

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 12th October, 2016

MEETING OF City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairperson, Councillor Graham, and Councillor Walsh.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd October.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Schedule of Meetings 2017

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee during 2017 and agreed that it would meet at 5.15 p.m. on those dates:

Wednesday, 11th January;
Wednesday, 8th February;
Wednesday, 8th March;
Wednesday, 12th April;
Wednesday, 10th May;
Wednesday, 14th June;
No meeting in July;
Wednesday, 9th August;
Wednesday, 13th September;
Wednesday, 11th October;
Wednesday, 8th November; and
Wednesday, 6th December.

The Committee noted that it had agreed previously to hold regular strategic meetings in order to receive presentations from outside bodies and that those would be scheduled as and when required.

Matters Referred Back from Council/Notices of Motion

Notice of Motion re: High Speed Rail Connection Belfast - Dublin

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd October, had considered the following Notice of Motion which had been moved by Councillor McVeigh and seconded by Councillor Long:

“This Council recognises the importance of high quality transport connections across these Islands and to this Island. Good Connectivity facilitates and encourages trade and commerce.

The Council believes that a high speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin, reducing traveling time to one hour each way, would help transform the Island economy to the specific benefit of both Belfast and Dublin and indeed the towns and cities that run along the eastern corridor between the two cities. Such a connection would facilitate a daily commute between the two cities for employees and business persons.

Such a development would cost in excess of £2 Billion. The Council believes that the European Juncker Fund, a multibillion Euro fund designed to finance major infrastructure projects throughout the EU, is ideally placed to assist with this ambitious project.

The Council will explore with others, particularly the Department for Infrastructure and Dublin City Council, the potential for a joint feasibility study to be carried out into this proposal, and to prepare a possible funding application to the Juncker Fund.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the Motion had been referred without discussion to the Committee.

During discussion, a Member pointed out that a Seminar on ‘Delivering Major Rail Projects’ was taking place at Westminster on 29th November and that it might be useful for Members of the Committee to attend.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara,

That the Committee approves the attendance of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees) of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, plus one officer, at the Westminster Energy, Environment and Transport Forum Keynote Seminar entitled "Delivering major rail projects: priorities for electrification, High-Speed Rail and Crossrail" on 29th November, 2016.

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

After discussion, the Committee also agreed:

- that other Members who wished to attend the Seminar could use their Personal Development Plan allowance to do so; and
- that officers would submit a report to a future meeting on the proposal for a High Speed Rail Connection between Belfast and Dublin.

Presentations

Ulster University Economic Policy Centre - Growing the Belfast Economy

The Chief Executive reminded the Members that, in March 2015, the Council had agreed to contribute to the work of the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) to enhance the Council's ongoing analysis and monitoring of the city economy and would support the underpinning evidence base for the Belfast Agenda.

The Members were advised that Professor Neil Gibson, Director at the UUEPC, was in attendance and he was admitted to the meeting.

Professor Gibson provided the Committee with an economic update on a global, national and local scale. He highlighted to the Members that, regardless of Northern Ireland being in or out of Europe, it did not determine the success of an economy and, despite uncertainty, business must continue as usual.

Professor Gibson advised the Members that Protectionism attitudes were becoming more prominent globally and that this was to be expected in difficult economic climates.

In response to a Member's question regarding the reason why the UK economy was considerably more vulnerable to consumer trends in comparison with the Republic of Ireland, Professor Gibson explained that the UK did not export nearly enough, whereas the Republic of Ireland's economy was externally focused with a huge volume of exports.

He advised the Members that the NI labour market was improving with an eclectic mix of opportunities. However, he pointed out that health, retail and public administration were the three biggest employment sectors in Belfast, and highlighted that these were all vulnerable to austerity, high inflation and low wage growth.

The Members were advised that there was a very close correlation between the most deprived areas and the lowest educational attainment. During discussion, Professor Gibson highlighted that there was a need for a societal change as school was not the optimum learning setting for all young people and that employers should play their part in offering training schemes or apprenticeships to gain skills and experience a working environment.

Professor Gibson advised the Committee that certifying what success was for the city was critical to ensure that the mission statement led to headline targets which, in turn, led to implementation plans.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Professor Gibson for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Javelin - Retail Impact Study

The Committee was advised that Mr. Paddy Gamble, Consulting Manager at the Javelin Group, was in attendance and he was admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Gamble advised the Members that, given the Council's focus on the delivery of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, Javelin had been requested to provide advice in relation to the ongoing challenges for Belfast and the retail sector. He advised the Committee that this was a continuation of the Belfast Retail Positioning Study which had been produced by the Javelin Group in June 2015.

He provided the Committee with an overview of current shopping patterns within Belfast city centre and the city region, the impact of the changing retail landscape, future shopping patterns, potential development scenarios and retailer gap analysis which highlighted potential improvements for retail within the city centre.

The Committee was advised that Belfast currently ranked 16th in the VENUESCORE ranking of city centres across the UK. He advised the Members that research had shown that Belfast should focus on attracting more aspirational retailers, such as John Lewis Partnership or an equivalent, into the City Centre to address the under provision of that market and that this would act as a catalyst in attracting a number of other retailers.

During discussion, a Member asked the Chief Executive for an update on the BMAP legal case, to which she advised that a remedies hearing was the next stage and that a date was yet to be set.

The Committee thanked Mr. Gamble for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

A Member requested that additional information would be gathered on the impact of Republic of Ireland consumers shopping in Northern Ireland and on the future of the high street.

The Committee noted:

1. the findings of the report, particularly the ongoing challenges faced by the city centre and the need to continue to work to support city centre retail; and

2. that, within the context of the retail offering that Belfast provided, a report would be submitted to a future meeting to include analysis on:
 - a) the numbers of consumers travelling from the Republic of Ireland to shop in Northern Ireland; and
 - b) the future of the high street, particularly with the increase in online retail.

Requests to Present to Committee

Transport NI and NI Water

The Committee was advised that requests to present to the Committee had been received from both Transport NI and NI Water. The Members were reminded that TransportNI (formerly known as DRD Roads Service) had historically made twice yearly presentations to Special meetings of the former Town Planning Committee and it was now considered that it should instead present to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee biannually. The Members were advised that NI Water had also undertaken a commitment to present to the Council annually and was also seeking a suitable date to provide the Committee with a short briefing on its investment priorities and activities within Belfast.

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that it had agreed, at its meeting on 11th November 2015, to hold regular strategic meetings in order to receive presentations from outside bodies.

At the request of a Member, it was also agreed that the Department for Infrastructure should also be invited to attend.

The Committee agreed to hold a Special 'City Infrastructure' meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, to which all Members of Council would be invited to attend, with Transport NI, the Department for Infrastructure and NI Water invited to present.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

The information contained in the following two reports is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Update on City Centre Investment Fund Acquisition

The Director of City Centre Development provided the Committee with an update on the Council's formal partnership with McAleer & Rushe in relation to the completed acquisition of the Belfast Telegraph building on Royal Avenue and advised the Members that the Council had now committed to an equity share via a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) with McAleer & Rushe, whereby the Council had a 46% stake.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the Partnership would be developing proposals for the site in line with meeting the aspirations of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Fund, including a potential location for the new BBC NI Headquarters. The Committee was advised of the next steps and was reminded that, in line with previous Committee approval, the Council had retained the ability to exit the partnership arrangement prior to development commencing.

In response to a Member's question regarding the proposed £100,000 being allocated towards the masterplanning work to shape and facilitate emerging

developments in the wider area, the Director of City Centre Development clarified that, while in-house skills would be used where possible, it was necessary to engage external expertise as a detailed plan would be needed in order to give additional weight to the area in advance of the Local Development Plan, particularly in relation to drawing up Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) or an outline consent, which would provide guidance to the public, applicants and developers when making planning applications for the area. She clarified to the Committee that SPG or an outline consent would ensure that the Council's vision and aspirations for the area being a mixed use site were met.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted that the Council had entered into a Limited Liability Partnership with McAleer & Rushe and had jointly acquired the Belfast Telegraph Building using the City Centre Investment Fund.
2. noted that, as part of ongoing workstreams, the Partnership would be developing proposals for the site in line with meeting the aspirations of the City Centre Regeneration & Investment Fund with a view to developing options for the site including a potential location for new BBC NI HQ; and
3. agreed that up to £100,000 be allocated from the existing budget for a package of wider masterplanning work to shape and facilitate emerging developments in the wider area to the North of the city centre.

Belfast Zoo - Options Report

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that it had considered a report at its meeting on 8th June, 2016, whereby it had requested that officers would submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee setting out the longer term options for the Zoo, with the view to a decision being made to develop the preferred options for further discussion. He pointed out to the Members that V4 had been appointed in September to work with officers to develop the range of options to deliver the long term operational objectives of the Zoo. From the outset, the Committee agreed to reject any suggestion of closure and disposal of the Belfast Zoo.

The Director outlined that a Stakeholder Workshop had been suggested to enable Members to develop a range of criteria to be applied to each of the operating options. A number of Members felt that, rather than making a decision on the operating model, they would prefer to decide what the Zoo would contain, or focus on, initially.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a report on the broad options for different types of zoo would be made available for Members consideration at the Stakeholder Workshop, to which all Members of Council would be invited to attend.

Strategic Issues

Committee Plan 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 provide an update on progress against the key actions contained in the City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan, as agreed by Committee in October 2015. This will provide Committee with a baseline on which to discuss and agree priority action areas at the upcoming Committee Planning workshop.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the progress to date against the agreed actions within the Committee Plan and
- Agree that Officers continue to progress, subject to further consideration at the Committee Planning workshop.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The 2015 plan was developed in line with the Council's existing Corporate Plan and the emerging Belfast Agenda, the community plan for Belfast. The Belfast Agenda has at its core a commitment to inclusive growth and the importance of growing the local economy to improve the quality of life. The Agenda has four main pillars, which summarise the city priorities (see below). The pillars for 'Business and the Economy' (Growing the Economy) and 'City Development' are the focus of this Committee. Thus the Committee continues to take the lead 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.



- 3.2 The 2015 plan and ongoing work also aligns with and complements the works of our key partners. In this way we expect to achieve the greatest impact in terms of jobs and opportunities for the people of Belfast. Key documents include the Programme for Government and particularly priority '1: growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future' and priority '2: creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and investing in the future'; and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and associated Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- 3.3 Last month Members noted some of the additional projects and programmes that have developed from the work of the Committee over the last year, in line with the Belfast Agenda. In particular, under the Growing the Economy theme, initiatives such as a clear city proposition, a concierge service for investors, a city Economic Forum, and the recently agreed wider 10-year Employability and Skills Framework. The upcoming Committee Planning workshop will provide an opportunity to test and shape the emerging thinking on these issues in the context of the economic

briefing provided by Professor Neil Gibson (at this Committee meeting), emerging priorities within the Belfast Agenda, and the progress with the current Committee Plan. The workshop will then shape the ongoing work and agenda of the Committee, the new Corporate Plan and the budget setting process for 2017/18. The date for this workshop is still to be confirmed but is likely to be in early November.

- 3.4 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. The Committee also has oversight of the 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.
- 3.5 The Committee is currently working to an ambitious Committee Plan, aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan and emerging 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:
- Place positioning and maximising the opportunities for investment, tourism and regeneration;
 - The Employability & Skills Framework (& Year 1 Action Plan);
 - Integrated Tourism Strategy;
 - City Centre Regeneration & Investment 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.
- 3.6 An update on the progress with the key actions contained in the plan is available on modern.gov. Members are also aware that a number of detailed reports on key work streams for Growing the Economy have recently been considered and will continue to feature regularly on the Committee agenda.
- 3.7 A separate item on the Committee agenda provides an Economic Briefing from Professor Neil Gibson. This provides an opportunity for Committee to contextualise the planning and priority setting for the ambition to Grow the Economy as part of the Belfast Agenda and the work of the Committee.
- 3.8 Members are also aware that the factors that influence economic growth do not solely lie within local government's control therefore strengthening business relationships and local-central government relationships is a central tenant of

the Belfast Agenda and the city's ambitions to Grow the Economy.

- 3.9 A key element of the Committee's role is therefore to shape and influence the major strategies and developments of our partners in the city to ensure that the benefits of city-region growth are maximised. As such, the Committee has received presentations and deputations over the year, from the Department for Infrastructure, the Titanic Signature Project, Central Library, and Transport NI, amongst others, to agree how better to align improvement activities for maximum economic growth.

Overview of Progress

- 3.10 As previously noted by Committee, 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. For this reason, the key actions within the Committee Plan are aligned to the delivery of the key themes that have emerged from the Belfast Agenda. The following provides a snapshot of some of the highlights and challenges over the period of the Committee Plan to date within the context of Growing the Economy.

Fostering Business Growth and Strengthening Business Relationships

- 3.11 Members will be aware that, on 1 April 2015, Council assumed statutory responsibility for a range of business start-up and growth functions.
- Our activities helped to support almost 550 new jobs during 2015/16. These activities included a suite of support for businesses from pre-start, to start, and then growth in addition to programmes to help people into work. Attendance at these various programmes for the year 2015/16 was 2,200.
 - Ongoing efforts to increase local procurement opportunities including delivery of the Smarter Procurement programme and information sessions. Council have agreed the 2015 local multiplier baseline figures - for every £1 of Council expenditure, 70pence is spent or re-spent in the Belfast economy which increases to £1.34 across the regional economy.
 - Establishment of two Business Improvement Districts in the city centre – BID One and Destination CQ. The Belfast One bid is expected to deliver more than £5 million pounds of additional investment over the next five years. Destination CQ expects to generate £1.7

million over the five years. Work is also underway to support the creation of the Linen Quarter BID. BIDS enable businesses within their area to work together and prioritise initiatives such as marketing, additional cleaning and public realm improvement. These are led by the BID for the businesses and help them to increase their competitiveness and grow their customer base.

- Enhancing the city's economic infrastructure, with the development and opening of the Innovation Factory. This is a 55,284 sq ft building, in a deprived area of the city, with Grade A accommodation innovation space aimed at accelerating business growth through collaboration and networking. It will support up to 400 jobs. The Innovation Factory also includes social and community regeneration opportunities and this model is being considered for other developments. A separate report on the Committee's agenda provides more detail on this.
- Engagement with public, private and skills sectors to identify creative sector growth opportunities for the local Belfast economy. This has helped to identify the need to provide appropriate work/office space for the sector. This will help to support growth and job creation in animation, app/mobile development, games development, music and children's television production.

Attracting Investment and Positioning the City to Compete

3.12 In an increasingly competitive global environment, Belfast must emphasise its distinct competitive advantage if it is to continue to compete and successfully attract FDI, tourists, and business to the city.

- The launch and opening of the Belfast Waterfront in April 2016 as an international conference and convention centre and the establishment of the Council Owned Company and appropriate governance arrangements. This £29.5m investment will enhance Belfast's position in attracting business tourists to the city. It will generate £100 million for Belfast and create 1,500 new jobs by attracting 50,000 conference delegate days each year by 2020.
- The city hosted the successful Tall Ships 2015 event, which generating an estimated £16 million for the local economy through the 520,000 visitors to Belfast Harbour over the four days and 130,000 to the Tall Ships Parade. The annual programme of city events (comprising St Patrick's Day, Lord Mayor's Event, Marathon, Autumn Fair, Monster Mash and Christmas Lights Switch On) has to date attracted a further 94,450 attendees to the city.
- Delivering the Belfast Year of Food 2016, which included the Focus on Food conference and running a second successful Twilight Market at St Georges

Market in May 2016 The latter boosted the footfall in St George's Market to 248,599 (target 205,000) for the first quarter of the year. This makes St George's one of the top attractions in the region and helps to directly support over 350 jobs.

- Developed a hotel prospectus for the city. The Council has now approved 11 planning applications for hotel developments in the city.
- Showcased Belfast at MIPIM in March 2016, promoting the city as a compelling location for investment and growth. Fifteen follow up visits to the city by significant investors are being followed up relating to Grade A office space, retail, hotel and residential developments.

City Centre Regeneration and Maximising the Opportunities for Growth & Regeneration

3.13 As the capital city and gateway to the region, many of the key growth issues, such as the need for effective infrastructure that supports growth also need to be considered and feature strongly in the Committee's plan.

- The City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy was approved by Council in September 2015 and adopted by Department for Social Development (now Department for Communities) as the policy framework for the development of the city centre in 2016.
- Agreed a Vision for the Linen Quarter, aligned to the plans for the development of the Transport Hub at Great Victoria Street. Work is underway to develop proposals for the Western Quarter and Oxford Street/East Bank Special Action Areas, as identified in the City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy.
- Developed a city car parking strategy which is currently being consulted upon. Members are asked to note that a public consultation event was held on 4 October in City Hall and the consultation will close on 21 November 2016.
- Successfully launching the Belfast Bike Share scheme in April 2015. This has accounted for more than a quarter of a million healthy and environmentally friendly cycle journeys being undertaken around the city. There are more than 4,000 annual subscribers. The scheme was awarded the Best Integrated Community Hub or Cycle Scheme at the annual Cycle Planning Awards. Work is currently underway to identify options for future expansion and to review the pricing structure.
- The Employability & Skills Framework, as approved by Council in June 2016. This aims to help an estimated 14,200 Belfast residents into work by 2025. It will become a vital workstream to enhance opportunities for communities and the growth of the city. With

approval to develop a Council led employability model for the city, combined with the Council's role as the planning authority which provides greater opportunity to plan effective and integrated interventions around employability, there is a need to ensure a long term strategic approach to delivering the Framework. Therefore, this is likely to feature prominently in the Committee's agenda moving forward.

This Committee has a central role in building and influencing external partnerships with key city stakeholders and transforming the city to secure future success, therefore it is important that the work of the Committee and the Committee Plan evolves on an ongoing basis to take account of developing and new opportunities for Growing the Economy within the city.

3.14 Finance & Resource Implications

The Committee Plan has been developed in the context of the resources available to Committee.

3.15 Equality & Good Relations Implications

Programmes and actions within the Committee Plan are developed and delivered in consultation with the Council's Equality & Diversity Officers."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Tourism, Events and International Relations

International Relations Framework

The Director of Development provided the Committee with an update on the development of the International Relations Framework for the period 2016-2020. He reminded the Members that the aim of the Framework was to promote Belfast on the international stage as a place to visit, study, invest and do business.

The Committee was advised that, since 2012, the Council had engaged in a number of strategic international partnerships, namely with Boston, Nashville and Shenyang, along with increasing collaboration with Dublin and London. Those engagements had involved not only the Council but also its partner organisations, thereby ensuring that the relationships were multi-dimensional.

The Director explained to the Committee that, with Regeneration powers expected to transfer to Councils in the coming years and with a significant endorsement of the commitment to 'Growing the Belfast Economy' as articulated in the Belfast Agenda, the Council was increasing its ambition around positioning the city to attract international investment from developers, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and institutional investment. He highlighted that the Council was also supportive of work being undertaken by partner organisations to increase the number of international students in the city, grow tourism investment, support more FDI and help local businesses to become more active in international export markets.

He reminded the Members that PA Consulting had been appointed to work on the Framework and that it had engaged with a range of key internal and external partners to identify the appropriate focus, structure and priorities in moving forward. The Committee was advised that the emerging principles and areas of focus identified to date had included:

- clarifying the role of the council;
- positioning the city – importance of the collective message;
- strengthening our relationships with key partners and locations;
- objectively assessing new opportunities;
- promoting trade and investment opportunities as a key area of focus;
- attracting visitors and creating positive perceptions of the city; and
- ensuring transparency and communicating success

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Development confirmed to the Committee that they would engage with all relevant tourism and other partners as part of the development and implementation of the Framework.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the contents of the report;
2. agreed that a workshop would be held, to which all members of Council would be invited, to discuss the emerging priorities of the International Relations Framework, noting that this would allow the draft final report to be presented to the November meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for consideration; and
3. agreed that a report on Professor Gibson's presentation on 'Growing the Belfast Economy' would be made available to the Members for the Workshop.

NI Science Festival Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issue

- 1.1 **The purpose of the report is to update Members on a request for sponsorship for the 2017 Northern Ireland Science Festival based on the success of the 2016 event.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the contents of this report and**
- **Agree to sponsorship of £35,000 from existing budgets for the Northern Ireland Science Festival 2017.**

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 **The Northern Ireland Science Festival has been taking place annually since 2015. The 2016 event took place over 11 days in February and March 2016. It offered 134 events across a wide range of venues, presenting local and international work that focused on a wide range of themes including science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The daytime programme targeted children and young people with workshops, talks and interactive activities while in the evening the Festival presented an eclectic mix of science debates, talks, theatre, comedy and music.**

- 3.2 **The event was organised by Science Festivals NI, a unique collaboration of major STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) outreach organisations in Northern Ireland. Belfast's exceptional higher level skills talent pool is the primary reason why investors choose the city. Events such as the NI Science Festival help grow collaborations between such organisations and individuals, showcasing Belfast in a positive light. Funding for the event was provided by a number of organisations including the then Department for Employment and Learning, the British Council, Queen's University and the Ulster University and Belfast City Council.**

- 3.3 Science Festivals are a relatively new type of event that are growing in popularity worldwide, with cities such as New York, Edinburgh, San Francisco and Dubai hosting large scale events as part of their wider cultural frameworks. In 2015, the inaugural NI Science Festival joined this international group by becoming the largest festival of its kind on the island of Ireland and one of the largest in Europe. Since the first Festival in 2015, the event has continued to go from strength to strength.
- 3.4 Both the 2015 and 2016 Festivals were considered to be major successes, exceeding agreed targets and competing with other established science festivals. This included:
- Audience numbers of 60,000 significantly exceeded the 2016 target of 50,000 set out in the funding agreement
 - Young people formed the majority of the audience (57%). The increased number of evening events for adults, teachers and parents resulted in a total audience share of 43%, up from 34% in 2015
 - 132 events took place across a range of venues, with approximately 90% of activities taking place in Belfast
 - 92% of attendees indicated that they would visit the Festival again, with 68% of survey respondents indicating that they were more likely to pursue or encourage others to pursue a career in STEM following the Festival
 - The Festival acted as a catalyst for two significant conferences to come to Belfast. The Institute for Physics hosted their Spring Conference in the Hilton Hotel, whilst the British Council brought an international delegation from the Philippines, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Yemen, Jordan, Colombia, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, South Africa and India to discuss the future for STEM. Conference organisers chose to hold their events in Belfast to coincide with the Festival.

Proposed 2017 Programme

- 3.5 The 2017 Festival will take place from 16 - 26 February 2017. The core objective of the Festival continues to be a commitment to reaching a broad and diverse audience to increase the accessibility of science and to promote learning. This is in line with the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda to improve skills and employability, make the city an attractive location for investors and improve vibrancy and city animation. This will once again be achieved through a series of events and partnerships that link science into different areas of interest. The Programme themes include:

- Tech and Digital – linking with local companies and international experts, this theme consists of talks, debates and workshops on areas such as coding
- Engineering and robotics – highlighting the advances in engineering and robotics across Belfast, including some of the unique strengths of Belfast businesses in this field
- Food Science – attracting a new audience through events linking with local restaurants, cafes and venues such as St George’s Market
- Art and Science - a number of events will focus on the crossover between art and science. This theme is centred around an exhibition and workshops by the festival’s “artist in residence” as well as a celebration of Lillian Bland by the Ulster Orchestra
- The Festival will also host events on photography, invention, history and wildlife in addition to the core themes such as mathematics, physics and space

3.6 There are opportunities for a number of the Council’s services to engage with the Science Festival to promote their work in innovative ways, particularly to young audiences, and to engage more residents around key issues for the city. These may include the support programmes on education and skills, profiling Council’s business start-up and business growth programmes and profiling ‘investing in Belfast’. There may also be opportunities for community engagement activity, managing waste and food waste in particular, supporting active communities and promoting mobility and encouraging access to arts and culture for all residents. In addition, the innovative nature of many of the events – alongside the flagship events already lined up – will act as an attraction for people coming from outside of the city into Belfast, for the purpose of attending some of these specific events or associated activities. A postcode analysis for the Festival indicates that a large proportion of the previous Festivals’ audiences come from outside Belfast.

3.7 The success of the 2016 event has helped to secure international events with a high calibre of speakers for the 2017 programme. These include:

- Talks by international experts including Professor Alice Roberts, Jim Al-Khalili and Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell
- One of Europe’s largest tech conferences aimed at teenagers to be held in Titanic Belfast
- A partnership with the BBC around employability and skills, with opportunities to link to the Council work in this area
- The annual Turing Lecture hosted in Belfast City Hall which will be delivered by Dr Guruduth Banavar, IBM Vice-President of Cognitive Computing and leader of the worldwide team creating Watson
- A ‘artist in residence’ programme in partnership with the British Council

- An event focused on sustainable development with Catalyst Inc and the British Council featuring experts from 14 different countries
- An opening night performance by the Ulster Orchestra and Dumbworld celebrating the life of Lillian Bland, the first woman to build and fly her own aircraft over Carnmoney Hill.

3.8 The Festival has strong alignment with the city’s investment, education, skills and tourism priorities as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, the Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. In particular, this is achieved through an emphasis on skills and educational attainment, international profiling, city events and programming. The message is consistent with the emerging city positioning work which is attempting to create a new narrative for Belfast that is based on the quality of its talent, reflecting its rich industrial heritage and its emerging specialisms in new technologies.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

The total budget for the Festival is estimated at £221,500. Funding of £83,000 has been secured from the Department for the Economy (this includes £50,000 of core funding), £5,000 from the British Council, £20,000 respectively from Queen’s University and Ulster University. A further £26,000 has been secured from Tourism NI alongside £7,500 from the Department of Communities. The Festival anticipates ticket sales to generate around £25,000. The amount of sponsorship requested from Belfast City Council is £35,000, in line with the awards made in 2015 and 2016. This funding is available within existing Departmental budget estimates.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications

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

In response to a Member’s question, it was agreed that officers would investigate, for future years, ways in which the NI Science Festival and the Friendship Four STEM conference could work together.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Business and Economy

Employability and Skills Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Update members on the Employability & Skills Framework and progress to date on the

implementation on the associated year one Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the final version of the Employability and Skills Framework and progress to date.
- Approve the proposed approach of engaging through Party Group Leaders to agree the pilot areas for Employability Outreach Pilots.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At the 24 June meeting of Strategic Policy & Resources Committee Members approved the final version of the Employability & Skills Framework and associated year one Action Plan. This Framework underpins all of the priorities identified under the Belfast Agenda. These are *Business and the Economy*, *Living Here*, *Working and Learning* and *City Development*. Achievement of the Employability and Skills Framework objectives will have a positive correlation on growing the city economy by influencing our ability to:

- Attract more investment into Belfast;
- Foster more business growth in Belfast;
- Strengthen business relationships;
- Make Belfast easy to do business with;
- Maximise impact of city region; and
- Reduce poverty and economic inequality.

3.2 The Framework was developed to understand the specifics of the employability and skills challenges in Belfast and to identify how a collaborative, outcomes-based, long-term approach could bring about a step change in employment rates and skills levels. It identified four key aims:

- Aim 1: To increase access to employment by supporting the development of lower and entry level skills and by addressing barriers preventing access to jobs;
- Aim 2: To generate higher level skills which meet the demands of employers and investors;
- Aim 3: To facilitate career progression routes across all skill levels; and
- Aim 4: To develop a culture of entrepreneurship at all levels.

The employability and skills issues facing the city are multi-faceted and complex. Economic inactivity is one of the most significant impediments to the city. Despite significant investments to tackle this issue, evidence would suggest the scale of challenge has not been effectively addressed. This highlights the need to do things differently through a long term strategic and collaborative approach tackling issues

such as skills gaps, family cultures, health problems, mobility, access to childcare and changes to welfare benefits etc.

3.3 Aligned to the principles of the Belfast Agenda, the Employability and Skills Framework contains the following overarching principles:

- Citywide approach;
- Long-term approach;
- Outcome and needs-based;
- Aspirational and Ambitious; and
- Inclusive Growth.

3.4 At the 24 June meeting of SP&R members approved the Framework's year 1 Action Plan. Whilst delivery of this plan is ongoing key areas of progress are outlined below.

1. Hospitality Pilot Project (Addressing Aim 1) - the hospitality sector has been recognised as one of the growing sectors within the city, attributed in part to key investments such as the Belfast Waterfront, new hotel developments etc. In response to expected employment growth, Council's Officer have been working with key partners to develop a Hospitality Employment Academy to provide a bespoke skills programme for the unemployed to equip them with the industry-specific skills for working in this sector. The project involves intensive work with existing and future employers, early intervention programmes with key target groups and development of specific skills programmes. To prevent duplication and achieve cost efficiencies, programme delivery has been designed to utilise existing resources already part-funded through ESF (European Social Fund) with Council funding used to provide 'top up' training required to tailor the programme to employer needs, working alongside Belfast Met. The pilot aims to support 70 people into employment with the first cohort of training expected to commence in late October 2016.

2. Belfast Employability Programme (Addressing Aim 1) – As members will be aware, SP&R committee of 20 May 2016 approved the development of a Council-led employability model for the city, specifically aimed at getting those furthest from the labour market into real jobs. The 'Belfast Works' project seeks to move individuals currently furthest removed from the labour market through stages of training and development to a point where they are 'job ready' and able to compete for a job that would be ring fenced to them once they have completed the full training - i.e. a pathway of support for individuals to move from unemployment into employment, offering access to real jobs available from Council, stakeholders and those arising from new investments.

This is a different model to what often happens at

present, which in many cases results in 'churn', whereby individuals may undertake employability training to a certain point but they do not necessarily progress through a joined-up pipeline to a second or third stage that gets them to a point where they are job ready. Further, jobs may exist or be in the pipeline in the city but they are not ring fenced. Belfast City Council however, as a large employer has, through the OD Department, designed and delivered an employability training programme and ring fenced our jobs to individuals who have completed the employability training and development programme. This project will build on that work by partnering with other large employers (for example, Belfast Trust and the hotel and hospitality sector) to identify jobs that could be made available for ring-fencing to individuals who are currently far from the labour market (for example, 16-24 not in employment, education or training) once they have completed a training and development programme that gets them 'job ready'. The model is relatively simple as a concept but in reality will be extremely complex to put into operation. The most significant issue is resources and this is currently being examined as part of the estimating process. This project will of course also require effective partnership and co-design and delivery with key stakeholders and to this end the Chief Executive has had positive initial discussions with senior officials in the Department for Communities; the Director of Organisational Development has met with her counterpart in Belfast Trust and secured commitment from them for involvement in this project; and staff from OD/ HR and the Development Department have started initial work with Belfast Metropolitan College but there will be a number of potential providers required to co-design and deliver the training and development element and stages of the 'pipeline'. A further report on this model and the resourcing requirements will be brought through SP&R Committee.

3. **Employability Outreach Pilots (Addressing Aim 1)** - At the August meeting of SP&R committee approval was given to undertake two pilot projects (Sport Changes Life and Active Communities Network), subject to pilot areas being identified. These projects are aimed at engaging young people, mainly aged 16-24 year olds who are or at risk of becoming NEET's. The aim of these projects is to use sport as a means of positively engaging with young people, to address their personal challenges and support them towards an ultimate goal of progressing into employment or further training. Council Officers are identifying the potential pilot areas for these projects, based upon an analysis of deprivation and NEETs data. It is proposed that engagement will take place through Party Group Leaders to agree the pilot areas for these projects with the intention of commencing pilot delivery in the forthcoming weeks.

4. **Access to Employment Opportunities (Addressing all aims)** - As members will be aware a complexity of training support is available across the city, however a key challenge

exists in linking training provision to employer needs and 'real' job opportunities. Awareness of and access to employment opportunities available can be difficult to determine due to the variety of recruitment mediums utilised by employers. To address this, the Council has been supporting a number of job fairs and careers events including:

- LEMIS+ Job Fair which recently took place in City Hall with over 50 local employers participating;
- Skills NI event taking place on the 8-9 November 2016 in Titanic Exhibition Centre. This careers event aims to involve up to 80 exhibitors and targeting 5,000 young people and their families;
- Digital Futures Programme delivered by Digital DNA, will engage with 4,000 13-17 years olds across Belfast to develop new skills in computer programming and to promote career opportunities within the creative sector.
- In addition discussions are also taking place with Department for Communities to host a joint large scale job fair in February/March 2017.

5. Entrepreneurship (Addressing Aim 4) is one the available routes into employment. In addition to mainstream provision through the Go For It programme, the Council has also recently launched new initiatives including Go Social to assist new social entrepreneurs and a new wave of the Belfast Enterprise Academy targeting student entrepreneurs. A range of enterprise awareness activities are also scheduled for Global Entrepreneurship Week taking place from the 14th -18th November to promote enterprise awareness, youth entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship.

6. Maximising investments – to maximise the employment opportunities arising from Council and other investments work is underway in the following areas:

- Delivery of the Innovation Factory's social regeneration activities to encourage the creation of new businesses, by working with local schools, provision of work placements and outreach activities with local communities. Through the operation of the facility 6 new jobs have been created alone, in addition 6 new businesses have been secured as tenants of the facility, this is expected to increase in the forthcoming weeks with a further 25 warm leads currently in progress;
- In partnership with the City Centre team, engagement is taking place with key development projects to maximise the impact of employment opportunities created through their investment. This includes working with major retailers, who are planning

expansion, or considering new investment to look at opportunities such as pre-employment programmes.

- Working with Corporate Procurement Services (CPS) to identify the potential for inclusion of social clauses in upcoming tenders. In order to ensure that these clauses can have a positive impact in local areas, we are making linkages between contractors and relevant local training providers. The next major opportunity is the Leisure Transformation Programme and work is currently under way to define the relevant social clause requirements.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

The Hospitality Pilot Project, the Belfast Employability Programme, the Employability Outreach Pilots and the Entrepreneurship Support programmes, as well as the work to maximise the employability impact of wider Council investment, are being supported by existing budgets which have already been approved by the Council.

Work is currently under way to consider the financial implications of delivering the year 2 work programme, as part of the estimates process. This will include an assessment of the staff resource required to ensure effective project development, management, delivery and oversight.

5.0 Equality & Good Relations Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the draft Employability and Skills Framework. As a result, extra engagement activity took place with organisations working with ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and young people. On an ongoing basis the outreach and engagement activity will ensure that all under-represented groups are able to participate.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Proposed ERDF-funded Business Start and Business Growth activity

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update concerning advancement of three projects. They are:

- A Regional Business Start Initiative, named locally as the Go for It Programme;
- A Belfast-specific programme for higher growth potential start-up businesses;
- A Belfast-specific business growth programme for established businesses to increase their competitiveness and growth.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note progress in advancing a Regional Business Start Programme (Go for It), a Belfast specific programme for higher-growth potential start-up businesses and a Belfast specific business growth programme for established businesses;
- Note the funding status of each of the above programmes under European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 – 2023 and Invest NI; and
- Note the proposals for business start provision from the end of the existing contract (22 October 2016) until the start of the new regional programme, expected to be 1 April 2017.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The purpose of the Programme for Government Outcomes Framework is to improve wellbeing for all by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth. It contains outcomes which are reflective of the Council's ambition for Growing the Economy, set out in the Belfast Agenda. Such outcomes include our ambition to be an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential and that we have more people working in better jobs.

3.2 In April 2015, Councils assumed statutory responsibility for a range of business start and entrepreneurship support activities.

3.3 Since the transfer of functions, officers have been exploring opportunities for securing external resources to support the ambitions set out in the Belfast Agenda for 'Growing the Economy' and re-focusing our own resources in order to meet the needs of our local businesses. This has included:

- Simplifying our messaging about the type of support that is available at each stage of the business lifecycle (Starting your Business; Growing your Business and Investing in Belfast)
- Working with partners to ensure that there are no major gaps in provision of support to our target businesses
- Improving signposting for businesses to ensure that they get the help they need when they need it
- Looking at how we can better package the support that we provide to businesses across the wide range of Council services (including Building Control, Waste Management, Street Cleansing, City Centre Development etc)
- Exploring potential incentives to encourage additional business start (including financial incentives and packaging business accommodation and business support services)

- Exploring opportunities for greater alignment between the Council's investment in business growth initiatives and its support for employability and skills issues – ensuring that local companies have access to the skills and talent that they need to grow their business and improve their competitiveness.

- 3.4 Work is currently underway to agree with partners the priority actions to move forward on the Belfast Agenda's 'Growing the Economy' theme. Given that the Council has statutory responsibility in this field, it is likely that this will form a significant part of the actions on which the Council will lead, bringing in other partners as appropriate.
- 3.5 In recognition of the pressures on Council resources, Officers have identified the opportunity to secure up to 80% match funding for eligible activities under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Investment for Growth and Jobs (IGJ) Programme 2014-2023.

Advancing a Regional Business Start Programme (Go for It) to support Growing the Economy

- 3.6 Members will recall that, as a result of Local Government Reform (LGR), a number of economic development functions transferred from the former DETI/Invest NI to local authorities. These functions included support for business start-up as well as targeted support for under-represented groups (youth, females) and social enterprise support.
- 3.7 Given that this is now a statutory function of local authorities, the associated job targets have been set out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and local authorities are accountable for the delivery of these targets. This Order contains an indicator regarding 'the number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity'. The annual Belfast target for this is 325 jobs defined as completion of 325 business plans.
- 3.8 Councils have a collective 'in principle' agreement to move forward with a regional Business Start programme in order to ensure consistency of provision in all areas. A business case for the new programme was developed and this has been submitted to Invest NI on behalf of the 11 local authorities. Invest NI is in the process of undertaking an economic appraisal in order to determine the viability of providing ERDF and Invest NI financial support to deliver the new programme. The only outcome measured in the ERDF programme is 'jobs created' at a cost of £1,000 per job. Up to 80% match funding is available for eligible activity via ERDF (60%) and Invest NI (20%) with Councils required to provide the remaining 20% match funding.
- 3.9 Pending an Invest NI decision on the new programme, councils agreed to extend the contract on the existing

programme to support business start (which is delivered by a range of Enterprise Agencies across Northern Ireland). This contract cannot be extended beyond 22 October 2016.

- 3.10 The business case presented to Invest NI on behalf of all of the councils will deliver 1,330 business plans and 819 jobs over 3.5 years in Belfast. Officers are continuing to work with Invest NI on a number of key points within the economic appraisal in order to ensure that the business support offer is attractive to interested individuals and meets their specific development needs. Members will be aware that the business start-up rate in Belfast is significantly below regional and national averages: Belfast is currently the lowest ranked city for business start-up in the annual Centre for Cities index.
- 3.11 In order to ensure that the EU match-funding element is available for the programme Councils met Invest NI's timescale of collectively agreeing the programme by 29th September 2016. The timeframe stipulated by Invest NI is to ensure that councils receive a Letter of Offer prior to the Autumn statement, scheduled for 23 November 2016. Current advice from Invest NI is that funding committed by this stage will be supported post-Brexit. Council Chief Executives – at their meeting on 23 September – endorsed the collaborative approach.
- 3.12 Upon receipt of the Letter of Offer, the procurement of the regional programme will be advanced by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. The indicative date for having a regional delivery partner in place is the start of the new financial year (1 April 2017).
- 3.13 For the interim period (22 October 2016 to 31 March 2017), councils are developing their own approaches to business start-up support. In Belfast, it is proposed that the interim solution will be to utilise the service contract for Innovation Factory. The contract allows for the establishment of 'additional' or 'optional' services in line with the main contract. This proposal is dependent on commercial negotiation with the operator, but early indications are that it may present opportunities for engagement of the local supply chain in the delivery activity. The need to ensure that there is service provision in place all across the City will be one of the key considerations in agreeing the interim solution, as well as a focus on quality and the need to ensure that we meet the business start targets agreed set out in the Local Government 2015 Order. This activity will be funded under the Transfer of Functions budget for promoting entrepreneurship.

A Belfast-specific programme for high growth potential start-up businesses

- 3.14 Additionally but complementary to the Regional Business Start Programme (Go for It) Officers are advancing a higher growth potential business start programme / tier 2 programme which will be specific to Belfast. This project, which is still being articulated and appraised by Invest NI is designed to encourage the development of higher growth businesses (employment and export) with a particular focus on Belfast City Council's key sectors, including creative and digital industries, Green/Clean technology sector, technology/ ICT and tourism.
- 3.15 The programme fits within Council's pipeline of support from pre-enterprise support through to post start business growth support. The programme is designed to provide a greater level of specialist assistance to companies compared to the generic regional start initiative / Go for It replacement programme.
- 3.16 The output for this project is still under review and targets are dependent on the final agreed appraisal relating to the Regional Business Start Programme (Go for It). At a minimum it will create 630 jobs over 5 years in businesses at the start up stage (less than 2 years) where the business can demonstrate higher-growth potential. Once accepted onto the programme, participants will be able to access support up to two years post-start. This support will be aligned with the Council's other support and programmes.
- 3.17 An economic appraisal for this project is being completed by Invest NI. There is currently no guarantee of funding for this project.

A Belfast specific business growth programme for established businesses to increase their competitiveness and growth

- 3.18 Belfast City Council is the first Council to be awarded a Letter of Offer for a project of this type. The Letter of Offer is subject to revision to provide a further 2 year period for delivery (currently 3 years). This programme will deliver support to existing businesses. The programme will deliver 336 jobs over 5 years.
- 3.19 Belfast City Council has a positive track record of delivering projects like this. Our previous ERDF funded programme, *Go for Growth* has been successful and this project will adopt the same process. This programme offers support to businesses irrespective of sector or scale of economic opportunity. Procurement for the advancement of this programme will be commencing soon upon acceptance of the Letter of Offer.

3.20 **Financial Implications**

The cost for business start-up activity will continue to be delivered from within existing Economic Development

budgets, inclusive of the budget associated with transferring functions. If successfully awarded Letters of Offer from Invest NI these projects could collectively benefit from approximately £1.2m.

3.21 Equality and good relations implications

Current and future business start-up programmes have been designed to help remove barriers to participation. Officers are currently assessing options to enhance the provision to be provided through the regional programme with the aim of adding further value and promoting equality of opportunity.”

In response to a Member’s question regarding the precise arrangements that the Council had had with Oxford Innovation, the Committee agreed that officers would circulate an update note on this matter to all Members of the Committee.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Innovation Factory Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress on the Innovation Factory (IF) Project which plays a key role in growing the city economy – the Council’s flagship new development to support new business starts and to encourage existing companies to grow and become more productive.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- **how this project encompasses the Council’s aspiration for Growing the Economy under the Belfast Agenda;**
- **the work undertaken to mobilise the centre towards opening to the public on 29 September; and**
- **how community benefit and good relations has been incorporated into the operation of the centre as a model of best practice.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Innovation Factory is located at Forthriver Business Park and offers ‘Grade A’ standard business accommodation in the form of a 55,000 sq. ft. building comprising 32,240 sq. ft. lettable space and 5,133 sq. ft. innovation space. It is the first development on the wider 14 acre business park which was previously the site of James Mackie and Sons Engineering Works.

- 3.2 The Innovation Factory project characterises a local economy, community, place and situation which the Council hopes can be achieved on a city-wide scale. By this we mean:
- A socially responsible centre where contract and management arrangements act as a catalyst for the local economy in terms of wealth generation, jobs, skills and employability, contributing to inclusive economic growth and the Council’s anti-poverty agenda;
 - A mix of ingredients for businesses to start, grow and innovate: infrastructure (telecoms and data storage), support, quality design of accommodation, access to other markets;
 - Capital investment leads to increased civic pride, shared space & good relations, enhanced public realm, access to quality services and improved living environments;
 - Access to finance; and
 - Collaboration and innovation leading to a longer-term sustainable economy.
- 3.3 The centre will be a significant contributor to the Council’s job creation target of 50,000 jobs and 5,000 new businesses supported. The current draft of the Belfast Agenda sets out these targets for the next 20 years. These targets are still work in progress but the Innovation Factory will accommodate 382 workstations across 111 business units. It will support at least 145 jobs in the operation of the centre by December 2018 and 187 by December 2020. It will provide support annually to over 100 businesses and create 5 collaborative networks. It will promote and encourage social and economic regeneration, encourage local and foreign direct investment and act as a catalyst for further development of Forthriver Business Park.
- 3.4 Belfast City Council accepted hand over of the centre from the contractor Heron Bros Ltd on 18th April 2016 ahead of the scheduled capital completion date of 6th May 2016. The project was also completed in budget.
- 3.5 In parallel with the construction contract, the centre operators – Oxford Innovation Limited – were appointed via a competitive dialogue procurement process. The Service Contract with Oxford Innovation came into effect on 1st June 2016 and since that point they have been mobilising to get the centre open for business at the end of September.
- 3.6 Oxford Innovation Ltd is responsible for overall centre management. A range of operational services will be sub-contracted locally and/or delivered via existing or newly created social enterprises where opportunity exists. To support local supply chains, Oxford Innovation have held ‘Meet The Buyer’ sessions, with over 30 local businesses engaged to date. These have provided an opportunity to meet with potential suppliers of some of these sub-

contracted services and a number of these contracts are now in place.

- 3.7 The Innovation Factory will not only provide business space. The centre will also offer business programmes and mentoring support to centre tenants (and non-tenants) to be provided by Full Circle Management Consultants (Belfast-based company).
- 3.8 Social regeneration impacts (including social enterprise development) will be delivered by Time Associates and GEMS NI. GEMS NI has a clear focus and track record in moving people from long-term unemployment, economic inactivity and worklessness to work and has been a partner of the Council on a range of initiatives since its establishment during the development of the Gasworks.

Since June 2016 Oxford Innovation and the Council have been working in partnership to get the centre ready for opening. This work has included:

- Recruitment: local recruitment of an Innovation Director, Centre Manager, Assistant Centre Manager, Community Engagement Officer and two Centre Support Assistants;
- Installation of telecoms infrastructure;
- Development of brand guidelines for the centre and website;
- Agreeing policies for the operation of the centre (e.g. finance manual, staff, procurement and lettings policies);
- Agreeing the capital expenditure plan for the fit-out of the centre;
- Agreeing the business growth and business innovation services delivered at the centre; and
- Agreeing the Good Relations and Shared Space Policy and Social Integration and Community Engagement Plan for the Centre.

- 3.10 The Innovation Factory's Good Relations and Shared Space Policy and Social Integration and Community Engagement Plan demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that the centre will have a positive impact on local communities. These plans set out the Innovation Factory's vision, namely:

“The promotion of the social and economic regeneration of the Springfield Road and Shankill Road areas and surrounding locality, providing employment opportunities and acting as a catalyst for further development in the area.”

- 3.11 There are seven key priorities, each of which contain timed actions for delivery. The priorities are:

1. To devise a clear and explicit policy based on the principles of Good Relations and Shared Space that ensures the IF remains a safe and welcoming environment where all members of the community, tenants, users, visitors feel comfortable and safe;
2. To assist and support local businesses to tap into supply-chain 'spin-off' opportunities arising from the operation of the Innovation Factory;
3. To facilitate skills development work placements and permanent employment opportunities for long term unemployed / economically inactive people living within the local community;
4. To provide school children from the Springfield Road, Shankill area and surrounding locality with first hand exposure to Innovation and Entrepreneurship with the aim of inspiring the next generation;
5. To engage actively with the local community to showcase operations including promotion of social enterprise activity and corporate social responsibility;
6. To encourage positive local engagement aligned to the ethos of the Innovation Factory that can extend its core services to include under-represented groups; and
7. Actively target, exploit and monitor potential sources of external support funding / other opportunities related to social regeneration.

3.12 Progress on each of these areas will be reported at quarterly management meetings between the operator and Council officers. The payment mechanism for the operator contract has been set up in such a way that the operator must demonstrate progress not only on the commercial elements of the centre (% occupancy, agreed rental) but must also show that they are meeting their social regeneration obligations.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Enterprising Britain Awards

The Director of Development advised the Committee that the Council's Belfast Enterprise Academy (BEA), a student entrepreneurship programme, had been highly commended in the Building Enterprise category of the Enterprising Britain Awards 2016.

He informed the Members of the current and planned initiatives which were aimed at supporting entrepreneurship across the city, as part of the wider Belfast Agenda which had set an ambition to grow the number and quality of new business starts. The Committee was advised that the BEA was the primary support intervention to stimulate student entrepreneurship levels and had successfully delivered over the past seven years, working in partnership with Queen's University, Ulster University and Belfast Metropolitan College.

He pointed out to the Committee that, currently, start-up rates in Belfast were significantly below the regional and UK average but that Council activity in the field had increased over the past two years, in line with the transfer of economic development functions from DETI/Invest NI to the Councils in April 2015. He explained that the

Council delivered support to businesses across a range of stages of development, including Starting Your Business, Growing Your Business and Investing in Belfast.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the various strands of work being delivered to support enterprise and entrepreneurship across the city;
2. noted that the Belfast Enterprise Academy had been highly commended in the Building Enterprise category of the Enterprising Britain Awards 2016;
3. agreed the attendance of the Chairperson of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (or nominee) and one officer at the awards ceremony which would take place in London in late October (date to be confirmed).

Operational

Public Transport Arrangements - Christmas

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, in the period leading up to Christmas 2015, the Council had suspended charging in its off street car parks all day Saturday and after 6.00 pm on week days, in an effort to encourage visitors into the city centre. He pointed out that the Council's car parking spaces accounted for only a small proportion of the overall spaces in the City.

He advised the Members that Translink and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had contacted the Council to raise concerns that offering free car parking in the lead up to Christmas in 2015 had had a significantly detrimental impact on the reliability and punctuality of their services and, subsequently, on traffic flow and congestion within the city. They stated that they believed that the offer of free parking in the 1500 spaces within Council-owned car parks had resulted in cars queuing for the limited spaces available or circling the city centre looking for a free space.

In its correspondence, Translink had advised the Members that the costs to its business in terms of the extra resources required was estimated at £250,000, in addition to the lost fare box revenue as a result of fewer passengers on services in 2015 in comparison to 2014.

The Director advised the Committee that Translink and the DfI had suggested incentivising public transport as an alternative to free car parking in order to prevent congestion and make it easier for all consumers, including car users, to use the city centre in the lead up to Christmas in 2016.

During discussion, a Member welcomed the suggestion from Translink and DfI, and highlighted that evidence suggested cities with freer flowing traffic and a greater reliance on sustainable public transport were more successful and attractive cities.

A number of Members expressed concerns at the proposal not to offer free parking in the small number of Council owned car parks in Belfast. A Member explained that some people who lived outside of Belfast were apprehensive about coming into the City to shop, particularly with the new bus lanes, and that using public transport was not always practical, especially when purchasing larger items. A further Member added that towns outside of Belfast often advertised their free parking and lack of traffic in a bid to encourage consumers out of Belfast and that the Council should be cautious in appearing to be 'anti-car'.

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed to an early review of the current arrangements for those car parks that DRD had transferred to Belfast City Council in 2014 (and any others) to involve synchronising their operations; rationalising opening days and hours; re-assessing the hourly and maximum charge rates; reviewing the monthly and quarterly season ticket charges; and modernising their names, livery and look.

After discussion, the Committee agreed also that:

- the Council would work in collaboration with Translink and the Department for Infrastructure to support the attractive Christmas transport proposals which would support greater choice for shoppers and tourists and have a positive impact in increasing footfall into the city as an alternative to Council offering free car parking; and
- the opening hours for Smithfield car park would be extended this year, and in future years, to cover the Christmas late night shopping period, with the set tariff applying, with all other Council-owned car parks, including Bankmore Street, available for use at all times.

Routes Europe Sponsorship 2017

The Director of Development advised the Members that the annual Routes Europe Conference would be taking place in the Belfast Waterfront from 23rd - 25th April 2017, and highlighted that this was a prestigious business tourism event for the city. He informed the Committee that it was the largest regional gathering for all aviation based companies operating in Europe, which brought together decision makers from airlines, airports and tourism authorities to negotiate and build relationships to shape the world's future air route networks. He emphasised to the Committee that the Conference was particularly attractive in terms of its economic impact on the host city, particularly in relation to new air routes.

He advised the Members that the event would attract around 1,000 delegates representing more than 100 global airlines, airports and tourism promotion agencies, which would generate an estimated delegate spend of £1.3 million. The Committee was also advised that, as well as providing an excellent opportunity for the promotion of the city as a destination, focussing on the key messaging identified within the emerging city narrative, it also provided an opportunity to change perceptions about our airports and flight networks.

The Director advised the Committee that the newly extended Belfast Waterfront had generated an estimated economic impact of £4.68 million from conferences and events since it opened in April 2016, with 2017/18 anticipated to generate an economic return to the city of £19 million.

The Committee noted that the Conference provided the Belfast Waterfront with an opportunity to showcase the newly extended conference centre to a wide range of European Corporations, many of which hosted conferences in their own right, as well as firmly positioning the Belfast Waterfront as a world class conference centre. The Director advised the Committee that a funding package was required from the various partners involved, with the Council requested to provide £100,000. He outlined that Invest NI had agreed to provide approximately £300,000, in addition £20,000 from Tourism Ireland, £165,000 from Tourism NI, £20,000 from Visit Belfast, £10,000 from

the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd., with the two airports approximately £100,000 each.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the upcoming Routes Europe conference which would take place in Belfast for the first time in April 2017; and
2. agreed that the £100,000 planned subvention to support the event in the city was now confirmed. This amount was planned for given the importance of this particular conference to the Belfast economy and was in the Department's budget.

Chairperson