Belfast Metropolitan College, US Consulate etc.).

- ***China Stakeholder Group***: to focus on taking forward work on Shenyang Sister City agreement. Will also cover wider inward visits / outward promotional opportunities to and from China. To be chaired by Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominee. Co-Chair / Deputy Chair to be identified from partner organisations. However, it should be noted that on occasion it will be important for the Lord Mayor to represent the Council if visits to China involve meetings with Mayors.
- ***Friendship Four Planning Group***: to meet for purposes of planning the international profiling element of the event. Lord Mayor to convene these meetings as required. This will be a time-limited planning group focused on the lead-in to the event. Its agenda will also align with the work of the wider USA stakeholder meeting.
- ***India Stakeholder Group***: group to be kept under review and meet on an as-needs basis, chaired by the EU & International Relations Team. Should the group become more active it is proposed that it is chaired by the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominee. Co-Chair / Deputy Chair to be identified from partner organisations.
- ***EU Funding Group***: it is proposed that a review of EU funding opportunities is undertaken in light of the 23 June referendum to establish the viability of any future engagement forum on EU funding. In the meantime, officers continue to have access to relevant policy and funding information and can provide this to Members, as required.

3.13 In addition to engagement in the relevant Stakeholder Groups, it is important that Members are engaged in the various international events and activities undertaken by the Council and its partners. Members have identified the need for more regular updates on international activity and this can be done through regular (quarterly) reporting at Committee. Likewise, it is important that relevant political leads (Chair / Deputy Chair of Committee and Lord Mayor if appropriate) can engage with international delegations, in line with relevant protocol.

3.14 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no specific financial or resource implications at this stage. Committee approval is already in place for a number of key activities (e.g. Friendship Four). Any new activities identified as part of the framework review will be taken account of in the new financial estimates and brought to Committee for approval, within the context of the new International Relations Framework.

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The new International Relations Framework will be equality screened.”

During discussion, the Head of Economic and International Development advised the Committee that there had been a notable increase in interest from the various partner cities over the past few years and that the new International Relations Framework was in the process of being drawn up and would be submitted to a future meeting.

A Member requested an update on the links which had been established with India, particularly since a major event had been held in Belfast to promote the relationship. The Head of Economic and International Development agreed to circulate the outcomes from that event to the Members and explained that links with India were being kept under review.

A further Member asked that flexibility be used in relation to the membership of the stakeholder groups, where those Members who had already developed good relationships with a sister city would be encouraged to continue to be involved.

A Member suggested that the European Union Funding Group should meet throughout the year, given that the relevant legislation had not yet been invoked by Parliament in relation to the outcome of the referendum on Brexit.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report and:

1. agreed that no co-Chairs would be appointed and that, where appropriate, Deputy Chairs would be appointed from the external organisations;
2. agreed to the re-configuration of a number of Stakeholder/Working Groups on international activity, as set out in 3.12 of the report, in order to move ahead with existing commitments and ensure partner buy-in to new activity; and
3. noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on the options for a one-stop-shop for Investing in Belfast, as well as an update on the World Trade Centre Licence.

Inward & Outward International Relations visits, October 2016

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Members approval in relation to a number of inward and outward visit proposals for October 2016, in the context of our work on international relations.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to approve:

- Hosting a joint inward Sister Cities delegation from Boston and Nashville from 12 – 16 October 2016
- The attendance of the Chief Executive and the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominees at the Boston Health Symposium and joint Belfast, Boston and Nashville business showcase to take place in Boston in October 2016.

3.0 Main report

Boston / Nashville visit to Belfast, 12 – 16 October 2016

3.1 Members will recall the Sister Cities Summit held in both Belfast and Dublin in April this year. Belfast City Council co-ordinated a programme of targeted meetings and visits for delegates from Boston and Nashville.

3.2 To build on the connections made during the visit, Boston and Nashville This visit will coincide with the 3rd Annual Homecoming Conference, which the City Growth and Regeneration committee has already agreed to sponsor.

3.3 A delegation of 30 representatives from both cities will involve officials from academia, business and government, ranging across a number of Belfast growth sectors including creative business, legal services, tourism and education.

3.4 While the delegates originally intended to visit primarily to attend the Homecoming event, the city delegations from both Boston and Nashville have now asked for a series of parallel meetings and visits to be arranged. These will build on the connections established during the April 2016 Sister Cities

event and will also provide opportunities to establish new connections with other city partners in areas of mutual interest.

Boston Connected Health Symposium, Boston 20 - 21 October 2016

- 3.5** In the course of the visit to Nashville in March 2016, the Belfast City Council delegation attended presentations and had a number of meetings on areas of interest for economic collaboration. One of the key growth sectors in Nashville is the healthcare sector. Members will be aware that this is equally an important sector for Belfast, and a number of areas for collaboration between businesses and institutions in both cities were identified.
- 3.6** Invest NI and the NI Connected Health and Innovation Centre (CHIC) at Ulster University have planned to participate in the annual Connected Health Symposium in Boston from 20 - 21 October 2016. This event has been attended by Invest NI in the past and attracts over 1,000 attendees in the industry.
- 3.7** Both CHIC and Invest NI, along with Council officials have identified an opportunity to support Belfast companies attending this event. In parallel, a number of Nashville-based companies will be in attendance.
- 3.8** It is proposed that Belfast City Council, in partnership with Invest NI Boston office and CHIC host a business networking session for the Belfast, Boston and Nashville businesses under the Sister Cities brand. This could be held in the new Boston Library innovation centre on 19 October 2016 prior to the main conference.
- 3.9** The purpose of the event would be to promote networking and collaboration in digital healthcare and smart city working, and to encourage tri partite cooperation between Belfast, Boston and Nashville companies.
- 3.10** It is proposed that the Chief Executive and Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or their nominees travel to Boston to host the event and attend the opening of the Connected Health Symposium as well as undertaking a number of government, academic and business side meetings to promote the sector with Sister City of Boston, and follow up on linkages made, and opportunities pursued, during earlier inward visits by Boston and Nashville.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

It is anticipated that costs will be as follows:

- Hosting joint Boston and Nashville delegates from 12 - 16 October will not exceed £5,000 for programming, transport and hospitality
- Travel and expenses for the Chief Executive and the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominees, (18 – 20 October), as well as co-hosting a Belfast, Boston and Nashville business showcase reception will not exceed £6,000.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or good relations implications attached to this report.”

The Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development confirmed to the Members that funding for the events could be made available from within existing departmental budgets.

Moved by Alderman McGimpsey,

Seconded by Councillor Boyle,

That both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, or their nominees, should undertake all overseas visits.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the proposal and ten against and it was declared lost.

The Chief Executive confirmed to the Committee that each overseas visit would therefore be considered on its merits.

In response to a Member's suggestion, it was agreed that officers would engage with the Queen's University Belfast to encourage its attendance at the Boston Health Symposium, given its links with the Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Operational

Markets Licence: Taste of Northern Ireland

The Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development advised the Committee that an application had been received for the 'Taste of Northern Ireland Festival' to be held in the Custom House Square, Belfast on 16th, 17th and 18th September 2016. She advised that this would be the sixth year that the event had taken

place in Belfast and that, particularly with the Year of Food and Drink 2016, it was designed to showcase the range of food and drinks produced in Northern Ireland.

The Committee was advised that the event was being organised by Denvir Marketing on behalf of Tesco, where some stall holders would have products for sale, however most would offer free samples and use the event as an opportunity to demonstrate their product range. The Committee was reminded that anyone who wished to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to the Council for a licence and that the organisers had supplied all relevant documentation for this event. She advised also that officers from the Markets Development Unit had engaged with the relevant officers across the Council in order to check and verify the documentation and that checks would also be carried out during the event, in line with the Markets Rights Policy guidelines.

The Committee agreed to grant the licence for the Taste of Northern Ireland festival at Custom House Square on 16th, 17th and 18th September 2016.

'Writers of Belfast' Art Collection

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:
- Provide Members with details of a proposal that has been received from the artist Neil Shawcross to produce a collection of art for the city entitled *Writers of Belfast*.
 - Seek approval to proceed with the project

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Note the contents of this report and the proposal to produce a *Writers of Belfast* exhibition
 - Agree to accept the gift of the art collection on behalf of the city and the original painting depicting *Dickens at the Ulster Hall*
 - Approve a budget of up to £10,000 to support the wider delivery of the project

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

A proposal has been received from Belfast based artist Neil Shawcross to produce a new collection of art entitled *Writers of Belfast*. This collection would celebrate up to 20 famous Belfast novelists, poets, playwrights and song writers. This collection would then be gifted to the city.

- 3.2 Born in Kearsley, Lancashire, Neil Shawcross has painted and worked in Belfast for over 50 years. He has exhibited widely throughout Ireland and in London, Hong Kong and the U.S.A. His work is much sought after, and is included in

many private and corporate collections. He has received numerous art awards.

- 3.3 Neil is an elected member of both the Royal Ulster Academy and the Royal Hibernian Academy. Shawcross was Professor of Painting at the College of Art in Belfast until his retirement in 2004. In December 2014 he was awarded an MBE for services to the Arts in Northern Ireland.
- 3.4 For a number of years much of Neil Shawcross's practice has focussed on literature linked pieces initially with interpretations of Penguin book covers before expanding to include other publishers. Examples of this work are on display at Conor Cafe in Stranmillis.
- 3.5 The proposal is to combine his established practice with his appreciation for Belfast's literary and musical heritage to produce up to 20 new works depicting book covers of work by Belfast novelists, poets, playwrights and songwriters. A final selection of writers will be made by the artist in consultation with Council officers and will be representative of the breadth of Belfast's literary and musical heritage. In keeping with Neil Shawcross's approach it is likely that the work will be captured on canvasses 7ft by 4ft. Featured living writers will be asked to produce a written commentary in response to the artwork which will then form part of the final exhibition.
- 3.6 A public exhibition will be held in an appropriate venue in Belfast with a launch event and marketing campaign to raise awareness of the initiative. Additional activities will include engagement with local groups and schools. There will be opportunities for local audiences to engage with the literary heritage of their area.
- 3.7 Further options following the opening exhibition include part of the collection to tour internationally with potential to examine Sister Cities linkages. The long term proposal is that the collection of individual pieces would be displayed in venues across the city and then potentially in the proposed Belfast Story visitor attraction.
- 3.8 As well as the significant financial value of this collection the project has a number of wider benefits including:

- helping to position the city as a cultural and literary centre nationally and internationally
 - celebrating the city's cultural and literary heritage including raising awareness with local communities
 - enhancing the tourism offer
- 3.9 An additional offer has also been made by Neil Shawcross to gift an existing painting to the Ulster Hall. Charles Dickens famously visited the Ulster Hall in 1858, 1867, and 1869. Based on these historic events Belfast born writer and performer, Sam McCready, created a one man show in 2012 called *Dickens at the Ulster Hall*. Neil Shawcross has captured this in a painting and he would now like to gift this to Council to be displayed at the Ulster Hall.
- 3.10 **Financial & Resource Implications**
A budget of £10,000 from existing budgets to be allocated to support the costs associated with installing, launching and marketing the event as well as additional community engagement activities.
- 3.11 A staff resource will also be allocated to act as point of contact with Neil Shawcross and co-ordinate the public exhibition and associated activities.
- 3.12 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**
Equality and Good Relations considerations will be accounted for when designing the wider programme of activity that will support the exhibition.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairperson