

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 10th January, 2018

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor O'Donnell (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, Kingston, McGimpsey and L. Patterson;
Councillors Beattie, Boyle, Dorrian,
Dudgeon, Graham, Hargey, Howard, Johnston,
Kyle, Magee, McAteer, McDonough-Brown,
Mullan, O'Hara and Walsh.

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

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 6th and 12th December 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 January.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentation

Translink – Weavers Cross

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. C. Conway, Chief Executive of Translink, was in attendance and he was welcomed to the meeting.

He explained to the Members that 'Weavers Cross' was an 8 hectare site linking a modern, high capacity transport hub with a mixed use development site. He outlined that it would become the main gateway for Belfast, with rail and bus connections to all parts of Northern Ireland, and the main rail and coach link to Dublin with direct connections to major airports.

He advised the Committee that the Transport Hub was now fully funded. He outlined that the project had been split into 2 planning applications and that the Transport Hub was currently going through the planning process so he would concentrate on providing an update on the wider development.

He outlined to the Members that the wider development was going through a consultation process and that a Pre Application Notice (PAN) had been submitted. The Members were advised that procurement of construction was ongoing.

The Committee was advised that Translink would be working with the Council on a Construction employment academy to provide construction jobs throughout the build period.

In relation to consultation on the project, he advised that they had received feedback from Project Hope, amongst other organisations, on ways in which Translink could improve the consultation process and he outlined a number of consultation events which would take place across the City.

In response to a Member's question regarding the removal of the Boyne Bridge, Mr. Conway advised the Members that there was no feasible design which allowed them to carry out the required level of development in the Sandy Row area and retain the Boyne Bridge.

In response to further questions, Mr. Conway explained that it would be difficult to justify the creation of rail links between Belfast city centre and the Belfast International Airport and the George Best Belfast City Airport, in terms of cost and disruption to services, and added that frequent bus services currently covered those routes.

Mr. Conway confirmed to the Committee that the Arts Advisory Panel would look at ways in which the heritage of the area, including the lights, plaque and steel from the Harland and Wolff structures could be incorporated into the design of the site.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Conway for this presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Restricted Items

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion of the items as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42 (4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2018/2019

(Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered a report, which had been prepared by the Director of Finance and Resources, in relation to the establishment of the District Rate and the compilation of the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the year 2018/2019.

The Director outlined that the paper would not be subject to call-in as it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council and the public's interest in striking the district rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2018.

He outlined to the Members that the main financial pressures facing the Council in 2018/2019 were uncontrollable costs but that the impact of those costs had been reduced by the increase in the rate base and efficiency savings.

He explained the cash limit for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2018/2019, as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 5th January, and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process leading to the setting of the district rate by Council at its meeting in February, 2018.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. agreed a cash limit for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2018/19 of £16,036,980 and the individual service cash limits detailed in table 3 of the report; and
2. noted the next steps in the rate setting process.

Royal Avenue Site Update

The Director of City Centre Development provided the Committee with an overview of the work which was ongoing in relation to the Council's joint venture partnership with McAleer & Rushe (Bel Tel LLP) with regards to the former Belfast Telegraph site. She also provided the Members with information on the proposed programme, engagement and branding for the scheme.

After brief discussion, the Committee noted:

1. the progress to date on Bel Tel LLP; and
2. the proposed programme, engagement and branding for the scheme going forward.

City Centre Living

The Director of City Centre Development provided the Members with an update on the work which was ongoing in relation to City Centre Living in terms of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (CCRIS), the Belfast Agenda and the Local Development Plan.

She explained the key learning points which had arisen from the City Centre Living Study visit to London from 12th-13th October, 2017, and the City Centre Living Workshop which had taken place on 23rd October, 2017. She outlined to the Members that this had prompted further work to take place on Living over the Shops (LOTS), and

potential pilot scheme to deliver city centre living principles, understanding the city centre residential market, use of the City Deal and invention opportunities.

During discussion, a Member requested that those residents who already lived in the city centre be invited to participate in the next Workshop.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the contents of the report; and
2. agreed that a follow-up Workshop would be held with the involvement of residents from the city centre communities.

Growing Businesses and the Economy

Employability and Skills Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on progress on the key Employability & Skills workstreams
- Advise Members of the impacts of the work to date and the plans in place to achieve targets set out in the Belfast Agenda
- Note the intention to hold a workshop with Members in February 2018 to ensure Member input into priority activity on Employability and Skills for the coming year.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the updates on the Employability and Skills workstreams and the impact of these interventions, including facilitating access to 735 jobs in the year to date
- Agree to hold a Committee Workshop on 21st February 2018 to ensure a collaborative approach to developing the future work programme for the coming year.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress against target on Council support for Employability and

Skills activity, focusing on how this aligns to Belfast Agenda priorities and targets.

- 3.2 The report includes details of key projects and investments and sets out how these will be developed in the short to medium-term. This is in line with the approach agreed by Members at the October 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Current priority activities include Employment Academies in key employment growth sectors as well as career development and youth engagement activities.
- 3.3 The following jobs creation and participant targets have been established for the current financial year:
- Up to 1,500 residents will be supported to find a job. To date, more than 1,000 residents have entered employment (735 through ESF and Employment Academies and 313 through our entrepreneurship (including Go for It programme) and business development support);
 - 4,000 residents will be engaged through employability interventions (e.g careers insight activities) and early engagement projects (with 2,928 people engaged to date);
 - Over 1,000 students and young people to be engaged through career events and digital skills programmes (715 young people engaged to date)
 - Over 290 work experience opportunities to be provided through the Council and key employers across the City (with 25 employers signed up to provide the 290 work experience opportunities to date).

3.4 Employment Academies Update

Members will be aware that the Council is delivering a range of Employment Academies across a range of employment growth sectors. These Academies are based on the learning from a number of pilot programmes undertaken in the previous financial year where 100 participants were supported and 60 found employment.

- 3.5 Employment Academies are a very flexible support intervention. They are designed in conjunction with employers to meet their specific needs. Typically, they involve a training intervention of up to two weeks, after which the employer will provide a guaranteed interview for an existing job.

- 3.6 Officers are currently engaged in an intensive programme of delivery, supporting Employment Academies across a number of sectors including Hotels/Hospitality; Construction; Social Care and Transportation. These Academies will run until June 2018. By that point, they will support the facilitation of at least 285 people into new jobs. Details of these Academies are set out below.
- 3.7 Hotel Employment Academy
- Members will be aware that Council Officers have been working closely with the HR teams from the Hastings Group and Dalata Group to provide candidates for more than 200 entry-level positions across their two new hotels which will open in the coming six months. 120 entry level jobs will be created in the period January-March 2018 in the Maldron Hotel which is scheduled to open in March 2018. Following this, the Grand Central Hotel will create 90 entry level jobs in the period May-June 2018 and the hotel will open in June 2018.
- 3.8 Both employers have been keen to ensure that significant effort is made to raise awareness of the employment opportunities across all of the City, and to work with the Council to consider how some of those furthest from the labour market can access the opportunities. As part of the programme delivery, a Stakeholder Engagement session took place in November 2017. This was attended by 42 organisations who work directly with those out of work across the city, including Jobs and Benefit Office (JBO) staff, European Social Fund (ESF) projects, training organisations etc. Those in attendance were made aware of the scale and spectrum of opportunities available as well as the timetable for training and recruitment.
- 3.9 In addition to the Stakeholder Engagement activity, Council officers, in partnership with staff from the Department for Communities (DfC) and the employers themselves, hosted community engagement sessions across the City. These took place in Conway Mill, Crumlin Road Gaol, Skainos Centre and Crescent Arts Centre. 221 people attended these drop-in local job roadshows.
- 3.10 Both hotels have also been willing to offer Job Insight Days. These provide interested applicants with a real life insight into the role so that they can decide whether they feel it would meet their interests and ambitions. The first Jobs Insight Day took place in early December 2017 and this was attended by 60 people. Further Insight Days have been set for January 2018.

3.11 Interviews are currently under way for the 2018 Academies and 160 people have taken part in these interviews to date, with additional interviews scheduled for January. The first series of Hotel Employment Academies will commence on 15 January 2018. All of those completing the Academy will be guaranteed an interview for a post with Dalata or Hastings. Interest in the Academies has come from all across the City. The breakdown of participants engaged to date is as follows:

- 20% are from North Belfast
- 29% are from West Belfast
- 19% are from South Belfast
- 32% are from East Belfast

3.12 In addition to the above, the Council has already delivered an Academy programme with the newly-opened Titanic Hotel. 12 people took part in the Hotel Employment Academy for this hotel and 10 successfully completed the programme and entered employment. Due to the location of this hotel, the vast majority of participants are from East Belfast. Given the success of the initial programme, it is planned that a number of additional Employment Academy Programmes will be held with the Titanic Hotel – and in partnership with DfC – in the New Year. At this point, the hotel has agreed to support a programme for up to 15 participants in late January 2018. All those participating in the Academy will be guaranteed an interview with the Titanic Hotel.

3.13 Given the success of the Hotel Employment Academies to date, there is now increasing interest and demand from the sector to look at how these Academies can be part of the solution for the range of new hotel openings and expansions that are expected in the coming year in particular. Employers are also keen to use the Academies as part of the recruitment for their existing facilities, given that there tends to be a significant degree of ‘churn’ within the industry. A meeting is planned with the Sector Skills body – People 1st – and the Northern Ireland Hotel Federation to plan the co-ordinated provision of Hotel Employment Academies across the hotel sector in Belfast moving forward.

3.14 Construction Employment Academy

The Construction Employment Academy was designed initially to meet the Social Clause requirements of Heron Bros. who were awarded the Leisure Transformation Programme contract for the redevelopment of Brook Activity Centre, Andersonstown Leisure Centre and the Robinson

Centre. The number of posts targeted for this Employment Academy is initially 14 jobs across a range of roles including plant operators, gate personnel and administrators. As was the case with the Hotel Employment Academy, Council Officers organised a Stakeholder Engagement event to promote the opportunities to training organisations across the City. 52 organisations attended the event. Officers also organised local job roadshows close to the vicinity of the developments – in Skainos Centre and Colin Glen Trust – with 45 people attending to find out about the employment opportunities. 21 people also took part in Job Insight Days at two of the Heron Bros. sites in order to gain an insight into the reality of the roles.

- 3.15 To date, there have been 56 registrations for the Construction Employment Academy which will commence on 8 January 2017. There are 30 places on this Academy and all participants completing the programme will be guaranteed an interview. Although the social clauses commitment is for 14 jobs, Heron Bros. have indicated that they will be willing to provide additional opportunities on other projects, should the candidates meet their requirements.
- 3.16 The postcode profile of those registering their interest in the Construction Academy to date broadly reflects the location of the opportunities. 33% of posts located in East Belfast and 66% located in West Belfast. The postcode profile of applicants is as follows:
- 18% from North Belfast;
 - 29% from West Belfast;
 - 32% from East Belfast;
 - 9% from South Belfast.
- 3.17 The Construction Academy model is flexible and can work not only on Council contracts but on any construction contract. Officers have been engaging with partners across a range of organisations including the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) to provide solutions for other major contracts. These include:
- Regular and structured engagement with Translink to deliver Construction Employment Academies aligned to the employment needs of the Belfast Transport Hub
 - Engagement with both Radius Housing and Clanmil Housing to agree Construction Employment Academies aligned to their Social Clause requirements across a range of developments such as the building of social housing at the Visteon site

- Engagement with Graham Bam Healthcare Partnership to agree a Construction Employment Academy aligned to their Buy Social requirements within the Royal Maternity development; and
- Engagement with Lagan Somague to outline how the Construction Employment Academy model can be utilised to meet their Social Clause requirements within the UU Belfast Campus development.

3.18 Health and Social Care Employment Academy

Officers have held a series of engagements with a range of domiciliary care providers in partnership with DfC to identify barriers to recruitment and agree the delivery of an Employment Academy to remove these barriers. One of the main barriers identified has been the need for applicants to have a driving licence. A number of employers have agreed to waive this as an essential criterion for the post and to progress potential candidates to interview with the caveat that, if they are successful in their application, they will be expected to secure their driving licence within an agreed timeframe in order to take up the offer. A funding package will be put in place to cover the costs, with contributions from the Council and the employer. Other employers have not set the driving licence as a pre-requisite for the jobs. A total of eight employers from the sector will take part in a jobs fair in w/c 15 January 2018. It is expected that there will be at least 35 job outcomes from this planned approach.

3.19 Public Transport Black Taxi Employment Academy

Members will be aware that, at the October meeting of this Committee, an update was provided on plans to develop an Employment Academy for Public Transport Black Taxis. Officers have now agreed the content and delivery process for this Employment Academy directly aligned to the employment needs of Belfast Taxis CIC, who have an immediate need to recruit 20 new drivers for their public transport routes across west and north Belfast. The company is also keen to upskill 6 current Black Taxi drivers as coach drivers to be able to expand their tourism offer to meet demand. In order to progress this programme, the Council will host a 'Meet the Employer' event on 23 January in An Chultúrlann where the employer will undertake preliminary interviews for the Employment Academy. Subject to satisfactory completion of the Academy, 26 participants will be offered positions with the company.

3.20 Based on the groundwork on this Academy model, Officers have also been working with the Shankill Public Transport Black Taxis company. While they are currently not in a position to take on any new drivers within the public transport element of their business, the company is engaging with Officers to develop and design a potential Employment Academy to expand the tourism element of their business. Working with the Tourism Team in the Department, Officers will ensure that the training reflects the skills required to improve the product development offer in the City, including customer care training and familiarisation with the tourism product offer across Belfast. It will also support delivery of the local tourism programme that was previously approved by this Committee.

3.21 Additional areas for development

Clearly there is an interest in the Employment Academy Model among employers across a range of sectors. The flexibility of the approach means that employers can develop the content to meet their needs, meaning that employees have the necessary skills to move into the company without the need for re-training. From the Council's perspective in ensuring that the interventions have a positive impact and that the opportunities for employment outcomes are maximised, this approach is also positive. As demonstrated above, the Academy programme provides participants with a much better chance of finding a job than the other models currently in the market.

3.22 While the early engagement around Employment Academies was undertaken in a planned and targeted way, focusing on hospitality employers in the first instance (given the planned growth in hotel development), it has become clear that the model is transferable and can be implemented across many sectors.

3.23 In addition to the planned engagement with the Hotels Federation, Officers are also engaging with major public sector employers (QUB, Translink etc.) to explore the feasibility of implementing Academy programmes for their upcoming vacancies. In order to consider how this approach can be escalated and resourced, Officers are currently working on a development plan for the coming financial year. This will be presented to the proposed February meeting of Committee (see 3.26), focusing on how the Council can add value to the current provision without creating confusion in a very cluttered marketplace.

3.24 Work Placement and Career Development Support

Members have previously noted the value of work placements in providing young people with an insight into a career. This was also one of the priority issues raised as part of the development work on the Employability and Skills Framework. The work experience will range from one week voluntary programmes for up to 250 young people to 4-6 weeks of paid employment in the summer of 2018. There may be opportunities to expand these numbers, based on additional engagement with employers and other partners.

3.25 In addition to the work placement activity, at least 2,000 post-primary students will receive additional careers guidance advice and support to help them develop a clear career pathway. As part of this support, there will be a focus on raising awareness of vocational pathways and self-employment, in line with the gaps and deficits identified as part of the Employability and Skills Framework and the Belfast Agenda. Officers will explore how this support can be delivered through formal school mechanisms as well as through other channels e.g. youth groups and community engagement activity.

3.26 Member engagement on future Employability and Skills activities

At the November 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, Members confirmed their continued support for the work on Employability and Skills and agreed the broad programme for the short, medium and long-term activities. They also confirmed their willingness to engage in the more detailed development process for this area of work. The first agreed step was to organise a workshop for Members early in 2018. It is proposed that this will take place in February 2018, as part of the additional meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (scheduled for 21 February at 5.15pm). This engagement will, of course, be an evolutionary process as the external environment and the economy change, but it is the intention that this additional engagement with Members will help build an understanding of the key issues and lead to informed decision-making on how to best allocate our resources to deliver on the City ambitions in this field. This engagement may also offer an opportunity to consider the wider programme of work for the Committee in the coming financial year, with a view to prioritising activities for inclusion in the City Growth and Regeneration Committee's Plan for the year.

3.27 Financial & Resource Implications

The budget for the Employment Academies and the Work Experience activities have been approved as part of this year's Departmental estimates process.

3.28 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The outreach and engagement activity has been designed to ensure that there are opportunities for participation by all groups.”

During discussion, a Member requested that a legal opinion be sought on whether the Council could ring-fence training provision through its Employment Academies for Belfast residents only.

A further Member stated that the Council should support the case for young people undertaking apprenticeships being paid a fair and reasonable wage.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the updates on the Employability and Skills workstreams and the impact of the interventions, which had facilitated access to 735 jobs in the year to date;
2. agreed to hold a Committee Workshop on Wednesday, 21st February at 5.15pm to ensure a collaborative approach to developing the future work programme for the coming year;
3. agreed that a legal opinion be sought on whether the Council could ring-fence training provision through its Employment Academies for Belfast residents only; and
4. agreed that officers would support the case for young people on apprenticeships being paid a fair and reasonable wage.

Update on Council and Partner Support for Business Start-up and Growth

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the work of the Council and its partner organisations to increase entrepreneurship levels in the City and support new business start-up and growth.
- 1.2 The report outlines how these activities are delivering against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) identified in the Programme for Government (PfG), Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland, the Belfast Agenda and the Employability

and Skills Framework 2016-2020. Primarily, these indicators relate to Job Creation and Business Productivity.

- 1.3 Members will be aware that the Belfast Agenda four-year stretch goals to 2021 include the creation of 15,000 new jobs and supporting 4,000 new business start-ups. Supporting new business start-ups and indigenous business growth is a sustainable means to developing a sustainable local economy and promoting inclusive economic growth. In the year to date, the Council has directly helped 344 individuals consider starting their business and has provided 300 companies with business growth support. In total, 313 jobs have been created.
- 1.4 Following the transfer of some economic development powers as part of Local Government Reform (LGR) in April 2015, entrepreneurship activity is now a statutory function of the Council. As such, there is an additional responsibility on the Council not only to ensure that it invests resources to encourage start-ups but also that it convenes the work of partner organisations active in this field.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- Note the work that is being undertaken by the Council and its partners to address the deficit around business start-up rates and to support indigenous companies to become more competitive and improve their productivity.
- Note that enterprise, business start and business growth activity has created 313 jobs to date this financial year. The breakdown of these jobs is 'Go for It' Programme 190 jobs, enterprise support for under-represented groups 6 jobs, Innovation Factory 85 jobs and 'Go Social' Programme for social entrepreneurs and co-operatives 32 jobs created).
- Note the performance for 'Start a Business' and 'Grow a Business', as summarised in the infographics in Appendices 1 and 2.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 At the December 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, officials from Invest Northern Ireland provided an updated analysis of the performance of the Belfast economy. This included references to key growth sectors as well as areas in which the City's performance was

lagging behind. This included start-ups levels and business productivity. Some of the key messages include:

- **Levels of entrepreneurship:** Belfast continues to lag behind the NI average for early-stage entrepreneurial activity with a TEA (total entrepreneurial activity) rate of 4.4% compared to the NI average of 6.3%. Belfast ranks 9th out of the 11 Councils in terms of Total Entrepreneurial Activity;
- **Self-Employment rates:** the self-employment rate in Belfast is 6% of total employment. This is half the figure for Northern Ireland;
- **Rebalance the economy:** the City is too reliant on the public sector which accounts for around one third of all employment. There is a need to rebalance the economy by creating more private sector businesses and employment; and
- **Business Base:** the total number of VAT-registered businesses in Belfast is 9,015. This represents around 13% of the Northern Ireland total. 81% of those are micro businesses with up to nine employees. The majority of businesses (93%) are in the services sector.

3.2 To address these challenges, Council Officers have been working in partnership with Invest NI and other local economic development stakeholders to design and develop a range of programmes and initiatives to increase the levels of entrepreneurial activity, self-employment and business start-up across the city. There is a further suite of initiatives designed to support small businesses to scale up and grow, increasing employment opportunities and improving their competitiveness.

3.3 The Employability and Skills Framework for Belfast outlines the specifics of the employability and skills challenges for Belfast and identifies how a collaborative, outcomes-based, long-term approach could bring about a step change in employment rates and skills levels in the city. The framework recognises that entrepreneurship and business start activity offers another option for individuals to enter employment and delivers against one of the aims of the Framework, namely 'to develop a culture of entrepreneurship at all levels'.

3.4 Since the transfer of entrepreneurship and business start-up functions from Invest Northern Ireland in 2015, Officers have developed a pipeline of business support incorporating early-stage entrepreneurial activity (thinking about starting a business), business start-up initiatives, high growth support

for key sectors and interventions for existing businesses and social enterprises. This has enabled us to provide a continuum of support from initial business idea generation right through to supporting businesses when they are established and successfully trading.

- 3.5 The business start-up and business growth support landscape is a complex one. Our engagement with business has identified the need to simplify the messaging and provide better signposting across relevant services in order to meet the needs of the businesses as opposed to the targets of the individual support organisations. Taking account of this, Officers have worked with our Corporate Communications Team to develop a simplified messaging for would-be entrepreneurs, new businesses and growing businesses. This will use the banner 'Belfast: City for Business'. It will be launched across the City in January 2018 and will be supported by an overarching communications and marketing plan aimed at increasing further our level of engagement and support to participants and employers. This is in line with the Committee's ambition to promote more good news stories about the work that is being undertaken to support economic growth in the city.
- 3.6 In order to ensure that there is alignment of activity, Council Officers have established an Entrepreneurship and Business Growth Working Group. This is an informal advisory and co-ordination group that engages 30 stakeholders across the city with the aim of supporting the achievement of the city's strategic aspirations and economic priorities set out in the Belfast Agenda around business start-up and growth. The group has collectively agreed to progress with the development of an Enterprise Framework which will identify strategic longer-term interventions to address some of the barriers to enterprise and business start-up across the city and which will address the deficits set out above. The intention is that this Enterprise Framework will be ambitious in its aspirations, delivering on the Belfast Agenda commitment to making Belfast a great place to start and grow a business.
- 3.7 In order to provide Members with assurances around the level of investment and support for business start-up and growth, details of some of the Council and partner activity for the current financial year are set out below. In summary, the key activity plus the overall impact in terms of participation and job outcomes includes:

- **Enterprise outreach and engagement:** engagement of up to 300 people by April 2018 through a range of informal settings (youth groups, community groups, one to one interventions, enterprise awareness sessions) with a commitment to ensuring that 200 of these participants are from under-represented groups (including those with a disability, women, those from areas of disadvantage)
- **Starting a Business:** support provided to 331 individuals and organisations (particularly cooperatives) to set up a business. 228 jobs have been created to date through the start-up support. In addition, new interventions planned to start in new financial year to support start-ups with high growth potential. A target of 250 jobs over two years to be created. This new element of the programme will commence in March 2018.
- **Growing a Business:** at least 418 companies to be supported to improve their business competitiveness, develop new products and expand to new markets. 85 jobs already created to date through Innovation Factory.

3.8 Enterprise outreach and engagement

Belfast is home to residents of many differing backgrounds, cultures and abilities. Our enterprise outreach support recognises this, providing interventions to help those with greater barriers to starting a business. Through the Council's Equality Consultative and Migrant Forums, we are delivering a series of interventions to promote enterprise to a range of groups to enable them to explore the idea of starting their own business and support them to access further Council start-up support. Through all of this support we aim to engage with 300 individuals across the city by April 2018 of which at least 200 will be from under-represented groups.

- 3.9** To date a specific programme of support was developed to target refugees from the Syrian community who were interested in starting a business. This programme successfully engaged 20 individuals from the Syrian community supporting 2 to start a business which created 6 full-time jobs and 10 training roles, and helping 6 to access further training or employment opportunities.

3.10 Starting a Business

A range of support activities are available to help individuals to start a business. These include:

- **Belfast Enterprise Academy:** providing support for student entrepreneurs and start-ups. Last year (2016/17), 9 new businesses started trading as a result of the programme. 32 new student entrepreneurs have been engaged on the programme since September 2017 and they are currently receiving support from mentors to develop their business idea and test its viability – while they are still in full-time education.
- **Go For It:** This initiative provides individuals with advice and support to start a business through the development of a business plan. The new Programme was launched in September 2017 in partnership with the 10 other Councils. This initiative is being delivered by the Enterprise Northern Ireland Local Enterprise Agency Network. Since April 2017, the initiative has supported 265 individuals to develop a business plan supporting the creation of 190 jobs in Belfast.
- **City Start Up Programme:** this is a joint initiative with Derry City and Strabane District Council. It provides enhanced support to individuals who have accessed the Go For It programme and targets start-ups in the Fashion, Tourism, Food and Retail sectors. The programme has just launched and aims to engage 30 businesses in the Belfast City Council area, providing sector-specific mentoring and access to financial incentives to enable them to overcome barriers to starting their business.
- **Go Social:** this programme aims to help increase the number of new social enterprises and cooperatives in the City. This year, the programme has supported the development of 34 social enterprises and 10 cooperatives, 9 of which have already started trading and which have created 32 jobs. Officers are currently working on a proposal for a test-trading facility in the City Centre. This will be used by the social enterprises supported through the Go Social programme as well as participants on our other initiatives. It will be a facility to test their product and services in the local market.
- **High growth potential start-up support:** given the productivity challenges identified in the research, the Council has secured additional European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) support to assist those businesses with high growth potential to achieve their business goals. Support will be available for up to 120 participants, creating a minimum of 250 jobs. This programme will commence in March 2018

- **Start-up World Cup support:** on 16 January 2018, the Northern Ireland qualifier event for the Start Up World Cup will take place in Belfast. This is a global event and it is the first time that a heat has been held in Northern Ireland. Other heats will take place in twenty global locations including Taiwan, Singapore, Australia and Egypt. Winners of this initiative can accelerate their ideas into reality with the help of \$1 million in funding and global recognition. The Council is supporting this event, in partnership with Belfast Global Shapers, Ulster University, Ormeau Baths and a number of other public and private sector partners. 10- 5 local start-ups will pitch for a place in the grand final in San Francisco in May 2018.

3.11 Growing a Business

- **MassChallenge Belfast:** MassChallenge is a no-equity accelerator which started in Boston but now runs a network of global engagements. Programme participants receive mentor support, access to investment and are exposed to business networks that can provide them with the opportunity to achieve global growth ambitions. The Committee has previously agreed to support the participation of up to 10 local companies in a week-long programme, based in Boston. Planning work is currently under way but it is likely that this programme will be launched during the civic visit to Boston in February 2018.
- **SXSW 2018:** in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and Digital Catapult, the Council will provide the opportunity for local digital entrepreneurs to attend SXSW 2018 – the world’s largest music and digital convergence event. Participation by 6 local entrepreneurs will be supported by Council.
- **Immersive Lab:** Supported by Belfast City Council, the Department for the Economy (DfE), Innovate UK and Digital Catapult NI, the Immersive Lab gives organisations of all sizes the opportunity to get hands-on experience with the latest immersive technology enabling them to demonstrate, innovate and test their own business ideas and research. The lab is part of a number of Immersive labs across the UK with other locations including London, Brighton and Gateshead.
- **Innovation Factory:** The Innovation Director at Innovation Factory provides a range of business growth and innovation initiatives aimed at centre users and tenants. Current tenant occupancy is 27% representing 85 jobs and 29 business tenants. To date

support has been delivered to 85 businesses. Topics include new product development support, leadership development master-classes and support for business to business collaborations.

- **Access to procurement:** Delivered in partnership with InterTradelreland, this support enhances the capacity and opportunity for local small businesses to benefit from public sector procurement opportunities. Running for three years, the programme focuses on 3 areas of delivery; Introduction to Tendering sessions, 'Go-2-Tender' sessions and specific 'Supplier Engagement' or 'Meet the Buyer' events. In the year to date, 115 businesses have been supported through this activity.
- **Business Mentor Support:** this support aims to increase a business' growth and employment potential by providing one to one mentoring, networking sessions and seminars on a range of business-related topics. From 2017 to 2020, 533 participants will be supported, creating at least 269 new jobs. In this year to date, 80 participants have received support. In addition, hospitality and retail businesses can avail of additional customer service improvement support. At present, 15 businesses are in receipt of this support.
- **Export and international trade:** A specialist international prospecting service has been commissioned by Council. The contractor will undertake international prospecting for business clients, develop an export plan and support them to enter new markets. The contract is for 15 participants on average per year. The type of support is flexible to meet the bespoke needs of clients.

3.12 A full service evaluation will be commissioned in the coming financial year to measure impacts of enterprise, business start and growth activity in line with the targets in the Belfast Agenda including sales, productivity, etc.

3.13 Finance and Resource Implications

Financial support for all activities set out in the report has already been approved by this Committee, as part of the departmental estimates process.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre has undertaken an analysis of under-represented groups in entrepreneurship

and business start activity across Belfast. This has been used to inform Council investment. Marketing activity and support will be targeted to encourage increased participation by under-represented groups. Tailored support will be adopted, where possible, including interpretation and translation services and specific support for persons with a disability.”

In response to a request from a Member, the Committee agreed that Oxford Innovation Limited, as operator of the Innovation Factory, be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting.

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

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Inner North West Masterplan

The Director provided the Members with an update on the ongoing work on the Inner North West (INW) masterplan.

She outlined to the Committee that the Inner North West area of the city centre was experiencing significant change, mostly as a result of a number of approved and planned development opportunities in the wider area including the new Ulster University campus, potential redevelopment of the Central Library, private and public sector schemes, as well as the proposed redevelopment of the former Belfast Telegraph site.

She highlighted to the Members that the area was in need of significant investment to ensure that coherent proposals could come forward on the many vacant sites. The Committee was advised that the area needed to be developed comprehensively to ensure improved linkages and connections with other parts of the city centre and adjacent neighbourhoods.

The Members were advised that the INW Masterplan sought to provide a framework to help shape those opportunities and ensure a more comprehensive approach to development on both public and private sector owned land.

The Director outlined that the INW Masterplan sought to facilitate a new city centre mixed neighbourhood which:

- incorporated a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, retail and leisure, all integrated through a strong and cohesive public realm;
- took into consideration the heritage of the area and the historic urban grain;
- reinstated the historically vibrant economy of the area;
- promoted ‘city centre living’;
- strengthened the city centre’s urban fabric and streetscapes;
- supported and strengthened pedestrian connections to the city and adjoining neighbourhoods;

- considered meanwhile uses to animate specific areas;
- delivered the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

She advised the Members of the engagement which had taken place to date on the Masterplan. She explained that the area involved multiple land owners, in both the public and private sectors, and pointed out that it had also seen planning appeals in recent times. As a result of the complexities she pointed out that officers had undertaken targeted pre-consultation engagement in September, 2017, which had informed the emerging masterplan. The Members were also advised that engagement with statutory partners continued to take place.

The Committee was reminded that a Workshop on the Masterplan had been held on 13th November, 2017, and that feedback from the session had been fed into the draft plan, particularly the development of an additional Character Area between Castle Street and College Street.

The Director explained that, during the formal 12-week consultation period, the Council would seek to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders in this area of the city, including residents, businesses, statutory partners and developers.

In response to a Member's question, the Director confirmed to the Committee that there would be proactive engagement with residents in the area.

The Committee agreed that a 12-week consultation be undertaken for the draft Inner North West masterplan, commencing in February.

Blackstaff Square

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report to seek agreement from Members to progress the Blackstaff Square public realm project under Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree that the Blackstaff Square Public realm project be taken forward under Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead programme, led by Department for Communities (DfC);
- Note DfC's intention to procure an Integrated Design Team for a BSA Phase 5 project;
- Note that the Council will work with DfC to ensure that project is designed and developed in such a manner that elements of the scheme can continue as a

standalone project outside the wider remit of the Streets Ahead 5 project, should full funding not be available;

- Note that this approach would mean that Phase 5 would be prioritised over Phase 2 (the area around City Hall) and Phase 4 (the area around Royal Exchange in the North East Quarter);
- Note DfC's intention to maintain a priority focus on the delivery of Streets Ahead 3 as the priority public realm project pending confirmation of funding arrangements.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 The Council's Linen Quarter (LQ) Vision and Guidance approved on 1st June 2016 included proposals to enhance the arrival experience between the proposed Transport Hub and the city centre across Great Victoria Street and create a new, improved high quality public realm in Blackstaff Square, to serve as a positive gateway from the Transport Hub to the Central Business District and Linen Quarter.
- 3.2 In February 2017, Council agreed that as part of the promotion and development of the Linen Quarter that the City Centre Development Team should develop a Phase 1 public realm design scheme and project cost to RIBA Stage 3. The original proposed delivery model was a two-stage approach with the Council appointing a design team to develop the project to RIBA Stage 3 (including planning) and the scheme passing to DfC for the procurement of an Integrated Supply Team to deliver the construction phase. DfC subsequently sought advice from the Central Procurement Directorate on the proposed delivery model and was advised that having the one Integrated Design Team in place from start to end provides the best value for money in line with NI Public Procurement Policy (NIPPP).
- 3.3 Over the past months, teams in the Council and DfC have been exploring how best to take this forward in terms of procurement and also in light of other development activities in the vicinity, such as the proposed Transport Hub and new Belfast Grand Central Hotel. The boundary of the Blackstaff Square project initially proposed is shown in Appendix 1. However, with Translink developing the Weavers Cross Transport Hub at their Great Victoria Street/Glengall Street site, there is the potential that this could impact on the scope of the

Blackstaff Square project. The Grand Central Hotel on Bedford Street at its junction with Franklin Street, which is also in close proximity to Blackstaff Square is scheduled for completion in 2018, as is the Maldron Hotel which has a frontage on the Square and student housing on McClintock Street. It is therefore timely to review the scope of the Blackstaff Square project and the most effective approach to procuring a design team and securing capital funding.

- 3.4 In DfC's Public Realm Masterplan, Blackstaff Square was identified as a catalyst project, whilst the surrounding area (including Great Victoria Street, Bedford Street and Dublin Road) are integral parts of Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) programme (See Appendix 2), which has the overall aim of improving connections with the principal railway and bus station.
- 3.5 Following discussion at a recent meeting of the BSA Public Realm Project Board which comprises of senior members from the Department of Infrastructure, DfC and BCC, the consensus was that, given the wider context, the Blackstaff Square improvements should be progressed under Phase 5 of the BSA programme. The Board considered that this option presents an opportunity for a more comprehensive/strategic approach to regenerating the public realm, taking account of the wider developments in the area. They also emphasised the importance of a joined-up approach to public realm improvements and connectivity around the Transport Hub and Blackstaff Square. This view is shared by Translink. There is clear justification for reviewing Blackstaff Square in terms of the timing of public realm improvements and DfC has indicated its willingness to re-prioritise the phasing of the SA programme to bring forward proposals.
- 3.6 The Council will work with DfC to ensure that proposals for Blackstaff Square are designed and developed in a way which would allow elements of the scheme to continue as a standalone project outside the wider remit of BSA 5, in the event that full funding does not become available. To this end we would commit to engage collaboratively with the Department to ensure successful delivery of the project objectives.
- 3.7 This approach would mean that Phase 5 would be prioritised over Phase 2 (the area around City Hall) and Phase 4 (the area around Royal Exchange in the North East Quarter). However, given the significant investment in this area, there would appear to be a convincing argument for accelerating Phase 5. In the past, such decisions have been made by the relevant Minister. In the current absence of a Minister, DfC will have to consider whether it is able to reach a decision. The Council's view of this

matter, as one of the main stakeholders, and as the locally elected body, is an important factor to be considered.

- 3.8 BSA Phase 3, in the vicinity of Ulster University, is DfC's current priority, but cannot progress at present, due to the current funding position. However, the delivery of the construction phase of the BSA Phase 3 project remains the next priority for the Department and consideration will be given to taking forward a new procurement exercise in the future, once sufficient funding to deliver the project has been confirmed

Timescale and Implementation

- 3.9 Subject to Council approval, DfC would move towards issuing tender documents for the appointment of an Integrated Design Team (IDT) by end February 2018. It is estimated that the earliest date by which the IDT could be appointed is August/September 2018. Timescales from appointment of the IDT to submission of planning application (including design, surveys and 12 week consultation period and reporting to Committee) is estimated as 12/14 months (i.e. by autumn 2019). Planning permission would be timetabled by spring 2020 with the contractor to undertake the works appointed and commencement on site expected in spring 2021. This would align with the construction programme for the Transport Hub. This is an indicative timeline of key milestones for BSA 5 which will be refined when the extent of the proposed project is established:

Capital Costs and Governance

- 3.10 It is intended that BSA 5 will be funded primarily by DfC subject to the necessary government approvals being obtained. The Council is currently preparing a Developer Contributions Framework that will set out the Council's approach to the negotiation of developer contributions as a means to mitigate and manage the impacts of new development on the City's infrastructure. The draft Framework is currently being finalised and following Party Briefings it is expected that the draft Framework, following Committee approvals will be published for a 12 week public consultation period from April 2018 as outlined in the report to Planning Committee in December 2017.
- 3.11 The BSA Public Realm Project Board, upon which the Council is represented, will be the governance model for project delivery.

4.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 Equality and good relations screening will be conducted as required, in parallel with any future proposed consultation process.

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1 Work will continue with the Planning Service on the contribution and utilisation of the existing Developer Contributions agreed with those schemes currently in the ground to the overall public realm in the area.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Belfast Rapid Transit

(Ms. A. Doherty, Planning and Transport Officer, attended in connection with this item)

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. C. de Burca, Director for Transport Projects and Business Services in the Department for Infrastructure, Mr. C. Conway, Chief Executive of Translink, and Mr. S. Duffy, Belfast Taxi Group, were in attendance and had requested to speak to the Committee on the item. The Committee acceded to the requests and the Chairperson welcomed them to the meeting.

The Planning and Transport Officer advised the Committee that the Council had been requested to submit a response to the Department for Infrastructure’s proposal to make two Orders, which would revoke and replace existing bus lanes and introduce new lengths of bus lanes in the city centre, operating between 7.00am and 7.00pm, Monday to Saturday inclusive. She pointed out that, under the proposals, only buses, cycles, motorcycles, permitted taxis and certain specified vehicles would be permitted to use the specified bus lanes during those hours of operation.

She explained to the Committee that the following Motion had also been referred to the Committee by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd January, under Standing Order 13(f):

“This Council shall submit to the Department for Infrastructure a corporate response to the Consultation on Bus Lanes within Belfast, as follows:

The Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) lanes should not operate from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday;

Operation hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. from Monday to Friday is sufficient for the operation of the BRT lane without general traffic;

Ordinary drivers and businesses in the area will suffer badly, funerals processions will be affected and taxi drivers will find it increasingly difficult to earn a decent wage;

All taxis should be allowed into all BRT routes and all bus lanes in Belfast on a permanent basis; and

The recent twelve-week trial allowing all taxis to use the lanes in East and West Belfast and in the City centre was a success and made a noticeable improvement to traffic on these routes and should now be introduced across Belfast in all lanes permanently.”

Mr. de Burca outlined that, under current proposals, the bus lanes would operate Monday – Saturday, 7am - 7pm, with a 2 hour loading window between 10am-12pm.

In relation to funeral corteges, which were alluded to within the Motion, he confirmed to the Committee that the Department would not prosecute a cortege moving between the church or house and the Cemetery. He clarified to the Committee that allowing private hire taxis into bus lanes would be a Ministerial decision and that civil servants could not implement a change in the legislation without Ministerial sign-off.

He confirmed to the Members that Public Hire taxis (Class B&C taxis) were allowed in the bus lanes at all times. He explained that a change to that policy would require Ministerial approval and that, without an Executive, the Department could not implement any change.

Mr. Duffy explained that he represented taxi drivers from across the city. He pointed out that a recent trial which allowed private hire taxis to use bus lanes in Belfast had been an overwhelming success, with customers having benefitted from cheaper fares and reaching their destinations quicker. He reported that taxis were able to use bus lanes in a number of cities across Great Britain and Ireland, including Manchester, Glasgow, Cork, Dublin and Cardiff. He emphasised that taxis provided a vital community service in the city, by taking people who were unable to use public transport to hospital appointments and to school. He explained to the Committee that taxi drivers would be severely disadvantaged if they were forced out of bus lanes for twelve hours, six days a week.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara

This Council shall submit to the Department for Infrastructure a corporate response to the Consultation on Bus Lanes within Belfast, as follows:

The Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) lanes should not operate from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday;

Operation hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. from Monday to Friday is sufficient for the operation of the BRT lane without general traffic;

Ordinary drivers and businesses in the area will suffer badly, funerals processions will be affected and taxi drivers will find it increasingly difficult to earn a decent wage;

All taxis should be allowed into all BRT routes and all bus lanes in Belfast on a permanent basis; and

The recent twelve-week trial allowing all taxis to use the lanes in East and West Belfast and in the City centre was a success and made a noticeable improvement to traffic on these routes and should now be introduced across Belfast in all lanes permanently.

A Member questioned the necessity of the BRT lanes operating on a Saturday and asked whether the Department for Infrastructure could review the necessity of Belfast Rapid Transit lanes operating on Saturdays.

Mr. de Burca confirmed to the Members that an ongoing review would take place of the new BRT scheme as was standard with the implementation of any new system.

Mr. Conway added that, similar to a tram system, the Belfast Rapid Transit glider service needed priority lanes throughout city and, if they did not operate the lanes on Saturdays, Translink would likely be forced to operate regular buses on Saturdays, thereby cancelling the benefit from the £90million investment.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Cllr Dorrian,

The Council strongly supports the introduction of the Belfast Rapid Transit system as it is considered that it would greatly improve the quality of public transport in Belfast and could be a driver for regeneration as well as provide high quality access to and linkages between jobs, hospitals, schools and colleges in different parts of the city. An aim of the Council's Belfast Agenda is to develop "a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city. The agenda sets out a number of stretch goals including the target to increase the use of sustainable transport in the city by 15 per cent by 2021. It is considered that the implementation of the BRT scheme will contribute towards this goal.

The Council is supportive of the proposals for the Bus Lane Orders in the City Centre and Belfast Rapid Transit, East and West corridors with the exception of the proposal for Donegall Square East, to revoke and replace the existing bus lane. The Council has grave concerns about traffic congestion in the City centre, particularly at the back of City Hall,

resulting from the arrangement for the prohibition on vehicles (except buses and emergency services) going from the bus lane on Donegall Square East into Adelaide Street from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

The Council would request that the Department reconsider the Order to replace the existing bus lane in Donegall Square East and remove the prohibition on vehicles entering Adelaide Street from 7.00am to 7.00 pm.

On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor O'Hara was put to the meeting.

On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the proposal and eleven against and it was also declared lost.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Dudgeon,
Seconded by Councillor Boyle,

That bus lanes should only operate 5 days per week, Monday - Friday, and that Transport NI should provide evidence for the necessity for bus lanes to operate on Saturdays.

On a vote by show of hands, four Members voted for the proposal and fourteen against and it was declared lost.

The Chief Executive pointed out that, unless further proposals were put forward, the Committee therefore had no agreed response to the consultation.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Hargey,

That the Committee's response to the consultation is that all taxis should be permitted to use all bus lanes and BRT routes across the City.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Howard
Seconded by Alderman McGimpsey

That the Council agrees with the DfI's proposals for the introduction of bus lanes which would operate Monday – Saturday, between 7am-7pm, and, after six months, that the Department should review the necessity of 12 hour bus lanes operating on Saturdays.

At this point, a Member questioned whether the amendment was valid, as it combined two previous proposals which had already been considered by the Committee and lost. Other Members disagreed and stated that they believed it constituted a further proposal on the matter.

A Member requested legal advice on the issue. The Chief Executive advised that it was a matter of process and that a legal opinion would not help in this instance.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor Hargey was put to the meeting.

On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was declared carried.

A Member requested that the further proposal regarding the days and hours of operation be considered by the Committee.

The Chairperson declared that the original proposal which had been carried was the Committee's response to the consultation.

A further Member added that there was no question over whether the original proposal had been carried, but that the further proposal should also be considered as it was not contrary to the decision which had just been taken.

The further proposal standing in the name of Councillor Howard and seconded by Alderman McGimpsey was thereupon put to the meeting.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for it and nine against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the following response be submitted to the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) consultation on the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) bus lanes as the Council's response, subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1st February:

1. that the Council agrees that all taxis should have access to all bus lanes and BRT routes across the City; and
2. that the Council agrees with the DfI's proposals for the introduction of bus lanes which would operate Monday-Saturday, between 7am and 7pm, and, after six months, that the Department should review the necessity of 12 hour bus lanes operating on Saturdays.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

St. Patrick's Day Celebrations in Belfast

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 13th April, 2016, it had agreed to provide financial support to a number of local organizations in order to

explore how the City's St. Patrick's Day and Orangefest celebrations could be developed and enhanced in order to attract additional visitors and spend.

He reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 11th October, 2017, the Committee had received a presentation on the emerging findings from Féile an Phobail and it was agreed that the final report would be brought back to a future meeting.

He advised the Members that the Executive summary was included within the report for Members' consideration and that the full report would be provided to any Member upon request.

The Committee considered the undernoted section of the report:

- “3.5 The report identifies the alignment with some key strategic documents from a range of local government and government partners. These include The Belfast Agenda and the Integrated Tourism Strategy. Its content was informed by a range of engagement and consultation events including 1-2-1 interviews, a community survey and a business survey.**
- 3.6 A series of benchmarks were identified and comparator research was undertaken to consider the organisational structure, tourism impact and cultural experience associated with the event in each of the five benchmark cities and towns. The comparator cities ranged from those with a global profile (New York, Chicago) to more local examples such as Birmingham and Downpatrick. These benchmarks collectively illustrate a significant economic return from their programming. Many are multi-day events, thereby maximising visitor spend.**
- 3.7 The report identifies a number of strategic priorities for future planning around St Patrick's Day events in Belfast, arising from the analysis. These are:**
- 1. Develop a reputation as a market-leading provider of an innovative and inclusive, community-led St Patrick's Day Festival. This involves expanding on the current offer to develop an event and a range of products that are capable of attracting significant numbers of local and international visitors and maximising the economic impact**
 - 2. Delivery of high quality, community-led events feeding into a unique and unrivalled celebration of St Patrick's Day in Belfast City Centre. This focuses on increasing support for locally-based celebration events which can feed into and support the main event in the City Centre**
 - 3. Provide a robust and highly effective management, partnership and governance structure to implement the ambitious festival plans. This suggests that, given the**

potential scale of the event, a collaborative planning and delivery structure will be required, involving representation from a range of tourism partners, community-based organisations, statutory partners and private sector representatives

4. Deploy a bespoke, innovative and culturally acceptable integrated marketing and communications strategy to match the event's high ambitions. Like all major events, this suggests that the proposed scale of activity needs to be supported by an effective marketing and communications plan in order to maximise its impact and the potential economic return.

- 3.8 This event concept is shaped by four underlying principles. These are:

- **Community-led:** the principle is that the event should be rooted in the community – therefore benefitting local residents – but with the commitment to showcasing the key activities in the City Centre
- **Commitment and integrity:** again, this points to the focus on a community-led product
- **Respectful and collaborative:** the event should complement cultural offering across Belfast and internationally
- **Quality:** the event needs to be world class, similar to other Belfast-based events.

- 3.9 The report identifies opportunities for audience development through a series of activities in the fields of sport, heritage, food, music and dance, art and drama and concerts and events.

- 3.10 In terms of governance and management, the report proposes the establishment of an overarching Steering Group comprising key public and private sector partners. The Steering Group would be supported by a series of working groups. The report proposes that the delivery of the main event would be commissioned to a third party organisation.

- 3.11 In summary, the report identifies the potential to re-position and enhance St Patrick's Day celebrations in the City. Its key findings include:

- **Opportunity for further development of the current City Centre event,** focusing more on indigenous product including music, dance, sport and art
- **Need to address ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour associated with the current event,** with the potential to engage some of the young people currently involved in anti-social behaviour in the

event itself. The report identifies the fact that there are a number of “hot-spots” where the anti-social behaviour is most visible and suggest that an enhanced and re-focused event could help address some of these issues

- Need to widen the event beyond the City Centre – but ensuring linkages between local events and the City Centre event. The report reflects comments from local communities about their interest in celebrating St Patrick’s Day within their local area. However, it is recognised that, in order to maximise the economic impact of the event and attract external audiences, a flagship City Centre event is required
- Need to invest resources in the event in order to maximise economic return. Not all of the benchmarks spent significant amounts on their event. However, the report notes that many cities were successful in leveraging investment from the private sector and other statutory partners. It concludes that, in some cases, this meant that the main event always took place on a weekend day in order to maximise opportunities for spend
- Opportunity to expand the event, focusing on a range of activities including sport, arts and music. The report notes that, while there is usually one main event in each city, many of the locations programme activity of a weekend or even a week in order to maximise impact and promote engagement
- Need for partnership approach to maximise investment and impact: based on models from other cities – and based on approaches to successful events and activities in Belfast – the report proposes the need for a partnership structure to increase available budgets and to ensure effective planning and delivery.

3.12 The budget requirement for an event of this nature has not been detailed in the report. There is an assumption that the Council would need to at least retain the current level of investment through the main event (£140,000 budget) and the St Patrick’s Day grant activity (£30,000) and there would also be a need for additional investment for other programme elements including youth outreach programmes, dance and music events, arts and drama events and marketing support. Potential funding sources have not been identified but it is expected that these would have to come from a number of statutory partners, and possibly from the private sector as well. The budget allocated in the benchmark cities ranges

significantly from £70,000 in Birmingham to more than €1million in Dublin.

- 3.13 Members will be aware that, at present, the main St Patrick's Day event is organised by the Council's City Events Team. This year, the event will comprise a parade that will start and finish at Writers' Square after traversing City Hall, followed by a concert that will run until 5pm. In addition to the main event, the Good Relations Unit administers a small grants scheme, allocating grants of up to £1,000 towards local events to celebrate St Patrick's Day. The total budget allocated to these events is £30,000.
- 3.14 Members will also be aware that a review of Festivals and Events is currently underway. This review will consider the current level of investment in Festivals and Events and the alignment with key drivers, including the Belfast Agenda. An update on work to date was presented to the November meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the final report will be presented to the Committee in February 2018. This report will take account of existing Festivals and Events activity including St Patrick's Day and will consider how the Council can invest its resources to ensure optimal return from such activities. Its recommendations will shape Council investment from the 2019/20 financial year onwards.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 The current St Patrick's Day event is delivered by the City Events Unit at a cost of £140,000. This funding is approved as part of the Council's annual events programme delivered by the City Events Unit. The Good Relations Unit provides grants of up to £1,000 towards local events to celebrate St Patrick's Day. The total budget allocated to these events is £30,000.

Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 3.16 No specific equality or good relations implications associated with this report."

A Member pointed out that, as the Events and Festivals Strategy would be discussed at the Party Group Briefings in January, Féile an Phobail's report on St. Patrick's Day should be included within those briefings and that a report should be submitted to a future meeting on the findings by Féile an Phobail on the City's St Patrick's Day celebrations, within the context of the ongoing review of the Strategy.

The Member also suggested that, given that the Committee had heard from Féile an Phobail, that the Orangefest organisers be invited to attend a future meeting to provide the Committee with an update on the work which had been carried out to develop and promote the event.

After further discussion, the Committee:

1. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the findings of Féile an Phobail on the City's St Patrick's Day celebrations, within the context of the ongoing review of the Events and Festivals strategy;
2. that Féile an Phobail's report on the City's St Patrick's Day celebrations be included in the Events and Festivals briefing which were taking place in the January Party Group briefings; and
3. that the Orangefest organisers be invited to a future meeting to present its findings on the development and promotion of Orangefest.

Creation of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance

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 advise Members of correspondence received from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) regarding the creation of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. TNI have asked that Belfast City Council becomes a member of that Alliance at a cost of £2,000 per year.**

2.0 Recommendations

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

- **Consider the request for Belfast City Council to become a member of the NI Tourism Alliance.**
- **Approve the contribution of £2,000 per annum for an initial period of 3 years.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 **Members will be aware of the growing importance of the tourism industry to Belfast and Northern Ireland. It is estimated that around 18,000 people are employed in the tourism and hospitality sector. The significant growth in hotel development – with an additional 1000 rooms becoming available in 2018 – will only serve to increase the employment potential of the sector.**
- 3.2 **At present, hospitality accounts for around 5.2% of GDP. This is around half of the figure for comparative cities across the UK and this demonstrates the potential for additional development.**

- 3.3** Unlike other industry sectors, tourism and hospitality does not have a strong industry body to represent its interests to government and to provide a focal point for engagement with the sector. Taking account of this, Tourism NI has been working with a number of key representatives from the sector and agreement has been reached to establish the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance.
- 3.4** The purpose of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance is to champion the tourism sector and its benefits to the regional economy, make the case for resources to be made available for the development and delivery of tourism growth, including the work of local government, and to advocate for positive policy change in areas such as VAT, Air Passenger Duty and Licencing Legislation.
- 3.5** A Steering Group established to explore the potential for creating an independent, private sector – led representative body for the tourism industry met in early December 2017. The group was facilitated by Tourism NI and chaired by Ellvena Graham, Chair of NI Chamber of Commerce and Chair of Belfast Waterfront Board.
- 3.6** The Steering Group agreed that it would be important to have all 11 Local Authorities engaged as members of the Alliance, given local government's role in delivering major visitors attractions, visitor servicing through Tourist Information Centres, regeneration and development of their local tourism industries. It was also recognised that given the scale of the contribution made by the local government sector that it should be afforded a seat at the Executive of the Alliance.
- 3.7** Currently seventeen organisations have agreed to commit to £5,000 per annum in membership fees to ensure the Alliance is suitably resourced to fulfil its objectives including Belfast Harbour, George Best Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport, British Airways, Aer Lingus, FlyBe, NI Hotels Federation, National Trust, National Museums NI, Titanic Belfast, Visit Belfast, Hospitality Ulster, Translink, Stena Line, ABTA, NI Federation of Passenger Transport and Food NI. Tourism NI will provide £30,000 support and will act as observers on the Alliance.
- 3.8** The Steering Group has proposed that each of the Councils could contribute £2,000 per annum towards the running costs and all Councils have been approached to provide this support.

- 3.9 It is considered that the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance will provide a useful vehicle for engagement with the industry. Likewise, it will help increase the profile of the industry to government and, in turn, help shine the spotlight on the economic potential of the sector. This is likely to lead to additional focus and resources being directed to support sector growth. Given the potential of the sector in Belfast, this will have a positive impact on the City.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.10 No specific equality or good relations implications.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 The contribution required from Belfast City Council is £2,000 per annum for three years initially and would be provided from existing Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts annual budget.”

A Member requested that further information be submitted to a future meeting with further information on the governance and structure of the NI Tourism Alliance.

The Committee:

1. considered the request for Belfast City Council to become a member of the NI Tourism Alliance; and
2. agreed that a detailed report on the governance and structure of the NI Tourism Alliance be submitted to the next meeting for its consideration.

Chairperson