

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 5th June, 2019

## MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairperson);  
Alderman Spence; and  
Councillors S. Baker, Beattie, Brooks, Ferguson,  
Flynn, Garrett, Graham, Hanvey, Heading, Howard,  
T. Kelly, Lyons, Murphy, Nicholl, O'Hara and Whyte.

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

### **Welcome**

The Chairperson welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the Committee since the recent Local Government Elections.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Kingston and Councillor McLaughlin.

### **Expression of Sympathy**

The Chairperson reported that the death had occurred earlier in the day of the mother of Alderman Kingston and, on behalf of the Committee, extended her condolences to the Alderman and his family.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of 3rd and 8th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 21st May.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Flynn declared an interest in relation to item 3(b) – Update on Markets, in that he was a member of the National Market Traders Federation and had submitted an application to trade at St. George's Market and in respect of item 8(a) – Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme, in that his employer had been mentioned within the Committee report, and left the meeting whilst these items were under discussion.

**Matters Referred Back from Council/Motions**

**Motion – Redevelopment and  
Regeneration of the City Centre**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 21st May, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Lyons and seconded by Councillor McKeown, to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council notes the challenges created by the fire in Bank Buildings and the ongoing Council-led effort to stimulate economic activity in the area using street animation, pop up play parks and other incentives.

The Council notes also that the redevelopment of our city centre as a shared and mixed use space offers traders, residents and visitors a range of economic, social and cultural opportunities.

Noting the Department for Infrastructure’s public consultation on the future use of the streets around Castle Place and Donegall Place, the Council calls for the pedestrianisation of this area.”

The Committee noted that it would have the opportunity to consider the motion later in the meeting, as part of the report on Castle Place and City centre pedestrianisation.

**East Belfast Translink Depot – Response  
from Department for Infrastructure**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th October, 2018, it had granted approval for officers to meet with Translink representatives to discuss the potential relocation of the East Belfast transport depot. The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 13th February, it had noted that Translink had agreed, in principle, to work collaboratively with the Council, through a feasibility study, to identify potential sites that could deliver its operational and logistical needs. That decision had been amended by the Council to provide that representatives of the Department for Infrastructure be invited also to enter into discussions with officers, prior to proceeding with the study.

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the Department for Infrastructure’s Director of Public Transport Division had, in response to the Council’s invitation, stated that Translink had no plans currently to relocate the East Belfast transport depot and that it continued to play a central role in delivering urban public transport, as it was ideally placed to keep operational costs to a minimum. However, the Department would not rule out the relocation of the depot in the longer term but would need reassurance that an alternative site would offer a similar level of efficiency and cost effectiveness and could be achieved with no financial detriment to Translink. She added that she was aware that the Council had commissioned a study to examine alternative sites and that, should that identify realistic options, those would need to be

given full consideration by Translink. She had concluded by stating that she would be content to meet with Council representatives to discuss the matter further.

After discussion, the Committee noted the response from the Department for Infrastructure and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting, once the feasibility study had been completed.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following three 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.

### **Belfast Zoo – Performance Update 2018/19**

(Ms. J. Wilson, Business Manager, City and Neighbourhood Services Department, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which outlined the performance of the Zoo for the period from January till March, 2018, under five key areas, namely, Animal Collection/Welfare, Education Services, Financial Performance, Marketing and Events and Visitor Services and provided an update on the Improvement Agenda.

The Business Manager reported that, in terms of the Improvement Agenda, a review of arrangements for lock up, animal escapes and general health and safety requirements had resulted in new shift patterns being agreed. The review had highlighted a legacy issue involving contractual overtime and she provided details of a compromise agreement which had been drafted by the Legal Services Section to address the issue and been circulated to staff. The agreement had included a requirement to buy out contractual overtime, the cost of which would be repaid primarily through savings acquired from the implementation of the new shift patterns. It was hoped that agreements would be signed by staff over the coming weeks.

She stressed that staff and Trades Unions continued to be engaged in the improvement process, through the Zoo Trades Union Forum and improvement group, on issues relating to the aforementioned five key areas, as well working patterns, cost reduction, procurement efficiencies and enhanced customer experiences.

She concluded by recommending that the Committee note the contents of the report and approve the removal of contractual overtime, via the compromise agreement.

In response to concerns which had been raised by the Members, the Business Manager confirmed that the Zoo Trades Union Forum had worked closely and positively

with staff and the Council on the issue of contractual overtime and that the overspend in employee costs could be attributed primarily to the deployment of seasonal staff over the period from June till September and of casual staff covering holiday periods and some long-term sickness absence and did not involve zero hours contracts.

The Chief Executive provided an update on the ongoing Strategic Review of the Zoo and pointed out that decisions arising from it would, in light of their financial implications, be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval and subsequently to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for information.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that, in future, all reports relating to staffing or changes to contracts should indicate clearly the extent of engagement with staff and the Trades Unions.

### **Update on Markets**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on a number of operational and enforcement issues relating to St. George's Market, as well as details of an application for the grant of a Markets Licence.

The Director of Economic Development explained that St. George's Market was a popular tourist attraction and space for local residents, as well as being an ideal location for new business starts and providing a source of income for more than 200 traders. He reminded the Committee that, in 2014, it had commissioned consultants to undertake work around a development plan for the market, which had resulted in changes to staffing structures and some operating hours. Officers were currently examining ways in which the market could be enhanced to meet increasing tourist demand, whilst retaining an important role as an asset for the City, its residents and the businesses which operated within it. It was proposed that consultants again be commissioned to develop a Strategic Development Plan for the market.

He reminded the Committee further that, at its meeting on 3rd April, it had been advised of a number of ongoing areas of work which would be progressed over the coming year and that it would be informed of any proposals which would impact significantly upon the market.

Accordingly, he highlighted the deployment of new mobile ventilation units, with a view to minimising odours and vapour from the cooking of hot food, as well as the increased focus on ensuring compliance with various guidance documents and enforcement policies. The Council's Food Safety Team had made a number of recommendations around the storage of food before and between market days and those would be implemented in the coming weeks. Given the operational implications of those changes, the Markets team would be working closely with other agencies and with traders around, for example, the loading/unloading of food. All changes would be made in line with legislative requirements in order to protect and maintain the reputation of the market as a food destination and unique visitor experience.

He reminded the Committee that anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale was required to apply to the Council for a Markets licence. He reported that an

application had been received from the Cathedral Quarter Trust to hold a market within St. Anne's Cathedral and the adjoining car park, on Friday, 20th and Saturday, 21st June, as part of Culture Night Belfast. He pointed out that the market would, in line with the aims of the Council's Markets Development Strategy, assist in enhancing the area and would drive footfall into the Cathedral Quarter and the surrounding area.

It was envisaged that there would be up to sixty stalls and operators would be required to submit in advance documentation such as public liability insurance and risk assessments. An operational plan covering, for example, security and stewarding, first aid provision and environmental health information would also be required. Inspections would also be undertaken over the course of the two days, in line with the Markets Rights Policy guidelines.

After discussion, the Committee approved the priority areas of investment in St. George's Market over the coming year, approved the application from the Cathedral Quarter Trust for a Markets Licence and agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to request a report on the use of consultants across the Council.

#### **Update on Strategic Sites Assessment**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the emerging findings of the draft Strategic Site Assessment which had been commissioned by the Council, in collaboration with the Department for Communities. The Assessment had examined the development and regeneration potential of the Council's car parks and adjacent public sector land holdings within the City Centre.

Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee:

- i. note the update on the Strategic Sites Assessment work and the initial assessment of the regeneration potential of various Council surface car parks and other Council assets and adjacent public sector lands in the City centre and that there may be potential for synergies and aligned development with adjoining private sector owned lands;
- ii. note the strategic context within which this work is being progressed and the opportunity for the Council to maximise the use of its assets to deliver on its growth ambitions in terms of the Belfast Agenda, the priorities of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and aligned Masterplans. This includes the opportunity to use public sector lands to help address the desire for increased city centre living that meets various housing demands. To note also that this work is being taken forward in collaboration with the Department for Communities, with further engagement taking place in terms of the regeneration potential for adjoining Council and Department for Communities' lands;

- iii. note the alignment with the Council's Car Parking Strategy recommendations that consideration be given to the optimal use of surface car parks to best support city centre regeneration and maximise valuable City centre land to deliver on wider regeneration outcomes;
- iv. note that further work is to be undertaken on the emerging development proposals for the identified sites, including options for delivery and proposed next steps;
- v. agree to further engagement thereafter with Members, by way of a workshop, to discuss the emerging proposals and proposed next steps, following which reports will be brought back to this Committee and submitted also to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the People and Communities Committee, as appropriate; and
- vi. agree to commission further work in respect of the impact on supply of off-street car parking taking into account recent and predicted future changes to supply, and including future development proposals and transportation schemes, as well as consideration of the financial implications for the Council.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed:

- i. to undertake engagement with those communities bounding the City centre to discuss plans for the regeneration of the City centre and how that could impact on them in a positive way;
- ii. to invite representatives of the Markets Development Association to a future meeting to show its "We Must Dissent" video; and
- iii. that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details of air quality levels across the City.

#### **Requests to Present**

##### **Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company/ Pragma Consultants/ Northern Ireland Water**

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company on the Weavers Cross regeneration scheme, from Pragma Consultants on its retail analysis of the City centre and from Northern Ireland Water on its water and wastewater infrastructure and services.

## **Growing Businesses and the Economy**

### **Employability and Skills: Strategic Engagement and Partnership Working**

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

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

##### **1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- i. update the Committee on the work being undertaken by the Council on employability and skills development activities, in conjunction with a number key strategic partners; and**
- ii. seek approval to refresh the Belfast Employability and Skills Framework in order to inform the areas of priority investment for future Council engagement in this area of work.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**The Committee is requested to:**

- i. note the work being undertaken to engage with strategic employability and skills partners to develop and test new approaches to addressing key city challenges including educational attainment, economic inactivity and youth unemployment;**
- ii. approve the delivery and associated budgets for ‘test and learn’ pilots to be undertaken in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department for the Economy (DfE); and**
- iii. provide budgetary approval for the joint commissioning of independent expertise to refresh the Belfast Employability and Skills Framework and support the development of the BRCD.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **Key Issues**

- 3.1 At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 6th March, approval was given for a series of activities under the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda. One**

of the thematic areas of this plan focused on strategic engagement, working in partnership with the government departments with statutory responsibility for employability and skills. The purpose of this activity is to develop joint areas of working to facilitate better alignment between regional employment interventions and the needs of the Belfast labour market and skills pipeline.

3.2 As reflected within the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda, key areas of focus for the city include:

- i. addressing economic inactivity: currently around 30% of the working age population is classified as economically inactive. This has a significant impact on achieving the Council's ambitions around inclusive growth. Likewise – at a time of when the unemployment levels are at an all-time low, there are opportunities to consider how these individuals can create a talent pool to meet the growing demand from Belfast's employers; and
- ii. creating effective pathways for young people to progress into employment, education and/or training: while the city has a very youthful population, there is also worrying levels of unemployment and economic inactivity among this demographic. Educational attainment levels are clearly one of the causal factors and recent research undertaken as part of the Belfast Skills Barometer has highlighted the fact that the low levels of educational attainment tend to be concentrated in the city's more deprived neighbourhoods.

3.3 To achieve any real impact on these priority areas highlighted, it is recognised that the Council must work in partnership in order to achieve the city's ambitions. Statutory responsibility and associated budgetary control for employability and skills remains within the remit of a number of government departments, principally the Departments for Communities, Economy and Education. To this end, the Council is actively engaging with these partners, using its community planning authority as a convenor to focus on these challenges and develop collaborative solutions. This work is being explored under the banner of the Working and Learning Board.

3.4 Following preliminary engagement with the key partner organisations, a number of areas have been prioritised, focusing on addressing educational attainment and enhancing access to employment opportunities for those



who are unemployed and/or economically inactive. In addition to these wider partnership forums, the Council is actively engaging with Departments around specific areas of work as outlined below.

**Collaboration with DfC**

- 3.5 DfC is a key strategic partner for the Council in tackling long-term unemployment and economic inactivity. As the mainstream provider of employability support for the unemployed and those with health conditions and/or disabilities, the Department has a central role in tackling this issue. Over the next three years, many of the mainstream employability programmes including Steps to Success, Workable (NI) and Access to Work will come to an end. The Department is working towards a solution or series of interventions that will aim to provide a flexible support offer, targeting the unemployed and economically inactive and providing them with the assistance that they need to move into sustainable employment.
- 3.6 Given the potential scale of this intervention, the Department has created a Programme Board involving representation from across all the government partners and agencies (including Social Security Agency, Department of Justice and Department for Education). Belfast City Council is also represented. The Board is particularly keen to try out new and flexible approaches in advance of committing to the full new programme. As a result, they have been encouraging a series of 'test and learn' pilots to explore these new approaches on a smaller scale over a time-bound period during this development phase. Belfast City Council has committed to working with the Department in three specific pilots, namely:
- i. **Enterprise Pathway**: this will create a new approach to helping economically inactive individuals to start a business. It will involve refocusing the existing 'Go for It' programme as well as providing additional mentoring support for the first 12 months of the businesses operation. Personal and skills development support will also be provided along with financial support of up to £3,500 against business start-up costs. The model also integrates the Universal Credit start-up option through which individuals can remain on benefit for the first twelve months of the business' operation. This builds on a similar model that has previously been tested in west Belfast under the SIF programme. Up to 35 individuals are expected to be supported through this

pathway in the course of the coming year.

- ii. **Employer Engagement:** there are around 15,000 businesses in Belfast across a range of sectors and varying from micro businesses to large-scale FDI companies. The majority of businesses are classified as micro and small businesses (employing less than 50 staff). Recent research with employers has identified that over 62% of businesses in Belfast have not engaged with mainstream employability and skills support, despite the range of support available and the number of organisations working in this field. Statutory partners recognise that there should be a more coherent approach to employer engagement and they have committed to undertaking work to look at options for how this might be achieved. This might include co-location of services; increased education and awareness-raising on the offer from respective partners or development of new services to meet gaps in the current provision. The scoping work on this model will be developed by Autumn 2019 with a view to exploring whether specific approaches might be piloted in particular sectors or specific geographical locations.
- iii. **Advice provision:** The Council – working with the Department for Communities – currently provides a support service using the advice sector across Belfast. One example of this support is through Advice Plus, led by North Belfast Advice Partnership. This project will trial a new relationship aimed at linking benefits and work-focused advice in a community setting. The Council will directly link its employment programmes such as Employment Academies into this network as a means of providing a direct route into employment for advice sector customers.

**Collaboration with Department for the Economy (DfE)**

- 3.7 To inform DfE's NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) action plan, officers are working with the Department to trial new approaches to support young people at risk of becoming NEET. At present, we are involved in two 'test and learn' pilots. Jointly funded with DfE, these pilots will support up to 40 young people at a high risk of becoming NEET many of whom will have some experience of the justice system and/or anti-social behaviour. Pilots are testing different approaches for engaging participants on a local area and a city-wide basis with a focus on flexible

interventions developed around a core mentoring offer to address the specific circumstances of the individual. The first pilot is a place based approach will be delivered in the Short Strand/Lower Newtownards Road area. The second approach is sectorally focused aimed at creating aspiration for young people to want to work in key sectors and supporting them to create a pathway to realise their ambition. Pilots are also engaging with a range of stakeholders including Youth Justice Agency, Education Welfare Officers, community organisations providing mental health, drug, and alcohol support. Pilot projects are expected to continue until March 2020 with a minimum of 20 participants progressing into positive destinations such as employment, further education and/or training. The outcome of these pilots will help to inform regional approaches to tackling the challenge around youth unemployment, specifically focused on NEETs.

**Refining the work programme moving forward**

- 3.8 In 2015, the Council developed a 10 year Employability and Skills Framework for the city with the purpose of creating an agreed vision and priority action areas for action by the Council and its partners. The ambitions contained within the framework formed the basis of the 'Working and Learning' pillar in the Belfast Agenda and the associated targets in the Agenda were drawn from the research undertaken as part of the framework development.
- 3.9 Over that period, the role of the Council in this area of work has changed considerably, with the majority of delivery focused on employer-led engagement to develop innovative solutions to help the economically inactive in particular to enter the workforce. While this work has had some significant success, it is important to ensure that the Council investment remains focused on those areas in which it can make an impact. In planning ahead, it is proposed that the Council engages external expertise to help focus its priority workplan for the coming 3-5 years, to be appointed through a competitive procurement process. This research will take account of the changing economic environment, a new approach to employability support by the Department for Communities (DfC), the development of the Belfast City Region Deal (BCRD), the wider ambitions for the city and a shared commitment to inclusive growth. It will help articulate the scale of interventions required to make a significant impact on the employment and skills levels in the city and will help identify some priority actions as a basis for

engagement with our wider government and private sector partners, as well as the associated budgetary implications of these investments. It will be an important tool for consideration as part of the medium-term financial planning approach of the Council.

- 3.10 Employability and skills is an underpinning pillar of the BRCD. Comprising of a range of projects spanning across infrastructure, regeneration, tourism, innovation and digital. Delivery and implementation of these projects is expected to result in up to 20,000 new and/or better employment opportunities. To identify the employment and skills implications of these projects, at both construction and operational phases, there is a need to better understand the skills requirements aligned to specific requirements for each project. Additionally there is a need to look at innovative approaches to delivering inclusive growth ensuring the benefits of the BRCD are spread across the city and wider region. To achieve this there is a need to access technical expertise to develop our understanding of skills needs, the scale of interventions required to make a tangible impact within our economy and developing a progressive approach to inclusive growth. The outcome of this work will be crucial in designing the employability and skills interventions required to support BRCD delivery. Commissioning of technical expertise will be undertaken through a competitive procurement process.

#### Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.11 Each of the activities outlined within this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and rural needs assessment completed. Consideration is 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.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 The financial resources to deliver the activities within this report will be resourced from the Economic Development 19/20 budget which has already been approved by this Committee. A breakdown of the budgetary costs is set out below:
- i. Enterprise Pathway pilot: the financial contribution from the Council to enhance start-up activity for the economically inactive is expected to be £100,000, with

the remaining costs expected to be provided through in-kind support from DfC and existing mainstream business start-up provision. This will support up to 35 potential start-ups;

- ii. Employer engagement pilot: the research and development work to support the development of a city-wide employer engagement service will require a financial contribution from the Council of up to a maximum of £20,000;
- iii. NEETs pilot: no financial contribution required from the Council – in-kind support to be provided through staff resources;
- iv. Revision of employability and skills framework to shape the work plan for the coming 3-5 years: maximum budget of £28,000 required for this work; and
- v. BRCD employability and skills technical expertise: maximum of budget of £25,000 as part of a wider partner funding package.”

After discussion, during which the Director of Development undertook to circulate to Members the Section 75 screenings for the various employment and skills development activities, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

#### **City Centre Recovery and Revitalisation Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the activity to date to support the City Centre Revitalisation Programme.

##### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- i. the update on the City Revitalisation Programme, in terms of planned objectives and the key strands of activity to be taken forward; and
- ii. that further updates will be brought back to the Committee as the overall programme and specific

proposals are further developed, in the context of the budget envelopes previously agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22nd February 2019.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1** The major fire at the Bank Buildings on 28th August 2018 resulted in the forced closure of 22 businesses inside a cordoned off area. It also had a hugely negative impact on traders and businesses within the immediate vicinity of the cordon, with 95 businesses assisted through the Primark support fund. Located on the intersection of four key shopping streets – Royal Avenue, Donegall Place, Castle Street and Castle Place, the cordon effectively cut the city centre in half. To mitigate against this, the Council, working with a number of stakeholders put in place a significant city recovery programme aimed at assisting impacted traders and driving footfall into the city centre.

**Impact of the City Recovery Programme Phase 1 Activity (pre-Christmas)**

- 3.2** Since the immediate aftermath of the fire and in the run up to Christmas, the Council working with a range of stakeholders (including Bid One, BCCM, BCTC, Visit Belfast, DfC, and retailers) put in place a City Recovery Programme to increase footfall and encourage shoppers and visitors back into the city centre. This addressed issues around wayfinding and connectivity; physical and environmental improvements; large scale attractors and a supporting animation programme; all complimented by a bespoke marketing and communications campaign, #YourBelfast.

**Key Success Measures of the City Recovery Programme**

- 3.3** Following the implementation of the City Recovery Programme, feedback and evaluations of these activities identified a number of key success measures:
- i. ***Footfall***: The key issue following the fire was the localised reduction in footfall, especially Royal Avenue and Donegall Place. However, overall footfall in the city centre generally increased each month in 2018 compared to the same month in the previous year. December '18 saw an increase in footfall of 17% on December '17, with January '18 up 13% on the previous year. Royal Avenue was up over 20% in the

week prior Christmas compared to the previous year, and Fountain Street and Ann Street were both up over 60% in the same week;

- ii. **Retail trading / Sales:** Information provided by BCCM showed retail sales in Dec 18 vs Dec17 indicated a small net growth overall; 61% experienced sales that were the same or higher than Dec 17. The growth was largely driven by multiples whilst independent retailers experienced similar sales to last year. Overall, the hospitality sector performed better than retail; 79% experienced sales that were the same or higher than Dec 17;
- iii. **Animation programme:** Council commissioned Cathedral Quarter Trust to programme animation activity at key locations (particularly those worst affected areas) which involved approximately 75 local creative, arts and community cultural organisations attracting hundreds of additional visitors to the city centre;
- iv. **Independent Market Survey:** This highlighted that the additional animation programme, the large scale attractions and physical improvements encouraged visitors into the city centre, enhanced their stay and increased the likelihood of revisits;
- v. **Marketing and Communication Campaign:** A significant campaign of city marketing and communications activity was led by BCC, Visit Belfast and several other city partners. Overall, the campaign was successful in delivering increased year on year results over the 8 week period of the Christmas Campaign (ie +16% trips, +122% bed nights and +4% spend); and
- vi. **#Your Belfast Reward App:** Involving over 200 local businesses and over 75 different incentives, there were 5902 total unique installations of the app and 6334 total QR scans in a 3 week period.

#### **City Revitalisation Programme**

- 3.4 Following the successful delivery of the temporary City Recovery Programme immediately following the fire and in the period up to Christmas, the decision was taken to refocus this activity into a City Revitalisation programme,

which would align more closely with the existing strategies to enhance and develop the city centre (Belfast Agenda, Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy etc).

- 3.5 An update on the activity within the strands of work for the City Revitalisation Programme as previously agreed by Members is set out below.

**Physical and Environmental Improvements**

i. **Pop up Park**

- 3.6 Members will wish to note that a number of the physical and environmental improvements have already been deployed in the city centre. The temporary 'Pop Up' Play Park specifically designed for children to encourage exploratory play and learning in a safe and welcoming environment was opened in Castle Place by the Lord Mayor on 22 March. As noted in the cordon update below, the early reopening of Castle Junction has meant that the Pop Up Park has been removed to allow vehicle access to Castle Place. DfI control the roadway and had granted the Council a temporary licence until end May (or removal of cordon) for purposes of locating the pop up park. A separate report is being brought to this Committee on this issue.

ii. **Belfast in Bloom**

- 3.7 The enhanced Belfast in Bloom project is expected to begin roll out later this month adding greenery and colour to the city centre. With a feature piece planned at City Hall, it will also extend to enhance tubs, planters and hanging baskets in the city centre. The thematic displays will feature maritime related designs in early summer, progressing to music themed features later in the summer.

iii. **Deep Clean and Graffiti Renewal**

- 3.8 The deep clean and graffiti removal using a new hot water washer has begun in the priority city centre areas affected by the fire. A dedicated team has been put in place with work initially focusing on the removal of graffiti from hard surfaces and the underfoot cleaning (pavements/ granite) and the gable walls. Officers are continuing to explore options to address the graffiti on shutters, although there are some issues around liability which are being considered.



iv. Bank Square Canopy

- 3.9 Members will be aware in the months immediately following the fire, the area around Castle Street and Bank Square in particular faced a number of challenges including access and delivery requirements, ongoing building works and wayfinding to direct people to the area. This made animating and programming the space difficult. Despite these challenges, key environmental improvements were rolled out such as planters and lighting fixtures along with a number of successful animation events including the Cinema on the Square, Fire and Ice performances, and City of Music events.
- 3.10 The Castle Street area will continue to be significantly affected for the foreseeable future due to the continued closure to traffic of Castle Street and Bank Street, and the continued use of Bank Square as a delivery route for local traders. A key project for the City Revitalisation programme is exploring the creation of an outdoor covered space for retailer-led themed events and other animation activity in Bank Square. In order to test the viability of a permanent covered space, two one-month long pilots are planned over the summer and autumn (June/July and September/October) using a temporary canopy to encourage visitors and shoppers to spend time in the area. Officers are working with local retailers to develop a series of events which already includes a continuation of Council's successful Summer Music in the City Programme and plans by Bid One for a weekend of music during the Golf Open weekend. Engagement with local traders to develop and enhance this is currently underway. If the temporary pilot programme is successful, it is intended to bring formalised proposals for a longer term more permanent solution that involves the Council, DfC and traders.

v. City Dressing and Lighting Strategy

- 3.11 Following engagement with city stakeholders, a coherent City Dressing and Lighting Strategy is also currently under development alongside city partners, aimed at providing a coherent approach towards lighting and dressing throughout the city centre. It is intended that the strategy will provide the foundation on how specific lighting schemes can be brought forward on a phased basis, subject to future funding. To feed into the lighting element of the strategy, initial pilot projects have been identified at Castle Street and Castle Arcade and discussions are also underway with city partners in terms of an approach for enhanced Christmas lighting.

3.12 In addition, as part of the city dressing approach in the strategy, it is likely that proposals will include a thematic /seasonal approach to city dressing. To support this, new cordon designs are being developed and are being implemented in May 2019 to bring life to the static cordon around the Bank Building. It is anticipated that the draft City Dressing and Lighting Strategy will be complete later in the year and will be brought back to Committee for consideration by Members.

vi. Entries and Lanes Strategy

3.13 One of the key issues identified in the pre-Christmas Recovery Programme was the connectivity and permeability of the city centre and its impact on wayfinding around the city centre following the fire. To address this, and following research in other cities, there is an opportunity to support and enhance permeability via an Entries and Lanes Strategy which offers the opportunity to improve the connectivity, resilience, tourism, city character, marketing and alternative uses for the existing entries. A Four Phase strategy is proposed:

- i. Phase 1: Enhance existing entries between High Street and Ann Street (2019-20);
- ii. Phase 2: Enhance existing entries at Castle Arcade and Wineceller Entry (2019-20);
- iii. Phase 3: Enhanced Lanes at Church Lane, Wellington St and Callendar St (2020-21, subject to budget); and
- iv. Phase 4: Reopening Entries at High St Entry, Sugarhouse Entry and Fountain Mews (longer term, subject to budget)

3.14 The procurement for design consultants to support Phase 1 and 2 is currently underway and it is anticipated that a consultant will be appointed in early summer. Following a period of engagement and design scoping, it is hoped that the capital works for Phase 1 and 2 will begin late autumn and run until the end of the financial year. Preparatory work for Phases 3 and 4 can also be progressed but the capital works element will be subject to funding.

Animation/ Events and Programming

3.15 Members will be aware that as part of the Recovery Programme, there was a significant animation programme in the lead up to Christmas. Going forward in the City

Revitalisation Programme, it is proposed that the focus will be on existing activity, scaling up investment and focusing on affected areas while creating a sense of 'experience' through 'must see' events that are unique to the city centre.

**3.16 Activities that have been enhanced to date include:**

- i. Extending the Festival of Fools event beyond Cathedral Quarter into the city centre, link to the Marathon and other bank holiday activity;
- ii. Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival: expansion of the programme for the 20th year of the event to include a number of high profile performances; and
- iii. Expansion of the Maritime Festival: there is a range of activities focused on the quays and Titanic Quarter area. However the event is also being expanded to include other locations such as St George's Market

**3.17 Other proposals planned going forward include:**

- i. 148th Open Golf: focal point of activity at City Hall to incorporate crazy golf, golf simulators and family-friendly golf-themed activities. Also exploring potential for a 'music hub' at Bank Square from mid-July to mid-August, incorporating a range of musical performances, in partnership with the businesses in the area;
- ii. 'Taste the Island' – exploring opportunities to tie into this Tourism Ireland campaign showcasing local food and drink produce as well as the best of local restaurants; and
- iii. Support for an expanded 'Culture Night' to become a 'Culture Weekend' – this is scheduled for weekend of 20-21 September. The Friday event will focus on the Cathedral Quarter area while the Saturday event will involve the retail and hospitality core in the City centre.

**Marketing and Communications**

- 3.18 In response to the feedback received through our regular stakeholder engagement with retailers and key city partners, and along with research which identified a decline in the day trip market, Visit Belfast have been commissioned to work with city stakeholders and Council to develop a new 'Make it Belfast' advertising campaign to support the City**

**Revitalisation Programme. Over the coming months, the campaign will advertise the city online, on the radio, in the press and on outdoor channels with a focus on families, young/young at heart to:**

- i. Re-engage local consumer interest and inspire visits through positive messages;**
- ii. Uplift image and attractiveness of Belfast city centre as a premier retail day trip destination;**
- iii. Maximise campaign reach and penetration to targeted segmented audience;**
- iv. Address perceptions and local visiting patterns; and**
- v. Promote positive Belfast experiences, great value and access.**

**3.19 The advertisements feature people who work in our shops, restaurants and bars and focuses on the city's character and energy, highlighting that a visit to the city - be it for shopping, eating or socialising - is always unique. Stakeholders identified that May and August were the most optimum times for the campaign to run taking into consideration other activities and plans they had in between these times. A highly visible promotional mix of ambient, bus T-sides, selected adshells, outdoor 48 sheets, radio, digital, video, social and national and local press will be used throughout the campaign to promote and inform the target audience. Where appropriate, Council will uplift the campaign via our existing external communication channels.**

**3.20 'Make it Belfast' campaign went live on Monday 13 May with radio advertising, followed by outdoor, digital and press advertising from w/c 20 May for the next six weeks. Social media will run throughout May up to the end of August to ensure an 'always on' approach to the campaign. It is planned that there will be an additional burst of advertising in late July which will continue up to the end of August with further radio, outdoor, regional press, digital and programmatic display and film advertising. Supporting material including a '*Make it Belfast*' campaign tool-kit is under development for use by all stakeholders to further strengthen and add value to the campaign.**

Update on the Cordon

- 3.21 As Members will be aware, in addition to the Castle Place walkway, two further walkways opened at the end of February and March this year, which have increased access around the cordon from Castle Street, via Fountain Street to Donegall Place. This access enabled a number of closed businesses to reopen in recent weeks including Zara, Abacus Beads and most recently Tesco which reopened on Monday 20th May. All business now have access to their premises and only one business remains closed.
- 3.22 The façade retention schemes were complete by the end of April, with the cordon at Castle Junction reduced earlier than anticipated at the end of May. This allowed a wider opening at Castle Junction to open on 23 May which allows single lane traffic between Royal Avenue and Donegall Place. Translink Metro Services were able to resume on the morning of 23rd May as well. Further details on the new city centre access arrangements and the Castle Place traffic management plan following the latest reduction of the cordon have been circulated to Members.

City Currency

- 3.23 As announced on 8th May, the pilot of the Belfast Coin initiative was launched. Following the pilot, Belfast is set to introduce its own city currency via an app later this year as a result of a successful application by the Council to be part of a global challenge through the 100 Resilient Cities network. Belfast Coin will be an incentive-based digital currency aimed at rewarding positive actions by residents, as well as encouraging economic growth and helping to achieve environmental goals while working alongside other global cities to learn from each other about urban problem solving and sharing best practice. The pilot will see Council work with a range of partners and stakeholders across the city to allow the currency to be used as payment in shops, restaurants and other business in response to shopping local, recycling, volunteering and taking part in civic activities.

Community Safety within City Centre

- 3.24 Council officers have been proactively working with key city centre partners, including BIDs, DFC, DOJ, BCCM, Cathedral Quarter Trust, Linen Quarter and retailers, to explore and identify how we can create an enhanced sense of safety within the city centre. This has resulted in co-funding being

secured from DoJ, Cathedral Quarter and Linen Quarter and BIDs for two new beat officers.

### Footfall Figures

- 3.25 There continues to be ongoing challenges around footfall in the city centre. In April, footfall marginally improved in the city centre as a whole, up 0.7% on the previous year to date. However, Royal Avenue continues to be impacted by reduced footfall compared to the same month in the previous year (-32.3% on Apr 2018) and Donegall Place was also down in April compared to the previous year (-4.1%). Nearly all areas (except Fountain Street) saw an improvement compared to the footfall figures reported in March, though this in part will be as a result of the Easter holidays in April. Across NI, footfall is up 0.8% on the year to date, and up across the UK as a whole by 0.2%.

### City Centre Regeneration Taskforce

- 3.26 Members may wish to note that all the activity related to the City Revitalisation Programme noted above is set within the context of a wider regeneration strategy and action plan for the city centre and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy forms the basis of this. It contains a number of policies, projects and special action areas aimed at driving the regeneration of the city centre whilst ensuring connections to adjoining communities. As Members are aware, in the aftermath of the Bank Buildings fire a City Centre Regeneration Task Force was established jointly chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and the Council's Chief Executive, which aims to support a collaborative public sector response to drive and resource the city centre revitalisation efforts in the long-term.
- 3.27 The priority areas of focus emerging from the City Centre Joint Regeneration Taskforce are set out below, which mirror the recurrent themes identified by businesses and the representative organisations within the City:
- i. City Resilience – a medium to long term city centre recovery plan involving various stakeholders and the continued need to drive forward and support the retail, office, tourist and city centre living product;
  - ii. Re-imagining and Diversification – recognising the need to diversify the city centre, including provision of family centric activities, enhanced tourist and

cultural offering, city centre living, enhancing the evening economy etc.; and

- iii. **Infrastructure and Connectivity** – enhance public realm and open space ensure permeability and connections through the city, transport and car parking issues etc.

- 3.28 The objectives of the emerging City Revitalisation Programme seeks to take account and align with these priority areas of focus.

#### **Finance and Resources Implications**

- 3.29 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February 2019, followed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 6th March, considered and approved a report setting out an overview of the broad proposals for the City Revitalisation Programme and associated budget allocations across the identified strands of activity totalling £2.505m. The key strands detailed and for which updates are provided in this report are funded from within the overall budget noted above.

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

- 3.30 None associated with this report.”

During discussion, a Member reminded the Committee that the Council had, in 2018, agreed not to designate the Belfast district or the City centre as a ‘Holiday Resort’, which would have allowed larger shops to extend their trading hours on up to eighteen Sundays per year. That decision had been based primarily on the impact which the designation would have upon small independent traders and shop workers. She explained that there now existed, in light of the significant work which had been undertaken in recent months to revitalise the City centre, an ideal opportunity to designate that area as a ‘Holiday Resort’ and suggested that consideration be given to implementing it initially on a one-year trial basis.

A further Member raised concerns around an investor in a company which the Council was working with as part of the City centre revitalisation programme. She claimed that the investor had received a letter from the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner in respect of its activities in the occupied territories of Israel/Palestine.

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

- i. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the Terms of Reference to progress proposals for designating the City centre as a ‘Holiday Resort’, taking into account issues beyond

opening hours and outlining the extent of the associated consultation process;

- ii. agreed that the Legal Services Section review in advance of its next meeting the aforementioned letter which had been issued by the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner and advise of any potential implications for the Council; and
- iii. noted that Council officers would, upon request, brief Political Parties on the wider aspects of the City Centre Recovery and Revitalisation Programme, with a view to informing future proposals, and that Members would have an opportunity to raise this and other issues in a series of workshops which were planned for the coming year around future priorities for the Committee.

### **Castle Place and Pedestrianisation**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of main Issues**

##### **1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- i. **update Members on the removal of the Castle Place Pop Up Park;**
- ii. **update Members on the emerging debate around city centre pedestrianisation and proposed next steps; and**
- iii. **highlight Motions brought forward by Members in relation to pedestrianisation; problem parking and traffic calming.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

##### **2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- i. **note the update on the Castle Place pop up park and the public response to its subsequent removal;**
- ii. **note the ambition of the City, as set out in the Belfast Agenda, to promote sustainable forms of transport including walking and cycling;**
- iii. **note the ambition of the Council, as set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, to create a green, walkable, cyclable City centre;**



- iv. note that the Department for Infrastructure is currently drafting the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Strategy, which will set the direction for transportation policy for the city, and will be a key stakeholder in bringing forward any discussions regarding the future use of the city infrastructure;
- v. agree that the Council commission research to examine models of pedestrianisation and other initiatives in a way which facilitates the development of the city centre, enabling both pedestrian enjoyment and public transport access;
- vi. note the ongoing engagement with wider civic and statutory partners to explore the issues of accessibility and use of the City centre;
- vii. note that options are currently being considered for the provision of further temporary pop up parks in the city centre in the short-term and at the same time consideration of options for permanent green space, with a further report brought back to Committee in the near future; and
- viii. agree to invite relevant officials from DfI to discuss current Motions raised by Council.

### **3.0 Main Report**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 In the aftermath of the fire at the Bank Buildings, Castle Junction and the bottom of Castle Street were closed to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic and a number of interventions took place in the city centre to address the drop in footfall, support the economic recovery, animate spaces and create a buzz in the lead up to Christmas. This work was brought forward under the Revitalisation Programme as part of a multi-agency approach, led by Council but involved a number of stakeholders including retailers; BCCM, Chamber, DfC, DfI, Visit Belfast, the BIDS, Cathedral Quarter Trust and other cultural organisations. These temporary measures were approved in the October SP&R Committee meeting and updated and approved through CG&R committee in subsequent meetings on 7th November and 5th December 2018 and 9th January, 13th February, 6th March and 3rd April 2019.

- 3.2 The Department for Infrastructure is the statutory authority for the provision of road infrastructure and public transportation. In order to facilitate the Revitalisation Programme the department granted licences to the Council to occupy specific areas on Donegall Place, Castle Place and Royal Avenue to install temporary environmental improvements, street furniture and attractions and to utilise the space for animation purposes. The licence for these areas were granted for a period from November 2018 until end of May 2019, or until such time as the cordon was sufficiently reduced to enable the reintroduction of the public transportation network. Pre-Christmas these areas were used to facilitate environmental improvements and family fun attractions including astro-turf and landscaping, seating, food markets, a snow slide and children's funfair area.

**Castle Place Pop Up Park**

- 3.3 Post-Christmas, as part of the Phase 2 Revitalisation programme the space at Castle Place was re-designed as a children's pop up play area that utilised the existing seating and planters. As part of the Phase 2 works, the park was brought forward on the basis that it was a temporary feature, in line with the timeline for the work on the Bank Buildings.
- 3.4 The design introduced elements of urban play, i.e. colourful soft mounds, animal sculptures and topiary, and a pirate boat. A bespoke sculpture of the iconic Bank Buildings clock was created for the site to give a focal point. The park was officially launched open on the 22nd March with a focus on providing fun and friendly space within the city centre and to test concepts for green urban play spaces within the city centre environment.
- 3.5 A programme of events, developed and delivered by Cathedral Quarter Trust, animated the area and drew significant crowds to activities such as music events, Festival of Fools, specific activities aimed at children and families, and provided a location for the Chinese New Year parade and three decorated 'Love Benches' for Valentines week.
- 3.6 As a part of the Festival of Fools programme a survey was carried out of 265 attendees at the performances in Castle Place and 72% ranked the space as excellent and 25% as good. There were also numerous articles in newspapers and local media: Belfast Telegraph, Daily Mirror, 4ni.co.uk, The Nolan Show and the Irish News. A BBC Newsline feature on the 1st May 2019 outlined the positive effects of the park on the city centre users but also highlighted that some

traders, businesses and services raised some concerns around access to the city centre.

- 3.7 Following confirmation of an accelerated programme from Primark on the removal of the Castle Place structural cordon the park was removed in the week commencing 6th May to enable the opening of the Castle Place junction to traffic in accordance with the licence granted by DfI. This was also in line with the updates provided to CG&R Committee on the temporary nature of the interventions.
- 3.8 The removal of the pop-up park was complete by 10th May to enable DfI to install the civil engineering works to facilitate the new junction arrangement through Castle Place. The new junction arrangement is dictated by the working space required to allow for the structural retention system to the historic Bank Buildings façade and to provide adequate working space for the remedial works to restore this landmark building. The new, constrained junction alignment was opened on 23rd May and provides for southbound bus and delivery access from Royal Avenue into Donegall Place and Castle Place, and normal service through Castle Place and Donegall Place. This junction arrangement will be in place until such time as the permanent structural framework can support the existing façade and the temporary container based façade retention can be removed. It should be noted that northbound services will continue to operate out of temporary bus stop locations on North Street.
- 3.9 The fire and cordon had a significant impact on businesses in the area, with 22 businesses having to close or relocate and others, especially to the north and west of the cordon, resulting in reduced trade and footfall in certain areas. Although the walkway through the cordon was opened on 3 December 2018, there was significant support from many businesses/retailers that the cordon should be reduced as soon as possible and vehicular access and bus services resumed.
- 3.10 Members should note that options are currently being considered for the provision of further temporary pop up parks in the city centre in the short-term whilst, at the same time, exploring options for more permanent green space and play space. A further report will be brought back to Committee on this in the near future.
- 3.11 Prior to the removal of the park Council held Facebook and Twitter polls that asked, 'Is this the type of project you'd like more of in #YourBelfast?' There were 1000 responses on to

the Twitter poll, 91% in favour and 9% not in favour. Council's initial Tweet reached over 23,000 people and engaged with 1,000 users. The Facebook poll had 846 votes with 90% support and 10% negative, reached almost 17,000 people, and engaged just over 1,700 people (reactions, comments, shares, post clicks).

- 3.12 NI Greenways has also petitioned Belfast City Council, DfI and Translink through the Change.org website on the basis that *'Belfast loves its new pedestrian core and play streets—DON'T hand it all back to traffic'* and to date there are over 3,400 signatures in support of the petition.

#### Pedestrianisation

- 3.13 A Notice of Motion was brought to the Full Council meeting on the 21st of May by Councillor Lyons and seconded by Councillor McKeown and was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. The Notice of Motion stated that:

*'This Council notes the challenges created by the fire in Bank Buildings and the ongoing Council led effort to stimulate economic activity in the area using street animation, pop up play parks and other incentives. The Council also notes that the redevelopment of our city centre as a shared and mixed use space offers traders, residents and visitors a range of economic, social and cultural opportunities. Noting the Department for Infrastructure's public consultation on the future use of the streets around Castle Place and Donegall Place, the Council calls for the pedestrianisation of this area'*

- 3.14 In response to the reopening of Castle Junction DfI released a press statement on 10th May stating that *'While the plan is to restore access now, the re-opening of Castle Place has started a wider debate about how we use our City Centre and make it an attractive, safe and accessible environment as possible for everyone'*. This direction is reflected in the Departments proposed Belfast Metropolitan Transport Strategy (BMTS) which will be progressed when Ministers are back in place. The BMTS and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan will form the policy that could enable the modal shift and rebalancing of road space in the city centre. DfI also pointed out that the rerouting of metro services away from Castle Place created difficulties for some groups using public transport to access the city centre and created congestion in other parts of the city.

- 3.15 In its press statement DfI also advised that *'the Department plans to open discussions with wider partners to explore how we should best proceed to ensure Belfast City Centre thrives through a greater focus on place and public transport accessibility.'*
- 3.16 As the statutory authority DfI will be critical to all discussions going forward to ensure alignment with the emerging work on the BMTS, and there has been ongoing engagement between the Council, DfI and DfC on this issue and how the city centre can best function for all users. This engagement will continue and widen out over the coming months with updates to be provided to Members through subsequent committee meetings.
- 3.17 It should be noted that pedestrianisation proposals for the city centre would have an impact on proposed and planned infrastructure projects for the city, including Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2, which currently forms a part of the Belfast Region City Deal, and Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 3. This scheme currently has planning permission, and DfC, supported by Council, have advocated that this scheme be prioritised for capital investment. The approved Streets Ahead 3 scheme allows for the provision of public transportation, blue badge holders and business deliveries (within a permitted delivery period of 6pm – 11am) only to access Royal Avenue.
- 3.18 A change in approach would result in the need for a re-design of the Streets Ahead scheme and a delay in the implementation of Streets Ahead Phase 3. Any re-design would require further engagement and consultation, and a re-application for planning permission. This would require agreement on the role and route for public transportation through the city centre.
- 3.19 This would also require input from DfI, retailers /businesses and their representative bodies, Translink, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce and people who live, work and use Belfast. There is a recognition that the temporary arrangements following the Bank Buildings fire were unsuitable for many and access to buses and future designs and changes must take in account people with different needs. This would involve engagement with people with disabilities, including but not limited to wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, blind and partially sighted people.
- 3.20 The Belfast Agenda outlines the City's ambition to promote the development of sustainable transport. This includes

promoting walking and cycling. The support, and concept, of pedestrianising areas in the city reflects one of the key policies in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), which seeks to create a green, walkable, cycleable city centre. It specifically references the lack of green space and tree-lined streets, and identifies the need for rebalancing the scales between tarmac and soft landscaping and recognises that there is no provision for children in the city centre.

- 3.21 In considering the effects and impacts of how pedestrianisation works, and how Belfast city centre could provide a modern and sustainable approach to infrastructure provision and connectivity, it is worth looking at measures and initiatives that make successful city centres elsewhere in the context of all users. This would also inform the debate on how Belfast could address some of the current issues, including ensuring a balance between business requirements, transportation, pedestrianisation and high-quality public space and taking into account the specific needs of different users of the city centre.
- 3.22 Much work has been done in other cities on the options around the practice of pedestrianisation. This has focused on the needs of both the pedestrian and other potential road users. Successful examples of pedestrianised or part pedestrianised streets have allowed various road users to share the same space in differing configurations. The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation has suggested looking at shared space under the following headings:
- i. 'Pedestrian prioritised streets' – where those on foot 'feel that they can move freely anywhere, and where drivers should feel they are a guest'.
  - ii. 'Informal streets' – where formal traffic controls such as signs, markings and signals are either absent or reduced. There is a footway and carriageway, 'but the differentiation between them is typically less than in a conventional street'.
  - iii. 'Enhanced streets' – where the public realm has improved and where restrictions on pedestrian movement – such as guardrails – have been removed, but where conventional traffic controls largely remain.
- 3.23 It is recommended the Council commission research which examines models of pedestrianisation and other initiatives in a way that facilitates the development of the city centre enabling both pedestrian enjoyment and public transport

access. This is particularly appropriate when considering the existing and developing Belfast Rapid Transit – Glider.

### Notices of Motion

3.24 DfI will be presenting the City Growth and Regeneration Committee with the Annual Spring Report (date to be confirmed) and it is proposed that the Committee invite the relevant officials from DfI to address the following issues raised through Council by Members:

- The Motion raised by Council Lyons on the 21st May (as outlined above) on the pedestrianisation of the City centre and the proposed consultation to address the recent debates;
- The following Motion raised by Councillor Dorrian on 1st February, 2019 on Problem Parking:

*'This Council recognises the concerns of many communities across Belfast in respect to 'problem parking' in their neighbourhoods, primarily during day time work hours, and recognises the need for further substantive engagement to address and resolve this issue. To date, strategies and campaigns have had minimal impact in solving these communities' difficulties. In mind of ambitious investment and expansion plans contained in the Belfast Agenda, the Council calls for immediate, co-ordinated action to improve parking measures and notes the lack of enforcement action to date with respect to bus and cycle lanes.*

*This motion also reaffirms the Council's commitment to full implementation of its car parking strategy, delivering proper parking infrastructure and taking appropriate action against those who show daily disregard for local communities.'*

*After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the motion; and agreed that there would be engagement with those communities which bounded the city centre, in conjunction with the Department for Infrastructure, to discuss the issues within the motion'*

- The following Motion raised by Councillor McAteer on 4th February 2019 on Traffic Calming:

*'This Council recognises that many of Belfast's citizens are having their health and wellbeing severely*

*impacted by living in streets which are clearly used as short cuts by heavy volumes of traffic travelling at speed, including HGV vehicles and buses. Currently, the Department for Infrastructure will carry out speed and traffic volume tests to ascertain if traffic calming measures are required. However, it does not also take into consideration the qualitative evidence of local residents and families in making decisions about traffic management.*

*This Council calls on the Department for Infrastructure to broaden its criterion in relation to traffic management decisions in highly congested streets, to include an assessment of both empirical and local qualitative research, and further calls on the Council to request a cross party meeting to discuss reviewing the criteria.'*

#### **4.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

- 4.1** There are no negative Equality, Good Relation or Rural Needs implications at this point. The Council's Equality and Diversity Officer will be consulted during any future consultation process and any proposed approach will be subject to the Council's screening requirements to ensure that Equality and Good Relations implications and Rural Needs are fully considered.

#### **5.0 Resource Implications**

- 5.1** The costs for Phase 1 and Phase 2 interventions were met by the City Revitalisation budget. The proposed research up to £30k will be covered from within current department budgets."

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an overview of the report and confirmed that discussions which had taken place on the previous day with the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure around the future development and use of the City Centre had been constructive, with all parties keen to explore how the City centre could best function for all users.

In terms of recommendation (v) within the report, it was pointed out that the Council, the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure had agreed to jointly commission a study to examine how the City centre could develop in a way that was accessible and welcoming for all. The study would include an examination of models of pedestrianisation and other initiatives, which would facilitate the development of the City centre, enabling both pedestrian enjoyment and sustainable access.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, including the amendment to recommendation (v).



## Positioning Belfast to Compete

### Update on International Relations

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

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

##### **1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for a number of activities including:**

- i. Friendship Four Ice Hockey initiative: this project was one of the earliest activities that came about through the Belfast-Boston Sister City agreement. The initiative is organised by The Odyssey Trust, who have requested financial support of £47,500 from the Council for this calendar year, out of a total project cost of around £250,000;**
- ii. facilitating an Inward Visit, including a welcome reception for the New York State Legislators from 21st-23rd September 2019, at a maximum cost of £2,000;**
- iii. attendance by the Chair of Committee (or nominee) plus one officer at the EUROCITIES annual conference on 20-22 November 2019 in Prague, at a maximum cost of £2,000; and**
- iv. participation by the Director of Economic Development (or his nominee) in an Invest NI-led business and investment mission to Israel at the end of July 2019, at a cost not to exceed £2,500.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

##### **2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- i. note the anticipated outputs of the Friendship Four event and approve the funding request of £47,500 for the current financial year;**
- ii. approve the facilitation and cost of welcoming the New York State Legislators from 21st-23rd September 2019 at a maximum cost of £2,000;**
- iii. approve the attendance of the Chair (or her nominee), plus one officer, at the EUROCITIES annual conference in Prague from 20th till 22nd November 2019, at a cost not exceeding £2,000;**

- iv. approve the participation of the Director of Economic Development (or his nominee) in an Invest NI-led business and investment mission to Israel at the end of July 2019, at a cost not exceeding £1,500; and
- v. approve the participation of the Chair of the Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or their nominees), plus one additional officer, on the upcoming Sister Cities business missions to Boston, Nashville and Shenyang.

All elements will be resourced from within the EU/International Unit and the Economic Development budgets which have already been approved by this Committee.

### 3.0 Main Report

#### Friendship Four

- 3.1 The Friendship Four tournament was one of the first major outputs of the Belfast-Boston Sister City agreement signed in 2014. This competition remains the first and only National Collegiate Athletic Association of the USA (NCAA) Division 1 hockey tournament to be held outside of the United States. Taking place over the Thanksgiving period, four colleges, alumni and family supporters travel to Belfast for a week. The games are televised live in the United States and Canada with the tournament also garnering a significant following on social media platforms locally, nationally and internationally.
- 3.2 In addition to the matches, the tournament encompasses a number of satellite events. The College students undertake visits to local schools whereby young people are able to learn about the American education system and scholarship opportunities and the visiting students are immersed in the local culture. The tournament also features a 'Festival of STEM' hosted by W5. W5 is the interactive science and discovery centre located managed by the Odyssey Trust and the STEM Ambassador Hub for Northern Ireland. The emphasis of the Festival of STEM programme is to promote these subjects across the curriculum, the involvement of women in sport and career opportunities within these disciplines
- 3.3 Since the first tournament in 2014, the Friendship Four programme has diversified and entered into new areas of

activity. In 2018/19, two new initiatives were delivered as part of the initiative. The inaugural women's competition was held in January 2019 and a business, education and tourism showcase promoted the local creativity and innovation across these sectors to those visiting the city as part of the event.

- 3.4 The Odyssey Trust has developed a business plan for the three year period 2019-2021. It identifies an annual visitor spend in the region of £320,000 by event participants. It also notes that the live television coverage of the event will reach more than 150million households. Plans are well advanced for the 2019 event. Teams confirmed as participating include Colgate (NY), Northeastern, Princeton (NJ) and New Hampshire. Teams proposed for the 2020 and 2021 competitions include Boston College, Michigan, Quinnipiac, Harvard, UMass Lowell, Vermont, Providence, Notre Dame and Clarkson.
- 3.5 Belfast City Council has been a principal funder of this event since its inception, alongside the Department for Communities (DfC), Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Invest NI, The US Consulate and the Odyssey Trust. Private sector income is levered through corporate sponsorship and ticket sales. In terms of alignment with Belfast Agenda targets, the proposed event supports a number of the key priorities including:
- i. increasing the number of bednights, particularly those from out of state visitors; and
  - ii. promoting and positioning the city to compete by building on the sports programme and creating a strong marketing and branding piece, focusing on the city's economic and tourism strengths.
- 3.6 Given the significant reliance on public support for the event, the Odyssey Trust is currently in the process of trying to secure the funding from the partners identified above. If the Committee agrees to provide the amount of funding requested from Belfast City Council, officers will develop a detailed Legal Agreement with key performance indicators for the event and the release of funding will be subject to the organiser's ability to meet those targets.

**EUROCITIES Annual Conference – 20 - 22 November 2019, Prague**

- 3.7 Members will be aware that Belfast has been a member of the EUROCITIES network for 24 years. EUROCITIES is a network

of more than 140 major European cities, made up of the elected local and municipal governments of major European cities. The network is structured through the thematic fora of Culture, Social Affairs, Knowledge Society and Environment and each forum has a number of working groups. Belfast has participated in a number of the groups, based on particular areas of need or interest to the council and the city at that time. We have 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.

- 3.8 Members will be aware that, in March 2019, this Committee agreed to the council's continued participation in the network. The annual conference enables cities to review and input into the future work plans, elect the Executive committee and discuss urban issues and challenges of specific interest. The theme for the 2019 conference is 'City Transformation' with pertinent issues on the agenda such as establishing new purposes for vacant historic buildings, addressing population decline in urban centres and greening the city.
- 3.9 In order to maintain access to the network and to ensure that Belfast retains the insight and high-level contacts in Brussels and other cities, it is proposed that the Committee Chair (or her nominee) plus one officer attends this conference.

**New York State Legislators Visit to Belfast, 21-23 September 2019**

- 3.10 The Council has received a request from the Assembly Member and President of the American Irish Legislators Society of New York State, Mr Michael Cusick, to host a delegation of up to 50 members from 21-23 September 2019.
- 3.11 The delegation will be undertaking a mission to Ireland from 18th till 27th September, and will be in Belfast for a series of economic, political and community meetings.
- 3.12 The aim of their visit is to demonstrate continued US commitment to advancing investment and transatlantic partnerships as well as continued interest in the NI Peace Process. The delegation last visited NI in 2015 and Belfast City Council hosted the group and facilitated relevant meetings and briefings at this time.
- 3.13 Members are requested to provide:
- i. a welcome and networking reception with key stakeholders; and

- ii. a formal business meeting with Belfast City Council members and officers to discuss how to enhance cooperation between Belfast and the State of New York.
- 3.14 In order to re-invigorate business, academic and cultural/tourism links with the state of New York using the influence of the Society, it is proposed that the Committee agrees to the above requests at a cost not to exceed £2,000.

**Business and Investment Mission to Israel**

- 3.15 Members will be aware that the Council has been working closely with Invest NI and Catalyst Inc to explore ways of bringing forward collaborative initiatives to support local businesses to become more competitive. This includes exploring new markets for their products and services and new avenues to lever investment. As part of these negotiations, Invest NI is working on an investment and business mission to the Israel. The trip will take place on the week commencing 29 July, 2019 and will also involve Catalyst Inc. The aim of the mission is to facilitate access to investment and new market opportunities for 5 Belfast based businesses. By taking part in the visit, it is anticipated that the Council will get greater insight into the potential for new business and investment opportunities in this location in order to inform our future work programme.

**Business Missions to Nashville, Boston and Shenyang**

- 3.16 Members will be aware of a previous report in March when approval was given to Belfast City Council to undertake three business missions to our Sister Cities, Nashville, Boston and Shenyang.
- 3.17 Plans are now well underway to recruit companies and develop itineraries for these visits. In order to ensure resources to deliver the civic business and logistical elements of each programme, Members are asked to approve the participation of the Chair of Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or nominees) as well as another officer.
- 3.18 The budgets for each of these visits have already been approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Additional details on the respective visit programmes will be brought back to future meetings of the committee once available.

**Equality and Good Relations Implications**

**3.19** There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with these activities.

**3.20** **Financial and Resource Implications**

The financial and resource implications are as follows:

- i. up to £47,500 for the Friendship Four tournament in November 2019, subject to a legal agreement and subject to the organisers meeting agreed objectives;
- ii. a maximum cost of £2,000 for welcoming the New York State Legislators from 21st - 23rd September;
- iii. an estimated maximum cost of £2,000 for attending the EUROCITIES annual conference;
- iv. the costs associated with attendance at the business and investment mission visit to Middle East will not exceed £1,500; and
- v. the costs associated with participation in the future business missions to Boston, Shenyang and Nashville have already been approved by this Committee.

**All budgetary allocations have been set aside within the EU & International or the Economic Development Unit budgets which have already been approved by this Committee.”**

After discussion, the Committee adopted recommendations (i), (ii) (iii) and (v), as set out within the report. In terms of recommendation (iv), it was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees that the Director of Economic Development (or his nominee) not participate in the trade mission to Israel and agrees further that the £1,500 which had been set aside for that mission be used, in light of the ongoing issues around Brexit, to facilitate the attendance at the EUROCITIES Annual Conference of the Deputy Chair (or her nominee).

On a recorded vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and five against, with one ‘no vote’ and it was declared carried.

For 11	Against 5	No Vote 1
Councillors S. Baker, Beattie, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Hargey, Heading, Lyons, Murphy, O'Hara and Whyte	Alderman Spence and Councillors Brooks, Howard, T. Kelly and Nicholl	Councillor Harvey

### **Galway 2020 Music Collaboration Project**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1** The purpose of this report is to update Members on discussions with Galway 2020 on delivering an international music collaboration project, as part of its European Capital of Culture programme.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1** The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report and approve an investment of £100,000 over two financial years in this project, subject to fundraising targets being reached.

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **Background**

**3.1** In June 2018, the Committee granted permission for officers to develop options for a collaboration with Galway 2020, as part of Galway holding the European Capital of Culture designation in that year.

**3.2** The background to this proposal is the work undertaken as part of Belfast's bid to become European Capital of Culture. This work revealed the opportunity for Belfast to increase local engagement in culture as well as maximising the role of culture in supporting Belfast as a global city through:

- i. Increasing cohesion and permeability
- ii. Building identity and confidence
- iii. Attracting investment and visitors
- iv. Retaining talent

- 3.3 In March 2019, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the draft ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, to go out to public consultation. This document proposes 16 key strategic priorities across 4 thematic areas. Following completion of the public consultation, a revised strategy will be presented to this Committee in August 2019 for consideration.
- 3.4 A number of the proposed strategic priorities across all the themes will be supported by this international collaboration project with Galway 2020, including:
- i. protecting and promoting cultural heritage in all its dimensions, both tangible and intangible including the plurality of the city's cultural narratives;
  - ii. supporting high quality cultural events that are accessible, diverse and inclusive;
  - iii. investing in a stronger and more sustainable cultural sector by supporting artists and producers to work beyond boundaries;
  - iv. strengthening our city, regional and international cultural networks; and
  - v. growing our sustainable cultural tourism product
- 3.5 In addition to the 16 priorities, the draft strategy also presents four major strategic projects over the ten year period including:
- i. A new approach to events and festivals in the city
  - ii. Plans for a year-long programme of cultural activity provisionally proposed for 2023
  - iii. A bid for UNESCO City of Music designation in 2021
  - iv. A new visitor attraction, including the Belfast Story, as part of the Belfast Region City Deal
- 3.6 The success of all of these projects is dependent of the ability of the city to develop international cultural links and deliver projects of quality and scale. There is also a specific focus on music building on our existing strengths as a city and following extensive research and the decision by Council to pursue the UNESCO designation for music.
- 3.7 Key Issues
- Proposed project
- Following detailed discussions with the Galway 2020 team, a proposal has emerged that focuses on exploring the music



links and heritage between the two cities and North America through our existing Sister Cities programme with Nashville and Boston.

**3.8 The project would have three keys strands:**

- i. a series of specially commissioned concerts to be performed in Belfast, Galway, Nashville and Boston;**
- ii. a touring exhibition potentially in partnership with Country Music and Folk Music Hall of Fame; and**
- iii. an artist exchange programme and showcase to support emerging artists**

**3.9 At the core of the project will be a series of signature concerts and related ancillary engagement programmes which trace the journey of Irish and Scots-Irish people to North America and, in particular, the impact of their music on American culture. Featuring leading musicians from both sides of the Atlantic, this will be a specially curated project with concerts in Galway, Belfast and participating US cities.**

**3.10 Through the various waves of emigration to America, local cultural heritage has had a profound and lasting influence on American music in particular. The mix of Irish and Scottish music introduced American musicians to new forms of music and storytelling styles. However, this was not an entirely one sided relationship as the adoption of African American instruments such as the banjo into traditional Celtic music illustrates.**

**3.11 A new repertoire developed from these immigrant experiences; railroad songs, work songs, songs of love, comic songs and songs of home. Many variations of these songs entered the mainstream of American folk song and are still a key influence on what we now call Americana music, incorporating elements of country, roots, rock, folk and bluegrass.**

**3.12 The proposal would be to celebrate these cultural connections through a concert format that will feature several group and individual performances linked by a specially commissioned script .**

**3.13 Outputs**

**The proposed outputs of the projects are as follows:**

- i. 4 concerts**
- ii. A curated touring exhibition including content from all 4 cities**

- iii. Artist-in-residence/ showcase opportunities to support local artists
- iv. Exchange programmes to facilitate and promote research and collaborative opportunities
- v. Merchandising such as CD, DVD etc
- vi. US/UK/Irish/European broadcasting opportunities including documentary and concert performances
- vii. Radio concert format

**3.14 Outcomes**

- i. Local civic engagement focussing on the music dimension of the Belfast Story with resulting exhibition contributing to the development of the new visitor attraction
- ii. Increased international profile including return on investment through media coverage
- iii. Support for UNESCO bid including number of international partnerships
- iv. Direct economic impact through bed nights and visitor spend
- v. Support and showcasing of local emerging talent

**3.15 Timescale**

- i. July - September 2019: funding commitments confirmed
- ii. September - October 2019: confirmation of lead artists and activation of commissions
- iii. 2019/2020 : concept development including commissioning of script, research into repertoire options, artist residencies
- iv. Summer 2020: rehearsals and footage for any documentary
- v. October/ November 2020: concerts in Galway and Belfast as well as touring exhibition
- vi. Nashville/ Boston performances and broadcasts to be scheduled for autumn 2020

**Next Steps**

- 3.16** The next steps will be to secure remaining funding, agree broadcasting partners and announce lead artists.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.17** The total project costs are currently estimated at £400,000 with an investment sought from Belfast of up to £100,000 over two financial years. The Council contribution will be match funded by Galway 2020. Earned income is estimated

at £80,000 with the remaining £120,000 to be secured from project and tourism partners. Should fundraising exceed current targets, then the investment from the lead cities will be reduced accordingly. The project will be funded from existing departmental budgets for ongoing cultural programme development.

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

- 3.18 A music implementation plan is being developed as part of the cultural strategy and will include this project. These plans will be subject to an equality screening and rural needs assessment.”**

After discussion, during which the Director of Development confirmed that the branding for the concerts and other events would be unique to each of the four participating cities, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Innovation and Growth Commission**

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd March, had approved the establishment, for one year, of a City Growth and Innovation Commission to integrate and join up major strategic projects facing the city of Belfast over the next 10-20 years.

She reported that the Commission would inform the development of the next phase of growth required to meet the City's ambitions in the Belfast Agenda, that is, 2021 and beyond, and would seek to ensure:

- that major programmes were integrated and joined up, that is, economic growth must also be sustainable;
- that resilience was built-in, so that the City was better able to withstand shocks and stresses and, by reducing risk, make it increasingly attractive to investment;
- that economic growth was inclusive, with the benefits being experienced by all;
- that opportunities to fund and accelerate this growth were identified and realised;
- that NI Civil Service / NI Government / Invest NI / anchor institutions were aligned to the plans developed; and
- that a strong relationship was built with the private sector.

The Chief Executive outlined the key outcomes of the Commission's work and confirmed that she would chair the Commission and lead its work and would be accountable to both the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for ensuring that it met its goals and worked within its terms of reference. The Commission would engage regularly with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and would submit substantive progress reports on a regular basis.

She pointed out that accountability for the day-to-day operation of the Commission would rest with the Commissioner for Resilience, who would be tasked with advising and supporting the Commission, identifying resources (including from 100 Resilient Cities) and producing final outputs, as part of her requirement to produce a Resilience Strategy for the City.

In addition, the Commissioner for Resilience would work alongside the Director of City and Organisational Strategy to ensure that effective support was in place to support the Commission and its work streams, provide research and ensure that it was linked to Community Planning and the City Deal.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Strategic and Operational Issues**

#### **Update on Belfast Bikes Scheme**

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

##### **"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To update Members on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in Year 4 of operation and provide details of the strategic review process and timetable.**

##### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- i. note the update on the Just East Belfast Bikes performance for Year 4;**
- ii. note the methodology for the strategic review, as agreed by the Committee in January 2019; and**
- iii. agree the proposed process for engagement with elected Members on the strategic review through the Area Working Groups in August and a presentation of draft findings and recommendations to Committee in September.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Key Issues**

**3.1 A summary of the main issues is outlined below:**

**Expansion of the Scheme**

**3.2 5 new stations have been installed in Year 4, as outlined below:**

- i. Skainos (operational from 27/08/2018),
- ii. Fraser Pass (operational from 10/01/2019) and
- iii. Connswater Shopping Centre (operational from 11/09/2018).  
(Funded by the Inner East, Urban Villages programme, NI Executive Office)
- iv. Carlisle Circus (operational from 18/12/18)  
(Funded by the Department for Communities, Building Successful Communities programme).
- v. All State – (operational from 23/07/2018)  
(Funded by planning agreement with All State).

**Relocation of 5 Stations**

**3.3 Members will be aware that, in September 2017, the Committee agreed new locations for 5 under utilised stations in the city centre. The stations were relocated to the areas outlined below:**

- i. Stranmillis Roundabout - (operational from 26/07/2018)
- ii. Catalyst Inc Titanic Quarter - (operational from 30/08/2018)
- iii. Rosetta Roundabout, Ormeau Road - (operational from 15/08/2018)
- iv. Ormeau Bridge / Ormeau Park - (operational from 01/08/2018) and
- v. Mid Ormeau, Ormeau Road – (installation expected May 2019).

**3.4 This approach was to allow a better deployment of the existing resources to increase usage and membership income without increasing the management cost. The relocated stations have been performing well in terms of usage with all in the top 50% for usage. Ormeau Park station is now the most popular station in the network with nearly**

1,000 rentals per month. It should be noted that there was difficulty in finding a suitable site for the mid-Ormeau Road station which resulted in the delay of installation to May 2019.

**Membership**

- 3.5 Annual membership subscriptions have increased by 10% in Year 4 with over 5,500 members. The uptake of casual membership has reduced, however there is a high uptake of the new 'pay as you go' option. There are currently over 17,000 active members registered to the Belfast Bikes scheme and further analysis of the payment options will be carried out as part of the strategic review.

**Journey Numbers**

- 3.6 There have been 787,000 journeys since the scheme was launched and 211,052 journeys in Year 4. This is an increase of 14% from Year 3.

**Vandalism**

- 3.7 Members will be aware that vandalism was an ongoing problem in Year 2 and Year 3. Extensive work has been ongoing with local communities, elected Members, schools and the PSNI to reduce the incidents. As a result, there has been a significant reduction of 70% in costs for Year 4 to £7,494.

**Subscriptions and Usage Revenue**

- 3.8 Members agreed in September 2017 to a review of the pricing for subscription membership and usage charges. The new membership and usage charges were introduced from the 1st April 2018. The annual subscription has increased from £20 to £25, the casual subscription has increased from £5 to £6 and a new 'pay as you go' (PAYG) option has been introduced with usage charges of £1 for 30 minutes usage. Income from subscriptions and usage charges has increased by 19% in Year 4 to £133,885.

**Funding, Sponsorship and Advertising**

- 3.9 The income from funding, sponsorship and advertising for Year 4 dropped by 44% to £67,000 due to a delay in commencing the new contract with Just Eat. A review of the procurement process for securing sponsorship will be considered as part of the strategic review.

**Expenditure and Investment**

3.10 In Year 4, the total cost for the operation of the scheme was £467,000. This cost was offset by the income from usage, funding and sponsorship and as a result the Council has invested £266,000 in Year 4 in the ongoing operation and maintenance of the scheme which is a 10% increase from Year 3.

**Strategic Review**

3.11 In January 2019, the Committee agreed to undertake a comprehensive strategic review of the Just Eat Belfast Bikes scheme and make recommendations for the future management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme. In particular, the review will assess options for maximising usage of the existing network as well as potential to reduce costs and increase income from usage of the scheme. The review will also consider an approach for any potential sustainable growth of the scheme. 'Intelligent Transport Services' was commissioned in May 2019 to carry out the strategic review of the scheme. The table below outlines the previously agreed scope of the review against the proposed timetable:

Stages	Methodology and Approach	Timetable
Assessment of the current network	Detailed analysis of the current scale, coverage and density of the network. Factors to be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station Location;</li> <li>• Usage of each station – Rentals and returns;</li> <li>• Capacity of the station too big or too small;</li> <li>• Network of stations (distance between stations);</li> <li>• Access to quality bicycle infrastructure;</li> <li>• Customer and operational feedback;</li> <li>• Contribution to the Belfast Agenda objectives</li> </ul>	May / June 2019

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee  
Wednesday, 5th June, 2019**

<b>Review of the Scheme Objectives</b>	The review will carry out analysis to measure if the scheme is meeting the objectives set at project initiation.	May 2019
<b>Review of operations</b>	<p>The review will consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current operation and management system;</li> <li>• Distribution and maintenance activities;</li> <li>• Infrastructure specification – terminals, bikes and docking points;</li> <li>• Security and vandalism including innovation in security and asset tracking;</li> <li>• Marketing of the scheme; and</li> <li>• App / website.</li> </ul>	June 2019
<b>Future Expansion</b>	<p>The review will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing scheme coverage and identify options for potential expansion</li> <li>• Risks and barriers to expansion</li> <li>• A business model for any future expansion (capital and revenue)</li> </ul> <p>Production of a prioritised, fully costed and phased expansion plan based on an assessment of options.</p>	June / August 2019
<b>Financial sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the procurement options for sponsorship and advertising in order to maximise income and streamline the process;</li> <li>• Review of the subscription and/or usage fees;</li> <li>• Consider alternative revenue sources - public funds &amp; private investment; and</li> <li>• Marketing of the scheme to promote growth in membership and usage.</li> </ul>	July / August 2019



<b>Stakeholder and Elected members engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of initial findings at Area Working Group meetings</li> <li>• Public Survey</li> <li>• One to one stakeholder meetings</li> </ul>	June to August 2019
<b>Strategic Review findings and recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of draft findings and recommendations to Committee</li> <li>• Finalise Strategic Review</li> </ul>	September 2019

**Member and Stakeholder Engagement**

**3.12 The appointed consultant ITS will engage with Members as part of their methodology, to ensure an integrated, collaborative approach to identifying the needs of the city to improve operation and consider expansion of the scheme. It is crucial that the strategic review is based on a comprehensive and reliable evidence base. It is proposed that ITS will carry out initial assessment of the current network and present findings to the Area Working groups as well as discuss options for expansion. Additional workshops with members can be scheduled if required. A public survey and discussions with key stakeholders such as Sustrans, Belfast Trust, DfI and community groups will also inform the findings.**

**3.13 Financial and Resource Implications**

**3.13 A budget of £29,280 is required to carry out the Strategic Review and is within existing departmental budgets.**

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

**None.”**

In response concerns which had been raised by the Members around the lack of provision in some parts of the City, the Chief Executive pointed out the scheme had focused initially upon the City centre and that its roll out to several strategic sites beyond there could be attributed largely to funding being secured from external sources.

She added that the expansion of the scheme to other parts of the City would be included within the strategic review’s Terms of Reference but stressed that, should additional sites be suggested, there would be costs associated with the purchase and operation of bikes and those would need to be considered as part of the Council’s rate setting process.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**City Growth and Regeneration  
Committee Priorities 2019/20**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reminded the Committee that it was responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards the regeneration of the City, in the context of outcomes agreed in the Belfast Agenda and corporate plans and other corporate strategy decisions. It was responsible also for the oversight of the exercise of Council functions in relation to economic development, urban development, tourism, culture and arts, European and international relations, car parks, city markets, city events, Belfast Castle, Belfast Zoo and Malone House.

He drew the Committee's attention to the following headline priorities for the Committee's oversight in 2019/20 and confirmed that they would be shaped by emerging developments such as the City Deal proposals and the Inclusive Growth Framework:

**Growing the Economy**

- Progress with the Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor;
- Tourism development, including implementing the neighbourhood tourism strategy, and developing a leisure and business tourism strategy with partners;
- Develop the Enterprise Framework action plan for the City to improve and join up provision of support;
- Provide support to entrepreneurs to start a business and for existing businesses to grow, including oversight of the Innovation Factory; and
- Promote and market the city internationally to position Belfast as a location of choice for business, tourism, education and investment

**Living Here**

- Agree and deliver the Cultural Strategy 'A City Imagining', including the development of implementation and investment programmes.

**City Development**

- Progress city regeneration and investment opportunities, including the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy priorities, projects and initiatives to drive the growth and regeneration of the city core and surrounding areas. This includes:
  - Progressing key projects, initiatives and developments such as the Destination Hub visitor attraction;

- Enabling and influencing major city-wide developments to maximise regeneration potential and deliver on inclusive growth;
- Maximising housing opportunities in the city through working directly with key stakeholders;
- Engaging with and lobbying central government to prioritise and shape major infrastructure investment, such as Living with Water programme;
- Progressing the Council-led infrastructure study, in conjunction with partners; and
- Improving city connectivity; including progressing the Car Parking strategy, the strategic review of Belfast Bikes and opportunities to enhance pedestrian connectivity in the city centre.

#### **Working and Learning**

- Support residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities through our programme of employment academies, European Social Fund projects and working with our partners to establish effective pathways of support; and
- Educational underachievement; including working with key partners to design and test new employability approaches targeted at those at risk of becoming NEETs and to identify and provide early intervention support to young people.

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy confirmed that a workshop was planned for August in order to allow Members to discuss these priorities in greater detail. A more detailed Committee Plan would thereafter be submitted to the Committee for approval.

The Committee approved its headline priorities for 2019/20, as outlined.

#### **Appointment of Director (Operational) of City Regeneration and Development**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the recruitment process and the appointment of Mrs. Cathy Reynolds to the post of Director (Operational) of City Regeneration and Development and congratulated her on her success.

**Schedule of Meetings**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for the period from August till December, 2019 and agreed that it should continue to meet at 5.15 p.m.:

- Wednesday, 7th August (monthly meeting)
- Wednesday, 28th August (special meeting)
- Wednesday, 11th September (monthly meeting)
- Wednesday, 25th September (special meeting)
- Wednesday, 9th October (monthly meeting)
- Wednesday, 23rd October (special meeting)
- Wednesday, 6th November (monthly meeting)
- Wednesday, 27th November (special meeting)
- Wednesday, 4th December (monthly meeting)
- Wednesday, 18th December (special meeting)

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Supporting the Writers of Belfast**

Councillor Nicholl highlighted the achievements in 2019 of two local authors, namely, Kelly McCaughrain, who had attained the CBI Book of the Year, the Eilís Dillon and the Children's Choice Awards, and Jan Carson, who had secured the EU Prize for Literature Ireland. Those had followed the award in 2018 of the Man Booker Prize to Anna Burns.

She explained that there had, for several years, been efforts to raise the profile of local writers and that the aforementioned awards could act as an inspiration to others wishing to pursue writing or acquire other artistic skills.

Accordingly, she requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining the support which the Council was providing currently to prospective writers and, in terms of other councils/regions, how that support might be enhanced.

The Committee acceded to the request.

**Funding of PLACE NI**

Councillor Ferguson informed the Committee that PLACE NI played a vital role in promoting the built heritage and environment and that it had delivered many valuable

projects across the City. She reported that the organisation had been informed recently by the Arts Council that its application for funding for next year had been unsuccessful and that PLACE NI had raised concerns around the process which had led to that decision. Therefore, the support of the Council was essential in ensuring that PLACE NI could continue to operate.

Councillor O'Hara highlighted also the significant work which PLACE NI had delivered and confirmed that it had an important part to play, in the context of meeting the challenges faced by the City in relation to, for example, climate change and resilience. He too expressed concerns regarding the removal of funding by the Arts Council and stressed that the Council should examine ways in which to support PLACE NI.

The Committee was informed that a number of representatives of PLACE NI were in attendance and Ms. A. Neely, Acting Chief Executive, was invited to provide further details around its current funding issues.

Ms. Neely informed the Committee that PLACE NI researched, designed and delivered creative projects which connected people to place and delivered a public programme of tours, talks, exhibitions and festivals. The Council had been instrumental in its establishment in 2004, by providing both a premises and officer support.

She reported that PLACE NI had, for fifteen years, been core funded by the Arts Council which, in turn, had allowed it to lever financial support from other sources. She explained that it was the organisation's view that the decision to refuse funding had been based upon inaccuracies and that it had requested a review of the Arts Council's procedures and was appealing the decision through the Ombudsman's Office. She stressed that the removal of funding was placing the organisation at immediate risk of closure and that, at this point, it would be unlikely to operate beyond 31st August. In terms of impact, its closure would lead to the loss of four jobs, numerous freelance contracts and volunteer opportunities, a resource for students and educators, significant tourism opportunities and contracts with artists and partner organisations. Ms. Neely concluded by inviting the Council to support PLACE NI by making available emergency financial support and by requesting the Arts Council to reconsider its decision to remove funding for next year.

In response to a question from a Member, Ms. Neely confirmed that the funding which PLACE NI had, in the past, received from the Arts Council represented approximately 50% of its overall budget and had been used primarily to cover salary costs. The amount requested from the Arts Council for next year had been £87,000.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the budgets for Council Departments were established each February, as part of the rate-setting process, and that it was difficult for funding requests to be considered outside of that framework. She confirmed that an end-of-year finance report was due to be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June and that requests for funding would have to be considered in the context of that report.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Arts Council and to the Department for Communities, its funding provider, affirming the Council's support for the work of PLACE NI and inviting the Arts Council to re-examine its funding application;
- ii. agreed that officers meet with representatives of PLACE NI to discuss other ways in which the Council could support the organisation in the short and medium term;
- iii. agreed that the end-of-year finance report being submitted in June to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee should include PLACE NI's request for funding; and
- iv. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing an update on the funding of PLACE NI.

Chairperson