

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 6th March, 2019

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lyons (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, Kingston, McGimpsey and Rodgers;
and Councillors Beattie, Black, Dorrian, Dudgeon,
Hussey, Kyle, Magee, McAllister, Mullan,
Murphy, O'Donnell, O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, City Regeneration and Development
Lead Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Graham and Nicholl.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th March.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Hussey and O'Donnell declared an interest in relation to item 2a, Visit Belfast Business Plan 2019/20, in that they had been appointed by the Council to the Board of Visit Belfast, and remained in the room whilst the matter was under consideration.

Presentations

Visit Belfast Business Plan 2019/20

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the request for funding from Visit Belfast for the 2019/20 financial year and to set out the organisation's strategic plan, focused on increasing visitor numbers and tourism spend in the city.**

Visit Belfast will be in attendance at the Committee meeting to present the detail of its 2019/20 plan.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i. note the draft Visit Belfast business plan 2019/20 and the areas where Council funds will be invested. The overall funding requirement for Visit Belfast in the coming financial year has been taken account of in the revenue estimates that have already been approved by the Council; and
- ii. approve the funding allocation of up to £1,997,500 for 2019/20 expenditure, subject to the development of a funding agreement establishing priority areas of activity and agreed targets.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that Visit Belfast is the principal Destination Management and Marketing Organisation for the city of Belfast. Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities in Belfast. It is a membership organisation with more than 500 member businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works, on behalf of its members, with a range of public and private partners such as the Belfast Chamber and the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.

3.2 Visit Belfast targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICC Belfast to drive new business to the city. There have been significant successes in this field and business events and conferences taking place in the city in this financial year are projected to deliver a return of around £60 million.

3.3 Visit Belfast is a public/private partnership. Its current Chairman is Howard Hastings OBE from the Hastings Hotel Group. Belfast City Council has four Councillor representatives on the Board: Councillor Arder Carson, Councillor John Hussey, Councillor Kate Nicholl and Councillor Mairead O' Donnell.

3.4 The tourism and hospitality industry in Belfast continues to go from strength to strength. Belfast continues to drive the regional tourism economy; in 2017 (last published Local Government District tourism statistics by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency), Belfast hosted 30% of all tourism trips to Northern Ireland (1.4m trips) and tourism spend amounted to £328m, 35% of Northern Ireland tourism spend.

- 3.5** Forecasts suggest that the sector will account for around 15% of new jobs in the coming decade. While it currently accounts for only 5% of the regional GDP, in many other locations, this is more than 10% of the GDP. This illustrates the potential for additional growth within the sector. One of the key growth areas is in hotel accommodation: over the past twenty years, annual hotel room sales increased by 314%, from 324,000 hotel rooms sold in 1999 to 1.34m in 2018. Visitor enquires have also increased by 343% reflecting the growing interest in visiting Belfast. One of the biggest tourism successes has been the growth in cruise visitors – in 2018, this had increased to 115 ships carrying an estimated 189,000 passengers and crew.
- 3.6** Visit Belfast is focusing on growing overnight stays, servicing the day trippers, increasing the length of overnight trips and increasing visitor expenditure in the city. Visit Belfast continues to drive visitor numbers and spend focussing its activities in the areas that offer the biggest market opportunity; namely short-breaks, business tourism, day-trips and cruise arrivals. It also manages three gateway visitor information centres, one in Belfast city centre at one at each of the two Belfast airports.
- 3.7** The mid-term review of the Integrated Tourism Strategy for Belfast, references the “demand-side” and the “supply-side” interventions in the tourism industry. Visit Belfast – along with Tourism Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and other marketing partners – are largely responsible for the “demand-side” activities, principally marketing the city to those interested in visiting. In parallel, “supply-side” activities such as local tourism initiatives, product and experience development, skills development and infrastructure investment are required in order to build the sector and ensure that there is a credible, quality product that can be marketed to target audiences. The review notes that the Council has a significant role to play in supporting and shaping the product development, which will be driven through the new Cultural Transformation Strategy. Additionally, the report recommends skills development activity and investment in tourism marketing – driven by Visit Belfast – is at least maintained in the context of an increasingly competitive tourism market.
- 3.8** The 2019/20 operational plan is the second year of the Visit Belfast Strategy 2018-2022 and although Year 1 results are yet to be reported, Visit Belfast expects to achieve targets set out for 2018-19 and remain on course to achieve its four-year cumulative targets.

With a proposed 2019-20 budget of £4.2m, Visit Belfast’s marketing, sales and visitor servicing activity aims to support:

- 390,000 bed nights, both leisure and conference;
- 286,000 cruise visitors;
- 946,000 visitor enquiries;

Details of specific activities will be set out in the presentation to the Committee.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 In the current financial year, Belfast City Council's funding arrangement with Visit Belfast is £1,997,500. An allocation of £1,997,500 has been set aside within the Departmental estimates for the financial year 2019/20. This will include income from Tourism NI towards the delivery and marketing of the annual Maritime Festival - £35,000 allocation from Tourism NI to be allocated to Visit Belfast for the marketing of the event.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. G. Lennon, Chief Executive of Visit Belfast, together with Dr. H. Hastings, Chair, and Mr. M. Williamson, Vice-Chair.

Dr. Hastings thanked the Council for the support which it had provided to Visit Belfast over the past twenty years and pointed to the fact that Belfast was now regarded as a prime destination to visit and hold a conference. He referred to the steady increase over the past seven years in the number of out-of-state visitors to the City and highlighted the economic benefits resulting from the increase in 2018 of the City's accommodation portfolio by an additional 1,000 hotel rooms. He provided a brief overview of Visit Belfast's four-year strategy, which was seeking to deliver over £1/2 billion for the City's economy, generate 1.6 million bed nights and welcome a further one million cruise visitors and stressed that the current uncertainty meant that economic growth could not be guaranteed. It was, therefore, important to ensure that investment in marketing and promotion of the City continued. He referred to the fact that the Council's year-on-year commitment to Visit Belfast had been vital in securing funding from commercial and other partners and stated that Visit Belfast remained the most effective mechanism for achieving the objectives set out within the Belfast Agenda.

Mr. Lennon reported that, over the past twenty years, visitor numbers and spend had grown by 340% and that, in the period from 2011 till 2017, overnight visitors had accounted for £1.5 billion. Importantly, out-of-state visitor numbers had increased steadily, and had, in 2017, accounted for 90% of the £328 million of overnight spend. He outlined the four main factors which were necessary to drive economic growth in the City, namely, political stability, improved access, infrastructure investment/tourism development and destination marketing and provided an overview of tourism performance for 2018 for conferences, room occupancy/sales, cruise ships/visitors and tourist enquiries. He reviewed the governance arrangements for Visit Belfast and confirmed that its key themes for 2019/20 would be based around Food, Game of Thrones, Golf, Music, Soft Adventure and Titanic Culture/History. Mr. Lennon then drew the Committee's attention to productivity indicators for the period from 2015/16 to

2019/20 for bed nights, overnight spend, cruise visitors, enquiries, economic impact and commercial/partnership income and highlighted forthcoming marketing/communications, business development and visitor servicing campaigns which would seek to deliver £140 million of economic impact. He confirmed that Visit Belfast was targeting expenditure of approximately £4.2 million over each of the next three years and concluded by endorsing Dr. Hastings' view that the Visit Belfast model represented the most effective, efficient and value-for-money option for the Council.

After discussion, the Committee paid tribute to Visit Belfast for its longstanding contribution to the promotion of Belfast and adopted the recommendations contained within the report.

Request to Present

Now Project

The Committee approved a request from the Chief Executive of the Now Project to attend a future meeting in order to review the work of that organisation.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following two items 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 items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.

Restriction of Reports

A Member highlighted the fact that the recent series of Committee reports on the Belfast Zoo had been restricted and sought clarification on the rationale surrounding that decision and on the restriction of reports generally.

In response, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services explained that the Corporate Management Team had sought advice around the restriction of reports, with a view to providing clarity around the process. In terms of the Zoo, reports had been restricted primarily on the basis that they had contained commercially sensitive information, in the context of discussions around its future development, or in response to concerns which had been raised around the potential impact on staff, following recent high profile incidents.

Independent Security Review – Belfast Zoo

(Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, and Mr. A. Cairns, Zoo Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th February, it had agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting on the outcome of an independent review of security at the Belfast Zoo, following a number of recent incidents.

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that the review, which had been undertaken from 17th till 19th February, had focused primarily on Category 1 animal enclosures, on all enclosures utilising electric fencing and on assessing keeper procedures and general animal operations. The resulting report had confirmed that the necessary policies and procedures were in place and that the standard of maintenance was adequate to allow the Zoo to remain open. However, it had made a number of recommendations aimed at making the recording, inspection and routine maintenance programme more robust and had identified routine maintenance works to be undertaken across a number of enclosures, together with some immediate improvement and replacement works. It had highlighted also the capacity of Zoo keeping staff and the time available to them to complete safety checks and assess the condition and security of enclosures.

He explained that officers had since categorised the recommendations contained within the consultant's report and, accordingly, he sought the Committee's approval to implement the following short (immediate) and medium term actions:

Short Term (Immediate)

- conclude the arrangements and Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the Dangerous Animals Response Team;
- arrange for the inspection of vegetation across all enclosures and for it to be cut back by Parks staff, where required;
- expand the management team arrangement at the Zoo to include regular input from those sections of the Council which were involved in the management of the site;
- seek approval to employ a dedicated temporary (6-12 month resource) to focus upon immediate Zoo maintenance, electric fence monitoring and enclosure inspections; and
- establish and secure the capital costs associated with the recommendations for improvement/replacement works.

Medium Term

- review and further develop the internal Service Level Agreements and ongoing maintenance arrangements for the Zoo, moving forward; and
- agree and implement the programme for the roll-out of the improvement/replacements works identified within the consultant's report.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the independent consultant's report on security at the Zoo and the recommendations contained therein;

- ii. approved the implementation of the short and medium term recommendations, including the employment of a temporary dedicated maintenance resource;
- iii. noted that a review of future maintenance staffing requirements would be undertaken whilst the temporary resource was in place; and
- iv. noted that it would, at a future meeting, receive a report on the outcome of that review, together with details of the overall costs associated with the implementation of the consultant's recommendations.

(Alderman McGimpsey in the Chair.)

City Recovery Programme

The City Regeneration and Development Lead Officer reminded the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February, had considered a report in relation to the City Centre Recovery Programme. The report had reviewed the impact of Phase 1 of the programme and had outlined the key strands of work which would underpin Phase 2, namely, physical and environmental enhancements, an animation programme, incentivisation and trader support, marketing and communications, creative input and programme delivery support and research/retail. The Committee had approved a budget of £2.505m for Phase 2, up until March, 2020.

She reported that, in response to requests from Members of this Committee, a footfall monitor was being installed in Castle Street and that other routes leading into the City centre were being considered. She added that the junction between Castle Street and Fountain Street had re-opened on 27th February and that Castle Street would, from 26th March, open fully for pedestrians. That would, she pointed out, allow those businesses which had been closed following the Primark fire to re-open.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 22nd February to approve funding of £2.505m for the key strands of activity to be taken forward as part of Phase 2 of the City Recovery Programme;
- ii. that it would receive further updates as the overall programme and specific proposals were developed; and
- iii. that the Council would continue to undertake expenditure on behalf of the Treasury and Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments.

Growing Business and the Economy

Growing the Economy – Programme of Work 2019/20

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the proposed programme of work to be delivered in the 2019/20 financial year as part of the Committee’s ambitions to support delivery of the targets under the Growing the Economy pillar of the Belfast Agenda.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the Council’s performance and contribution to delivering against Belfast Agenda ambitions to grow the Belfast economy, focusing on Starting a Business; Growing a Business and Investing in Belfast;**
- ii. note that the associated activity will support the creation of up to 957 jobs in the course of the year;**
- iii. approve the 2019/20 Work Plan to support the delivery of these ambitions, as set out in sections 3.4 to 3.9, including the associated budget commitment of £1,342,075 (excluding Innovation Factory costs); and**
- iv. approve the proposed approach to requests for financial contributions to support conferences and events aligned with the Economic Development Unit’s profile of activity. To be administered in-line with the the delegated authority granted to the Director of Economic Development and Strategic Director of Place and Economy Department.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that, at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 11th April, 2018, approval was given for the delivery of the Growing the Economy work plan for the current financial year. The work plan was developed as part of the Council’s contribution towards the commitments identified under this theme within the Belfast Agenda.

3.2 Since April 2018, the Council has developed and delivered a range of activities to address the challenges around low levels of start-up, innovation, competitiveness and productivity. Whilst work is ongoing to deliver the 2018/19 work plan, key achievements to date include:

- 770 individuals engaged through Enterprise Awareness activates this year, providing them support and guidance to start a business or social enterprise**

- By the end of January 2019, we had supported 311 individuals through the Go For It programme supporting the creation of 196 jobs
- Through our Go Social programme, we have supported 32 Social Enterprises and Co-operatives, creating 31 jobs
- We provided support for 60 university/FE college student entrepreneurs to develop their new businesses while still in education. We also launched a new initiative providing grant assistance to programme participants in partnership with Invest NI which aims to provide a salary and wrap around support for one year to enable them to start their business
- We successfully launched high growth start-up support which has to date engaged 64 new high growth businesses based in Belfast
- We continue to support the Innovation Factory (IF): occupancy levels are forecast at 55% by end of March 2019 representing representing approximately 249 jobs across 40 offices and 22 dedicated desks (excluding 22 business members and virtual office users). Through its social regeneration programme, IF has facilitated 60 work placements, engaged with 461 businesses and has achieved a procurement spend of 96% of its budget within the Belfast area
- We have provided business mentoring support for 130 small businesses, creating an additional 65 new jobs. We have also supported 150 businesses through SME skills development workshops on strategy and leadership, finance and talent management
- This year we supported 20 local high growth businesses to access intensive acceleration support through scaling programmes in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland and Catalyst Inc. Companies received support around pitching, targeting investment and partnership development and accessed opportunities to network with other Boston-based companies to develop new partnership arrangements and collaborations
- We reached agreement on a new Enterprise Framework for Belfast, in partnership with our enterprise and business growth stakeholders across the city. This Framework sets the vision for Belfast to become “a city recognised for its diverse community of entrepreneurs, who benefit from a comprehensive, planned and coherent system of enterprise support, which fulfils their needs at all stages of the business growth life-cycle”

- The City for Investment Service pilot has just completed its first year. To date the service has supported 57 businesses attracting a potential £72 million investment to the city.

3.3 Building on these achievements, the proposed work programme for the next financial year (2019/20) continues to align to the Growing the Economy pillar of the Belfast Agenda. Across this work programme, it is expected that 1,752 Individuals will access support to start a business, 1,619 businesses will be supported through business growth initiatives and 110 targeted through the City Investment Service. This work will also be shaped by the emerging City Deal proposals, including the investment in digital connectivity, infrastructure and innovation. Likewise, there will continue to be a significant focus on activities as part of the City Revitalisation programme with a view to ensuring the future stability of the city centre in the aftermath of the Primark fire in August 2018. A detailed overview of the proposed projects and financial implications is attached and a number of key areas of work are detailed below. This work is informed by economic research identifying business challenges and barriers to growth; key growth sectors (digital; technology; tourism and hospitality); opportunities for investment and impact of technology on the world of work. The programme is focused on three main areas, namely:

- Starting a Business
- Growing a Business
- Investing in Belfast.

Starting a Business

- 3.4
- Enterprise Framework in Action: With the Enterprise Framework now in place, we are tasked with working in partnership with stakeholders across the city to put in place an Action Plan to 2021 and also looking at the longer-term ambitions to increase the number of new business starts and to make existing businesses more productive and competitive. A number of priority projects will be delivered in the coming year, including the development of a shared brand, communication strategy and potential Management Information System (MIS) to create a more joined-up provision for participating businesses, new interventions to support businesses that have the potential to scale and financial incentives for those moving from unemployment to start a new business (in partnership with Department for Communities)
 - Improving the business start-up offer: The Northern Ireland Business Start-up Programme (NIBSUP) has a limited budget and therefore the ability of the delivery partner to offer any dedicated follow-on support is restricted. The Council has been able to attract additional ERDF support to supplement the existing offer, including

some limited financial incentives for qualifying businesses. Officers are also looking at how the Council can use its assets and resources to support new businesses, for example setting aside a limited number of stalls at St George's Market for test trading of new products and services.

Growing a Business

- 3.5
- **Support to Grow and Scale:** One of the key challenges identified through the enterprise framework is the need to encourage more businesses to grow and scale to turnover of more than £3million. We are currently developing support for those businesses in partnership with Catalyst Inc and Invest NI to build on the work that has been undertaken through Mass Challenge Belfast and the Way to Scale Initiative – both of which were previously supported by this Committee. Other resources such as the Innovation Factory will provide critical “feeders” to these initiatives. Investment in activities of this type are critical to improving city competitiveness and productivity
 - **Digital Transformation support:** many small businesses are unable to understand how new digital technologies can help them transform their business and generate new business opportunities. We have secured ERDF resources to support a series of targeted interventions which will help businesses generate more online business, enhance their business processes and improve their customer engagement and experience by introducing new digital technologies
 - **Procurement support:** we have been working closely with Corporate Procurement Services and with other public sector commissioners to look at how we can help local businesses to enter the supply chain for works and services. Achieving the balance of competitiveness, efficiency and access for small businesses is an ongoing challenge for all public sector organisations. We are also exploring how we can help major development schemes to fulfil their social clause criteria around supply chain engagement (as well as employability and skills support). There are also significant opportunities through private developments: one of the most significant infrastructure schemes in the coming decade will be the Heathrow expansion: we are currently bidding to host a logistics hub on North Foreshore and one of the drivers for this has been the potential to encourage the local supply chain to access opportunities arising from this £15billion investment scheme.

Investing in Belfast

- 3.6 The two-year pilot City for Investment service proactively works with investors, both indigenous and FDI, providing professional and personal connections to help businesses be successful in Belfast. In addition to the continuation of the City for Investment Service, further development will be undertaken to position Belfast in key markets (including London and Dublin) as an investment location of choice for businesses in key growth sectors. Working in partnership with the City Regeneration and the International unit this will provide support for indigenous businesses in key sectors to develop their international partnerships to expand the business as well as profiling Belfast as a dynamic investment location. There will also be close collaboration with the work of the International Relations team, linking the Sister Cities activity and maximising the trade and FDI linkages from our collaboration with partners in those cities. Additional detail on this activity is set out in the International Relations report.

City Centre Development

- 3.7 The city centre support activity will focus on contribution to the City Revitalisation programme, following the Bank Buildings fire. Priority activities will include trader engagement and support, physical improvements and city animation.

Approach to supporting Conferences and Events

- 3.8 The Economic Development Unit has seen an increase in requests for contributions of financial support towards events and conferences to support activity that is – to a greater or lesser extent - associated with the unit's priorities, as set out above. While these events can often act as a useful promotional vehicle for Council interventions and can help secure referrals to programme activity, many of these requests tend to be last-minute requests for relatively small amounts of money and provide little measurable return.
- 3.9 In order to assess the impact of the requests, officers have developed a process to measure and score these requests based on their alignment to the Growing the Economy pillar of the Belfast Agenda, the contribution to the work of the economic development unit as set out in this report and the potential to profile the Council activities and generate interest and demand for the services. The total budget to support contributions to events and conferences in this financial year is £70,000 and it is proposed that each application for support will be capped at a maximum of £10,000. Objectives and outputs will be agreed through a funding agreement with the event organisers.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 The recommended budget allocations based on contractual commitments and pending funding applications are summarised below:

Starting a Business	£688,785
Growing a Business	£395,290
Investing in Belfast	£60,000
City Centre Development	£98,000
Contribution to events and conferences	£70,000
Evaluation of Impact	£30,000

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.11 Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of each project.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Working and Learning – Programme of Work 2019/20

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a programme of work to be delivered in the 2019/20 financial year under the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda.
- 1.2 The proposed work programme supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council by addressing barriers to progression, focusing on educational underachievement and supporting residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to:
- i. approve the 2019/20 Work Plan and associated budget of £1,280,491 to support the delivery of the Working and Learning strands of the Belfast Agenda, as summarised in section 3.5; and

- ii. note the ongoing development work being undertaken with key partners through governance structures including; the Belfast Agenda Working and Learning Board, BRCD Employability and Skills Steering Group and Employability NI Programme Board.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that, at the Committee meeting on 11th April 2018, approval was given for a series of activities under the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda. At that meeting, members agreed a number of guiding principles of the Council's investment in this area of work including:

- Employment-led: focusing upon identified employment opportunities and gaps in provision;
- Needs-led: in order to deliver against the principles of Inclusive Growth, targeting interventions towards geographical areas and/or underrepresented groups while being accessible and open to all;
- Ambitious: to increase visibility and awareness of Council's role within the environment and strategically build our position in this area;
- Intelligence-led and evidence based: ensuring that our investment is based on a sound rationale;
- Adding value: ensuring we do not duplicate existing provision;
- Flexible: allowing for interventions to be developed around emerging market needs/opportunities; and
- Scalable: delivered seamlessly across the City, in line with need and opportunity – trying out new solutions on a pilot basis and increasing their coverage if they have a positive impact.

3.2 Whilst work is ongoing to deliver the 2018/19 work plan, key achievements on track to be achieved include:

- Over 2,750 participant engaged in employability programmes, with more than 800 expected to progress into employment this year
- Over 3,500 young people supported through youth initiatives
- Almost 7,500 participants engaged through career events and job fairs.

3.3 Some of the key activities undertaken include:

- Employment Academies: we have extended this employer-led initiative to include new sectors providing a broader spectrum of employment opportunities to local residents. Across the 18/19 financial year around 500 residents have or will participate in academies, and it is expected at least 350 will progress into employment. Sectors currently engaged through these academies include hospitality and tourism,

transportation, childcare, health and social care and construction. Although these academies are principally focused on helping the unemployed into employment, officers have also been exploring how we can support upskilling into higher-level employment opportunities. As an example of this work, we have developed and delivered upskilling academies in the childcare sector. Through these interventions, over 30 Belfast residents will have secured employment in career progression roles whilst simultaneously completing a level 3-5 accredited qualification this year. This type of intervention is essential in order to address the challenge of low skills levels, particularly in some part of the city.

- **Youth Initiatives**: a key focus of the Belfast Agenda is to tackle educational inequalities and to provide coherent pathways of support to enable young people to positively progress. To support these ambitions, a range of activity has been undertaken to support young people to make informed career choices, support digital skills development, access work experience opportunities and support those at most risk of not achieving and/or being NEET (Not in Education, Employment and/or Training). Across these interventions over 3500 young people have been supported across the current financial year.
- **European Social Fund (ESF)**: as part of the Council's efforts to support the long-term unemployed and economically inactive to enter the labour market, match funding was awarded to five European Social Fund (ESF) projects. Since 1 April 2018, 2442 participants have been engaged with 985 accredited qualifications achieved and 656 entering employment.

3.4 In addition to the delivery of these priority interventions, officers have also been working on a wider programme of engagement with public and private partners to develop new collaborative approaches to city skills and employability challenges. This includes engagement through relevant governance and partnerships (Belfast Agenda Working and Learning Board; Belfast City Region Deal Employability and Skills Group) as well as focusing on potential project ideas such as bringing forward proposals for a City Youth Pledge and exploring opportunities to deliver on the Belfast Agenda commitments to support inclusive growth.

3.5 The proposed work programme for the next financial year (19/20) continues to align to Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda and to support the inclusive growth

ambitions by targeting barriers to progression, addressing educational underachievement and supporting residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities. It will also inform and shape the development work on the Belfast Region City Deal approach on employability and skills, which will be a focal point for activity in the coming year. Across this work programme, over 3000 Belfast residents will be supported through a range of targeted employability and skills interventions with nearly 1,000 progressing into employment. Over 1700 young people will be engaged through targeted youth activities, with 495 receiving intensive support to address educational underachievement and/or support them into positive outcomes (employment, education and/or training). A summary of the proposed projects and financial implications is contained within the attached appendix. Key areas of work are outlined below:

- **Access to employment:** We will continue to support Belfast residents to enter the labour market and to progress and advance in employment. The principal instrument for delivery of this commitment is through the successful Employment Academies approach. In the coming year, these will focus on both entry-level positions and upskilling employment opportunities. Pilots will also be undertaken specifically aimed at supporting young people (aged 16+) to access part-time employment opportunities in key sectors. Taking an employer-led approach, we will continue to support key sectors including; tourism, hospitality and leisure, health and social care, construction and transport industries. In this year, we will also expand the programme into other key growth sectors including the financial services and creative and digital industries. New delivery models, incorporating employer incentives will be trialled. We will work in partnership with the Department for the Economy and Department for Communities to deliver joint academy models when appropriate, in order to maximise the scale and impact of Council investment.

To support those furthest from the labour market, we will continue our support for the five ESF projects ((LEMIS+ consortium, Workforce Learning, USEL, Specialisterne and Springboard) year two delivery. Funding levels allocated to each of the five supported projects will be maintained into year two delivery with a total funding of £315,518 (£240,000 Belfast City Council and £75,518 Urban Villages funding).

- **Focus on Young People:** One of the commitments as part of the Belfast Agenda included the development of a City Youth Pledge. The ambition was to create a coherent progression pathway for young people to enable them to

progress into employment, further education and training. To inform the development of the Youth Pledge and wider youth provision, officers have undertaken a range of research pieces and the headline outcomes were presented at the September 2018 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Engagement with key stakeholders including government departments, City Youth Forum etc. has identified the need for long-term investment with a partnership approach, incorporating private sector employers. Key initiatives for the coming financial year will include a dedicated programme of support targeting young people (14-24 year olds) at risk of becoming NEET and further development work on the City Youth Pledge through the Working & Learning Board to secure partner and employer commitment to its establishment and delivery.

One of the key issues identified in the Belfast Skills Barometer was the low levels of educational attainment, particularly in some parts of the city. In order to address this problem, officers have engaged with partners across the city and are proposing the extension of an initiative that currently operates in east and west Belfast and that has been shown to have some considerable success. The “Easter School” and intensive revision support programmes will provide additional support for young people to help them achieve Grades A-C in key subjects – particularly English and Maths.

- **Strategic Engagement:** Working in partnership with government departments we will continue to develop joint areas of working to facilitate better alignment between regional employment and skills programme and the needs of the Belfast labour market. This will include the development of new “test and learn” pilots with the Department for Communities. At present, details of potential pilots are being finalised but they are likely to include targeted initiatives to help the unemployed/economically inactive to start a business, as well as developing new ways of working to enhance employer engagement. These projects will involve Belfast-specific activities as well as initiatives that cover the Belfast City Region area, as part of the City Deal work.

- **Inclusive Growth:** we will continue to focus on maximising the economic and social impact of the Council’s spending and investment in the local area by re-focusing our work on social clauses. We will also look at other mechanisms such as developer contributions and development briefs

to secure employability and skills benefits for the city and, in particular, those neighbourhoods where the skills challenges are most significant.

- **Citizen Basic Income Scheme:** Officers will continue to investigate the feasibility of a citizen basic income scheme, in response to the notice of motion brought to the Council in October 2017. This will include reviewing the outcomes of an existing feasibility studies and development of pilot models being undertaken by the Scottish Government and a similar pilot recently concluded in Finland.

3.6 Finance and Resource Implications

The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2019/20 budget for the Employability and Skills section of Economic Development Department budget. Detailed budget breakdowns are included in the appendix to this report.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

Each of the proposed projects referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and a rural needs assessment completed. Considerations given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development. Officers will work closely with the Equality and Good Relations Team on this activity.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on International Relations and Forward Work Plan

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- update the Committee on the delivery of the International Relations Framework focusing on activity over the 6 months since October; 2018 and
- seek approval for the delivery of the 2019/2020 Action Plan and associated budgets.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i. note the range of activity and associated outputs of International Relations actions over the course of the second half of this financial year; and
- ii. agree the International Relations Action Plan outlining activity commitments for 2019/2020, as set out in sections 3.8 – 3.24.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will recall the November 2016 approval of a new International Relations Framework for the period 2016 - 2021.

3.2 The aim of this Framework is to continue to promote Belfast on the international stage as a place to invest, work, visit and study. The Framework is delivering primarily on the formal relationships already in existence through our Sister City Agreements with Shenyang, Boston and Nashville, the Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin, and developing relationships with the City of London. New areas of opportunity will be considered on their merits and relevance to Belfast.

3.3 Members will be aware that, at the Committee meeting on 10th October, an update report on International Relations activity for the previous six months was presented and the outline plans for the coming period were set out for endorsement. This report provides an update on the activities and associated outcomes over the six-month period from October 2018 to March 2019, and outlines an Action Plan for international activity and associated costs for 2019/2020. A number of the activities are still under development and further updates or requests for approval may be brought back to the Committee for information and endorsement in the course of the year.

3.4 The International Relations activity set out in this report focuses principally on our established relationships with our Sister Cities and partner cities. The Council is also involved in a range of additional engagement activity in international markets. These include:

- Support for Visit Belfast to promote the city as a vibrant tourism destination for both leisure and business tourists. The Council investment in additional conference and exhibition space at Belfast ICC has meant that the venue is now able to attract additional national and international conferences and events – thereby increasing visitor numbers from new markets
- Promoting the city for international real estate investment: a Council-led delegation will take part in the annual European property investment showcase in Cannes in March 2019 – MIPIM. The public-private partnership will promote the city as an investment location, focusing on attracting both investors and end-

users in the key FDI sectors as well as hospitality and international education and training opportunities

- Supporting local companies to export and develop an international presence: Members will be aware of the city's presence at the annual music, digital and convergence event in Austin, Texas – SXSW. We have also supported local businesses to develop international partnerships and benefit from international expertise. This includes our partnership with Invest NI and Catalyst Inc. on the Way to Scale programme which targets local businesses with the potential to scale and attract investment.

3.5 This range of activity is delivered in collaboration with the council's private and public stakeholders represented on the various stakeholder groups set up to support international framework delivery. This includes key agencies such as Invest NI, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, the Consulates and the NI Executive Office. The attached appendix outlines some of the key activities and outputs for the last six months. By their nature, these activities often take some time to deliver on outcomes so it can be difficult to track the impact of the Council's investment over a short period. However, through our partnerships and stakeholder arrangements, we have taken a collective approach to developing linkages and activities in our priority areas of focus and have a shared investment in activities. In the coming year we will improve how we demonstrate outcomes on business tourism and education.

3.6 With regard to the key activities for 2019/2020, it is proposed that these will be driven by a number of the priority outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda. Activities will be assessed in order to consider how they can deliver on these outcomes before making investment decisions. The key outcomes will contribute to the 'Growing the Economy' theme of the Belfast Agenda. The Council's national and international relationships are also an important foundation for the developing City Deal. Outcomes will focus on:

- Building the City's position as a magnet for FDI
- Maximising the City's connections worldwide to drive growth
- Positioning the City internationally as a key tourism, education and business destination. Helping local companies to internationalise their business and increase business connections and exports.

3.7 While many of the activities are still under development, it is proposed that the 2019/2020 Action Plan will focus on the following priority areas in order to maximise the return on investment, given the limited resources available:

Shenyang

3.8 Civic/Political

- Support for an inaugural “China in Belfast” Programme”: this programme is still under development but is likely to involve re-packaging many existing and planned partner activities to highlight the depth of the linkages with China across many partner organisations in the city. Details of potential civic and business inward visits are currently being finalised and will be presented to Members as more information becomes available. The Belfast City Council associated budget for supporting activity associated with the “China in Belfast” programme will not exceed £20,000
- Ongoing support to the Chinese Consulate team and the new Consul General to support relevant civic visits
- Support for the 2020 Chinese New Year in Belfast at a cost not to exceed £10,000
- Participation in the 5th China-UK Regional Leaders Summit to be held in Scotland in 2019. Further detail and costings to follow.

3.9 Business

- Development work underway with The Executive Office, Invest NI and NI Councils engaged in China, to explore the feasibility of a business mission to China in Autumn 2019. This activity will build on official linkages made by the five other NI Councils during the third China UK Regional Leaders Summit held in Dalian in October 2018. It allows Belfast City Council to focus in on the economic, business and investment pillar of the International Relations Framework and work with the City of Shenyang, its economic Stakeholders and Free Trade Zone. It is anticipated that each Council would identify a number of companies at the appropriate state of readiness to do business in China. The costs associated with this event will not exceed £25,000.

3.10 Tourism

- Ongoing support to Visit Belfast in their follow up to the 2018 joint Tourism Showcase in Shenyang. Visit Belfast is preparing for two inward familiarisation visits from the Shenyang and greater China tourism industry. Work is already underway to develop bespoke tourism products with industry partners to encourage them to become China Ready and exploit the opportunity of the two new direct flights from Dublin

- Ongoing support to the new NI China Tourism Cluster to significantly develop a Northern Ireland Strategy and Action Plan for engaging in China, increasing both leisure and business visitors.

3.11 Education/Culture

- Hosting an education mission from Shenyang in May 2019, in partnership with the Department of Education, The Executive Office and other relevant stakeholders
- Ongoing support to both Universities, Belfast Metropolitan College and the educational sector overall in developing their teaching, research and foreign student market with partner Institutions in China.

Boston

3.12 Business

- Belfast will host two Business Missions from the Boston area in 2019. From 29-30 April 2019, 25 companies will travel with the British American Business Council of New England. This mission is being promoted by Mayor Walsh's Economic Development team and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and will involve a targeted business to business programme in partnership with Invest NI. From 4-8 December 2019, the Boston Irish Business Association will travel to Belfast with up to 20 companies to attend the annual International Homecoming Conference and undertake a programme of business to business meetings
- Exploratory work is currently under way to scope out a potential Belfast visit to Boston in the course of 2019. There are a number of areas of interest for this visit including engagement with Mayor Walsh and his relevant officials, exploring potential cooperation on Resilient Cities and City Recovery work, support for some of the sports-based events and partnerships (including Friendship Four) and a tourism showcase event in conjunction with Tourism Ireland. Details of this planned activity will be brought back to the committee at a future date for endorsement. Costs of any visit will not exceed £10,000
- Belfast City Council has been asked to support the 7th Annual International Homecoming Business and Investment Conference at a cost of £10,000. It is proposed by the organising Committee (attended by BCC Senior Officers and Councillors) that the theme of the 2019 Conference is focused on the Belfast Agenda, promoting achievements to date but setting challenges to the International visiting experts on proposing solutions to some of the cities work areas e.g. regeneration, corporate social responsibility, resilience, business growth post Brexit etc.

3.13 Education/Culture

- Plans are at an advanced stage of development to connect Belfast's two teacher training colleges to schools in Boston focusing on the methodology of teaching of STEM subjects
- Plans are now in place to hold the first Belfast/Boston Hackathon on 6 April 2019 which will enable young people in both cities to address the challenge of city regeneration and neighbourhood revitalisation.

Nashville

3.14 Business

- Plans are at an early stage of development to identify opportunities along with Invest NI and Catalyst Inc to lead a small business mission to Nashville in 2019. Members will recall the May 2018 inward mission from Nashville and the very positive feedback from the companies and Venture Capitalist delegates. A further report will be presented to Members with regard to this in the near future. Members are asked to agree in principle to a working budget of £15,000 for this mission, subject to detail being brought back for approval.

3.15 Education/Culture

- Planning work is at an advanced stage to coordinate a second Nashville in Belfast Programme from 12-16 June 2019 in partnership with key stakeholders. This year's programme will build on the previous year's event. Council support of £20,000 is requested to support the communications and marketing campaign and the hosting of the Nashville delegation who will be in the city at the same time
- Cinemagic undertook an exploratory visit to Nashville in December 2019, making key contacts, and will return in March 2019 to work with disadvantaged Nashville youth, to write and produce a music video (keeping in theme of Music City). This will ultimately be linked to a three-way project with Nashville, Boston and Belfast around film making skills, development and employability of young people in all three Sister Cities.

3.16 Support for Eurocities Network

Members will be aware that Belfast has been a member of the Eurocities network for some time. Eurocities is a network of more than 140 major European cities, made up of the elected

local and municipal governments of major European cities. Eurocities is structured through a range of working groups on issues such as Culture, Social Affairs, Knowledge Society and Environment. Belfast has participated in a number of the working groups and has developed collaborative projects with other cities facing similar urban challenges. The city has also shared learning on a range of topics and has availed of the network to engage with the key EU institutions in order to influence policy. In order to maintain access to these networks and to ensure that Belfast retains the insight and high-level contacts in Brussels and other cities, particularly in a post-Brexit context, it is proposed that Belfast City Council renews its annual subscription to Eurocities at a cost of €16,700.

3.17 Other International Engagement Activities

- Belfast City Council has received a sponsorship request for a contribution of £5,000 towards the annual New York New Belfast Conference in June 2019. Members will recall that this event showcases the new Belfast to the US-based audience and is a useful channel for promoting our key business, investment and cultural messaging. If endorsed by members, officers will work with the organising team to influence the agenda in line with city and council priorities. If the Committee agrees to financial support, it is also requested that the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Director of Economic Development, or nominees, attend and participate in the conference
- Belfast City Council will be requested to provide input into a number of potential inward missions on 2019. The level of engagement will be assessed by officers, and will be commensurate with the potential return for the city. Early indications include interest from both Seattle and Philadelphia. Any costs arising from these visits will be met within existing unit budgets.

3.18 Financial and Resource Implications

It is proposed that Members approve and agree financial support for the range of activities and events set out in sections above. These allocations have been included in the budget estimates for 2019/2020.

3.19 Shenyang/China

- Support for an inaugural China in Belfast programme 2019/20 at a maximum cost of £20,000
- Support for 2020 Chinese New Year event in Belfast at a maximum of £10,000

- Support the development work and delivery of a pilot China Business Mission in partnership with other relevant players. The cost of this will not exceed £25,000.

3.20 Boston

- Support the development and delivery of a civic and business mission to Boston in 2019 (date tbc). Details are currently being developed and will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for endorsement. The cost of this will not exceed £10,000.

3.21 Nashville

- Support the promotion and marketing of the second Nashville in Belfast week and host a Nashville delegation at a maximum cost of £20,000
- Support an outward business focused mission to Nashville in 2019 at a maximum cost of £15,000 (subject to agreement with partners)

3.22 New York/New Belfast

- Agree to sponsor the June 2019 NYNB Annual Conference to a value of £5,000 and agree attendance of the Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee and Director of Economic Development or nominees at a maximum cost of £2,500.

3.23 International Homecoming Conference

- Agree to sponsor the 2019 Homecoming Conference at a maximum cost of £10,000.

3.24 Eurocities

- Agree to renew the council's annual newsletter of the Eurocities Network at a cost of €16,700.

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

No specific equality or good relations implications. The International Relations Framework has been equality screened. No rural need impacts.”

After discussion, during which the staff of the European and International Relations Unit were commended for their ongoing work in promoting the City internationally, the Committee adopted the recommendations. It was noted that officers would examine ways of enhancing the process for informing Members of delegations and events taking place as part of the Council's International Relations activity.

Application for a Markets Licence – HMS Caroline

The Committee was informed that the HMS Caroline Preservation Company had submitted an application for a Markets Licence to enable it to hold a Maritime Festival Makers Market in the HMS Caroline car park, Alexandra Wharf, Queen’s Road.

The Director of Development explained that the market, which would be held from 24th till 26th May, as part of the Belfast Maritime Festival, would increase footfall around the Titanic Quarter and would complement the wider festival and programme of animation being delivered currently in the City. It was anticipated that there would be between thirty and forty stalls at the event and the organisers would, in advance, be required to submit the relevant documentation and details of its operational plan. Those would be assessed by Council officers, who would also undertake inspections over the duration of the market.

The Committee agreed to grant the Markets Licence.

**Update on Department for Communities’
Access and Inclusion Capital Programme**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th January, it had been informed that the Department for Communities had invited councils across Northern Ireland to administer its Access and Inclusion Capital Programme, which sought to improve access to arts and cultural activities by people with disabilities. £750,000 had been allocated in total to the programme and applicants could, on the basis of demonstrable need and potential impact, secure funding of up to £30,000.

The Director of Development reported that the Committee had approved the Council’s participation in the programme and confirmed that twenty-two applications had been received by the deadline date of 18th January. Eligible projects had been ranked by a panel of Council officers against an agreed set of criteria, with the following applicants being awarded funding from the programme to complete their projects by 31st March, 2019:

	Organisation	Amount Awarded	Project Details
1.	Accidental Theatre	£29,999	Disabled lift repair and upgrade
2.	Belfast City Council	£2,300	Visitor exhibition hearing portable loop system
3.	Belfast City Council	£17,100	Chair lift at City Hall rear access door
4.	Belfast Photo Festival	£27,081	Disability Exhibition facility
5.	Black Box	£26,785	Access and Inclusion project
6.	Crescent Arts Centre	£24,977	Disability Access and Inclusion project
7.	Exchange Place Resources	£29,500	Making Accessible Exchange Place
8.	McCracken Cultural Society	£24,800	Disability door access and toilet upgrade
9.	Ormeau Table Tennis Club	£8,117	Accessible table tennis facilities
10.	Quotidian Word on the Street	£6,000	Disability accessible poetry jukebox

11.	Spectrum Centre	£24,864	Spectrum Inclusion lift upgrade
12.	Strand Arts Centre	£21,385	Mobile Screening project
13.	Strand Arts Centre	£16,012	Audio Visual Accessibility Programme
14.	Theatre NI	£20,022	Captioning Support Programme
15.	University of Atypical	£11,220	Access to Art project
16.	Ulster Orchestra	£10,912	Access and inclusion programme
		£301,074	

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Financial Reporting – Quarter 3 2018/19

The Committee considered a report which set out the financial position of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for the third quarter of 2018/2019. The report confirmed that there had, during that period, been an underspend of £172,000, with a year-end underspend of £55,000 being forecast. The underspend could be attributed primarily to staffing costs resulting from vacant posts across a number of services and to reduced expenditure on programme costs and premises costs.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Strategic and Operational

Request for Special Meeting

The Committee agreed that a special meeting be held at 5.15 p.m. on Monday, 8th April, to receive an update on the strategic study for the Cave Hill Country Park and on the development proposals for the North Foreshore.

Chairperson