

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 14th September, 2016

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman McGimpsey (Deputy Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, Patterson and Spence; and
Councillors Beattie, Boyle, Carson, Craig,
Dudgeon, Hargey, Howard, Kyle,
Magee, McAteer, McDonough-Brown,
Mullan, O'Hara, Reynolds and Walsh.

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

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from the Chairperson, Councillor Graham.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Presentation

PA Consulting - Draft International Relations Framework

The Committee was advised that Mr. Andrew Webb, PA Consulting, was in attendance and he was welcomed to the meeting by the Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Webb provided the Committee with an overview of the draft International Relations Framework, during which he emphasised that representatives from Belfast must continue to be proactive in order to target trade, tourism and inward investment. He highlighted that the Council's International Relations unit had carried out invaluable work over the past few years but added that there was still a considerable amount to be done. He explained to the Committee that Belfast was not competing at the level that it could be with regards to attracting an increased number of tourists or international students, particularly in comparison to what other cities were doing, such as Dublin,

Bristol and Edinburgh, which were all extremely active in promoting their cities in the international arena.

During discussion with the Members, Mr. Webb explained that it was essential that all partners conveyed a consistent message when promoting the City to others. The Chief Executive added that a further update on the Place Positioning work for Belfast would be submitted to a future meeting for the Committee's consideration.

Mr. Webb highlighted the importance of attracting more international students to the city and pointed out to the Members that Belfast was currently only attracting 1% of Chinese students who came to the UK, with Scotland and Wales attracting 8% and 5% respectively. He suggested that the Council and the universities each had their own role to play in ensuring the city was appealing in terms of a variety of courses, a café culture, places of worship and a vibrant nightlife, as well as ensuring that Belfast had a reputation as a safe city.

A number of Members expressed their thanks to the staff who had been involved in the recent successful visits to China and the United States, and noted that sending the right people with the right message was key to the success of both inward and outward visits.

In relation to the current international stakeholder groups, Mr. Webb advised the Members that it might wish to consider establishing a group based on our future relationship with Europe.

The Committee noted the next steps which PA Consulting would undertake before the next Committee meeting, namely:

1. that it would meet with the Budget and Transformation Panel later that week;
2. that the feedback from the Budget and Transformation Panel and the City Growth and Regeneration Committee would be taken into consideration to refine the final International Relations Framework;
3. that work on the future internal structures and resourcing would be finalised; and
4. that the Framework and Action Plan would be finalised for Members consideration at the next meeting.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr. Webb for his presentation and he left the meeting.

Restricted Report

VuCity Update and Presentation

The Director of City Centre Development advised the Members that Mr. Jason Hawthorne, **Managing Director of Wagstaffs**, was in attendance to demonstrate VUCITY to the Committee and he was welcomed to the meeting by the Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Hawthorne demonstrated the various features of the VUCITY interactive digital model of London to the Committee. He advised the Members that the model was accurate to within 15cm and illustrated the huge level of detail which had been captured within it, such as pavement heights, tree sizes and waterways. He advised the Committee that the model of London had been well received as part of the planning and decision making process within the city.

During discussion, a number of Members stated that they were impressed with the flexible nature of the model, particularly given that proposed developments could be added in and removed within a few days, which would allow for consideration of various planning considerations.

The Chief Executive explained that a model like this could assist not only with planning issues but, given its portable nature, it could be taken on outward visits to illustrate investment opportunities within the city and she also highlighted that there was the potential to integrate existing data into the model, such as flood risk areas, noise complaints and real time traffic modelling. She advised the Members that, due to the anticipated wide-ranging uses for such a model, it was therefore considered that various city stakeholders could be approached to invest in the development of the model.

The Director of City Centre Development explained to the Committee that, if it was to agree to commission a model of Belfast, the first stage was time sensitive. She explained that this was because it was crucial to capture the aerial photography of the city in October/early November, or from late February onwards, in order to ensure there were no leaves on the trees and minimal building shadowing.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the presentation, the proposed next steps and the potential to develop a 3D model of Belfast, subject to the relevant procurement requirements; and
2. agreed to commission the aerial photography element of the project, at a cost of £15,000, which was included within the City Centre budget.

Belfast Story Attraction

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on the ongoing development of proposals for a new visitor attraction for Belfast City Centre
- Outline next steps and programme of work

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report, the work undertaken to date and next steps

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Members will recall that in January 2016 approval was granted to undertake feasibility work on a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction with a further update provided to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in June 2016 outlining progress to date.

3.2 The Belfast City Regeneration and Investment Strategy identifies the need for a major city centre development recommending that serious consideration should be given to the opportunity to create a significant attraction or destination of national or international stature that is distinctive and unique to the city. Such a proposition is further supported by the Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 and the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2016-2020. Both of these strategies identify the role of culture and heritage in engaging with local people and connecting the city globally.

3.3 A number of other cities have also been examined with examples such as Southbank in London or Guggenheim in Bilbao illustrating the regeneration potential of culture through the creation of world class visitor destinations.

- 3.4 In parallel to the development of a strategy for the city centre a number of proposals were emerging for further investment in cultural infrastructure.
- 3.5 Despite the merits of these proposed developments, each as an individual stand alone project was not considered to fully meet the challenge of regeneration and the need to be transformational for the city centre and visitor economy. Nor may they be able to create a sustainable venture in their own right. However across the proposals there were strong synergies with the cultural heritage and contemporary appeal of the city.
- 3.6 Facilitated by Council a number of key stakeholders from across the city came together representing tourism (Tourism NI), the arts (Arts Council), museums (National Museums), film (NI Screen) and education (Ulster University) to explore whether there was in fact an opportunity to reconsider these proposals to create a stronger single proposition with a focus on telling the Belfast Story.

Belfast Story

- 3.7 The Belfast Story Attraction (previously referred to as a Creative / Cultural Hub) would be the cornerstone or anchor of a new destination that would create an experience that is authentic and distinctive to Belfast that supports local people to connect to the rest of the world and is a visible and confident expression of the city's cultural heritage and future aspirations.
- 3.8 The emerging concept has a number of key component parts including:
- Belfast Stories visitor attraction – telling the story through music art, literature, our great people and achievements etc.
 - Discovery and experiences of the story that make people want to explore more throughout the city and beyond
 - A Northern Ireland film centre including a cultural cinema
 - Permanent and temporary exhibition space that can accommodate and support collaborations with major international artists and cultural brands
 - A shared space for cultural / digital / media skills development
 - Commercial space for retail, food and beverage

- 3.9 As well as seeking to represent a chronology of the city in a very interactive way the attraction would be focussed on the stories of the people and the place with particular emphasis on themes such as Music, Literature, Art and Film.
- 3.10 Critical to this emerging proposition is the preferred location. The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy identified a number of special action areas requiring tailored responses and interventions. Also highlighted was the need for increased connectivity to ensure that the overall impact of investment is greater than the sum of its parts.
- 3.11 The Royal Avenue North area has been identified as a potential location for a number of important reasons:
- Inner North is a Special Action Area identified in the City Centre Regeneration Plan and requires direct intervention
 - There is a need to drive footfall down and across Royal Avenue
 - The Belfast Story can be a major anchor that will support future investment in the city centre including retail and other sectors
 - There is an opportunity to support the development of a wider ‘Cultural Corridor’
- 3.12 There has been significant investment in this area already with the Ulster University development as well as plans for a major refurbishment of Central Library. The Belfast Story Attraction could also help further realise the impact of these other investments by acting as one of the anchors for this emerging cluster as well as driving footfall and increasing spend in the city centre.

Work to date

- 3.13 Feasibility work to date has largely considered the proposal under three priority areas:
- The need for regeneration
 - The need to enhance the tourism offer of the city
 - The need for innovation and skills development to help grow the economy
- 3.14 This work has recommended a destination approach incorporating a number of experiences rather than a single building approach. This ‘mall’ style development can support a number of the key components as outlined above at 3.8

3.15 Additional research conducted to assess at this early stage the potential economic impact concluded that in a medium growth scenario there could be:

- 24.7 % growth in overnight stays
- 29.8% growth in number of nights stayed
- 10.5% growth in spend per night

3.16 Further catalytic impacts include the potential for the hub to signpost to and support the existing cultural and tourism infrastructure in the city and beyond resulting in an overall step change.

Next steps

3.17 There is a requirement to further continue to develop the concept of the Belfast Story and continue to test and refine the proposition. A number of key work streams have been identified to support this ongoing development including:

- Development of Belfast stories concept including a detailed design exercise
- Agreement on governance, organisational design and structure including identifying an appropriate governance and operating model for the project which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the various key stakeholders
- Masterplanning and delivery options
- Wider stakeholder engagement
- A viable funding model

This work programme will then culminate in the development of an Outline Business Case.

3.18 Financial & Resource Implications

Staff from the City Centre Regeneration Team will continue to take forward the work programme working with partner organisations. A further update report will be taken to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in due course with costings for the development of an outline business case.

3.19 Equality & Good Relations Implications

There are no Equality or Good Relations implications at this stage. Equality and Good Relations implications will be examined as the project develops.”

During discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Dudgeon,
Seconded by Councillor Craig and

Resolved - To add to the proposed next steps, as a further key work stream, the option of a stand-alone tourist destination building somewhere in the city to house a municipal art gallery, developed in conjunction with major cultural players like National Museums Northern Ireland.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Requests to present to Committee

Tesco NI

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that a request had been received from Tesco NI asking for local senior executives from Tesco NI to be able to present to the Committee on the role that Tesco NI played within the local community in terms of employment, supporting local businesses and assisting locally based charities.

The Committee acceded to the request and agreed to invite Tesco NI to present to a future meeting of the Committee.

UUJ - Economic Briefing

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 13th January, 2016, it had received a presentation from Professor Neil Gibson, Director of the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC). She reminded the Members that the Committee had agreed to receive a regular economic briefing from the UUEPC, as a 'critical friend' to the Council.

The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from Professor Gibson at its next meeting.

Strategic Issues

Committee Plan Workshop Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to propose a Committee Planning Workshop to allow Members to shape the upcoming work and agenda of the Committee, the new corporate plan and the budget setting process for 2017/18.**

1.2 The workshop will reflect on how the Committee can lead and shape implementation of the priorities within the Belfast Agenda, consider how the Committee can build on the work that it has undertaken to date to grow the local economy and how the regenerative impact of the work of the Council and its partners can be maximised.

1.3 The report also contains an update on projects and programmes that have emerged from the work of the Committee to date. The proposed workshop will provide an opportunity for the Committee to test and shape emerging thinking on these issues.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- Agree that a Committee Planning Workshop is held in October/November to consolidate the strategic direction of the Committee and shape the new Corporate Plan and budgets for 2017/18.
- Note the update on emerging work-streams related to 'Growing the Belfast Economy' which will be discussed at the proposed workshop.

3.0 Key issues

3.1 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for:

- The development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards regeneration and growth of the city in the context of outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy decisions.
- Oversight of the exercise of Council functions in relation to economic development, urban development, tourism, culture & arts, European and international relations, car parks, city markets, city events, Belfast Castle, Malone House and Belfast Zoo.

3.2 The Committee is currently working to an ambitious Committee Plan, aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan and Belfast Agenda. The current plan was created after discussion with Members about the role of the Committee and its priorities for the City. The following priorities were agreed by Members in November 2015:

- City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy;
- The Employability & Skills Framework (& Year 1 Action Plan);
- Place positioning and maximising the opportunities for investment, tourism and regeneration;
- Integrated Tourism Strategy;
- Investigate the feasibility of a City Deal for Belfast;
- Develop a car parking strategy;
- Ensure the above strategies give consideration to connecting neighbourhoods to the city centre, ensuring that the whole city enjoys the benefits.

3.3 The Council is now entering a key phase of the strategic planning calendar when plans are reviewed and refreshed in order to inform priorities and decisions about resource allocation in the year ahead. It is therefore proposed that the Committee dedicates a workshop to take stock, review the progress to date and consider the priorities for the next year.

Growing the Belfast Economy

3.4 Members have played a leading role in shaping the Belfast Agenda, the community plan for Belfast. The Belfast Agenda has at its core a commitment to inclusive growth. The Committee has played a key role in ensuring that the narrative of the agenda balances the need for economic growth with the purpose of this growth – to connect people to opportunity and reduce inequality.

3.5 The 'plan on a page' summary of the Belfast Agenda (available on modern.gov) – to which the Committee Plan is aligned - demonstrates the centrality of growing the local economy to improving quality of life in Belfast. The pillars summarising the city priorities, demonstrate the importance of the role that the Committee will play in ensuring that the Council's contribution to implementing the agenda is maximised.

3.6 An update on emerging proposals to develop projects and programmes to support this implementation is set out below. These projects and proposals will be considered further at the Committee workshop.

Attracting Investment and Positioning the City to be Competitive

3.7 In an increasingly competitive global environment, Belfast must develop its distinct competitive advantage if it is to compete and successfully attract FDI, tourists, and business to the city as well as grow its own indigenous businesses.

3.8 Members have emphasised the importance of continuing to attract and support FDI to Belfast and the Council has been delivering on the Tourism Strategy Action Plan, developing a

'Go to Market' plan to attract investment and working with city stakeholders in the development of the International Relations Framework to ensure that this is focused on attracting investment and positive profile for Belfast. An update on the International Relations Framework is included as a specific item on the Committee agenda. To support some of this work, plans are in place to prepare for Belfast to attend MIPIM in 2017 and proposals are being developed to create a city investor 'landing service'. This is at an early stage and is based on discussions with city stakeholders and following a review of similar service provision in other UK and ROI cities. This service will provide a welcome and network of professional and other services for those businesses, investors and developers new to the city but also those indigenous businesses who are already committed and willing to grow and develop their business/investment in the city. An important element of the landing service will be a city 'Concierge Service' which would be welcomed by FDI clients given their lack of knowledge of the city and its quality of life - geographically, educationally, culturally and socially. This would be additional to support provided by Invest NI which focuses on attracting them to invest in Northern Ireland and would focus on helping them get to know the city. Closely linked to this service is a strong city message and proposition to attract businesses, investors and developers to select Belfast as their preferred location to locate, and grow, their business in.

- 3.9 Several cities including, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol, Liverpool and Dublin have set up and successfully operate such services. Taking forward such a proposal will build on the city's distinctive qualities and requires a strong collaborative approach, on a city and city-region basis, with key stakeholders such as Invest NI, to maximise the added value and impact.**

Fostering Business Growth and Strengthening Business Relationships

- 3.10 Equally important is growing our own small business sectoral and clusters economy. Members will be aware that, on 1 April 2015, Councils assumed statutory responsibility for a range of business start-up and growth functions. 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 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 waste, food health, licensing, building control and planning.

- 3.11 Committee received a detailed report on the Council's support for businesses at their meeting in August 2016 and work is underway to further consider the four proposals raised through the recent Notice of Motion to support businesses as considered by Committee. Progress on this work will be brought back through the Party Briefing process in the next month for further consideration. There are challenges for enterprise across the city linked to Employability and Skills in regard to promoting a culture of innovation and enterprise via early interventions within schools and colleges.

Employability and Skills

- 3.12 This will be a key focus for the Committee and Members have agreed to the development of a Belfast Employability Programme (Belfast Works) within a wider Employability and Skills framework. The SP&R Committee in May 2016 approved the development of a Council-led employability model for the city. Work has started, putting in place resources to design a pathway, focusing on one or two employment partners to test the approach in the first instance. This is core to realising Members ambition to inclusive growth.
- 3.13 There are a number of significant policy changes which will have an impact on skills and employment demands in the next few years. The changes to Welfare Reform from 2020 will mean that many of those who were previously economically inactive (around 70,000 in Belfast at present) will have to seek employment. At the other end of the employment and skills spectrum, the potential reduction of Corporation Tax from 2018 had been predicted to create an additional 30,000 new jobs across Northern Ireland – with many likely to be located in Belfast. These jobs are likely to be in higher-end professional and financial services roles and will require higher level skills. At this point, there are significant funding pressures within universities and colleges and there are concerns that these budgetary pressures could impact negatively on the supply chain of talent to meet the demands of any new investment.

- 3.14 The Employability and Skills Framework highlights that this is a complex and multi-faceted issue. It is not just about education, training and employment. Rather it is impacted by a wide range of issues such as family cultures, health problems, mobility, access to childcare and welfare benefits. Equally, the deep-rooted nature of the economic inactivity challenge – and the fact that figures have improved only slightly even during periods of growth – suggest that making an impact will require a long-term strategic approach across a range of organisations. The Belfast Agenda and commitment of partners to work towards the vision for the city in 2030 provides a real opportunity to redesign how we do things in this area.

Potential Neighbourhood Opportunities for Growth and Regeneration

- 3.15 Members have instigated the delivery of a major programme of capital investment and physical improvement across our neighbourhoods. In total this represents some £300 million of investment, including unprecedented investment in leisure estate, some of which is in the heart of our most challenged communities. Council officers have been working with partners to secure synergies with other major capital schemes, e.g. the stadia. People and Communities Committee have been looking at how these assets can improve the achievement of outcomes for local people in terms of reduced health inequalities and improvements to quality of life. Equally the opportunity exists to optimise the achievement of economic opportunities, including employability opportunities and the creation of better local tourism product.
- 3.16 There is room for the Council to build on the effective work undertaken as a result of the Investment programme which saw 503 permanent and 365 publicly advertised jobs; approx 200 work placements provided; pre-recruitment programmes and Social Investment Fund placements (SIF).
- 3.17 In addition to owning around 12% of the City's land, the Council also delivers its own capital investment programme which includes Leisure and the Belfast Investment Fund etc and also levers additional investment into the city. It is therefore in a strong position to place shape and maximise the use of assets to deliver outcomes. In particular the council's position as the planning authority gives much greater opportunity for the forward planning of effective and integrated interventions around employability.

3.18 At the proposed workshop Members will have a chance to consider how these opportunities can be maximised, building on work that has already been done. By way of example opportunities include:

- Andersonstown area approximately £150m is targeted for investment in a new leisure centre, Casement Park stadium and in the Belfast Rapid Transport schemes between 2017 and 2019, all of course subject to planning;
- The North Foreshore will be creating additional business over the coming years;
- Boucher Road which already is an economic driver will be enhanced with the Olympia and new Stadium Sports Village complex.
- The Gasworks has some further development to go and will have a future churn in terms of lettings as the NI Civil Service consolidates its office estate.
- The new Innovation Factory once operational and linked to other similar ventures such as Argyle, Ortus, Science Park etc. is another driver.
- There are a number of job opportunities being created at Maysfield via Allstate and Concentrix.
- The Connswater Community Greenway is coming to completion and the East Belfast Partnership have already built a new tourism facility (with the assistance of Local Investment Fund monies) to attract and keep footfall in the area.
- Due to various Council investments there are quite a few new or due tourism type products being developed across the city to add to the existing attractions.

(Note this list is far from exhaustive)

3.19 As we move towards finalising plans and budgets for 2017/18, it is important that we consider what further actions we need to take to catalyse the economic potential of these projects and others across the city and their regenerative impact.

City Centre Regeneration

3.20 A core part of the Committee's work will continue to be maximising the impact of the City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy. The Committee is regularly updated on the key city centre projects which Members will continue to be engaged with as they develop. However similar

opportunities will arise for employability programmes as these projects come to fruition.

Maximising the Impact of the City Region

- 3.21 Members will continue to lead work to ensure that benefits of city-region growth are maximised. Many of the city's economic challenges such as economic inactivity, skills and employability levels and low levels of business start up persist beyond the Council's geographic boundaries and will require a whole systems approach if they are to be addressed. Additionally, as the capital city and gateway to the region many of the key growth issues, such as the need for the effective infrastructure that supports growth also need to be considered and feature strongly in the Committee's agenda.
- 3.22 The Committee has also been at the forefront of influencing economic strategy at regional level through its discussion of the role of the city in regional growth and should note the intention of the NI Executive to consult on the draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy in the autumn. The support provided by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) in terms of regular economic briefings and as a 'critical friend' in the development of the Belfast Agenda and other strategies enhances the evidence base to enable Committee to fulfil its role. This support is in place for a two year period and renewal will be subject to review and Committee decision by February 2017.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.23 The Committee Planning Workshop is being arranged to help shape the budget setting process for 2017/18 and the effective alignment of resources to priorities.

Equality & Good Relations Implications

- 3.24 There are no direct implications at this stage; however, programmes and actions will developed in conjunction with the Equality & Diversity Officer."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Regeneration

Chamber of Trade and Commerce Belfast Manifesto

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 bring to Members' attention the Belfast Manifesto recently published by the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce. The Belfast Manifesto sets out the aspirations of the business community on how to improve the economy of Belfast and outlines the Chamber's views for the forthcoming Programme for Government. The key points from the manifesto executive summary are outlined in the main body of this report. The executive summary is available on modern.gov. The full manifesto document, which provides further detail on various city interventions, can be viewed using this link: <http://www.belfastchamber.com/news-story/757/belfast-chamber-launches---belfast-first---manifesto>

1.2 Council will be seeking to work together with the Chamber and the city's businesses community to deliver a successful business and retail sector in Belfast. We will also support the Chamber in developing further key city and economic messages and programmes. As part of Council's ongoing approach to supporting businesses in the city, particularly retail, we have commissioned Javelin group, retail experts owned by Accenture to update the retail study undertaken in 2015. This work considers the ongoing challenges faced by retail in the city centre and looks at the potential impacts of future city centre retail development, job creation and economic uplift as well as the potential risks in job losses and growth of large scale retail development taking place elsewhere. Committee will be updated on this work in due course.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- The contents of the Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce Belfast Manifesto and note the ongoing retail analysis undertaken by Javelin.
- In terms of the rates issues which they have raised, this will be incorporated in our discussions on the rates review.

- More detailed conversations are also required with the chamber on rating issues.
- In terms of service delivery, the council will establish levels taking into consideration the new BID and its priorities.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Chamber's Belfast Manifesto is strongly supportive of Belfast's regional role as the capital city and highlights that

- Over 28% of all jobs in Northern Ireland are located in the city.
- The city is the main centre of business in Northern Ireland with a primary catchment population of 1.8 million. This includes all of Northern Ireland as well as extending into parts of the Republic of Ireland.
- 7.1 million high-spending visitors to the city each year, demonstrating the Lonely Planet's description of Belfast being a 'city on the rise'.

3.2 In line with Council's City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy the Manifesto makes the important point that promotion of Belfast is not in conflict with the economic prosperity and vitality of the rest of Northern Ireland.

3.3 The Manifesto has a number of requests which it breaks down into a number of categories, some of the key points are outlined below:

Working Together

- An overarching Belfast Strategy to be located within the Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).
- b. An overarching strategic framework for town centre regeneration with improved cross-departmental co-operation or alternative governance arrangements.

3.4 *Planning for a Sustainable Future*

- The urgent adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5), which are critical to the protection of town and city centres.
- In line with draft PPS5, consideration of a test to proposed out-of-town shopping centres, based primarily on the economic impact on existing retailers.

3.5 *Fairer Business rates and Taxes*

- More consultation on rates with businesses, non-domestic rate payers who in Belfast pay some two thirds of the rates bill.
- Consideration of business turnover as part of the rates evaluation process.
- Welcome a reduction in Corporation Tax with caveats.

3.6 *A Cleaner city for all;*

- Recognise that the Belfast ‘Streets Ahead’ project has improved the quality and appearance of our city centre but it is now important these high standards are maintained.
- Calling on the Council to increase the level of its cleaning operation in the city.

3.7 *Accessibility for all*

- BCTC call on DRD to prioritise investment which will assist in enhancing Metro bus services through the provision of additional Quality Bus Corridors on arterial routes and bus priority measures within the city centre
- Car parking tariffs to encourage short-term parking and where possible the movement of all-day parkers to Public Transport.
- Strategic Park and Ride sites on the outskirts of the city similar to Cairnshill would help to deter car users from coming into the city.

3.8 *Building a better city centre for all*

- Belfast Chamber would advocate that Regional Development, Planning and future Local Council Policy be directed to encourage people to live in our city centre.
- Standards of excellence in urban design for the city

3.9 The Manifesto is broadly supportive of Council’s position regarding the status and regional role of the city and our desire to grow and enhance the city is shared by the Chamber. In many places the Manifesto supports council’s recent strategies including the draft parking strategy, the city centre regeneration and investment strategy and the high level aims of the Belfast Agenda and city growth deal.

3.10 The Manifesto raises some important points regarding the how businesses and both local and central government work in partnership. The Council looks forward to working on these issues with the chamber with the shared aim of improving Belfast for all. The Full Manifesto document includes recommendations for various wide-ranging changes to city governance and accessibility which the Council will seek to engage with the Chamber on in order support our city business sector.

3.11 The Council is aware of growing concerns regarding the risks associated with any failure to strengthen the retail market in Belfast. On this basis Council have commissioned Javelin to undertake a retail analysis for the city which Members will be updated on in due course.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.12 None

Equality & Good Relations Implications

3.13 None.”

The Committee noted a tabled report on the most recent Venuescore rankings for Belfast, and further noted that Javelin would present to a future meeting.

During discussion, the Committee agreed that the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce should seek to engage widely with the Council in advance of producing its next manifesto, and that Council officers would engage with the Chamber of Trade and Commerce in relation to the issues which had been highlighted in the current manifesto.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Business and Economy

Details of BCC submission to "Refocus of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: Call for Evidence"

(Mr. Colin McCabrey, Economic Development Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 Following the Assembly elections of May 2016 and the development of a draft outcomes focused Programme for

Government Framework, the NI Executive has issued a 'Call for Evidence' to consider how the Economic Strategy should be refocused to reflect current economic conditions and developments in key policy areas such as the 'Fresh Start' political agreement to lowering Corporation Tax.

- 1.2 The call for evidence is a pre-consultation exercise received by Council on 4 August with a return date of 19 August. While an extension was secured until 31 August, this did not permit time for Committee to consider the response therefore, given the tight timeframe, an officer response was prepared and is available on modern.gov. This response was drafted taking account of the Council's position in relation to key strategies; primarily the response to the draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework ratified by Council in July 2016, the draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy in 2010 as well as the ongoing work on the Belfast Agenda and the Employability & Skills Framework (which was ratified by Council in July 2016).
- 1.3 Committee is asked to note that this is a pre-consultation exercise designed to enable stakeholders to submit views to inform the thinking of the Department for Economy prior to the development of a draft Economic Strategy. The draft of the refocused Economic Strategy will be subject to a full consultation process during the autumn and members will have the opportunity to fully input to the consultation process. It is the NI Executive's intention to finalise the Economic Strategy along with the Programme for Government, Investment strategy, Social Strategy and budget later in the year.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the officer response to the pre-consultation Call for Evidence on the Refocus of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy
- Note that the draft strategy will be subject to consultation during the autumn 2016.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Northern Ireland Executive's Economic Strategy, published in 2012, sets out the plans to grow a prosperous local economy in the short, medium and long term (to 2030). The ultimate aim is to improve the economic competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy by focusing on export-led economic growth. The vision for 2030 is: 'An economy characterised by a sustainable and growing private sector, where a greater number of firms compete in global markets and there is growing employment and prosperity for all'.

3.2 The five key themes identified in the strategy are to:

- stimulate innovation, R&D and creativity so that we widen and deepen our export base;
- improve the skills and employability of the entire workforce so that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increased social inclusion;
- compete effectively within the global economy and be internationally regarded as a good place to live and do business;
- encourage business growth and increase the potential of our local companies, including within the social and rural economies;
- develop a modern and sustainable economic infrastructure that supports economic growth.

3.3 The nine pre-consultation questions are structured around the vision, key objectives and themes contained in the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and the key challenges moving forward.

3.4 The Council welcomes the call for evidence as a pre-consultation exercise to inform the development of the draft strategy. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders will be critical in shaping and delivering the Economic Strategy. It is important to recognise the significant role that local government has in delivering all the PfG outcomes and those pertaining to economic growth, particularly given its role in investing in the city, supporting economic development and regeneration.

3.5 The Economic Strategy, along with the Investment Strategy and Social Strategy, will be key to take forward the ambitions contained in the draft PfG outcomes framework.

The response available on modern.gov reinforces the Council's position in relation to the draft Programme for Government commitments, as ratified by Council in July 2016. In summary, the response highlights:

- The outcomes and critical indicators in the draft Programme for Government (PfG) that will shape the economic strategy refocus and the need for a whole systems approach to delivering these.
- The Council's approach to inclusive economic growth which focuses not only on stimulating economic growth and creating jobs through investment in infrastructure and service provision, but also in ensuring that as many people as possible have access to those jobs through employability and skills initiatives.
- Acknowledgement of the Economic Advisory Group's recent summary of Northern Ireland's competitiveness which reports an improvement in performance in terms of FDI job creation and the NI businesses are becoming more externally focused. While manufacturing is the largest export sector, there are also encouraging signs in the service sector.
- The Council's support for business start-up and growth as well as developing a pipeline of measures to foster business growth, development and exporting potential. It also highlights the potential opportunity to 'piggy back' on existing export led initiatives and activities such as Belfast's International Relations Framework and collaborative initiatives such as Tech Mission and South-by-South West (SXSU).
- The value of the service sector as an economic generator and as a source of employment. Tourism and hospitality is a major source of revenue and employment and critical in supporting the city and region in competing internationally. It also features strongly in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy which includes a proposal to bring forward another world class visitor attraction to further enhance the city and regions tourism offering.
- A key challenge for Belfast and Northern Ireland is high levels of economic inactivity. The Council believes that social innovation provides a real opportunity to develop new innovative approaches to addresses this.
- Business start-up activity needs to be encouraged and accelerated and therefore should be an integral aspect to rebalance the economy. Developing a culture of innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship at an early stage in the school setting will be important in supporting this.
- The need for a whole systems approach; working across government, with the 'education family' and

private sector to better align education and skills development with employer needs.

- Creating the conditions for economic growth requires a co-ordinated approach to the delivery and resourcing of infrastructure and investment in the region.
- Recognition of the role of cities in driving economic growth and highlighting that a successful Belfast city-region is vital to the well-being of the wider regional economy.

3.6 As outlined in the Council's response to the draft 'Programme for Government Outcomes Framework', there is a huge opportunity to redesign how we work and to create a new collaborative partnership between central and local government to stimulating and securing inclusive economic growth. The Council's role as a delivery agent for capital projects funded under a number of external initiatives including Building Successful Communities, Urban Villages and Social Investment Fund demonstrates the track record and ability of Council to successfully work in partnership with central government. The response also indicates that the local impact and role of Council in supporting economic growth could be further enhanced by the transfer of regeneration powers from the Department for Communities as previously planned for under local government reform.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.7 There are no resource implications attached to this report.

Equality & Good Relations Implications

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

In response to a Member's question, the Economic Development Manager highlighted to the Committee that they had placed an emphasis on the importance of Belfast being the economic driver for the region within the Council's response to the pre-consultation Call for Evidence.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Operational

Exploratory Drilling in Woodburn Forest - Update

The Committee considered information from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Stop the Drill campaign, which it had requested at its Special meeting held on 27th June, 2016.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Deputy Chairperson