

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 23rd October, 2019

SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairperson);
Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Brooks, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett,
Graham, Heading, T. Kelly, McLaughlin and
O'Hara.

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Spence and Councillors S. Baker, Beattie, Lyons, Murphy and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentation

Belfast Harbour Strategic Plan

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th August, it had agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from representatives of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners on its Strategic Plan for 2019 – 23 and vision to 2035.

Accordingly, Dr. D. Dobbin, Chairman, Mr. J. O'Neill, Chief Executive, and Ms. A. Dowling, Communications and Marketing Manager, were welcomed to the meeting.

Dr. Dobbin informed the Committee that Belfast Harbour had a statutory duty to efficiently and effectively maintain, operate and develop Belfast Port for the benefit of users and wider stakeholders. Whilst its Trust Port Status prevented it from receiving public funding, it did allow for all of its net earnings to be reinvested into the development of the Port and the Harbour Estate.

He drew the Members' attention to the following key information:

- more than £250 million had been invested over the past ten years in equipping and developing the Belfast Harbour to deliver wider economic and job creation benefits;

- around 24 million tonnes of goods passed through Belfast Port each year, making it the tenth largest port in the United Kingdom in terms of cargo shipment;
- 1,500 people lived currently within the Harbour Estate;
- 760 businesses operated currently within the Harbour Estate;
- 27,000 people either worked or studied with the Harbour Estate each day;
- the Harbour Estate was a major tourism and leisure destination and attracted five million visitors annually; and
- there had been a marked growth in the number of cruise ships docking in Belfast Harbour in recent years, with almost 150 expected during 2019.

He explained that Belfast Harbour was now preparing for the next phase in its development and highlighted its innovative and ambitious new strategic plan, which set out its proposals for 2019 – 2023 and ambitions up to 2035, under an enlivened vision of creating a key regional hub for trade, tourism and tradeable services and an iconic waterfront for the City.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the strategic plan would be underpinned by five interdependent themes, namely, a Growing Port, a Green Port, a Smart Port, a Connected Port and an Iconic Waterfront for the City and that the organisation would strive to be adaptable, collaborative, customer-focussed, innovative and receptive in all aspects of its work. He pointed out that it would be working in partnership with key organisations, through a series of Memorandums of Understanding, to deliver many of its initiatives and highlighted its involvement with the Council through, for example, the Belfast Region City Deal and the Belfast Agenda.

He reported further that, between 2019 and 2023, Belfast Harbour was planning to invest £254 million which, for the Belfast Port, would see the rolling out of Smart Port initiatives, the installation of a new ramp to accommodate larger ferries, the construction of a new quay to cater for the increasing number of cruise ships and investment in new feeds storage and important maintenance works. In terms of the Harbour Estate, the investment would lead to a new film studio and media hub, high quality offices and residential accommodation, public realm/marina facilities and improvements in the roads infrastructure. Importantly, research which had been commissioned around the direct impact of those activities had indicated that the economy would benefit by £500 million, 3,500 construction jobs would be supported, 7,000 jobs would be created and £300 million and £4 million would be generated in additional wages and rates respectively.

Mr. O'Neill then outlined the major infrastructure and other projects which would be undertaken between 2024 and 2035, such as the deepening of the Victoria Channel and the creation of a high quality and sustainable iconic waterfront within the Belfast Port and Harbour Estate respectively and concluded by stressing that Belfast Harbour would continue to play a pivotal role in the overall development of the City.

Messrs. Dobbin and O'Neill then addressed a number of points which had been raised by the Members in relation to transport and waste water infrastructure, partnership working with Rotterdam Port, inclusive growth measures, sustainability,

D
1638

City Growth and Regeneration Committee
Wednesday, 23rd October, 2019

employment and training opportunities, engagement with schools and universities, residential provision, carbon neutrality/clean air targets and monitoring and Brexit preparedness.

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 21st June, had approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, which set out how they would work together through a strategic partnership arrangement to realise their shared ambitions for the growth, regeneration and prosperity of the City.

She explained that it had been agreed that a Joint Consultative Forum, consisting of four Elected Members, who would be appointed under the D'Hondt process, and four Belfast Harbour Commissioners, be established to oversee the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, with the Strategic Policy and Resources and the City Growth and Regeneration Committees receiving regular updates on the work of the Forum as appropriate.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives of Belfast Harbour for their presentation, following which the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson