Public Document Pack

Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

23rd March, 2020

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The following is a list of reports with recommendations which were due to be considered by above-named Committee on Friday, 20th March, 2020.

These decisions will now be taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the authority delegated to her by the Council.

A table of Recommendations to Committee will also be sent separately by email and these should be completed by Party Leaders and returned by the deadline indicated in the email.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Restricted Items**

   (a) Briefing for Councillors on Financial Position (Pages 1 - 2)

   (b) Mini Stern - An Economic Analysis of Decarbonisation (Pages 3 - 30)

   (c) Consultation on Council decision to erect bilingual / multilingual external naming and internal directional signage in Andersonstown, Lisnasharragh, Olympia and Templemore Leisure Centres – Options paper (Pages 31 - 112)

2. **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

   (a) Finance Update (Pages 113 - 116)

3. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

   (a) Corporate Plan (Pages 117 - 148)

(b) Inclusive Growth (Pages 149 - 192)

(c) Draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) (Pages 193 - 206)

(d) A City Imagining Investment Programme: Cultural multi-annual grants (Pages 207 - 298)

(e) 'Putting you first, Transforming customer experience' public consultations and equality screening decision (Pages 299 - 326)

(f) 'Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland: A Call for Evidence'- Response from Belfast City Council (Pages 327 - 414)

4. **Governance**

(a) Proposed approach to enable the strategic consideration of Notices of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance by Members (Pages 415 - 424)

5. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

(a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 425 - 426)

(b) Assets Management (Pages 427 - 440)

6. **Finance, Resources and Procurement**

(a) Contracts Update (Pages 441 - 444)

(b) CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 202021 (Pages 445 - 462)

7. **Equality and Good Relations**

(a) Dual Language Street Signs Policy (Pages 463 - 500)

(b) Equality and Diversity- Quarter 3 Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report (Pages 501 - 508)

(c) Request for approval for a permanent plaque to commemorate WW1 Nurses to be installed in City Hall (Pages 509 - 528)

(d) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 9th March 2020 (Pages 529 - 550)

8. **Operational Issues**

(a) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 551 - 554)

(b) Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 10 March 2020 (Pages 555 - 570)

(c) Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum (Pages 571 - 574)

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Finance Update
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Head of Finance

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The initial decisions sent back from Council were to reconsider the decision in relation to the request for additional support of £100k to the 2020 EUBC Schoolboys and Schoolgirls Boxing Championships and for £20k to be allocated to Compass Counselling as referred to Committee by the Council at its meeting of 2nd March
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Consider the request for support of £20k to Compass Counselling

3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Members are reminded that at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21 February 2020, they were advised by the Director of Finance and Resources that approximately £200k of funding was available for re-allocation.
3.2	Members agreed to defer providing £75k of funding to the Belfast Advice Group (Citywide Tribunal Service) until DfC clarified its position, and the remaining forecast underspend (approximately £125k) to be considered again at the year end with consideration being given to use if for alleygating and Belfast Bikes.
3.3	At the Council meeting of 2nd March 2020, it was agreed that the £75k be awarded to the Belfast Advice Group (Citywide Tribunal Service). Given the current Covid-19 situation we will reassess how the money is best utilised for this purpose.
3.4	Council also agreed that the request for additional support of £100k to the Ulster Boxing Council to host the 2020 EUBC Schoolboys and Schoolgirls European Boxing Championships from 7th June until 11th July and for £20k to be allocated to Compass Counselling be referred to this Committee for consideration. It is expected that the boxing championships will not go ahead so the only deceision to be made is in respect of Compass Counselling.
3.6	Compass Counselling were invited to complete a Discretionary Payments Application form by noon 10th March. The completed form was duly received before the deadline along with all requested information: • Grant Application (using Discretionary Payments Scheme Application Form and Guidance) signed by their Director • Business Constitution signed by the Chairperson • The most recent set of Accounts signed by Treasurer • Previous years accounts signed by Treasurer • Copies of 3 months bank Statements
3.7	Compass Counselling is a Community Interest Company registered with Companies house. They are requesting core funding of £20,000 to enable them to keep delivering vital counselling services in a hugely deprived area. The activity to be funded from the £20,000 will be 445 Counselling sessions at £45 per session – This includes Counselling, initial assessment, administration, line management and clinical supervision.

3.8	Their application indicates they meet the Belfast Agenda Priority – Making Life Better for Everyone. The work will still be carried out despite Covid-19.
3.9	Members are asked to note that a verbal update on the potential financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic will be provided to the Committee.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.10	As detailed in the report.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>
3.11	None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Corporate Plan 2020-2024
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officers:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To present Committee with the 2020-24 Corporate Plan (Appendix 1) and seek approval for it to be formally adopted.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the 2020 – 2024 Corporate Plan.
3.0	**Key Issues**
3.1	The corporate plan is a key governance document, cited in the council's constitution as the means by which the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee sets the strategic

	direction of the council. It sets out what the council wants to achieve for the city and the key priority actions to make this happen. These priorities are then used as the basis for the rate setting process.
3.2	On 25th October, SP&R Committee agreed to commence a public consultation on the draft Corporate Plan. This consultation period closed on 28th January 2020. Following this, a Joint PGL/ CMT meeting was held on 5th February to further discuss the priorities.
3.3	<u>Public consultation feedback</u> Following the BCC Consultation & Engagement Framework, the consultation was published online through Citizen Space and promoted regularly through social media for the duration of the consultation period. The responses received indicated clear support for all priorities. Two priorities stood out as being the most strongly supported – delivering value for money services and making the city more easily connected.
3.4	In relation to the open questions, the most common points made were emphasising the most important issues under each theme – this included improving public transport, better connection of the city, sustainability, neighbourhood regeneration and increasing community capacity.
3.5	<u>Party Group Leaders/ CMT Away Day</u> Following discussions at the joint meeting held on 5th February, it was agreed to update the corporate plan and further reflect the members focus on the following: • Climate plan (mitigation and adaptation) • Next phase of Leisure Programme • Waste Management/collection • City Deal • North Belfast destination planning (including the Zoo) • Neighbourhood regeneration plans • City Centre regeneration • Inequalities – inclusivity/skills/health • Economy growth –(balanced growth ambitions) • Tourism – sustainable approach • Housing – clarifying role of Council and possibility of involvement in bringing forward schemes • Finance- capital prioritisation to align to priorities. Models for bringing in more revenue. • More devolution – starting with regeneration

3.6	Changes have been made to reflect the consultation process and the PGL discussions and the date of the corporate plan (i.e. 2020-2024) has been updated to reflect the Councils corporate planning cycle.
	<u>Finance & Resources Implications</u>
3.7	There are no immediate resource implications. However the priorities agreed in the corporate plan will form the basis of the rate setting process.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.8	Equality screening has been completed as part of the plan development process.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan 2020-2024 FINAL

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Corporate Plan
2020 - 24

Draft

www.belfastcity.gov.uk

Belfast City Council

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Welcome from the Chair of Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

I am delighted to present our Corporate Plan 2020 - 24

Our corporate plan is a reflection of what people in Belfast have told us they want and the type of leadership they feel the city needs. It takes the priorities of the Belfast Agenda and sets out the ways in which the council will deliver these to grow a sustainable, inclusive economy and equitable society.

Belfast is a city with many strengths which we're seeking to build upon.

Our economy is going from strength to strength. In Belfast we have a young and talented workforce and we create employment for people across the region. Visitor numbers are increasing and with billions invested in regenerating the city in recent years the continuing transformation is there for all to see.

As elected representatives, we believe this corporate plan reflects our responsibilities as a council to:

- serve and represent citizens and communities and deliver the best possible value for money services for local people, communities and businesses;
- provide strong and trusted leadership for the city to ensure growth happens and as many people as possible can take advantage of that growth; and
- engage with and support local people, communities and businesses to improve life across the city and the areas where people live.

To fulfill our responsibilities, our corporate plan not only ensures we deliver the day to day services which the people of Belfast rely upon; we stretch ourselves through a series of strategic priorities to ensure we positively affect the lives of everyone in Belfast.

I am excited by the ambitions contained in this corporate plan and I hope you are too.

Alderman Brian Kingston,
Chair, Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

Foreword

Welcome to our Corporate Plan 2020 - 24

As Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, I am pleased to present our draft Corporate Plan for 2020 - 24, a plan which will deliver for local people in a time of both significant opportunity and considerable challenges for our city. The 60 councillors who make up Belfast City Council have articulated their aspirations for the city and this plan sets out the priorities, programmes, investments and service improvements which will deliver their collective ambitions.

Our Corporate Plan needs to be read alongside the Belfast Agenda - the city's joint vision and plan for 2035. The Council is in a unique position of leading this vision and plan but it also puts an equal onus on other organisations across Belfast and NI to improve our economy, infrastructure, neighbourhoods, health and wellbeing and skills for the jobs of the future. The Belfast Agenda was developed after listening to local people in our 'Belfast Conversations' and it includes clear city targets, such as creating 46,000 new jobs. It not only builds on the great assets and opportunities the city has, but also recognises and sets out actions for addressing some of our inherent weaknesses, such as educational and health inequalities. Our Community Planning Partnership is in place to challenge all the organisations involved to meet these targets and make sure that a much wider number of people and communities feel the benefits of, and are able to participate, in a better economy and transformed city.

You will see that the Corporate Plan 2020 - 24 translates that long term vision into specific priorities which the Council will take forward. It also highlights a number of very significant 'cross-cutting' priorities that will be game changers for the city, such as the Belfast Region City Deal, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Programme. The plan also aims to ensure that the Council uses its money and staff resources wisely to provide first class, value for money services and facilities across Belfast. We will also ensure the organisation and our staff are developed and equipped to achieve the targets set.

I am pleased that this Council has recently been able to progress the £850m Belfast Region City Deal and the three state of the art leisure facilities - Andersonstown, Brook and Lisnasharragh. A number of pitches, community facilities and open spaces have also received significant investment in recent years.

An accompanying annual delivery plan that oversees delivery of our priorities will be used to ensure we deliver. I look forward to bringing forward early actions in the city's first 10 year cultural strategy to ensure that culture, arts, events and festivals are positioned as the lifeblood of the city and also to progressing the City Deal projects to make us one of the most innovative and digitally enabled cities across the islands as well as boosting tourism and use of public transport even further. We will also start the new leisure developments at Templemore and Avoniel, improve our customer services, develop a climate change action plan and publish our spatial plan for the city. These are just a few of the exciting and innovative priorities detailed in this ambitious plan.

Suzanne Wylie

CEO, Belfast City Council

Our vision

Through the Belfast Agenda, the Council, residents and stakeholders have set out a clear vision for the city:

Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone.

Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.

Strategic context

As a city we will realise the vision of the Belfast Agenda through the achievement of five key outcomes by 2035:

We are the only democratically elected body to represent the city. To deliver these outcomes we will use our political leadership to address city wide issues and lead Belfast towards this vision.

We will do this by working with our partners to reshape the city in to one that addresses these challenges and achieves all aspects of this vision - through regenerating and managing the city and supporting its people.

At the very heart of our city are the people that live here. Our corporate plan aims to improve the lives of these people, promote a shared society that celebrates diversity and create a resilient and inclusive economy. We will focus on improving facilities and services that enhance our neighbourhoods and improve the lives of our residents. This will make Belfast a city of choice to live, work, learn and do business. To achieve this we need to be good at:

- Delivering outstanding services in a way which targets these long-term ambitions;
- Investing in projects that will enhance quality of life and stimulate inclusive economic growth; and
- Providing effective civic leadership, including making the case for improvements in government investment and services whilst working hand in hand with other agencies, the community and the private sector.

To do this, the Council needs to have the right capabilities, which include:

- Making sure we understand the needs of citizens, areas, neighbourhoods, businesses, investors, tourists and our partners. We need to manage our reputation, find innovative ways to deliver our services, ensure decision makers have access to the right information and expertise to allow them to make informed decisions and inspire and motivate others to work in partnership with us;
- Ensuring we have staff with the right skills, who understand their contribution to this corporate plan, are highly motivated and uphold our goals and values;
- Being clear about our priorities and aligning our resources. We cannot do everything at once and therefore we need to prioritise our resources and capabilities. For this reason we are focusing our priorities on what improves the lives of those living here, including inclusive economic growth; regenerating neighbourhoods; building the capacity of our communities; improving the opportunities for those looking to work and learn; and ensuring our city continues to develop in a sustainable, resilient manner.

It is important that we balance our ambitions for economic growth with the need to address long term inequity in the city – this is what inclusive growth means. We must connect all residents with economic growth to create vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity and aspiration to succeed. This will take specific interventions, including skills programmes and changes to our approach to procurement.

While there are many opportunities and challenges facing Belfast such as the impact of Brexit, this corporate plan gives us the ability to prepare for and mitigate any impacts on the city to ensure our continued success.

Strategic context – facts and figures

Opportunities

Young population
20% of people are aged under 15

10,132
hotel bed spaces in Belfast, a 27% increase in number of bed spaces from the previous year

World's top destination for financial services technology investments

£470m GVA
per year increase through £1 billion Belfast Region City Deal investment

9
Out of 10 properties in Belfast have access to superfast broadband over 300Mbit/s

Belfast accounts for **18%** of the population and **30%** of all jobs in NI

885,023
square foot of city centre office space, a record level of office accommodation

Cyber security
1,200 new cyber jobs in the last five years, projected to grow to 5,000 by 2022

Challenges

Average life expectancy in Belfast is lower than the NI average for both males (76.0 years) and females (81.1 years)

In Belfast, the average life expectancy for a man in the most deprived area is 9.4 years less than in the least deprived areas. For a woman the gap is 6.4 years less.

56,000
More than 56,000 residents in Belfast live in poverty, 28% children in Belfast grow up in poverty

£ 703.70
Average earning of all Belfast residents differs greatly between the highest 10% of earners (£846.50 per week) and lowest (£142.80 per week)

58%
of the working population travel to work by car or van

44%
household waste is recycled and composted

7,322
people in housing stress

42%
of school leavers (entitled to Free School Meals) achieve 5 GCSEs grade A*-C (including English and Maths) compared to 74% of those who are not

9,800
properties potentially at significant risk of flooding from rivers

Our priorities for 2020 - 24

Cross-cutting

Our cross-cutting priorities will have a multitude of social, economic and environmental benefits for the city. These priorities include once in a lifetime opportunities to fundamentally change the city, culturally, physically and economically and help achieve the big ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

Deliver the Belfast Region City Deal

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is an unprecedented partnership that will deliver an integrated programme of transformational investment. It will support delivery of up to 20,000 new and better jobs, fund 22 integrated projects underpinned by a programme of investment in employability and skills and increase GVA by £470 million per annum.

Publish the Belfast Spatial Planning Framework

We are responsible for publishing a Local Development Plan for Belfast, working with local people, to create a clear vision of how the council area should develop to suit the needs of the people and provide a vision for what it will look like in the years to come.

Develop and implement the city's Cultural Strategy

It is widely recognised that cities of culture can drive transformation. The purpose of the Cultural Strategy is to present a series of priorities that have the potential to contribute significantly to people's outcomes.

Build better partnership working to deliver Belfast Agenda outcomes

The Council has an important role, working alongside city partners, to provide the leadership and strategic direction of Belfast by shaping, developing and managing the city.

We have set ourselves a challenging agenda for the coming years but we are confident that by working successfully with our city partners and communities, as well as utilising our partnerships across the sector, such as Core Cities and 100 Resilient Cities, we will deliver our commitments.

Continue to deliver a physical programme that brings about better social, economic and environmental conditions for Belfast

Communities and people are the lifeblood of our city and we must create assets that make a real difference to people's lives and are transformational at a city-wide and local level. Our Physical Programme is one of the most visible and easily recognisable signs of the Council's civic leadership role in the city. It has an impact right across Belfast with every area of the city benefitting from the programme. The current delivery programme includes over 200 projects worth over £325 million in capital investment.

Implement the Inclusive Growth Strategy to ensure everyone benefits from city growth

We have seen our city transform in recent years. We are creating new opportunities for many of our residents. But this is a tale of two cities; not everyone is part of this new story. We still have unacceptable levels of persistent deprivation and inequality.

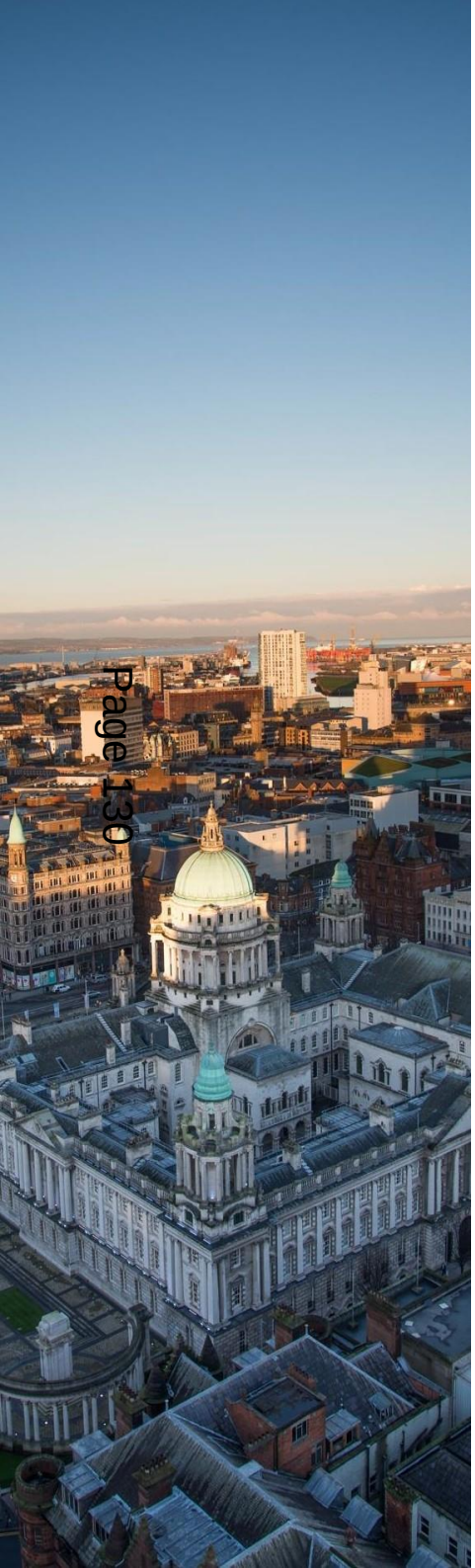
We will drive inclusive growth through the Belfast Agenda, setting out how we will use our employment and procurement policies as well as our investment powers to ensure Belfast is a truly inclusive city.

Promote a shared future and implement the Good Relations Strategy

Following years of conflict, the people of Belfast have made great progress towards normalisation. Despite this, there remain key legacy issues that manifest themselves in segregation between communities. The Good Relations Strategy will promote a shared future, increase cultural diversity and respect for everyone's identity, not just the legacy issues following conflict but to address issues relating to hate crime and intolerance to show that Belfast is a city for all.

Deliver excellent, value for money services

At the core of everything we do are the services that we deliver. We will continue to seek new and innovative ways to ensure our services are delivered to the high standards expected by our customers whilst always ensuring value for money.



Growing an inclusive economy

BCC will work to create an inclusive, resilient economy through creating good, sustainable jobs.

A thriving urban economy is a key foundation to achieving many of the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda. Not only can a successful economy generate the wealth required to grow local businesses, generate jobs and offer routes out of poverty for struggling families, it is also the main source of revenue for the city's public services, programmes and interventions.

Develop a city growth plan through the Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission

Our corporate plan contains several 'once in a generation' opportunities that could deliver transformational impacts for the city of Belfast. This Commission will ensure that major programmes are integrated and joined up, that long-term resilience is built-in so we are better able to withstand shocks and stresses, as well as making Belfast increasingly attractive to long-term investment.

Drive inclusive economic growth through £350 million investment in digital innovation projects and progress delivery of a Digital Innovation Strategy

The digital and innovation strands of the BRCD will act as a catalyst that will drive forward investment in research and development and help embed a culture of innovation to act as a driver for increased productivity.

Increase tourism spend by developing sustainable products

One of the key ways we can contribute to the growth of the local economy is by maximising the tourism appeal of both the city centre and our neighbourhoods. If we are to achieve our target of securing £500m in out-of-state tourism by 2021 we need to continue to build on the unique attractions of Belfast by promoting the city's particular character.

Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth

We have worked with our city partners on an Enterprise Framework to agree who provides what support and to whom. The delivery of the Enterprise Framework for Belfast will result in a more comprehensive and coherent system of enterprise support covering all stages of the business growth lifecycle.

Provide the environment to support inward investment including the positioning and marketing of the city internationally

Attracting inward investment to Belfast is a crucial area of our work. This in turn creates jobs and opportunities for local SMEs – inward investment provides opportunities for indigenous businesses through global value chains to integrate with the global economy.

We continue to work with partners, developers and funders to deliver a shared Belfast city promotional brand to ensure that Belfast is visible and accessible to an international audience.

Maximise the economic benefit of the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor

The Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor is a term used to describe the geographical area between both cities recognising the potential benefits that are created from the concentrations of related businesses, industries, educational institutions, technology and transport infrastructure. By working with local authority colleagues and government partners we will agree a future economic vision for the corridor.

Resilience and sustainability

BCC will work to protect our city and its environment for future generations by adapting to and mitigating against climate change

The Belfast Agenda provides the city with an ambitious vision for our future. However, even the best-laid plans can be knocked off course by unexpected shocks, or long-term stresses. Being a resilient city means reducing our exposure to vulnerabilities, being better at adapting to challenges such as the fire at Bank Buildings in August 2018, shaping a new relationship with the European Union or preparing for a changing climate.

Changes to the environment are amongst the biggest threats we face. The International Panel on Climate Change special report on global warming of 1.5℃ which called on ambitious action from all levels of government. In response to this increasing threat, Belfast City Council has declared a Climate Emergency. We must become a sustainable city that meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. From the way we heat our houses, how we use water or how we choose to travel have significant long term impacts on our local environment and quality of life. To become a climate resilient and sustainable city we will drive action to improve air quality, use energy more efficiently and deal with our waste sustainably.

Resilience Strategy to reduce strategic risks for the city

Urban resilience is the capacity of cities to survive, adapt, and develop no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience. Through membership of 100 Resilient Cities, we have taken a targeted approach to issues which pose the greatest risk to the city, its economy and its people. Our Resilience Strategy has identified a series of shocks (for example: infrastructure capacity; condition of current housing stock; climate change; and Brexit) and stresses (for example: capacity for economic recovery; population change; dependency on fossil fuels; housing supply; segregation and division). To address these, we have identified three 'multiple problem solvers' aimed at resolving these strategic risks to the city:

1. Climate resilience;
2. Children and young people; and
3. Connectivity.

Organisational climate adaption and mitigation plan

By 2021, we will have developed a climate plan for the Council that deals with both climate adaption (preparing for the effects of climate changes, for example: building flood defences for our assets) and mitigation (preventing or alleviating the impacts of climate change, for example: the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by reducing an organisation's carbon footprint).

This plan will establish a set of science-based targets for decarbonisation, set out how we will protect our assets from the impact of climate change, agree a range of measures which we can take to ensure an inclusive and just transition to a low carbon organisation and identify a financial model to pay for the necessary changes.

City wide climate adaption and mitigation plan

Whilst developing the climate adaption and mitigation plan for the Council, we will work with our city partners in developing a city-wide climate plan to ensure that adaption and mitigation plans are in place for the entire city.

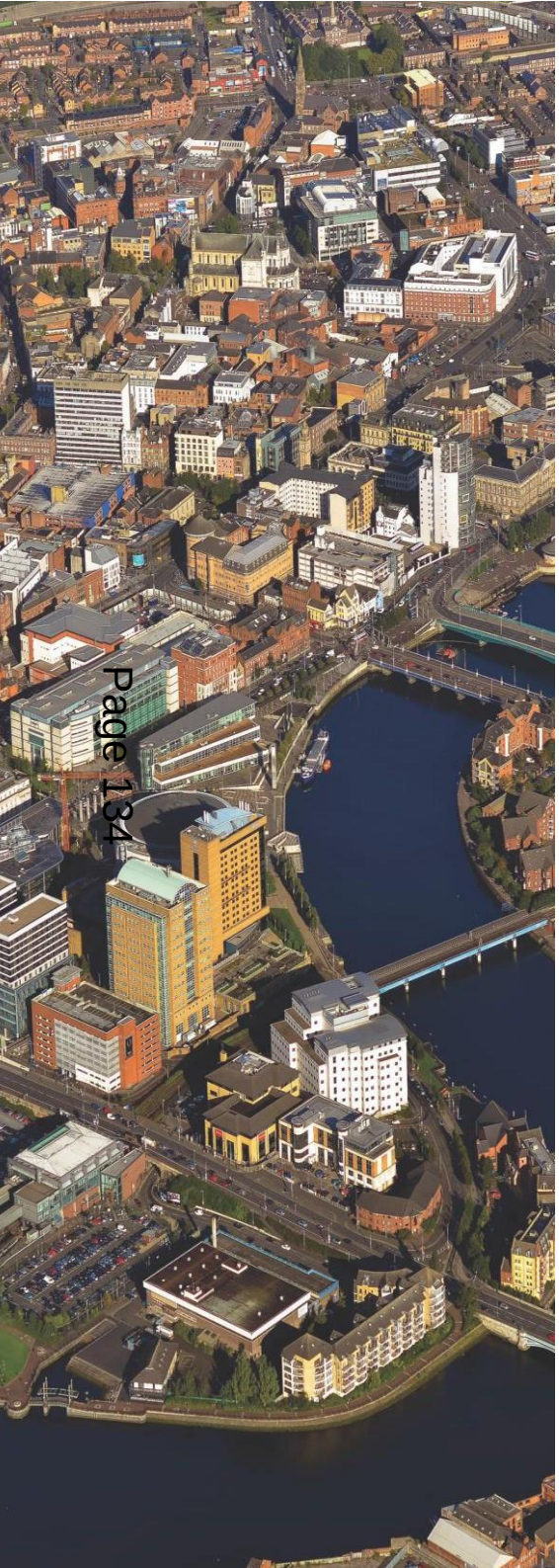
We will drive this approach through our Belfast Agenda partnerships, ensuring not only the Council, but the city itself is responding to the impacts of climate change and move Belfast to a low-carbon economy within a generation.

The circular economy and urban waste

Successful cities manage the impact of growth and ensure that it does not limit the quality of life of future generations. This includes reducing our consumption of non-renewable resources and managing waste and materials effectively, while minimising impacts. We will develop a strategy which will ensure waste is managed effectively and investigate the economic potential of the circular economy to increase skills, jobs and growth.

Improve urban air quality

With city partners, and as part of our broader work on resilience and sustainability, we will identify and agree key strategic actions to improve air quality across the city, with a particular focus on public health outcomes.



City development

BCC will work to ensure the city is sustainable with robust infrastructure that protects future generations.

Residents and stakeholders have told us they want a Belfast where the city centre thrives with a vibrant mix of retail, leisure, tourist and residential opportunities. They want a city where the development and growth of the city is aligned to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of it's citizens and infrastructure that meets the needs of today and the future.

Continue to implement the City Regeneration and Investment Strategy

We are committed to encouraging and creating a vibrant and well connected city centre that combines a range of uses including city centre living, retail, employment and office uses, tourist, cultural and family centric facilities for people to enjoy. The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy already stands as an example of our shared ambition – jointly adopted by the Council and the Department for Communities.

Continue to support solutions for the required city infrastructure

Infrastructure planning for the Belfast City Region needs to be taken forward in a strategic and integrated way, not on a project by project basis. We will work with public and private sector partners to identify key infrastructure investment requirements. We will continue to engage with and lobby central government to prioritise and shape the major infrastructure investment required to ensure the city is prepared for future sustainable growth and development.

Facilitate and enable city wide development and regeneration

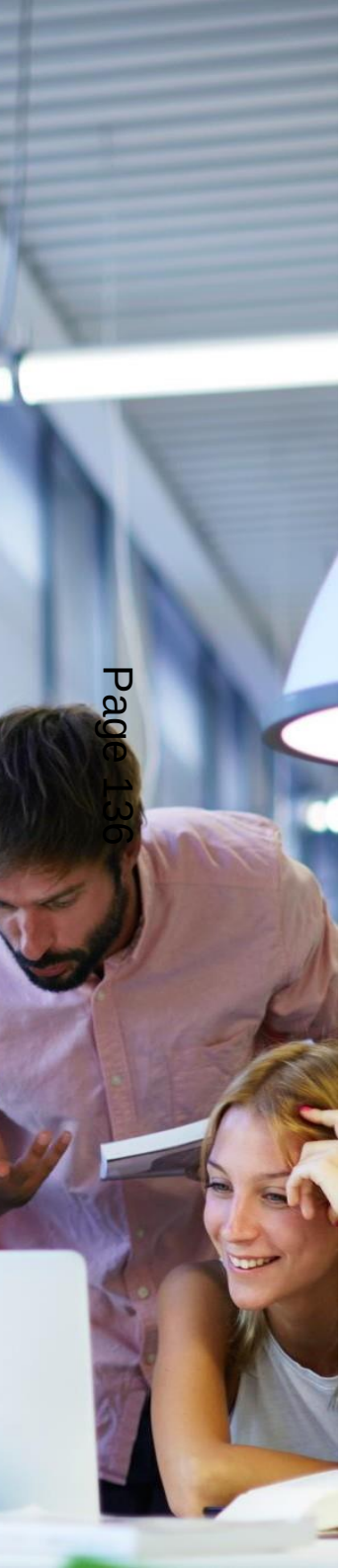
We are committed to ensuring that the regeneration potential of the wider city is maximized in a way that benefits all citizens and results in improved outcomes for communities. We will continue to work with partners to facilitate, enable and influence key city developments and ensure an integrated neighbourhood regeneration approach that delivers on inclusive growth.

Continue to develop the Destination Hub

The research for the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy suggested the need for another major city centre tourism destination hub. The current redevelopment in the area around the new Ulster University campus, including Belfast Streets Ahead and Belfast Central Library provides an ideal opportunity. The Destination Hub will become a space to showcase Belfast's culture, creative and artistic offerings, engaging local communities and visitors, developing skills in the sector and promoting further economic growth and redevelopment.

Make the city more easily connected

Connectivity is vital for a city to be successful. Whilst Belfast is the transport and logistical hub for the entire region, it must also meet the needs of our communities, ensuring they have access to jobs and to each other. Improving connectivity within the city centre as well as between the city centre and neighbourhoods is critical to our future success. The connections with other core cities is critical for the development of a sustainable and successful city. It is also a key enabler if Belfast is to exploit its growing reputation as a tourist and business destination. We will continue to build our partnerships with key city anchors, such as Belfast Harbour, and seek to maximise the role of the city as the gateway to the region. We will continue to progress a comprehensive solution to city car parking and support a shift to sustainable modes of transport such as walking, public transport and cycling.



Working and learning

BCC will work to ensure people are appropriately skilled for the jobs created in the city.

Education is the foundation for a better life, not only in facilitating future employment and providing access to a fulfilling adult life, but also as a major contributor to a person's wellbeing and to shaping lifelong health. Working with our partners, we will bring forward a work programme which supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council with a focus on addressing barriers to progression.

Help to address educational underachievement

To ensure all children are given the inspiration and opportunity to succeed at an early stage before they become disillusioned with the education and employment system, early intervention work is essential. Therefore we are taking steps to work with schools and younger people to identify ways that they can be supported through GCSE attainment, career advice and practical experience via work related training academies.

The lead agency for young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is the Department for the Economy (DfE). We will work with DfE to develop an action plan and trialling two new approaches to support young people at risk of becoming NEET. The two pilot approaches are:

- A place-based approach which will be delivered in the Short Strand/Newtownards Road area;
- A sectorally focused approach aimed at creating aspiration for young people to want to work in key sectors.

Support residents to access employment through initiatives such as Belfast Workplace and provide upskilling opportunities

We will work with partners to establish 'pathways' to ensure that individuals can progress and avail of the support which they need to access employment. This will involve supporting people in the city's more deprived neighbourhoods, providing targeted support for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive, and working directly with employers to run 'Employment Academies' to help train people for the opportunities that exist. We will include social clauses on our procurement contracts so that they provide work opportunities and will target areas of greatest employment demand and potential growth.

Working in partnership

We will work with our partners on a series of test and learn pilots to explore new approaches to providing employability and skills support. The three pilots are:

- Enterprise Pathway: a new approach to helping economically inactive individuals to start a business;
- Employer Engagement: encouraging 15,000 businesses in Belfast to engage with mainstream employability and skills support;
- Advice provision: trialling a new relationship aimed at providing benefits and work-focused advice in a community setting.

In our convening role as the community planning authority we will engage with our partners, including the Departments for Communities; Economy; and Education; employers; and training providers. We will develop joint areas of work with the city's universities and further education college to facilitate better alignment between regional employment interventions and the needs of the Belfast labour market and skills pipeline. In this way we can make the support more effective and, perhaps more importantly, make it easier for individuals to understand what help is available and how they can access it.

The Belfast Region City Deal has the potential to deliver up to 20,000 new and better jobs. It has an ambitious programme of activity covering a range of projects spanning infrastructure; regeneration; tourism; innovation; and digital. Work is underway to identify the employment and skills implications and requirements of these projects, at both construction and operational phases.

H & W
H & W
WHITE STAR HOUSE

Living here

Our city and neighbourhoods are vibrant, resilient and safe places where people choose to live, work and spend time being more healthy and active.

In our recent residents survey, 86% of respondents were satisfied with Belfast as a place to live. We want everyone to be satisfied. We want to deliver a high quality of life for everyone. In doing so, we must deliver and plan effective public spaces and conserve our natural environment so it can be accessed and enjoyed.

Develop neighbourhood regeneration plans

Like most cities, Belfast functions on various geographic levels including citywide, at an area level (north, south, east and west) and at local neighbourhoods. The socio-economic conditions, needs, challenges, and aspirations, particularly across our neighbourhoods differ, as will the interventions and actions necessary to address them and achieve the improved outcomes we want to see.

The city continues to deal with the challenge of ensuring that neighbourhoods feel connected to and benefit from the continued regeneration of the city centre. We also want to encourage movement and collaboration from neighbourhood to neighbourhood across the breadth of the city. We will focus on identifying and addressing the socio-economic needs of neighbourhoods. We will tailor investments and interventions within particular neighbourhoods, focused on the key arterial routes that flow through our communities and build on opportunities to maximise synergies.

Continue to build our community capacity

Strong and vibrant communities are an essential part of the fabric of Belfast. We will provide physical investment, revenue support and funding to enhance community capacity. Over the life of this corporate plan we will seek to work in partnership with our communities and partners to ensure that the support we offer meets local needs and delivers sustainable impact. We will also look at ways of increasing support to help build community capacity.

Develop integrated services at a local level

We will develop a local area approach to the delivery of services to ensure better coordination and integration of resources to solve local problems such as particular health inequalities or anti-social behaviour. This will bring services closer to people so we can better understand the different needs and aspirations of communities across Belfast and where local people can help shape the services they receive to meet their needs.

Build and open seven new leisure centres

The £105m Leisure Transformation Programme is the largest programme of its kind across the UK. We will develop seven new leisure centres with Olympia, Brook and Lisnasharragh already open and Andersonstown due to open in 2020. Work has commenced on the redevelopment of Avoniel and the complete refurbishment and extension of Templemore Baths which has received support from Heritage Lottery Fund. We will also continue plans for the development of an additional leisure facility at Girdwood.

Work with partners to maximise housing development opportunities

The Belfast Agenda sets out an ambitious target to increase the city's population by 66,000 people. It also has ambitions to increase the supply of social and affordable housing. The draft Local Development Plan suggests 31,600 additional homes will be needed by 2035 to satisfy these requirements.

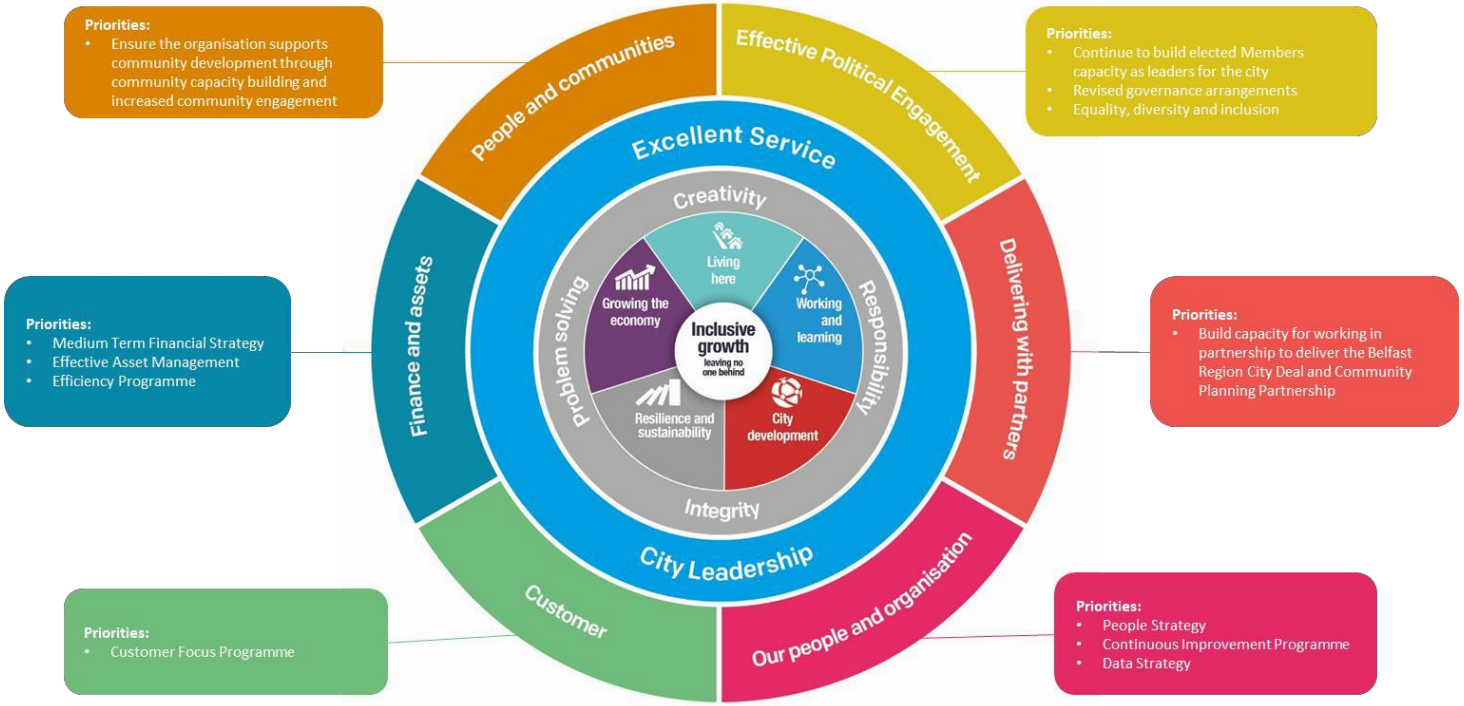
While the Council does not have direct responsibility for building new homes, it does have a range of powers relating to housing and housing development. These cover the Local Development Plan, HMO licensing, building control, planning, non-statutory regeneration activities, economic development, promoting the city to investors and providing land that it owns for household development.

More importantly, the Council, in its role as city leader, will seek to address the effects of over 7,000 people in Belfast currently in housing stress by maximising housing opportunities in the city by convening and co-commissioning activities and interventions with our key stakeholders and those agencies who do have a statutory responsibility for housing development.
Council is also able to provide support via activities such as identifying potential land for housing development in our communities, promoting city centre opportunities and encouraging good practice.

Belfast City Council

Our organisational priorities

In order to help guide us in our change programme we have developed a wheel which sets out the type of organisation we need to be to support the ambition in this corporate plan. The inner circle expresses our mission which is based on the pillars of the Belfast Agenda. We want to create a resurgent, prosperous city, shared by all of our people and admired around the world. Moving outwards within the wheel the next ring shows our values - Creativity, Responsibility, Integrity and Problem Solving. These guide our actions and should be lived by us all. Our critical success factors are next. These are what all our staff should meet. Finally, the outer ring shows the organisational capabilities we need to deliver the Belfast Agenda.



As our city becomes more ambitious so must we. To do this, we can only succeed with the wholehearted support and enthusiastic contribution of our staff. To harness this energy they need to feel valued and understand how they contribute.

As an organisation, if we want to perform these capabilities to the best of our abilities we must continuously look to improve how we do things. We have therefore agreed twelve priorities that will help us improve our capability. For example, in order to provide the best customer experience possible we have developed a customer focus programme that will enhance the experience felt by all our customers. Likewise, to get the best out of our most important resource, our staff, we will develop and deliver a People Strategy.

Customer Focus Programme

One of the key ambitions of the Belfast Agenda is, 'to deliver services differently in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of people.' Our customer focus programme will significantly improve the quality of the services we provide while delivering services cost effectively.

People Strategy

As we move forward as a council, we need to ensure that our staff are at the heart of this journey of change and improvement.

Our People Strategy will put in place the framework to ensure we have the skilled workforce we need to deliver our corporate priorities.

Ensure the organisation supports community development through community capacity building and increased community engagement

We are committed to working in partnership with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. To do so, we will strengthen the models of engagement at both a city and council level.

Data Strategy

The Council has a clear need to extract more value from the data it holds and to improve its ability to make evidence-based decisions.

For the Council to reach its desired state of city knowledge it must take a strategic approach to data that enables the sharing of data across the organisation. It is therefore important that the Council develops a Data Strategy that enables this vision.

Continuous Improvement Programme

While this corporate plan contains a series of strategic improvements we will always look at how we can improve internally.

The continuous improvement programme will deliver a programme of priority improvement projects that resolve organisational challenges, rationalise cost, build capacity, agility and capability and enable delivery of our objectives.

Effective asset management

Our property assets are an important part of supporting and enabling us to transform the way we deliver our services and our regeneration priorities. We are developing an asset management strategy which will set the framework for managing our property portfolio effectively.

Medium-term financial strategy

A revised medium-term financial strategy is required to secure the financial position of the organisation to ensure priorities are properly resourced and value for money is provided to the ratepayer.

Efficiency programme

A key strand of the medium-term financial strategy is the delivery of cash efficiencies to support Members' ambitions on the level of district rate to be set and to support the financing of new priorities.

Continue to build elected Members capacity as leaders for the city

Our elected members, in their civic and community leadership roles, actively serve the communities they represent and the city of Belfast as a whole.

Our ability to deliver value for money services and add real value to the leadership of the city depends on our commitment to provide continuous learning and development opportunities for elected members. This will ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their various roles effectively.

Revised governance arrangements

We will review our governance arrangements for the newly elected Council to ensure effective and efficient political decision-making.

Build capacity for working in partnership to deliver the Belfast Region City Deal and Community Planning Partnership

As we seek to improve conditions for our citizens, we must act in partnership with others. Successful delivery of outcomes will only be achieved by working collaboratively with all sectors including: the wider public sector, businesses, the community and voluntary sector, education and training providers and wider civic society.

To ensure that our organisation and staff are able to lead and achieve success, we will work with our staff to embed a culture of partnership working.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Belfast is a modern city with an array of multi-cultural identities that's welcoming to all. As the democratically elected body of the city, we recognise this rich tapestry of identity. We will develop a new five-year Equality Scheme for the Council, implement a city-wide approach to linguistic diversity and develop a new four year disability strategy.

Excellent, Efficient Services

In addition to the key programmes and activities outlined above, the council will also continue to deliver a range of statutory and other core services to the people of Belfast. This includes essential services like: emptying the bins, cleaning the streets, registering births, deaths and marriages to a wide range of regulatory and enforcement activity such a planning applications and building control and inspections and enforcement relating to public and environmental health including food safety, port health and health and safety. The council also maintains and runs a number of local amenities such as parks, playgrounds and community centres to city and regional amenities including City Hall, Belfast Zoo, Waterfront Hall and Belfast Castle.

We attracted:

200,000 visitors to Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall

Over 1m visitors to St George's Market and over 1 m visitors to the Christmas Market and other markets

200,000 visitors to Belfast Castle and Malone House

608,000 visitors to 25 community centres

We entertained:

over 300,000 people at our large scale events, adding £12m to the local economy

Over **134,000** people through our parks and events programmes

1,500 children at 32 inclusive summer schemes

Delivering community safety services such as on-street alcohol enforcement and policing and Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) projects

Attracting over 224,800 visitors to our website every month

Dealing with fuel poverty via schemes like **Be Warm** which sold £111,415 in oil stamps

Delivering **1,304** free home safety checks

Supporting 2,750 through employability initiatives with 800+ expected to move into employment

We've provided financial assistance of:

Over £3m in 273 community grants

Dealing with **133 dangerous buildings** and improving the look of over **13 dilapidated buildings**

Supporting over **33,0000 people** to promote good relations

Responding to **4,740** night time noise services requests

Supporting **3,500** young people through youth initiatives relating to employability and skills

£367,000 for sports clubs, coaches, talented individuals and sports events

1,590 individuals have engaged in our enterprise initiatives and we've helped 547 new businesses or social enterprises to start, which has supported the creation of 336 new jobs in the city

Giving advice to over 1,200 consumers, resulting in over £190,000 going back into the consumer pocket

Issuing 380 entertainment licences

Continuing to promote Belfast as a tourist destination (in 2017, tourism generated £328m into the economy on 1.5m overnight visitor trips, supporting 18,600 jobs)

This year we've:

Organised **152** community clean-ups

Recycled over **65,000** tonnes of waste

Issued nearly **2,500** Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and dog offences

Recycled nearly **44 per cent** of our household waste

Had nearly **842,800** people visit our recycling centres

Emptied almost **9m** **wheelie bins** and carried out over 38,500 bulky waste collections

Cleaned over 4,787 streets per week (445,000km per year)

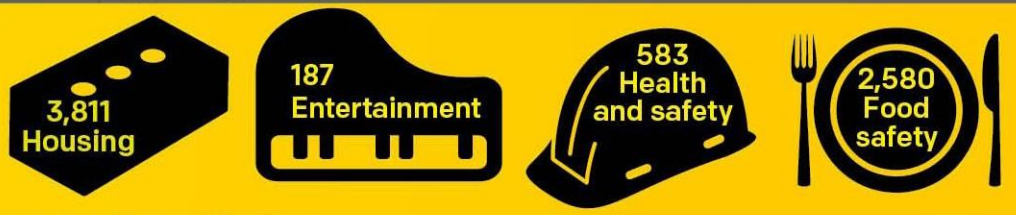
We've delivered a physical investment programme including:

A total investment of £66.4m

30 major projects **completed**

Work started on another **16 major projects worth £80 million** (see page 14)

Carrying out inspections for health and safety, housing, food safety and entertainment



Engaging with **7,500** participants through career events and jobs fairs

Just over £1.5m to culture and arts organisations

£465,000 to support good relations

Key projects completed include **Olympia Leisure Centre**, the **Tropical Ravine** refurbishment and the new **City Hall visitor exhibition**

Key expenditure 2019 - 20

Our corporate plan is based on a planned investment of £202.85 million for 2019-20. This includes a projection of £157.80 million from the district rate, £21.11 million from fees and charges, £11.29 million from grant funding and £12.66 million from other sources.

Where we get our money from

We get our money from these key areas:

District rate (from householders and businesses)		**£157.80m**
Fees and charges (Money received for services like waste disposal and building control)		**£21.11m**
Grants	(For example from Europe and central government)	**£11.29m**
Other	(For example rents and licences)	**£12.66m**

Total planned income for 2019-20
£202.85m

Where we plan to spend our money

Where we plan to spend our money ..... £ m

Planning Committee	£7.73m
Strategic Policy & Resources Committee	£56.00m
People & Communities Committee	£92.90m
City Growth & Regeneration Committee	£24.69m
Capital Financing	£21.52m

Total planned expenditure for 2019-20
£202.85m

Values and principles

Our corporate plan is underpinned by a set of core values which will guide the work of the Council and inform our standards of conduct and behaviour.

Creativity

We are creative, always seeking new ways of working. Imagining and delivering a bright future for the city. We encourage innovation and new ideas in all that we do; giving positive recognition to those who contribute to our creativity.

Responsibility

We accept responsibility for our actions, individually and collectively. We act responsibly, respecting each other and taking care of Belfast's cultures and the environment.

Integrity

We are open and honest. We adhere to the highest possible ethical standards. We want the people of Belfast to trust us to do the right thing. We trust and support one another.

Problem solving

We overcome problems through hard work, ingenuity, determination and real resilience. We overcome barriers and resistance and use our creativity to think about challenges in a different way.

Our elected members

On the 2nd May 2019, a new council was elected. Belfast City Council has 60 democratically elected councillors, representing ten District Electoral Areas, as indicated in the map. Our councillors play a key role in representing the interests of their constituents and ensuring that the views of their electoral areas and the entire population of Belfast are reflected in the decisions that the council takes.

Balmoral (Belvoir, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave and Upper Malone)

Councillor
Sarah Bunting
DUP
07823 668783

Councillor
David Graham
DUP
07823 668786

Councillor
Dónal Lyons
SDLP
07846 770144

Councillor
Geraldine
McAteer
Sinn Féin
028 9032 0202

Councillor
Kate Nicholl
Alliance
07717 543680

Black Mountain (Andersonstown, Ballymurphy, Beechmount, Colin Glen, Falls Park, Shaw's Road and Turf Lodge)

Councillor
Ciaran Beattie
Sinn Féin
028 9050 8989

Councillor
Arder Carson
Sinn Féin
028 9080 8404

Councillor
Matt Collins
People Before Profit Alliance
07467 339284

Councillor
Steven Corr
Sinn Féin
07788 246107

Councillor
Micheal Donnelly
Sinn Féin
07823 668799

Councillor
Emma Groves
Sinn Féin
028 9080 8404

Councillor
Ronan
McLaughlin
Sinn Féin
07823 536140

Botanic (Blackstaff, Central, Ormeau, Stranmillis and Windsor)

Councillor
Áine Groogan
Green Party Northern Ireland
07823 664817

Councillor
John Gormley
Sinn Féin
07825 450526

Councillor
Tracy Kelly
DUP
07823 664909

Councillor
Emmet
McDonough-
Brown
Alliance
07833 220447

Councillor
Gary McKeown
SDLP
07823 665088

Castle (Bellevue, Cavehill, Chichester Park, Duncairn, Fortwilliam and Innisfayle)

Councillor
Fred Cobain
DUP
07823 668785

Councillor
Conor Maskey
Sinn Féin
07833 437083

Councillor
Nuala McAllister
Alliance
07791 251441

Councillor
Mal O'Hara
Green Party Northern Ireland
07823 668807

Alderman
Guy Spence
DUP
07824 859297

Councillor
Carl Whyte
SDLP
07823 668806

Collin (Dunmurry, Ladybrook, Lagmore, Poleglass, Stewartstown and Twinbrook)

Councillor
Daniel Baker
Sinn Féin
07899 737000

Councillor
Michael Collins
People Before Profit Alliance
07823 665091

Councillor
Matt Garrett
Sinn Féin
028 9080 8404

Councillor
Brian Heading
SDLP
07854 365833

Councillor
Stephen
Magennis
Sinn Féin
07989 530062

Councillor
Séanna Walsh
Sinn Féin
028 9032 0202

Court (Ballygomartin, Clonard, Falls, Forth River, Shankill and Woodvale)

Councillor
Christina Black
Sinn Féin
07771 937236

Councillor
Claire Canavan
Sinn Féin
07717 361621

Councillor
Billy Hutchinson
PUP
07515 715563

Alderman
Brian Kingston
DUP
07795 233313

Alderman
Frank McCoubrey
DUP
028 9032 0202

Councillor
Nicola Verner
DUP
07823 664888

Lisnasharragh (Cregagh, Hillfoot, Merok, Orangefield, Ravenhill and Rosetta)

Councillor
David Brooks
DUP
07823 667496

Councillor
Séamas
de Faoite
SDLP
07823 665090

Councillor
Eric Hanvey
Alliance
07823 668780

Councillor
Michael Long
Alliance
07876 395436

Alderman
Tommy
Sandford
DUP
07867 420201

Councillor
Brian Smyth
Green Party Northern Ireland
07823 668431

Oldpark (Ardoyne, Ballysillan, Cliftonville, Legoniel, New Lodge and Water Works)

Councillor
Shauneen Baker
Sinn Féin
07823 666215

Councillor
Fiona Ferguson
People Before Profit Alliance
07823 668428

Councillor
JJ Magee
Sinn Féin
028 9521 5649

Councillor
Paul McCusker
SDLP
07467 339637

Councillor
Ryan Murphy
Sinn Féin
07554 222395

Councillor
Dale Pankhurst
DUP
07596 551785

Ormiston (Belmont, Garnerville, Gilnahirk, Knock, Sandown, Shandon, and Stormont)

Councillor
Anthony Flynn
Green Party Northern Ireland
07823 668432

Alderman
Tom Haire
DUP
07796 453691

Councillor
John Hussey
DUP
028 9032 0202

Councillor
Ross McMullan
Alliance
07823 668429

Councillor
Peter
McReynolds
Alliance
028 9032 0202

Councillor
Sian Mulholland
Alliance
07775 412700

Alderman
Jim Rodgers
OBE
UUP
07801 882478

Titanic (Ballymacarrett, Beersbridge, Bloomfield, Connswater, Sydenham and Woodstock)

Alderman
Sonia Copeland
UUP
07833 223215

Councillor
George Dorrian
DUP
07342 064928

Councillor
Carole Howard
Alliance
07876 800913

Councillor
Michelle Kelly
Alliance
07823 668437

Councillor
John Kyle
PUP
07515 409757

Councillor
Adam Newton
DUP
028 9032 0202

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Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Inclusive Growth
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officers:	Christine Robinson, Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	In September 2019 the Council produced its "Commitment to Inclusive Growth' in draft form. Since then the Strategy, Policy and Partnerships team have been supporting the oversight of the ongoing work across Council and completing a citywide consultation. The purpose of this paper is to provide a short summary on the findings of the consultation - highlighting implications for the commitments published and to present the final and updated strategy for your approval.
1.2	Please note that this report was completed in advance of the implications on society from Coronavirus being fully understood. It is therefore expected that that some of the plans flowing from the Council in relation to inclusive growth may require reprioritisation to support citizens in need across the city as a result of changes in their economic circumstances. Community support will become a major focus as will support for people

	trying to find work and struggling businesses. It is also vital in the longer term that we continue to plan as 'one city' using our procurement and recruitment powers to support those in greatest need – therefore our commitments in terms of progressive procurement (both social value and support for social enterprise and co-operatives), opening up our employment opportunities and developing a 'one city approach' through the city charter remain vital actions in supporting residents now and into the future.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that Members: a) Approve the Council's 'Commitment to Inclusive Growth' attached at Appendix 1. b) Agree that the we will communicate via Citizenspace – the *You Said, We listened* aspect of the consultation findings; c) Note the recruitment of the dedicated staff team will commence to support implementation of the published commitments and to shape Council's future ambitions. d) Note the creation of the officer group and the intention to report on progress at paragraphs 3.30 and 3.31 (although this may take time in the current circumstances). e) Agree that initial priorities will be proactive support for those suffering as the result of COVID 19.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Members will be aware of that in 2019 they tasked officers with the production of a cross council 'strategy' to reflect their growing ambitions in relation to social policy and inclusive growth in particular. This strategy was designed to build upon the Councils Inclusive Growth Decision Making Framework produced in 2018.
3.2	Since then officers have been working with members, officers and wider civic society to define the council's ambitions. With respect to members, this has included: - An all members workshop - resulting in the development of an Inclusive Growth Statement and initial target groups were members wanted us to initially target our efforts. - Focused individual party sessions with members to support the development of draft content. - Focused conversations with Party Group Leaders. - Final individual party sessions to secure agreement on eth commitment to be published.
3.3	The result of this process was the production of the Councils 'Commitment to Inclusive Growth'. This document sets out a clearly defined list of ambitions and linked actions as to how the council in its capacity as a corporate body and as a city leader will deliver against it commitment in the next two years.

3.4	The document contained commitments that BCC would progress over the next two years, including: - Introducing a BCC approach to social value in procurement (note the BCC approach to social value procurement is also being developed to include sustainability). - Introduction of progressive procurement measures designed to support the local supply chain. - Enhanced support for the development of social enterprises and co-operatives. - Ring-fencing of our entry level employment to benefit people outside of work, across the City. - Introduction of a BCC apprenticeship model - both entry level and higher level apprenticeships. - Enhanced employability interventions – including measure to tackle educational underachievement and development of the Belfast Workplace. - Improved models of civic engagement. - Development of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for all employers across the city – setting a city wide standard in relation to procurement, employment and civic / neighbourhood engagement.
3.5	The Councils 'Commitment to Inclusive Growth' document was endorsed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 20th September 2019, where it was agreed that the draft would be subject to a 12 week public consultation.
3.6	This document marks the 'first phase' of the Councils ambition in relation to inclusive growth and as we seek to refresh and refine the Belfast Agenda - the ambition and impact of the Councils work will grow.
3.7	The published commitments are designed to complement rather than replace the Belfast Agenda. Members will be aware that officer are working to deliver on a range of other measures through community planning to address many of the constraints to, and symptoms of, inclusive growth such as transport, job creation, health inequalities, education, childcare and housing. As we start the process of working with member, partners and citizens to refresh the Belfast Agenda it is expected that the Councils commitment to inclusive growth will grow.
	City Wide Consultation
3.8	The purpose of the consultation was to:

	- Gather peoples' views on the councils published commitment and its key components. - Seek input from citizens and stakeholders of additional elements that should be included. - Identify any barriers for specific groups/citizens in relation to the actions identified. - Identify clear areas for reconsideration or revision to inform the final published commitment. - Raise awareness of the strategy and the council's commitment to inclusive growth with citizens and key stakeholders.
3.9	The consultation set out to engage with a broad range of people including citizens, those individuals that the strategy would focus on supporting (i.e. our four target groups), anchor institutions and other employers, community and voluntary sector and other public sector partners.
3.10	The consultation period closed on 24th January 2020.
3.11	During this process, the Council has had direct engagement with over 400 people and attended 30 events/workshops. All feedback and responses have been collated and reviewed. A consultation report has been complied – this report will be disseminated across council and the feedback within it is vital to shaping our approach going forward.
3.12	A summary of the engagement completed is as follows: - 78 consultation postcards returned - 34 Citizen Space questionnaires completed (76% identified themselves as being members of the public rather than affiliated to a specific group or organisation) - Business workshop in partnership with Allstate – 70 employers attended - 11 community centre drop-in sessions hosted - 5 detailed written submissions - 5 targeted cohort workshops – 40 participants attending - 5 targeted "section 75" workshops - Social enterprise workshop hosted by SENI - Engagement with the Lord Mayors Charter Group - 4 skills fairs/ employment academy roadshows - Internal staff sessions
3.13	The results of the consultation has been overwhelming in favour of the approach set out by Council. The tables below present the high-level survey findings.

Table 1: Citizen Space Survey Results	
Priority Area	**Strongly Agree/Agree**
Statement of Inclusive Growth	85%
Inclusive Growth Cohorts	82%
Priority Area	**Very important/important**
Our role as a procurer	91%
Our role as an employer	88%
Decision making framework	82%
City charter	82%
Employability and Skills	97%
Inclusive growth through planning	88%
Strengthening civic voice	76%

3.14 Over and above the on-line consultation platform we wanted to give people the opportunity to feedback in a more focused, informal way and we chose to use postcard feedback. This also meant we were able to take these cards with us to every consultation we attended. We received 78 completed postcards in total and overwhelmingly they evidenced support for the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the priority areas for activity/action, with 97% of respondents stating they felt inclusive economic growth is important for Belfast going forward. The high level results from the postcard responses are as follows:

Table 2: Postcard Reponses	
Initial commitment areas	**Yes - these are the right areas to focus on**
Our approach to purchasing goods and supporting local businesses	98%
Promoting fair work and good quality jobs	99%
Creating more apprenticeships	96%
Employability and skills initiatives	99%
Inclusive Growth City Charter	85%
Citizen Voice	97%

You said, we listened

3.15 While the consultation exercise was supportive of the published approach - feedback gathered has suggested that we need to make a number of small changes to the published document. Key changes to the document include:

	- A change from the term 'workless' to 'residents not in employment'. - The inclusion of the BCC definition of affordable housing. - A move from bi-annual to annual reporting.
3.16	A range of other comments relate to issues associated with implementation of the actions and these will be reflected in our approach going forward e.g., the importance of including social enterprises in the development of the city charter, the need to consider childcare to support employability initiatives and the importance of working with existing structures rather than creating new ones. A copy of the summary of the consultation findings will be circulated to PGL for their information.
3.17	We have made these small changes to the document and included the final version in Appendix 1 for your approval.
	Moving forward – delivering against our published commitments
3.18	Members requested that resource be allocated to inclusive growth to ensure that their published commitments would be delivered and to shape and develop the Councils inclusive growth / social policy into the future.
3.19	As a result of this a dedicated budget will be made available from the start of the 20/21 financial year. We have been working with colleagues across council to determine how this funding could best be allocated to deliver against our published commitments and member's ambitions to continue to grow and develop our approach to inclusive growth.
3.20	It is vital that there is a central team in place within the Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Unit to develop and deliver the councils inclusive growth ambitions. This team must be to be able to research, advise and drive delivery as well as have the skills to monitor impact. The team will also take on a co-ordination role for the Council and across the City and manage interdependences across deliver teams.
3.21	The team will work across the organisation, providing support to departments and service units as required and will ensure that there is an organisational approach to inclusive growth / member's wider social ambitions.
3.22	The team will be recruited to ensure that it has strong expertise in the development of social policy, programme and project management, data development, evaluation and

monitoring and research skill. The team will also make more efficient use of the resource allocation ensuring that there is no duplication as we deliver. Furthermore a dedicated team will minimise the requirement for a research and consultancy budget.

3.23 Table 3 details the anticipated staffing levels

Table 3 Core Team	
Post	Indicative Grade
Inclusive Growth Lead	PO9/10
Policy & Programme Officer	P06/7
Support Role / Co-ordinator	P03

3.24 Support from the centre will include:

- Bespoke research, advice and guidance to those service areas that are critical to delivery
- Ongoing strategy development to ensure that the council continues to develop and deliver against the members social ambitions
- Engagement with city stakeholders to create an inclusive City and increase impact for citizens
- Dissemination of best practice and shared learning to assist strategy and policy development and enhance service delivery e.g., the Inclusive Growth Learning Network, UK, RoI, EU and international best practice.
- Shaping and developing inclusive consultation and engagement and hosting of city wide events
- Business case development and options analysis for service areas when required
- Co-ordinated programme management of the councils inclusive growth strategy (via the oversight board) and individual project management support for workstreams where required
- Evaluation and monitoring – ensuring impact and VfM
- Councillor liaison and update including developing yearly actions plans & composite impact reporting to committee
- Lobbying and advocacy – including the development of place based outcome frameworks with central government and shaping regional interventions to meet local need (e.g., the forthcoming NI Anti-Poverty Strategy / SPF / Green Book measurements etc)
- Fundraising - working externally to secure external sources of funding

The team will be supported with a programming budget. Specifically, the team will drive and deliver a number of project deliverables specified within the strategy including:

3.25

Delivery of published commitments

- Design, development and implementation of the Councils Social Value Procurement Framework
- Development of a broader progressive procurement policy for council
- Design, developed and implementation of the City Charter with employers across the City
- Embedding the inclusive growth decision making framework within Council – including staff training and adaptation to business case approaches

Evaluating Impact and Refining Delivery

- Development of an inclusive growth dashboard and refining and shaping inclusive growth measures
- Development of a composite monitoring framework across council to ensure that we are able to assess and report on cumulative impact
- Undertake detailed data capture / analysis across the city and within neighbourhoods to better target resources and measure impact (including an enhanced and improved citizen survey in Year 2)

Strengthening Civic Voice & Inclusive Engagement

- Testing a range of innovative approaches to civic engagement
- Develop a council wide approach to civic engagement - including commissioning of innovative consultation and engagement platform to enhance public discourse, civic engagement and consultation
- Enhanced participation of the CVSE sector in action planning and problem solving

3.26

Alongside the development of the central team, discussions at the inclusive growth oversight group have indicated that additional staffing and programming resource is required to support implementation of the published commitments. Table 4 presents the staffing allocation.

Table 4 Departmental Staff	
Post	Indicative Grade
EDO x 2	PO4
HR –Apprenticeships	P04

3.27	Departmental staffing and programme requests relate specifically: - to shaping and delivering the councils support to social enterprise and co-operatives; - city wide employability efforts (by growing and meeting demand for the councils successful academy model); - the councils own approach to recruitment – in particular the development of focused entry level recruitment and apprenticeships (including the cost of recruiting and training apprenticeships). - A funding allocation to P&E to support the acceleration of efforts in relation to apprenticeships and high levels skills (note that this element of programme funding is expected to be recurring) **Co-operatives and Social Enterprises**
3.28	Growing and supporting the social enterprise and co-operative sector is a key ambition of Council – and will be a significant focus of inclusive growth going forward. An update on the work of the Council in relation to social enterprise and co-operative support was brought to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in January 2020. As Members will be aware, officers have undertaken research to understand what specific support is required for co-operatives and social enterprises and to inform the support provided by the Council. Developing progressive procurement policies that support the sector and further enhancing the direct support that we offer – both financially and in terms of capacity building - will be a key feature in the forthcoming financial year for the cross council inclusive growth team. The changes that will flow from the development and implementation of social value and broader progressive procurement changes will also have a clear benefit and impact on this sector.
	A one-council approach – Oversight and reporting
3.29	When working with members to shape their priorities, the importance of a 'one-council' approach was raised. Members were clear that enhanced co-ordination would improve the councils collective impact and also reduce duplication.
3.30	In response to this the Strategy, Policy and Partnerships team have developed an inclusive growth oversight group. The purpose of this group is to drive delivery of the year one actions and to shape future ambitions. It is also proposed that the oversight group will be central to shaping the allocation of programme funding into year two and beyond – working through Committee and with members to develop our approach.

3.31	A progress update will be brought every 6 months outlining the progress and new developments. We have also committed to produce a yearly public update on progress.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.32	Council have approved a dedicated budget for Inclusive Growth – there are no additional financial or resource implications.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.33	None associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Updated Inclusive Growth Document

Our commitment to
Inclusive Growth
2020 - 2022

Belfast City Council

www.belfastcity.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

Belfast City Council (BCC) is committed to inclusive growth. For us inclusive growth means ensuring the success of the city reaches every citizen. Our aim is to connect all residents with economic growth and create vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity and aspiration to succeed.

This document expresses the commitment of all political parties to drive inclusive growth in Belfast. We know there is a strong desire across the city for change. We want to work in collaboration with others, to collectively make a difference. This commitment has been agreed by Party Group Leaders:

> "As a Council, we are committed to ensuring that all citizens of Belfast are part of and feel pride in this exciting chapter of Belfast's story."

The commitments outlined in this document will be used to guide the council in adopting business practices that support inclusive growth and to engage partners (including statutory, businesses, social enterprises and community groups) across Belfast in the development and delivery of the city's ambitions. Furthermore, it is vital that the voices of citizens and communities shape our approach.

It is both a commitment on behalf of the council and also a call to action for other organisations across the city. It sends a message to all of our stakeholders that we want to do business in a way that brings about a more inclusive Belfast.

Throughout the document we set out a policy framework designed to deliver improved outcomes for Belfast citizens and communities and encourage multi-agency collaboration. Our commitments complement a range of local and regional strategies, plans and policies, including the Belfast Local Development Plan, the Belfast Agenda and are heavily embedded throughout our Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023.

We recognise that in order for others across the city to prioritise inclusive growth, the council must take the lead and demonstrate how it is possible to use a range of powers to create an inclusive city. That is why our initial focus is on what we can do as a corporate body and in our role as a civic leader, to improve access to economic opportunity across Belfast city area. We then set out how we believe the city as a whole, and its key anchor institutions, can respond to the imperative to develop a more inclusive economy.

The actions needed to meet these challenges are complex but delivery of the commitments within this document is one of the first key steps to meeting the vision of an inclusive Belfast, leaving no-one behind. We are looking forward to working together as an organisation, with partners and communities to translating it into a powerful programme of delivery and change.

Context

The Belfast Agenda is an ambitious plan for the city, with a strong economic focus and far-reaching targets for population and jobs growth. We believe that in order to address the long term challenges facing people in Belfast, such as health and educational inequalities, the need for good relations, ensuring people feel safe and have good living conditions, we need to focus on growing our economy and ensuring the benefits are felt by everyone.

We know that the best route to an improved quality of life for most people is through having a good job. So we are committed to growing the number of jobs in the city and providing support for residents to take advantage of these. Our goal is that by 2035 our urban economy will support 46,000 additional jobs.

We also know from the experience of other economically successful cities that increasing the number of jobs results in a growing population. It is our desire to grow the city's population by 66,000 more people, returning Belfast's population to similar levels not seen since the 1970s. We want to encourage more people to both live and work in the city, directly contributing to its success, vibrancy and sustainability.

We have therefore rightly set out an ambitious economic growth agenda. This is highlighted by our success and commitment to secure the Belfast Region City Deal and the creation of a range of investment funds and investments to make Belfast a great place to locate and start a business.

We are also committed to creating a strong and vibrant city centre. Its development is vital for attracting private sector investment, creating revenue and enabling the sustainability of council expenditure and service delivery.

Of course, economic and population growth on its own is not enough. These are a means to an end to help us reduce inequalities and create opportunities for all. Not everyone in Belfast has benefited in the past and unless there is a paradigm shift in our policy framework this will continue. While Belfast currently displays great economic optimism, it is imperative the benefits of this growth are inclusive, where everyone has the opportunity and aspiration to succeed.

This strategy aims to improve life chances and therefore it is something that no single organisation or sector can deliver alone. We must do it together. We look forward to working with our city partners to ensure future interventions provide inclusive growth opportunities to ensure no-one is left behind.

While significant, the measures outlined in the remainder of this document are only one part of our commitment to creating an inclusive city. Alongside these commitments to inclusive growth, we continue to work with all partners to address many of the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion such as health inequalities (specifically mental health), educational underachievement, transport and community infrastructure.

7,322
people in housing stress

42%
of school leavers (entitled to Free School Meals) achieve 5 GCSEs grade A*-C (including English and Maths) compared to 74% of those who are not

1/3
(32.5%) of residents have
below NVQ level 2 qualifications
Substantially higher than the Northern Ireland average of 29.0%

5%
of the working age population within Belfast are claiming unemployment-related benefits and 39% of these are long-term unemployed

£703.70
gap in average weekly earning of all Belfast residents differs greatly between the highest 10% (£846.50 per week) and lowest 10% earners (£142.80 per week)

56,000
residents in Belfast live
in poverty
28% of children in Belfast grow up in poverty

Average life expectancy
in Belfast is lower than the NI average for both males (76.0 years) and females (81.1 years) In Belfast, the average life expectancy for a man in the most deprived area is 9.4 years less than in the least deprived areas in Belfast, the average life expectancy for a woman in the most deprived area is 6.4 years less than in the least deprived areas

Most deprived
Belfast has 8 out of the 10 Electoral Wards that feature in the top 10% most deprived in Northern Ireland

6.7%
Young people not in education, employment or training, higher than the NI average of 4%

11%
Business start-ups in Belfast, well below other Leading Cities

World's top destination city for financial services technology investments

Regional Capital
with a population of
340,220
(over one million in the Belfast Region)

20%
Young population
20% of people are aged under 15

7th
Competitiveness Index ranks Belfast 7th out of 12 comparator cities

2. Our inclusive growth statement

As a council we believe it is important to have a common and shared understanding of what inclusive growth means for us. In drafting this strategy all political parties worked together to collectively examine the issues facing the city and develop an inclusive growth statement. This statement is set out below.

"For Belfast City Council inclusive growth means writing a new chapter for Belfast, ensuring the success of the city reaches every citizen.

We have seen our city transform in recent years. We are creating new opportunities for many of our residents. We are creating a new chapter for our city, one which is optimistic and ambitious, aiming to be outward-looking and confident on the world stage with significant economic growth. But this is a tale of two cities; not everyone is part of this new story.

Whilst our city has flourished for decades, some of our communities have been left behind, with unacceptable levels of persistent deprivation and inequality. Conflict compounded this deprivation, creating a city divided on religious and economic grounds. More than 56,000 residents in Belfast live in poverty, 28% children in Belfast grow up in poverty and over 7,000 households applying to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are in housing stress. These issues are concentrated in inner south, inner east, west and north Belfast with pockets across other parts of the city. Many residents in these areas are out of work. They are disengaged from new developments, even when these are on their doorstep. In short, many residents are not benefitting from new opportunities and prosperity.

We also have uneven education attainment levels. Some parts of Belfast are succeeding - in one area almost every pupil attained 5 GCSEs at A*-C (including Maths and English), whilst in another ward less than 3 in every 10 pupils achieve this. This variation is not good enough.

For years we have helped tackle the symptoms of deprivation, now we need to go one-step further. We need to stop the symptoms occurring and connect all residents with economic growth to create vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity and aspiration to succeed. To ensure our growth sectors and new jobs are accessible for all residents, we need to better target the opportunities to all residents and ensure everyone has the right support to take these opportunities.

The Belfast Agenda will ensure the right conditions are in place so that everyone can benefit from economic growth - improved housing conditions, improved skills levels, more jobs and a more developed city. As a council we will take the lead, changing how we make investments, interventions and procurement decisions around geographic and demographic need.

We want all our residents to feel pride in their community, as such we will not only ensure our residents are supported but will ensure they can contribute and play a positive role in the city's future and help move people out of generational deprivation.

We will continue to work hard to secure business investment and growth, but we want businesses to create jobs with decent pay, fair contracts, training and career ladders which are accessible to all our residents. There will be no single way in which this can happen, and we will bring together areas such as skills, business, education, housing and transport to address this.

We are committed to doing all we can to eradicate poverty and inequality in our city.

Party Group Leaders

Ciaran Beattie - Sinn Fein
George Dorrian – DUP
Michael Long – Alliance Party
Donal Lyons – SDLP
Mal O'Hara – Green Party
Billy Hutchinson – PUP
Sonia Copeland – UUP

Our inclusive growth cohorts

We have identified four groups of Belfast residents that we will target in the first instance. Each target group is complementary to the Belfast Agenda. Through the delivery of our data development commitments, as set out within Section 5, we will refine our evidence base. In particular we will pay attention to the composition of the four groups in relation to our equality duties.

Residents not in employment

Unemployed and economically inactive households and individuals are usually amongst those most vulnerable or at highest risk of poverty. It can also impact health outcomes, both mental and physical and school performance of children.

Residents with low skill levels

Measuring skills attainment reflects the wide disparity in education performance within Belfast. In Belfast, 32.5% of residents hold below NVQ Level 2 qualifications, which is greater than the NI and UK averages of 29.0% and 25.8%, respectively. Residents with lower levels of qualifications may be restricted to relatively poor paid jobs and are less likely to progress and benefit from new jobs growth in the city.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Research shows that time spent NEET can have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health and increases the likelihood of long-term unemployment, low wages, or a low quality of work later in life. Lowering the number of young people who spend time NEET will form an important part of Belfast's inclusive growth strategy and future prosperity.

In work, low earning individuals

According to a joint report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (2018), almost 60% of people living in poverty are non-pensioners in working households. It is vital that inclusive growth interventions target low earning working individuals and encourage employers to pay their employees a fair amount. As the living wage is based on the real cost of living, individuals paid below this threshold can struggle to meet their day to day expenses, particularly as Belfast has higher living costs relative to other parts of Northern Ireland, potentially leading to residents accessing lower quality housing and suffering from poorer health. The disparity between average weekly gross pay (available data is 2015) for Belfast residents (£499.10) and Belfast workers (£550.30) suggests that Belfast's growing economic prosperity is not necessarily flowing to its residents with many highly paid workers commuting into the city from surrounding towns and villages.

3. Our corporate commitments

This chapter details how as a corporate body we will seek to contribute towards inclusive growth. Outlining how we will leverage our procurement and employment powers to deliver against our vision and how we will place inclusive growth at the heart of our key investment and strategy decisions.

Harnessing procurement to social value

In 2017-18, Belfast City Council procured over £93million from revenue suppliers and over £38million from capital suppliers. We have to achieve value for money, but this doesn't mean we can't seek to ensure that the money we spend through procurement meets our city wide social ambitions. This level of expenditure can provide a boost to our local economy; supporting business and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector; providing employment opportunity; and putting money into neighbourhoods, high streets and local shops. Our procurement approach can also make a major contribution to the reduction of our overall environmental impact.

We will place a real value on those suppliers who can offer more than the core technical requirements of the contract for goods, works or services. This could include, but is not limited to, opportunities such as:

- creating skills and training opportunities e.g., apprenticeships or on the job training;
- creating high quality sustainable employment opportunities for target groups in the local area;
- offering work placements to target groups;
- providing career advice and information on specific careers;
- providing additional opportunities for individuals or groups facing greater barriers;
- activities contributing to wider economic and institutional transformation;
- lowering barriers to social mobility and inequality;
- creating supply chain opportunities for small business and social enterprises;
- encouraging community engagement; and
- delivering environmental benefits for local communities.

We will develop a comprehensive Social Value Procurement Framework. Through this framework, we commit to maximise the potential of the council's procurement spend to support our social ambitions. Social value in procurement is defined as "the additional benefit to the community over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes".

This work will be guided by the following principles:

Flexible and proportionate guidelines around the implementation of the framework will be appropriate to the value, nature, duration and complexity of the contract that is being procured. This is necessary to ensure accessibility to all suppliers from micro to Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to larger businesses.

Easy to understand and adopt with minimal administrative burden for all businesses, especially SMEs.

User-friendly and supported with guidance, education, tools, and templates. This will include the development of a Social Value Procurement Toolkit. The toolkit will provide guidance for all key stakeholders, including commissioners and procurers and will include a capacity building programme around meet the buyer events, training, collaborative bids and looking at the size of lots.

Evidence based by committing to request potential suppliers provide details and evidence of how they will contribute towards the delivery of our inclusive growth ambitions and include the use of a social value calculator and a category applicability matrix.

Strong governance arrangements will ensure that we work within the agreed legal framework to reduce the regulatory burden on our suppliers.

Reaching out to others to build a pool of best practice across Belfast. As a civic leader for Belfast we want to spread best practice and will ask our partners and anchor institutions across the city to join us in our ambition so that we can use our collective influence to do more business locally, for the benefit of the many.

Environmentally sound and sustainable procurement

Environmental and sustainability considerations will be a key aspect of our social value framework.

We understand that our procurement approach can have a major contribution to the reduction of our overall environmental impact. With this in mind, we are committed to working to reduce the environmental impacts of our supply chain through sustainable procurement practices. We will work in partnership with our suppliers and contractors to minimise and manage these impacts.

Monitoring of the procurement framework

We will ensure that the measurement and monitoring of contractual commitments made by the provider are incorporated into the general performance management of the contract.

Winning providers will be expected to report on the outcomes to evidence how they are achieving the social value and sustainable outcomes they propose to deliver throughout the contract. We will monitor progress, reporting on achievements and sharing best practice with other suppliers, staff and key stakeholders. Monitoring the social and sustainable value delivered and working with providers on these aspects of their bids will be useful in producing new ideas that can be incorporated into future procurements.

Increasing the capacity of our local supply market

We believe that the more we spend on Belfast based suppliers, the more our residents will be able to benefit. Research indicates that strengthening the ability of SMEs and the Community and Voluntary and Social Enterprise sector (CVSE) to compete with multi-nationals and or other larger enterprises may result in improved economic growth and resilience, supporting a region's ability to better withstand business and economic shocks.

Our approach is about boosting local competitiveness not about sheltering local businesses from competition.

We will build on the good practices already established in our processes to support and develop our local supply base by ensuring improved awareness of opportunities, advice and guidance and removal of any barriers to tender. This is our offer to local businesses. Our ask of them is that they provide good quality employment and work with us to ensure that our target groups benefit. We will do this by:

Understanding demand, impact and the supply chain

We will undertake a review of historical annual spend and establish a baseline for Belfast, including an analysis of where council money spent goes geographically, the profile of the suppliers, and wider local economic, social and environmental impact.

Adjusting our approach

We will develop focused and targeted approaches to bid for procurement opportunities and grow a local supply base in areas of under-representation.

We are committed to exploring opportunities for supporting the development of co-operatives or new businesses to meet that untapped demand. We will develop a social enterprise action plan to support and grow the sector in Belfast.

Removing barriers

Over the course of this strategy, we are committed to ensuring that we remove barriers to procurement and increase the capacity of under-represented suppliers to compete, including:

- dividing contracts into lots, so that there is more opportunity for SME organisations to bid. And in accordance with relevant legislation ensure the minimum financial turnover required does not exceed twice the estimated contract value;
- ensuring we only ask the minimum, proportionate number of quality (award) questions to establish a bidder's ability and proposals to deliver a contract;
- ensuring that we provide advice and guidance on our procurement processes;
- facilitating learning amongst suppliers and
- encouraging local businesses to engage in tenders for council contracts though publishing a forward plan of tender opportunities. And where appropriate offering pre-tender 'meet the buyer' local market engagement sessions.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Social value
Collaborate with other organisations with the same aspirations to develop a costs benefits approach to social value tendering.
Examine options and seek agreement on the council's preferred approach on the status placed on social value and positive environmental outcomes in relation to other more traditional procurement considerations within the tendering process. For example in relation to cost, quality and experience.
Develop a draft framework and social value calculator and a category applicability matrix and test.
Develop accompanying policies and procedures.
Pilot implementation of draft framework through two council procurement contracts (to be agreed) and develop case studies for future.
Local supply market
Develop a social enterprise action plan.
Continue to collate learning from best tender practice in the council and in the market.
Undertake a review of historical annual spend over a three year period and establish a baseline for Belfast, including an analysis of direct and indirect beneficiaries.
Map our future procurement needs against the market.
Refresh the supplier database to make it easier to find local suppliers.
Agree procurement data collection model.
Year two
Launch Social Value Procurement Toolkit and test in market.
Run training and capacity building events with required council officers.
Develop capacity building programme for local businesses through community engagement and pilot.
Hold two 'meet the buyer' events with key partner and anchor organisations.
Identify two Belfast based anchor organisations willing to develop a baseline and to develop their own social value procurement framework.

Promoting inclusive growth through our role as an employer

We are a significant employer within the city, directly employing over 2,300 people across a broad range of occupational areas. We recognise that as a civic leader and large employer in Belfast we can and should set a strong example for others in driving best practice around employment. We firmly believe we can make real progress towards the achievement of the council's inclusive growth ambitions by looking at our own employment practices and the job opportunities we create. We are committed to driving forward some immediate areas which complement the aspirations of our People Strategy.

Promotion of fair work and good-quality jobs

We consider fair work an important mechanism in delivering inclusive growth. Fair work is defined as "work that offers all individuals an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect". It is generally accepted that if you have a poor quality job you are more likely to live in poverty, your children are more likely to live in poverty and your chances of accessing training or development are lower.

We will initially focus on the following areas of our employment policies and practices to bring about required outcomes:

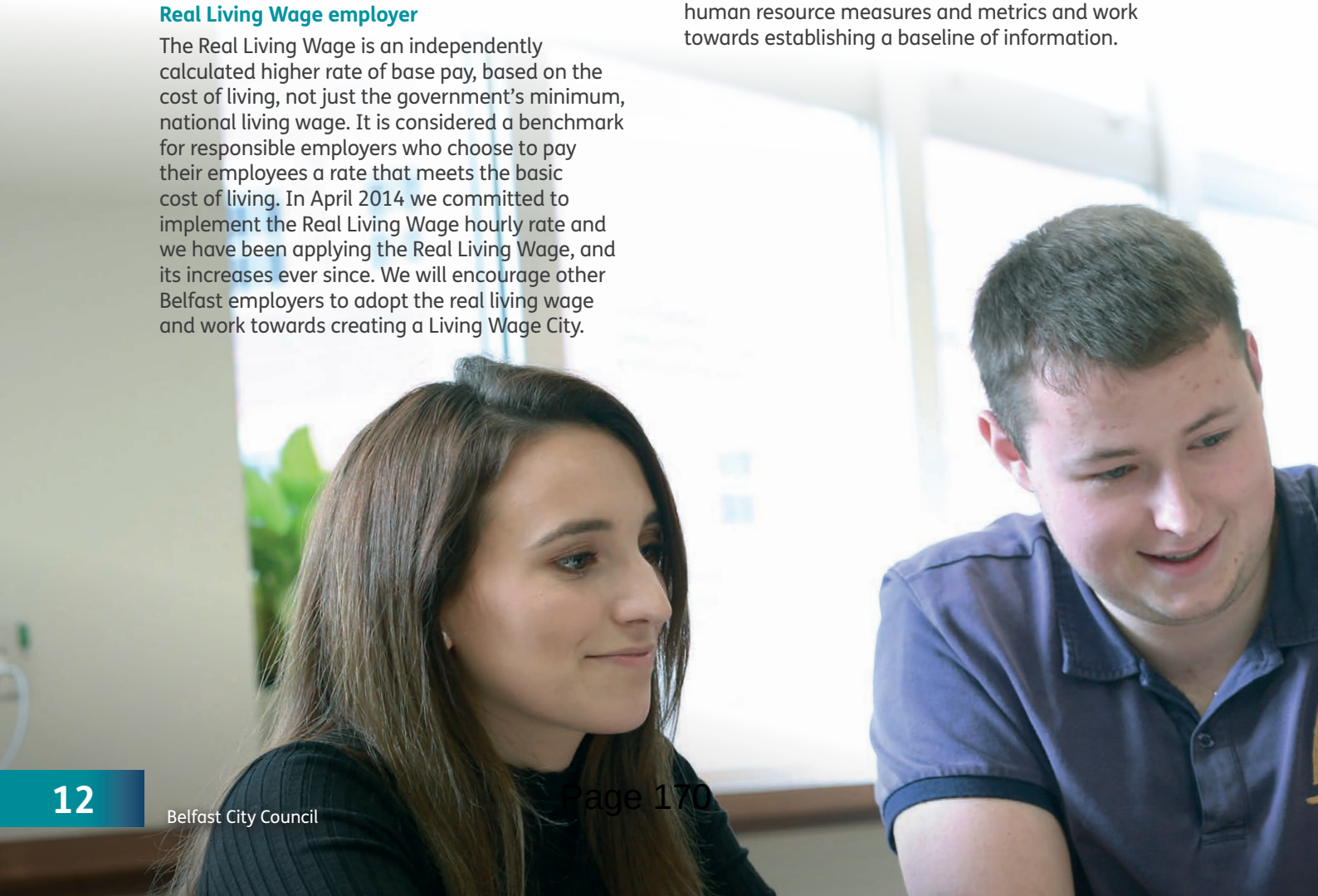
Real Living Wage employer

The Real Living Wage is an independently calculated higher rate of base pay, based on the cost of living, not just the government's minimum, national living wage. It is considered a benchmark for responsible employers who choose to pay their employees a rate that meets the basic cost of living. In April 2014 we committed to implement the Real Living Wage hourly rate and we have been applying the Real Living Wage, and its increases ever since. We will encourage other Belfast employers to adopt the real living wage and work towards creating a Living Wage City.

Inclusive recruitment and opportunity

The council currently adopts many inclusive employment practices, for example advertising to as wide and diverse a pool as possible, offering a guaranteed interview scheme for those with a disability and ensuring there are no unnecessary criteria or other barriers applied at shortlisting or when staff are accessing career development opportunities.

We will renew our efforts to work in collaboration across the organisation to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are mainstreamed. We will develop and work with our current Employee Networks (Gender, Disability and LGB&T) to improve employee voice and input into our policies and procedures. We will also develop appropriate human resource measures and metrics and work towards establishing a baseline of information.



Security and sustainability in employment

Building stability into contracts and offering flexible working hours at all levels can help removes barriers to employment, particularly for employees with dependants and those with a disability. Zero hours arrangements, where workers only work as and when they are needed by employers and are only paid for the hours they work, may be open to abuse. We only endorse the use of casual or session work contracts where both parties to the contract enjoy flexibility and where there are no exclusivity clauses. Such an approach can provide advantages, provided these contracts are not open to abuse by employers.

We commit to carrying out a review with staff of the current suite of work-life balance options and making recommendations for the future.

Improving participation in employment

As a council we have a role both as a corporate body, and at a policy and programming level in improving participation in employment. The following section details how we will use our corporate resources to contribute towards our inclusive growth ambitions, with detail on how we will work across the city to improve participation in employment outlined in Chapter Four. Initially we will focus on:

Apprenticeships

We will develop opportunities to address our current and future recruitment needs through apprenticeships from entry-level through to higher-level technical and professional qualifications. Apprenticeships provide a sustainable route into employment across all levels of the workforce and we are committed to embedding apprenticeships within our workforce planning strategy. We will do this by working in collaboration with our community planning partners and the Northern Ireland Civil Service. In the first instance we will explore opportunities in relation to digital services, customer service and operational delivery.

Breaking down barriers for under-represented groups

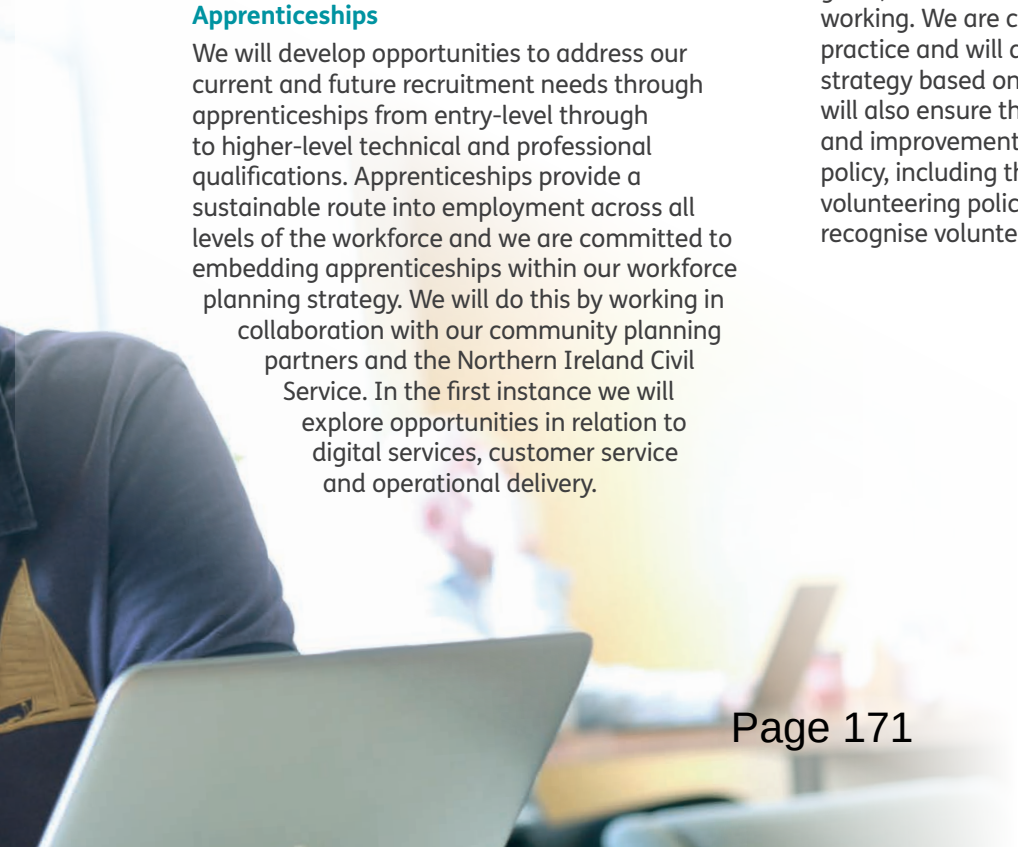
We will ring fence entry level posts, where possible, and support this through the provision of appropriate pre recruitment training programmes to benefit those furthest removed from the labour market.

Engaging and building capacity within our neighbourhoods

Through our Community Outreach Programme we offer extensive employability support to educational establishments, disability organisations, criminal justice organisations and other community based organisations. Working collectively with partner organisations we will carry out a review of our work in this area and design a targeted work placement and employability support plan. This will include a minimum of 150 work placements and 18 industrial placements each year.

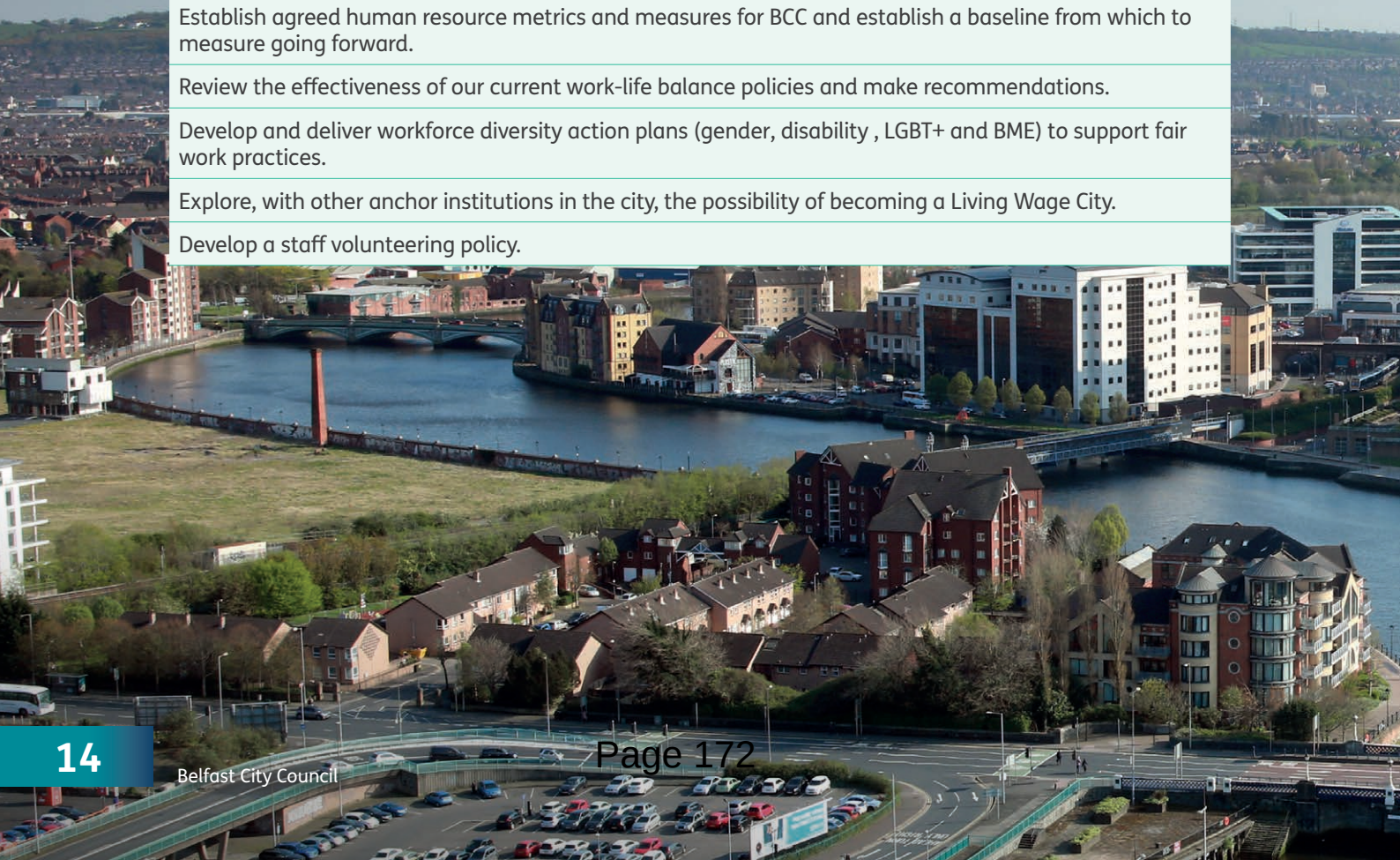
Volunteering

We have long recognised the value of volunteering and encouraged it across the city. In recent years nationally and internationally, cities have recognised the value of taking a more strategic focus to volunteering to make a major impact on the challenges being faced, built on clear goals, measurement of impact and partnership working. We are committed to following this best practice and will develop a city-wide volunteering strategy based on a partnership approach. We will also ensure the consistent implementation and improvement of our current corporate policy, including the development of a staff volunteering policy and explore how we can recognise volunteering as valued work experience.



Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Improving participation in employment
Identify planned recruitment to support our inclusive growth aims and develop an action plan with targets.
Commit to ring-fencing suitable entry level positions, targeting the four cohorts, and running pre-recruitment training programmes.
Develop our approach to apprenticeships, initially considering areas such as customer service, digital services and operational services.
Review our employability and skills community outreach and engagement work in conjunction with key partner organisations and make recommendations to focus resources on agreed inclusive growth cohorts.
Develop a forward action plan of work with schools, colleges, universities and youth organisations to offer work experience and business awareness, prioritizing those who face additional barriers. This will include a minimum of 150 placements and 18 industrial placements.
Fair, inclusive work
Review current human resource practices to ensure we can drive our inclusive growth ambitions and make recommendations, with a focus on employee voice.
Reaffirm our position on the use “casual” workers in BCC and partner organisations alongside a commitment, as part of our procurement of temporary staff services, to ensure that “exclusivity clauses” are not utilised by any providers of contracted agency workers.
Establish agreed human resource metrics and measures for BCC and establish a baseline from which to measure going forward.
Review the effectiveness of our current work-life balance policies and make recommendations.
Develop and deliver workforce diversity action plans (gender, disability , LGBT+ and BME) to support fair work practices.
Explore, with other anchor institutions in the city, the possibility of becoming a Living Wage City.
Develop a staff volunteering policy.



Embedding an inclusive growth decision making framework

We are a significant investor. Not only do we invest through our procurement but also when deciding what capital investments we make, where to focus our revenue expenditure and what funding and grant programmes we deliver.

The main objective of these investment decisions will not always be economic growth. However they will often have a positive influence on the economic condition of people in Belfast without undermining the main objective of the investment.

To help maximise the benefits of our investment decisions, we commit to embedding an inclusive growth decision making framework. Once implemented, the framework will test any future major investment decisions to ensure they have considered how they can help the economically disadvantaged in the city.

In 2018, the council agreed a draft framework. This framework is structured to identify how each investment will benefit our identified inclusive growth cohorts. Within this framework, questions are structured as a flow diagram and help paint a picture of who will benefit from the investment decision, how they will benefit and how many people will benefit.

This includes a series of questions used to determine if any planned investment will help the targeted groups. The questions are focused on the following five key areas: jobs; training and skills; business growth; planning and regeneration; and digital. This information will then form a critical part of the business case to help determine if the investment is approved.

We will implement the Inclusive Growth Decision Making Framework and ensure that the economic benefit of investments or interventions made by the council has considered how it can maximise the economic benefit to those in need. This will be implemented across all our investments – capital, revenue and grant funding - and we will monitor and develop it as we learn more about what works in contributing towards our aim of a truly inclusive economy.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Commence staff engagement to develop understanding and begin testing of framework through two capital projects.
Undertake testing of the framework.
Refine framework following testing period and review implementation plan.
Commence public consultation period.
Finalise framework.
Year two
Launch and operationalise framework in a phased approach.
Commence monitoring and reporting of framework.
Encourage our city partners to use the decision making framework as part of their decision making processes.

Continuing to prioritise poverty alleviation

While these inclusive growth commitments are designed primarily to intervene early and provide improved access to economic opportunity for all our residents, we also realise that for many households support is required to address the immediate effects of economic disadvantage. We will continue to invest directly and to work with partners across the city, to alleviate the impact of poverty and are therefore committed to:

Targeting the use of our existing resources

In 2018-19 we focused our resources in the following areas:

- **generalist advice services** - provision of annual core funding of generalist advice services to five area based consortia, incorporating 21 membership organisations. In total in 2018-19 there were 118,489 enquiries made, 74,085 clients assisted and an estimated benefits maximisation of £45.7million;
- **Belfast citywide tribunal services –** provision of a citywide tribunal service via the Belfast Advice Group, with an initial 5,935 enquiries made, 1,879 clients assisted, 1,451 appeals and an estimated £5.2million return on investment;
- **revenue for community buildings** – in 2018-19, 78 community organisations which address the needs of their community by delivering a broad based programme from a specific building were supported through grants;
- **capacity building grants –** capacity building grants were provided to support lead community development organisations in ensuring good practice in governance, committee procedures, appropriate policies and financial management; and
- **service-based funding –** the community sector continued to be supported via current financial arrangements with community based organisations across the city who deliver services on our behalf. This includes the independent management of our community centres, anchor tenants and service level agreements with play resources.

Working in partnership to support those in fuel poverty

- **Affordable Warmth Scheme –** Belfast City Council has been engaged in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme (AWS) since 2014. The scheme aims to address fuel poverty for the most vulnerable households in the city. During 2018-19:
  - the BCC service completed 303 referrals to the NIHE;
  - the total value of approvals granted for the scheme in Belfast was £871,381;
  - 450 measures were installed; and
  - 233 homes were improved within Belfast.
- **Administering the Belfast fuel oil stamps scheme -** our fuel stamp scheme 'Stay Warm', is available throughout Belfast and helps householders save for home heating oil by spreading the cost of their fuel. Individuals can buy oil stamps from participating retailers, collect them on a savings card and use the value of the stamps to pay for all or part of their oil when placing an order. Over the course of the last three years fuel stamps sold equate to £302,770 and fuel stamps redeemed equate to £293,620.
- **Winter Warmth Packs –** we work with the Public Health Agency, Surestart and Age NI to procure and distribute Winter Warmth Packs to vulnerable families each year. Through this partnership a total of 660 packs were distributed to vulnerable adults in 2018-19.

Ensuring that our services are more accessible through concessionary rates

Leisure pricing remains under the control of BCC with the schedule of charges being applied by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) as our service delivery partner. We currently have concessionary rates available based on a number of factors, for example, age, disability and economic hardship. Based on 2018-19 data, 50% of all BCC leisure centre users paid the concessionary rates which reduces the monthly cost from £34.50 to £17.25.

4. Creating an inclusive city

We recognise that the inclusive growth agenda is not the job of a few but of the many. This section details our ambition and approach to working with others (including our private sector, anchor institutions, community and voluntary sector and our wider public sector partners) and how we will use our wider policy and planning powers to create an inclusive city.

Developing an inclusive growth city charter

Anchor institutions are big and locally rooted organisations like colleges, universities, hospitals and big businesses with local headquarters. They have a significant role to play in realising the economic and social ambitions of a city. This is especially true in Belfast where a 2013 report completed on our behalf by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, highlighted some of the notable economic and social contributions made by anchor institutions within Belfast.

The research clearly indicated that anchors are helping strengthen city leadership and are major employers (with around 60,000 direct and indirect staff in Belfast), procurers of goods and services and innovators. They already may have employability programmes which target priority neighbourhoods for intervention, employ apprentices, and have active corporate social responsibility activities and community trusts.

The potential for collaboration across local anchor institutions around inclusive growth is huge. This is an agenda not just for one institution, but for the whole city. One way to harness the collective power of the anchor institutions across Belfast, that has proven successful in other cities, is the creation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter.

Our aim in creating this charter is to encourage organisations across Belfast to ensure their business practices as employers, procurers, or in the delivery of their services are channelled in the direction of more inclusive growth across Belfast. This charter will enable organisations to apply for a Charter Mark which will recognise their commitment to inclusive growth. The charter will follow a methodology of self-assessment and prioritise continuous progression with goals set by and appropriate to, each individual organisation, within key areas of focus.

In essence, the charter and its supporting framework will enable anchor institutions across Belfast to look at their current practices and identify areas where they could make changes which would have a beneficial impact on inclusive growth for Belfast, whilst also aligning with their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity and the promotion of equality and diversity. The framework will enable anchor institutions to self-assess where they are now, where they want to be and how to get there.

Possible dimensions of an inclusive anchor institution are outlined below:

Proposed dimensions of an inclusive anchor institution	
Employer	Recruit in ways that provide equality of opportunity and maximise scope for local people to secure good jobs. Pay the real living wage, and go further to support people in stretching take home pay, e.g. via pensions, non-pay benefits and poverty proofed HR policies. Commit to lower paid staff reaching their potential via inclusive personal and professional development, flexible working, transparent progression pathways and excellent management. Support mental and physical health, e.g. via facilities, policies, culture, advice.
Procurer	Engage with local suppliers and increase the proportion of spend with them. Use procurement processes to deliver social value, e.g. for communities, employees, environment.
Physical investment	Procure developments in ways which create local jobs, skills and apprenticeships, with focus on young people and those facing disadvantage. Design buildings and spaces to create vibrant places with community, health and environmental benefits. Enable access and use by local communities.
Services	Design and deliver services so that they reach and benefit disadvantaged communities. Work with local neighbourhoods to better deliver and gain uptake of services, especially by disadvantaged communities.
Corporate & civic	Embed inclusive anchor dimensions into organisational vision and mission, values, culture, communications, behaviours, leadership, corporate planning and budgeting. Champion anchor collaboration, take civic responsibility, learn, share, promote the services of other anchors, lead by example.

We are committed to working in partnership with other employers and anchor institutions in the development of this charter and underpinning assessment tools. We will engage in a process of co-design with our stakeholders. We will take a phased approach to development, consulting and engaging with business to design the charter and undertaking piloting and testing with key partners in the first instance to ensure that the charter is fit for purpose.

Aligning corporate social responsibility with inclusive growth and the Belfast Agenda

There are many examples throughout Belfast of where employers and organisations utilise their resources to support city-wide challenges. This includes: staff volunteering, fundraising to support local charitable efforts, funding and expertise to support local schools and the provision of work experience and training opportunities to name but a few.

We will work directly with employers, through our existing city leadership governance structures and with existing membership and representative bodies such as Business in the Community, Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Chamber of Commerce (COC), to encourage employers to align their corporate social responsibility activity to address citywide challenges outlined in the Belfast Agenda.

Furthermore we will seek to access sources of philanthropic funding to support the achievement of our citywide inclusive growth ambitions.

Working with our growth sectors

We want to ensure that as our economy develops, everyone across Belfast has the opportunity to connect to growth sectors and the 'jobs of the future'. While we have outlined our commitment and approach to connecting our under-represented residents to workplace opportunities wherever they exist, we believe that the tech, digital and innovation sector has an important role in achieving our inclusive growth ambitions. This is particularly relevant given the significant investment within the sector and its supporting infrastructure as a result of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

The digital, tech and innovation sector is a major employer within Belfast and one with significant potential for growth. We want to work with the sector to put in place the actionable steps that will support its future expansion in a way that benefits everyone and, although ambitious, look to establish a target for inclusive employment within future job creation projections.

To make this a reality we will work with key stakeholders to establish an Innovation and Technology Inclusion Working Group. The composition of this group will be critical to success and we will seek to ensure that the private sector, the wider public sector and our education and training providers are strongly represented.

The purpose of the working group will be to advise on ways in which to grow the city's digital, innovation and tech-economy in an inclusive manner, increase the number of jobs and high-technology businesses, and ensure opportunities for all of Belfast's residents.

We will ensure that the working group develops an action plan to support the achievement of these ambitions. It is anticipated that this action plan would include, but not be limited to, the development of strategies and tangible actions across:

- **foundational aspects**, providing the groundwork and fundamental tools for residents to participate in the sector;
- **capacity building** for residents to develop technical capacity through opportunities for education and workforce development;
- **capital measures** to expand access to human, social and financial capital; and
- **building awareness** by developing initiatives that highlight and support inclusion.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Working with employers and anchor institutions to develop an Inclusive Growth City Charter and practical guide.
Explore the feasibility of introducing an assessment framework against which to enable organisations to analyse their inclusive growth performance.
Host a citywide engagement session with key business leaders to seek buy-in and support and test the framework with two willing pilot organisations.
Work with organisations to seek alignment of corporate social responsibility activity to support city wide objectives.
Work with key stakeholders to establish an Innovation and Technology Inclusion Working Group.

Prioritising employability and skills

Ensuring that the skills and labour supply across Belfast city area meets business needs is critical in creating a resilient and diverse inclusive economy, with the ability to respond to changing market conditions in both a local and global market context.

It is well documented that certain sections of society face more barriers to employment than others and require more targeted interventions to achieve more equity throughout the recruitment and employment pathway. Additional challenges can also be encountered in sustaining and progressing into 'better' employment.

Addressing this challenge will require a focus on both the continued creation of suitable employment opportunities alongside the upskilling and work readiness to improve participation in employment across Belfast city area.

High quality work experience and placements are vital in enhancing an individual's employability, confidence and future prospects and are of particular importance to those who may have become disengaged from the labour market e.g. NEETS, disability and long-term unemployed. Employment barriers must be removed to enable residents to take up these opportunities and facilitate them to remain in employment in the long term.

Research suggests that there is a correlation between learning, skills development and earning potential. Encouraging and supporting skill development opportunities is therefore vital to help residents gain and progress in employment.

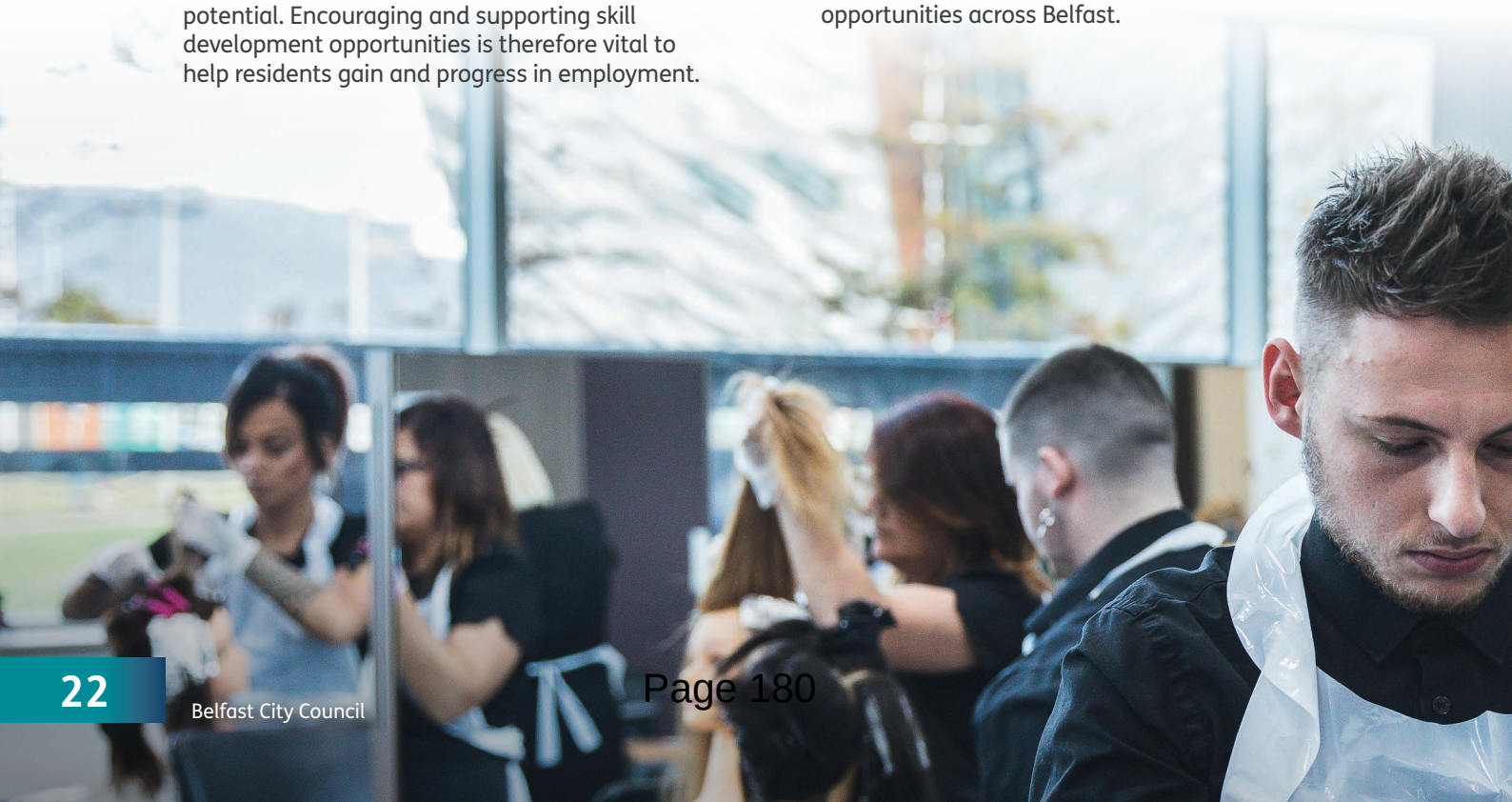
Early intervention within the education environment can help to support young people to recognise the value of education, support them to identify their own career path and the skills journey they need to embark upon to reach their ultimate employment destination.

Our work with city partners under the Working and Learning pillar of the Belfast Agenda supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the council by addressing barriers to progression, focusing on educational underachievement and supporting residents to access employment and/or upskilling opportunities.

Across the spectrum of the business community potential exists to support our ambitions towards economic inclusion. Over the next ten years employment opportunities are expected across high growth sectors such as ICT, financial services, creative digital industries as well as more traditional sectors including retail, care, tourism and hospitality.

Across this work programme, we will contribute towards the goals of the Belfast Agenda to:

- reduce levels of economic inactivity;
- address educational inequalities;
- enhance and increase the skill levels of Belfast residents;
- address barriers to employment; and
- match people and skills to opportunities across Belfast.



Across the coming year up to 3,000 Belfast residents are expected to take part in a range of initiatives, including:

Access to employment

Increasing access to employment by addressing barriers and supporting industry relevant entry and mid-tier skills will be a key area of focus. Through employability interventions flexible support systems will be delivered geared towards addressing the personal and structural barriers impacting upon a person's ability to positively progress.

Through an employer led approach we will further refine and develop our successful employment academies approach, designed to be demand led and aligned to real job opportunities. Through this activity we will continue to work with employers in order to develop a talent pool aligned to their business needs. In the coming year, these will focus on both entry-level positions and upskilling employment opportunities. A key area of focus for our future academies will be harnessing the wealth of talent amongst young people to access our employment academies.

Additionally we will trial new approaches aimed at supporting employers in growth sectors to create accessible work experience and employment opportunities for individuals who are unemployed or underemployed.

Focus on young people

Developing the talent of our young people is a core strand of our employability and skills work. Ensuring young people have the right skills, access to work experience and are informed to make the right career decisions are all important factors.

Our youth interventions are geared towards supporting young people during their formative years in education as well as post 16. Support is provided on a needs led basis, with those identified at being at risk of or who have disengaged from education or unemployed being a primary focus. Activities are personalised to client needs, with clear outcomes seeking positive progression for young people into further education, employment and/or training. Progression pathways will be built around young people's realistic career aspirations and where possible opportunities to experience the world of work will be provided.

Develop Belfast Workplace

Through the ongoing implementation of the Belfast Agenda we will work with city partners to examine how we can support those furthest from the labour market to access employment opportunities. Focusing upon relevant community planning partners initially, we will collectively develop an initiative known as 'Belfast Workplace' that opens up entry level recruitment to benefit those furthest removed from the labour market. In developing this pathway, we will work closely with employability partners and stakeholders who are leading the way in employability initiatives throughout the city. We will also look at how employers across the city could be engaged as part of a coordinated approach with partners.

Educational attainment

Low educational attainment is one of the key labour market challenges facing the city. Labour market intelligence suggests those with lower level skills will find it increasingly difficult to find employment with employers driving demand for mid and higher level skills.

One of the critical milestones in young people's educational journey is their GCSE attainment levels. Often regarded as a passport qualification for employment and further education. Low levels of educational attainment (measured by GCSE performance) particularly in parts of the city is an ongoing skills challenge. To address this, our GCSE support programme is aimed at supporting young people in the later stages of the school system to improve their prospects of obtaining minimum GCSE attainment levels in key subject areas.

This programme builds upon successful GCSE revision programmes which have operated in parts of the city, extending the level of provision to all parts of the city combining holiday and community revision programmes. Specifically geared towards providing additional support for young people to help them achieve Grades A*-C in key subjects, particularly English and Maths.

Our ambitions in this area also extend to working with our community planning partners to plan for the development of an integrated city programme to address educational inequalities. Taking an evidenced based approach, learning from best practice and identifying how and where interventions are most needed.

Strategic engagement

Working in partnership with government departments we will continue to develop joint areas of working to facilitate better alignment between regional employment and skills programmes and the needs of the Belfast labour market. This will include the development of new "test and learn" pilots with the Department for Communities (DfC) and Department for the Economy (DfE)

Belfast Region City Deal

The Belfast Region City Deal (BCRD) has the potential to deliver up to 20,000 new and better jobs, with an ambitious programme of activity underpinned by employability and skills. Its impact on the growth of the region will be significant. The BRCD has inclusive growth at the centre of its vision. It will provide the mechanism to develop a transformative employability and skills programme for the region that delivers skills for growth and skills for inclusion. Inclusion is therefore being built into each investment pillar to ensure that we are connecting people into the opportunities created – through regional innovation networks, affordable transport, tourism led-regeneration and social value.

The BRCD partners recognise that a fully integrated approach may take some years to develop, but there is potential to seize the opportunity created by the BRCD investment. The BRCD creates an opportunity for councils, colleges, departments, agencies, businesses and the community and voluntary sector to co-design a new integrated model of working that will align existing and new resources over the 10 year period to support a collective vision of inclusive growth.

As well as directly creating the opportunities for improved productivity and growth, the BRCD will also invest in transport infrastructure, ensuring that people are connected to the economic opportunities that are created. The proposed expansion of the Glider network (Belfast Rapid Transport Phase II) will be vital in connecting communities and individuals to the job opportunities of the future and crucial in realising our inclusive growth ambitions.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Develop and deliver, working closely with community planning partners, a Belfast Employability Pathway to support Belfast residents access into and through employment.
Work with community planning partners and anchor institutions to understand workforce planning needs and identify employment opportunities for entry level recruitment to benefit those furthest removed from labour market.
Deliver a suite of sectoral employment academies, including a 'Leisure Academy', to help train people and enable them to gain access into employment.
Work with DfE to develop an action plan and trial new approaches, through 'test and learn' pilots, to support young people at risk of becoming NEETs.
Development of a citywide youth engagement programme to provide flexible support for NEETs or those at risk of becoming NEET.
Delivery of large scale events to provide access to residents to employment opportunities and or career advice.
Delivery of career development support providing young people with access to information and experiences to help them identify career pathways.
Development, commissioning and launch of a citywide GCSE revision programme targeting year 12 students at risk of not achieving a grade C in English and Maths.
Deliver schools based employment academies supporting young people in year 12 at greatest risk of not achieving or dropping out of education.

Promoting inclusive growth through planning powers

On 1 April 2015, the council became the planning authority for Belfast as part of the wider reform of local government. For the first time in a generation the council is responsible for exercising the majority of planning functions within its own boundaries creating a planning regime that is more responsive and understanding of the needs of the city. Since 2015 we have been actively working to update planning policy ensuring that we use planning to build strong communities.

Affordable housing

Maintaining and improving access to affordable housing[1] within the city is a key aspect of meeting our inclusive growth ambitions. The Belfast Draft Local Development Plan has proposed a new draft policy on affordable housing, which requires all housing developers on sites greater than 0.1 hectares and or containing five or more dwelling units to provide a minimum 20% of units as affordable housing (social and intermediate). Other key aspects of this draft policy are that:

- appropriate size, type and tenure of affordable units will be determined having regard to up to date analysis of housing stress and prevailing housing need;
- the affordable housing[1] should be an integral part of mixed tenure development and tenure blind; and
- where the applicant can demonstrate that it is not sustainable or viable to meet the affordable housing requirements in full, suitable alternatives will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The council's draft policy on affordable housing will be accompanied by Supplementary Planning Guidance, which will provide further detail, in particular around the mechanisms for delivery. In addition, we are committed to future monitoring of affordable housing provision with Belfast in line within proposed targets.

1 Affordable housing relates to social rented housing and intermediate housing.

Planning tools – developer contributions

Developer contributions are a planning tool used to mitigate or manage the impacts of new development. For example they can be used to ensure that a new development is supported by the right infrastructure or to make sure that the environmental impacts of a proposal are appropriately managed.

Since the transfer of planning powers in April 2015, our council has routinely secured developer contributions to mitigate and manage development impacts in appropriate circumstances. That means for those developments which would otherwise have a negative impact, those impacts are mitigated through the provision of on-site infrastructure or financial contributions to off-site infrastructure or programmes. We are committed to continuing to develop the use of developer contributions to support the creation of an inclusive and sustainable city.

We have recently published a draft Developer Contributions Framework for consultation and are committed to agreeing the final policy position. This Framework sets out the types of infrastructure or environmental mitigation that may need to be addressed through developer contributions. The list below is by no means exhaustive and each planning application will be judged on its merits, having regard to the Local Development Plan and other relevant material considerations.

- open space, sport and outdoor recreation;
- local neighbourhood facilities – including meeting places, crèches, youth facilities;
- schools, surgeries and local shops;
- public realm;
- employability and skills;
- sustainable transport;
- air quality;
- natural heritage;
- flood risk and sustainable drainage; and
- waste management.

One of the regional strategic planning objectives is to tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation. Therefore in line with our inclusive growth ambitions the draft Developer Contributions Framework sets out that the council will consider the use of developer contributions to support employability and skills initiatives as outlined below.

A key additional feature of the framework is to encourage early dialogue between developers and communities to help identify what the impacts are likely to be of a development and how they can be properly dealt with through the planning process.

The draft framework is currently being reviewed following public consultation with the intention of seeking adoption by the Planning and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in 2019.

Description of proposal	Developer contributions
Major development proposals	Supporting employability and skills initiatives in the city where there is a skills shortage (either during construction or on occupation of the development).
Development proposals resulting in the loss of economic development uses	Supporting employability and skills initiatives in the city to enable displaced employees and people who may have sought employment at the site, to gain employment elsewhere in the city.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
The Developer Contributions Framework will be adopted by Belfast City Council.
Governance arrangements for utilising developer contributions will be established.
The number of apprenticeships and jobs aligned to planning agreements will be recorded, monitored and reported on.
Continue to pursue the council's ambitions in relation to affordable housing.

Strengthening civic voice

We are committed to ensuring that citizens and communities shape our services and policies. We will design and test new and innovative models of engagement.

We will build on our learnings from previous council citizen engagement mechanisms such as The Belfast Conversation, the Cultural Hub and Citizen Space.

We will look at best practice case studies around citizen participation, to garner further ideas and agree upon the best mechanisms to put in place to enable us to understand and respond to broad stakeholder interests. In particular, we will foster participation with those who may face additional difficulties and barriers and consider the design of models of engagement which benefit local SMEs and co-operatives.

As well as ensuring direct engagement with citizens we will strengthen and modernise our approach to engagement with the Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise (CVSE) sectors. This will include the establishment of a CVSE sectoral advisory panel, bespoke information sharing and innovative engagement fora. This engagement will go beyond consultation and ensure that the CVSE is an equal partner in shaping action planning and delivery.

We will begin by ensuring that Belfast citizens have a role in shaping our inclusive growth agenda and in the assessment of progress. We want to draw on the ideas and experience of local people from across the city, both directly and through engagement with community and voluntary sector organisations, starting with consultation on this draft strategy.

Our long-term aim is to co-design a system of inclusive policy and agenda setting that enables the voices and experiences of local residents to be heard.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Test a range of innovative approaches to harness civic voice and citizen engagement in our policy and delivery design.
Develop a council wide approach and model to civic engagement.
Develop and test new models of engagement with the CVSE sector (in association with community planning partners).

5. Holding ourselves to account

Underpinning our desire to create an inclusive city is a commitment to hold ourselves to account. We will do this in a number of ways, including publishing yearly action plans reporting against our commitments and monitoring how many people we have been able to support across our target groups. We will also continue to refine and build our evidence base, creating new measures of inclusive growth where required including both qualitative and quantitative measures.

We will commit to publishing a statement of progress annually, setting out the extent to which we are delivering against the commitments outlined in the strategy and the impact we are having.

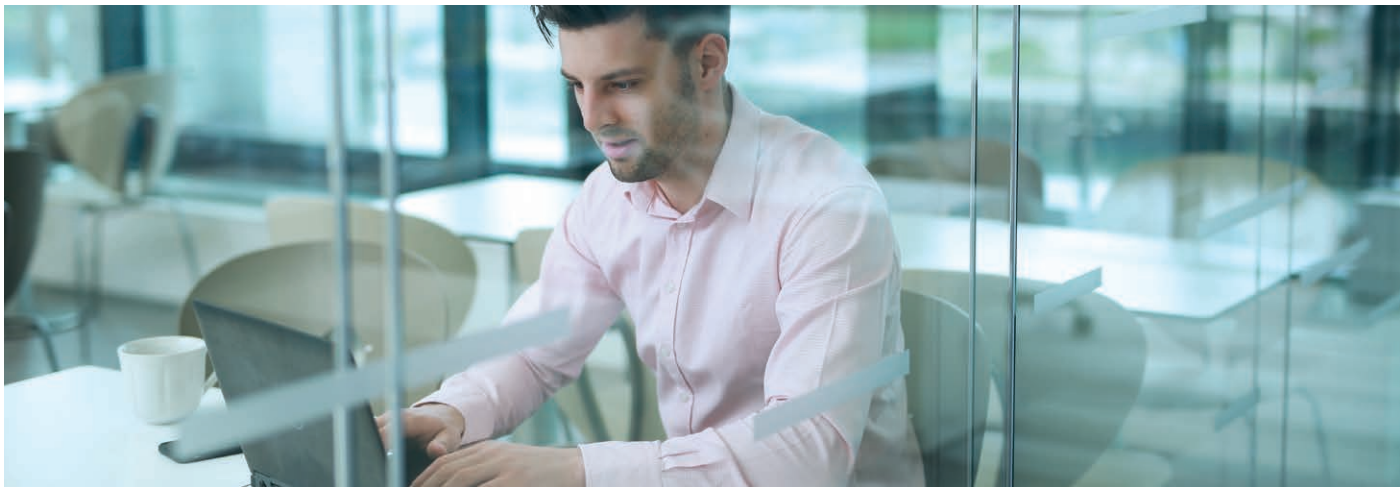
Developing an inclusive growth dashboard

This strategy includes a number of policy interventions, which highlight the council's initial contribution towards delivering inclusive growth. They are designed to provide a contributory relationship towards the citywide outcomes of addressing residents not in employment, residents with low skills levels, in-work low earning residents and young people not in education, employment or training.

In pursuit of our vision for inclusive growth for Belfast, we will adopt an open and transparent approach to reporting by publishing a statement of progress annually. This report will provide a summary of the information from the inclusive growth dashboard which will be used on an ongoing basis to measure success and the extent to which our policy interventions are having an impact.

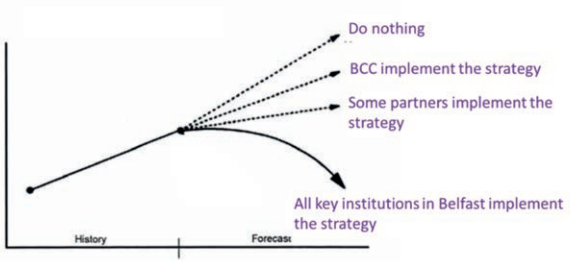
These target groups, identified during the development of the council's inclusive growth decision making framework, align to the Belfast Agenda and can be measured by a number of its population indicators, as follows:

Inclusive growth target group	Belfast Agenda population indicators
Residents not in employment	1.8 The proportion of working-age population in Belfast who are employed 1.9 Working age employment rate by deprivation 1.10 Economic inactivity rate (excluding students)
Residents with low skills levels	3.1 Proportion of working age population who have attained Level 2 or above
In work, low earning residents	1.11 Average earnings
Young people not in education, employment or training	3.6 Proportion of school-leavers entering employment, education or training



These indicators provide a sense of whether as a city the entire population is heading in the right direction.

Affecting change of the above target groups requires coordinated effort amongst citywide partners and anchor institutions. This is best demonstrated by the "Turning the Curve" concept used as part of the Outcomes Based Accountability™ thinking. For example, if the chart below maps the city's economic inactivity rate, the "Do Nothing" forecast predicts that this is likely to increase. Nevertheless, a concerted partnership approach to inclusive growth policy interventions would enable us to 'turn the curve' and reduce for example, economic inactivity at the population level.



In addition to the population indicators included within the Belfast Agenda's monitoring framework, we also capture information through our biennial residents' survey.

The residents' survey enables reporting every two years on the extent to which a representative sample of Belfast residents:

- agree that everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous city;
- agree that Belfast is a city where everyone fulfils their potential;
- agree that they can access job and training opportunities; and
- earn at least or above the living wage.

Obtaining access to meaningful, detailed and timely data presents a challenge for policy makers particularly at a local government district level. Proxy measures may therefore be required to report performance at a population level due to difficulties accessing data.

However we will not be constrained by this. Work is being progressed with our community planning data analytics partner, Queen's University Belfast to develop an inclusive growth monitor that is specific to Belfast. We are committed to developing an evidence base that will allow us to take an intelligence led approach to inclusive growth. Therefore we will also seek to benchmark our efforts by examining the work of the Centre for Progressive Policy in relation to the measurement of inclusive growth at the country, community and company level.

Reporting on who we have supported

We will also monitor and report at a performance level. Using this to create targets and strengthen and shape our actions over time. This could include:

- the total number of participants completing employability programmes (specifically targeting those that are long term unemployed or economically inactive) and the proportion progressing into employment;
- the total number of participants completing work experience or paid placement opportunities;
- percentage and value of spend within the local supply chain;
- percentage and value of spend with SMEs and social enterprises;
- number, duration, type and scope of direct delivery of business/enterprise initiatives that supports business start-up;
- the total number of participants increasing skills, qualification levels or 'upskilled' to be able to access 'better' employment;
- the total number of employees progressing in employment as a result of 'upskilling'.
- the total social value (£) for local communities as a result of council procurement;
- percentage of suppliers' employees who are employed on a permanent basis;
- percentage of suppliers paying the Living Wage;
- the total number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of social value in procurement;
- the total number of pupils engaged by working with schools and colleges; and
- the total number of new apprenticeships created.

The above measures are not intended to be an exhaustive list and it is envisaged that new performance measures will be developed as monitoring mechanisms within the council are developed. We will also work collaboratively with our city partners to widen the evidence base that exists for our target groups.

Establishing an inclusive growth oversight group

We recognise that implementing this strategy will require a significant shift in behaviour across the council. This is why we are committed to establishing an inclusive growth oversight group, reporting directly to our senior officers through well established oversight structures. The purpose of this group will be to ensure that we are working in collaboration across the organisation and on track for achievement against our stated outcomes.

This will allow support for best practice to be shared across the organisation, and for streamlined engagement with our key stakeholders in ensuring that a city wide agenda is adopted. This group will also work to commission joint research required to implement the strategy, support the development of improved targeting and monitoring and advise on improved target setting and future action planning.

International benchmarking and networks

In our efforts to develop a fully inclusive economy we are committed to learning from other cities throughout the United Kingdom (UK), Ireland and internationally to build our expertise, benchmark our performance and develop and share best practice. Opportunities will be sought at both an officer and elected representative level to ensure that within Belfast we are leading the way and to open us up to constructive peer review. This could include continuing to build linkages with:

- **EUROCITIES** - Belfast City Council has been an active member of the EUROCITIES network (comprising 140 European cities) for more than 20 years. In February 2019 EUROCITIES launched a new political initiative "Inclusive cities for all: social rights in my city" to demonstrate cities' contributions to a more cohesive society. Mayors and elected officials from 21 cities have announced their pledges to act on the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights through dedicated investments for city measures. There is an opportunity for Belfast to support and endorse the campaign but equally to learn from signatories on measures used by municipalities to support inclusive growth.
- **The Social Affairs Forum (SAF)** has an active working group entitled Smart Social Inclusion which enables peer reviews, the identification of solutions to address issues common to cities across Europe.
- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)** - In April 2016 the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) in association with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation launched an Inclusive Growth Commission for the UK. Belfast was one of a number of cities visited and examined by the Commission. Since then, we have been actively developing our links with the RSA, JRF and other organisations that provide leadership in this area. This ongoing relationship has led to the development of a new opportunity for Belfast that will greatly enhance our impact. With JRF and others we are exploring the potential for a city wide network of officers. We hope that these connections to other places and inclusive growth experts will enable constructive peer review, providing critical support and insight as we develop and innovate inclusive growth policy.

Our actions to make this happen

Year one
Finalise the measures that make up the inclusive growth dashboard.
Progress work with our partners to develop an inclusive growth monitor.
Develop a monitoring framework across the council to ensure that we are able to capture, record and report on our activity and outputs.
Continue to benchmark ourselves against best practice internationally, through membership of appropriate networks.
Establish an inclusive growth oversight group.
Continue to raise awareness of the strategy and its progress with citizens and key stakeholders.

Best practice case studies

Learning from others

Building community wealth, The Cleveland Evergreen Cooperatives

The City of Cleveland is an urban centre of around 400,000 residents located in Cuyahoga County in the state of Ohio. During the 2000s Cleveland experienced growth in a number of highly-skilled sectors, with increasing job opportunities in some STEM and health occupations, as well as growth in the number of highly-skilled workers living in the city. However, poverty rates remained comparatively high, unemployment rates were around the national average while wages were slightly below.

One important approach to economic development and harnessing inclusive growth in the city is the use of cooperative structures.

Evergreen Cooperative, is an umbrella body for a number of co-operatives in Cleveland. The co-operatives, which consist of a laundry company, an energy efficiency contractor, and America's largest urban farm, were grown with the help of procurement contracts with Cleveland's biggest schools and universities.

The Cleveland Foundation, a private charitable trust, took the lead by encouraging the city's key anchor institutions – the Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals – to buy into the vision, and the City of Cleveland quickly joined the scheme, pooling its resources in a multi-stakeholder effort.

In 2016 the three Evergreen Cooperatives employed around 120 people from the low-income University Circle area and generated a combined revenue of $6.3million.

Manchester - Social value in procurement

In 2016-17 Manchester City Council spent 71% of its procurement spending with local companies, equating to around £320million on goods and services from Manchester businesses. This figure was just over 50% a decade ago and is the result of work to improve its procurement policy and practices, aiming to address local needs and maximise benefits to the city's residents.

The council state they are firmly committed to embedding social value into all aspects of its procurement cycle and has established a minimum 20% social value weighting for all procurements.

As well as the direct economic benefits, research estimates that they have:

- created 705 apprenticeships in the city and over 1,000 jobs, including 423 employment opportunities for " hard to reach" individuals;
- created almost 70,000 hours volunteering and community sector support activities; and
- achieved 75% of responding suppliers paying their staff an hourly rate in excess of that advocated by the National Living Wage foundation.

Building on our work

Ringfenced recruitment - Belfast City Council

In 2013 Belfast City Council, with employability partners across the city, identified that a key factor in helping the long-term unemployed was to ring fence opportunities . With our employability partners we co-designed and delivered a pre-recruitment programme for five ringfenced basic entry administration posts. 40 participants were selected by partner organisations to take part in a two week pre -recruitment and training programme. This consisted of a mix of on the job experience and classroom based learning, and all who completed the course were invited to interview. Skills checks questionnaires were used instead of qualifications requirements. Five people were appointed to five permanent posts. Following the success of the pilot, which had never been tested in the public sector in Northern Ireland before, this approach was employed for the further recruitment of Cleansing Operatives and Business Support Clerks with a total of 27 people recruited via this method to date.

Volunteering - Belfast City Council

In 2015 Belfast developed a Charter for Volunteering, with an estimated 73,693 volunteer hours benefitting the council during 2013-14. We developed this commitment further by implementing an accompanying policy and procedures in 2017.

Currently we are actively promoting opportunities in our community centres, Super Connected Communities Hubs, summer schemes, Age Friendly Belfast and the Tropical Ravine, involving approximately 1,000 volunteers across the city.

Employability - Belfast City Council

Across the 2018-19 financial year, key achievements include over 2,750 participants engaged in employability programmes, with more than 800 expected to progress into employment this year; over 3,500 young people supported through youth initiatives and almost 7,500 participants engaged through career events and job fairs.

BCC 446

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Access to information

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. This document is available in alternative formats such as Braille, easy-read, audio, large print and also in other languages on request by contacting: 028 9027 0234

Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS)
Date:	20th March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the findings of the public consultation on the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) and to seek their agreement on the proposed changes.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to • Note the update on the draft BOSS consultation process and agree the proposed changes and actions set out at **Appendix 1** and the production of the final Strategy document.

3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Key Issues The Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) is an update of the previous Open Spaces Strategy – 'Your City, Your Space' completed in 2005. Belfast City Council appointed AECOM to help prepare a new BOSS for the Council Area. The BOSS, including the data collected during its preparation, forms part of the evidence base for the Local Development Plan (LDP). The high level Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan also supports the LDP. The draft BOSS has evolved as a strategic document pitched at a city level. To help us produce this strategy we established a Strategy Advisory Group which was made up of external partners and stakeholders (statutory, community and voluntary organisations). We also set up an internal Strategy Oversight Steering group made up of officers from across the council to provide oversight and guidance.
3.2 3.3 3.4	Consultation exercise Members are reminded that given the linkages with the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP), it was felt that a joint public consultation exercise would be beneficial to maximise responses. The consultation questionnaire was designed to allow respondents to comment on either document or both. The consultation process took place from 17th June until 20th September 2019. During the consultation period we received a total of **96 responses**: • 67 responses via Citizen Space • 16 hard copy questionnaire responses • 13 general written submissions 68 responses were from individuals, with 28 from groups/organisation. During the public consultation period, Officers also attended six events across the city to raise awareness of the consultation and to get feedback from a wide range of users. Given the level and detail of the responses, a report outlining the initial consultation findings on the draft BOSS was brought to the November 2019 meeting of this Committee. A detailed analysis of the responses has now been completed and a high level summary of these are outlined below. A document providing more detail on the consultation findings, with the Council's response, including proposed changes and actions is attached as appendix 1. Members should note that analysis of the GBIP was undertaken by the Development Planning and Policy team and was taken through Committee in December 2019.
3.5	Consultation Findings In general the Council was commended for developing the strategy and there was widespread support for it. There were some general comments around timescales and a lack of detailed actions, but as Members are reminded, this is an overarching strategy with

3.6	headline actions and over the coming months detailed action plans will be developed under each of the Strategic Principles. A number of respondents thought that the BOSS should include more detail or further emphasis on certain issues, such as the duty to enhance biodiversity and the need to urgently address climate change. Many suggested additional wording or sought greater clarification. Many of such comments have merit and it is proposed to amend the wording of some sections accordingly. Nevertheless, such changes are minor in nature and do not represent any substantive change to the Strategy.
3.7 3.8	<u>Vision</u> Whilst **70%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the draft vision is appropriate, there were some suggestions around how it could be changed and it is proposed that the vision is reworded to the following (changes in bold): By 2035… Belfast will have a well-connected, **accessible** network of high quality, **sustainable** open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives, works in and visits our city.
3.9	<u>Strategic Principles</u> Within the draft strategy seven strategic principles (SPs) have been proposed to provide the foundation and framework for achieving the vision and implementing the strategy, these are: o SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces o SP2: Improve connectivity o SP3: Improve health and well-being o SP4: Support place-making and enhance the built environment o SP5: Increase resilience to climate change o SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment o SP7: Be celebrated and support learning • **80%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the 7 strategic principles are the correct ones to achieve the vision • **71%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the 7 strategic principles addressed their priorities

3.10	A series of headline actions were developed under each of the 7 strategic principles and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that these were the correct actions. • **73%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces • **70%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP2: Improve connectivity • **72%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP3 : Improve health and well-being • **61%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP4 : Support place-making and enhance the built environment • **74%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP5: Increase resilience to climate change • **75%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment • **67%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP7: Be celebrated and support learning
3.11	A range of comments and additional actions were suggested under each of the seven Strategic Principles (SPs), these have been collated and are detailed in appendix 1. Members should note that some of the comments/suggestions were cross cutting and appeared under several SPs e.g. partnership working. Where appropriate, suggestions will be considered within the detailed actions plans that will be developed under each of the SPs. Some of the comments/suggestions do not fall under the remit of the BOSS and where appropriate will be considered and implemented under the relevant strategy such as the new LDP or LBAP.
3.12	<u>Equality screening and rural need analysis</u> A draft equality screening and rural needs analysis were completed and were included within the consultation. Three detailed responses were submitted in relation to these, they will be analysed, and the screenings updated as necessary.
3.13	<u>Next steps</u> Officers will update the draft BOSS as outlined in the document attached as appendix 1 (subject to Committee approval) and a final Strategy document will be produced. Over the coming months, Officers from across City and Neighbourhood Services will develop detailed action plans under each of the seven Strategic Principles and these will be brought to the People and Communities Committee.
3.14	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> The delivery of the BOSS will rely on existing budget, working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders and sourcing external/ partner funding over the life of the strategy.

3.15	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The final strategy will be subject to an equality screening and rural needs assessment in line with the Council's process.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Summary of key issues from the consultation findings and recommended response and actions

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Key Issue Raised	Council Response and Action
General Comments	
Commend and support BCC for developing the plan which provides clear recognition of the critical role and benefits of open spaces, including for ecosystems services, health and wellbeing and biodiversity.	We welcome the support given to our vision, together with the constructive comments and suggestions put forward in the responses we received. **No action required**.
Concern raised over the implementation and delivery of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy and its lack of actions and targets. Specific comments in relation to this included: • Financial resource issues should be challenged • Plans not ambitious enough • Timescale too long – not compatible with climate emergency • No actions included for improvements	**Comments noted.** The BOSS is not intended as an action plan. It is an over-arching strategy recognising the many benefits of open spaces and how these can be incorporated into projects and plans across the city. Whilst the BOSS contains headline actions these are intended to be high level and detailed action plans will be developed under these. **Proposed actions:** Detailed actions plans will be developed under each of the strategic principles and these will include timescales and resource allocations.
Various suggestions for minor rewording to help clarify or emphasise key points throughout draft document.	**Comments noted and agreed.** **Proposed action:** Minor wording amendments throughout document to aid clarity or emphasis that do not alter the overall direction or strategic principles set out in the draft document. We will also ensure alignment with the GBIP.
Suggested that council should lead by example in it management of parks and open spaces.	**Comment noted.** The effective delivery of the vision and principles will be implemented through its influence on other plans, strategies, programmes and projects, including through the new LDP, the GBIP, Local Biodiversity Action Plan and council investment in projects. **No further action required.**

Definition of Open Space is different to PPS8 and suggest single definition throughout policy documents. Concern that typologies omit 'natural and semi-natural urban green spaces' and FiT standard for these should be included. All of Belfast Hills not open space in terms of accessibility – suggestion that area is marked as a Significant Natural Heritage Asset with open spaces marked individually.	**Comment noted.** The BOSS is not a planning policy document and focuses only on land whereas PPS8 covers all open space of public value including bodies of water. It should also be noted that in the future PPS8 will be superseded by the LDP. The BOSS is one of a suite of documents within a wider policy framework and the GBIP considers a boarder suite of open space typologies. **No further action required.**
Greater emphasis should be given to benefits of biodiversity and the council's duties in furthering biodiversity. Concern that priority to functionality over biodiversity – definition of Open Spaces (p8).	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action**: Add reference to the WANE Act 2011 and the council statutory duty to enhance biodiversity, along with minor consequential wording edits in relevant sections of document. The Council is currently developing the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and we will amend the policy framework on p11 to show the relationship between the BOSS and LBAP.
Suggestion that area working groups take the strategy forward.	**Comments noted.** This suggestion will be considered within the development of the actions plans for the implementation of the strategy. Where appropriate we will look to use existing or emerging structures. **No further action required.**
A number of respondents raised concern over the loss of green open space to development of 3G pitches - in particular Glassmullin Green.	**Comments noted.** This is a site specific matter that is not directly relevant to the Open Spaces Strategy, which is a strategic framework document. This specific matter of Glassmullin Green was subject to due planning process. **No action required**
Importance of engagement with stakeholders – offers to work together from partner organisations.	**Comments noted.** **Proposed actions:**

	We will continue to work with partners in the implementation of the strategy and we will follow up with organisations who specially commented to identify any potential partnership working opportunities.
Vision	
Several suggestions were made in relation to rewording the vision, these included: • Change to 'local' network of premium open spaces • Suggest access for all is made more explicit • Omits reference to protect and enhance natural environment • Simplify the vision it and make it more explicit in relation to Biodiversity	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** It is proposed that the vision is reworded to the following (changes in bold): By 2035… Belfast will have a well-connected, **accessible** network of high quality, **sustainable** open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives, works in and visits our city.
Strategic Principles	
SP1 – Provide welcoming shared spaces **Comments** • Comments stress the need to protect, enhance and preserve existing open spaces and create new open spaces, especially a city centre green space. • Uneven distribution of open space across the city • Additional reference to open space in new residential developments • Difficulty of creating 'new' open space – in context of growth agenda, concern that this will place considerable pressure on existing open spaces. • Need more emphasis on practical protection and preservation of the natural environment	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.

• Restricted access to open space eg growth in number of 3G pitches and need to measure quality of access; specific examples where provided including Glassmullan Green • Some underdeveloped open spaces should be considered for housing to meet acute need • Welcome commitment to focus development on brownfield sites **Suggested Actions** • BCC should increase 'new' open spaces in line with growth or new developments • Concerns over genuine shared spaces – neutrality • Address vandalism	
SP2 – Improve connectivity **Comments** • Continuous high quality cycle/pedestrians routes a priority • Sustainable transport policy important and should have greater emphasis and recognise the importance of connectivity and to include wildlife corridors between green spaces • Greenways should not only be thought of as linear - should acknowledge the benefits of inter-connectivity and linkages and beyond BCC area **Suggested Actions** • Ensure existing wildlife taken into consideration when planning greenways to comply with WANE biodiversity duties • Include an action to promote connectivity in relation to habitats and species	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.

SP3 – Improve health and wellbeing **Comments** • Mixed views on the benefits of artificial pitches versus grass pitches • Essential to recognise the role that open space plays in wellbeing • Consider dog walkers as a high user group • Food should be more prominent – city growing/farming • Programming and partners key to behavioural change – consultation required to understand the needs of minority groups and help address multi- benefits of open space • The BOSS does not explicitly aim to promote age/child friendly environments **Suggested Actions** • Partnerships need to be built up and retained • Providing appropriate facilities is important – toilets, shelter, seating, picnic tablets • Parks should remain open 24/7 • Suggestion to add 'and enjoyment of nature' in action re passive recreation, high proportion of use is passive – peace and tranquillity are key attributes to well-being – need to balance this with promotion of active sport and recreation	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.

SP4 – Support place-making and enhance the built environment **Comments** • Focus on parks that have been neglected • Need to protect built heritage and support regeneration of heritage assets - suggest change action to 'built and natural heritage assets' • Suggestion regarding management principles for a healthy public realm and natural environment. • Have more emphasis on community involvement, including in the management of open spaces • Greater focus required in relation to development areas/proposals to ensure adequate open spaces and facilities • Should focus on longer term rather than temporary projects • Whilst welcome the development of activities, passive recreation should be recognised and a balance between all uses achieved • Addressing derelict land should aim to address housing and environmental needs **Suggested Actions** • Suggest greening of vacant spaces and plazas to be more inviting for public use • Suggest enhancement of green spaces for multi- functionality • Collaborate with stakeholders/partners to animate underused spaces • Designation and promotion of proper working Botanic Gardens will increase the public's understanding of its importance - should have its own classification as unique site - would welcome restoration of Palm House and Kelvin monument	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.

• Would welcome support from BCC on the heritage of Ligoniel Village	
SP5 – Increase resilience to climate change **Comments** • Suggestions around how assets such as Divis/Black Mountain, Lagan Banks and Ballymurphy and Blackstaff Rivers could be used to tackle specific issues • Recommendation that native species should be used • Importance of partnership working • Suggestions around wider actions that could be taken such as renewable energy and sustainable transport • BOSS design strategies should be connected with the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan • Consider renewable energy • Correct action around LwWP to reflect that this is a multi-agency programme (the final strategy document will be amended to reflect this) **Suggested Actions** • Incorporate food growing spaces/reference urban agriculture • Should be noted that open space and de-culverting can help protect other areas from flooding through water attenuation - LWWP should be referenced under sustainable drainage (p26)	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.
SP6 – Protect and enhance the natural environment **Comments** • Suggestion that there are many opportunities to involve citizens	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within

• Strongly support action to enable species movements across the landscape • Suggestions made around actions (including on specific sites) that could be taken to support wildlife and the natural environment **Suggested Actions** • A priority habitat and species audit need to be carried out to meet the aims of this strategic priority • Include landscape and ecosystem services within guiding principles • Reference BS 8545:2014 in relation to the planting of new trees • Under actions around invasive alien species, need to look at rhododendron and its link to phytophthora ramorum	the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.
SP7 – Be celebrated and support learning **Comments** • Importance of community involvement • Suggestion that there is link to the cultural strategy to ensure consistency **Suggested Actions** • Suggestion around working with the voluntary sector and using volunteers • Suggestion that we make events more environmentally sustainable • Suggestion to work with the educational sector to engage young people • Have park events across the city	**Comments noted.** **Proposed action:** The comments/suggested actions will be considered within the development of the detailed actions plans that will be used in the implementation of the strategy. Where suggestions do not fall within the scope of the BOSS they will be directed to the appropriate service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing planning policies and the new LDP. They may also be picked up under existing or emerging strategies such as the LBAP.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	*A City Imagining* Investment Programme: Cultural multi-annual grants
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Eimear Henry, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: - Provide additional information in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment carried out on the Cultural Strategy, *A City Imagining* and the Equality Screening of the cultural Investment Model including cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG). – Consider the referral from Council to Committee of recommendations 4 and 5 in relation to cultural multi-annual funding presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 26 February 2020 as follows:

	○ agreed that funding totalling £80,000 be allocated to a capacity building programme, with the PUL community to be proactively targeted; and ○ agreed that the aforementioned capacity building programme be extended to include the LGBT and all other recognised Section 75 groups.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that Members: – Note the additional information presented in this report and the recommendations for capacity building for section 75 groups as set out in the cultural strategy implementation plans. – Approve specific recommendation of capacity building for PUL communities including allocation of £80,000 budget from 2020-21 departmental budgets. – Note that Covid-19 will obviously have an impact on the events planned in the next number of months. Some may not go ahead and some may be postponed. We are currently working through all of the implications including the need to support core costs relating to jobs etc. Where it is possible to make cost savings this will be done and factored into the overall cashflow procedures
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Members will be aware that at a Council Meeting held on 2 March 2020 recommendations 4 and 5 in relation to cultural multi-annual grants presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 26 February 2020 were referred back to Committee for further consideration. At a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 4 March 2020 it was agreed that this item would be considered at the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
3.2	<u>Background</u> The new ten year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining* was approved by Members at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2019. This strategy is the culmination of extensive public engagement and consultation over a 2 year period and is a consolidation of the foundation, commitments and achievements of several preceding strategies and frameworks. *A City Imagining* sets out a long-term commitment to facilitating a new integrated phase of culture-led progress and development for Belfast. The strategy brings together the culture, events and tourism functions within Council as well as identifying areas of cross departmental working to

	support the Belfast Agenda. This requires a new cross-cutting approach within Council including the design and delivery of: – Detailed implementation plans to include a series of new programmes to support 16 priorities set out in the strategy and a number of flagship strategic projects including bidding for major events. – A new investment model including launch of cultural multi-annual grants.
3.3	The strategy was informed by best practice, independent reviews and benchmarking with other cities. In keeping with the ethos of citizen-led design and engagement, Council also committed to an in-depth consultation process for this new strategy. This involved various engagement strands from the traditional online platform, *Citizen Space*, to opening a consultation hub in the city centre.
3.4	Other methods included citywide exhibitions and one to one meetings led by officers. The results of the overall process have been extensive reaching over 3000 residents and visitors, in one to one engagement through 80 events taking place in Belfast. A further 134 responses were received online or in writing. Additional awareness raising was achieved through the distribution of the full strategy document, a citizen summary and a short film.
3.5	A draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was made available throughout the consultation phase with a series of targeted engagement and consultation activities to ensure equality was considered as a critical element of the overall strategy.
3.6	The EQIA concluded that the Cultural Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly, by contributing to economic growth and social cohesion. It is further anticipated that some areas of development may have a specific positive differential impact on a number of Section 75 groups by actively addressing recognised need.
3.7	However through the consultation a number of issues were raised including: – The strategy document did not reference specific Section 75 groups such as members of the LGBTQ+ community, minority ethnic groups or disabled people. – The importance of equality of access and equality of opportunity. – Making information readily available on the accessibility of venues.

	– Consider accessibility issues when planning and delivering cultural events/activities, including the cost/pricing and infrastructure issues such as transport and parking. – Increasing staff capacity and training around the use of language and assistance around disability – The need for monitoring to be manageable.
3.8	These issues identified in the consultation and reflected in the EQIA have been addressed in the following ways: – Changes were made to the final strategy document – The inclusion of specific, targeted initiatives in implementation plans – Informed design of investment model including CMAG – A commitment to further equality screening of individual programmes especially investment programmes
3.9	**Implementation Plans** Draft implementation plans were presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2019 and October 2019. These implementation plans cover an initial 3 year period and will be further supported by annual operational plans. The operational plan for tourism, culture, arts and events for 2020/21 will be presented to City Growth and Regeneration in April 2020.
3.10	These implementation plans set out phase one of delivery against the overall strategy. Included are a number of targeted initiatives including specific programmes for Section 75 groups. These are outlined below and include indicative budgets over the three year period however these are subject to annual budget setting and approvals: – Establish a participative forum open to those resident or working in Belfast (£5,000) – Complete a cultural mapping of the city (£50,000) – Deliver eight 3-year (Y)our Home Projects to include projects led by and working with LGBTQ+ groups, new communities, disabled people, older people, schools and multi-lingual communities (£400,000) – Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people. This could include specific initiatives such as *Gig Buddies* (£30,000)

	– Support employability skills and capacity building programmes for disabled artists, LGBTQ+ representatives and those from minority ethnic groups. (£120,000)
3.11	Year one actions will be presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in April 2020 as part of annual operational plans and have been accounted for in existing departmental budgets.
3.12	**Equality Screening on Investment Model** In line with the recommendations of the equality impact assessment, an equality screening was carried out on the emerging investment model with detailed consideration of the proposed cultural multi-annual grant.
3.13	The opportunity to increase engagement in culture by section 75 dimensions most at risk of missing out is embedded in the parent strategy, *A City Imagining*, and its themes and priorities have been embedded in the Investment Model including the design of cultural multi-annual grants.
3.14	However the equality screening did identify a number of mitigating actions and / or policy changes that will be actioned as part of annual programmes of work and have been accounted for in departmental budgets. This includes: – A number of proactive policy decisions were built in to the strategy and investment model. This includes prioritisation of people and communities currently most likely to miss out; and the requirement for applicants to comply with the DDA and set down how their organisation and activities are inclusive of disabled people. – Section 75 monitoring has been included in applications for MAGs and should be included at application and monitoring stage for all grants. Completion rates will be monitored, and the questionnaire will be reviewed and revised accordingly. – Collate and consider data gathered through section 75 monitoring and use it to inform policy and practice at regular intervals. – Work with other key funders and agencies in the city to streamline the collection of monitoring data. This is likely to reduce the administrative burden on both

	funders and recipients, improve the quality and frequency of responses, and provide more robust data. – Work with other key policymakers in the city to monitor key population indicators and programme performance measures, in particular participation and attendance by disabled people. – Provide additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development of under-engaged audiences, in particular disabled people and older people; people and groups where there is evidence of additional barriers, such as LGBTQ+ and carers; and people with multiple identities. – Support for outdoor events promoters will include the promotion and implementation of the council's Inclusive Events Guide. – Cultural festivals will be included in the accessibility audit. – Update the Inclusive Events Guide to consider the needs of carers not just as "personal assistance", but as consumers of culture in their own right. – Ongoing screening of other Investment model investment strands to be carried out at they are designed and implemented.
	Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG)
3.15	Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG) opened for applications on 7 October 2019 and closed on 22 November 2019. The grants were advertised via websites, existing networks and on social media. Nine information sessions were held across the city, with 204 attendees in total. In addition, 137 one to one advice sessions took place. In total, officers engaged directly with 406 potential applicants in advance of the deadline.
3.16	The results of the CMAG process are summarised as follows: - 84 applications were received in total amounting to ££4,446,114 requests and 54 grants were recommended to be awarded a total of £2,363,264. - The standard of applications was very high with thresholds between >73% and >79% - A Transition programme will support organisations who were existing multi-annual clients, and who were either unsuccessful or ineligible to apply. - Recipients of CMAG grant or Transition programme will be allocated an officer - Applications for two year funding will be due to reopen in Autumn 2021, for 2022-24. Applications for four year funding will be due to reopen in Autumn 2023, for 2024-28.

	- Other funding strands, support mechanisms and projects are currently being developed to support *A City Imagining* cultural strategy 2020-2030 and the Belfast Agenda.
3.17	On reviewing the outcomes of CMAG, it was concluded that there has been under-representation of groups from or representing the PUL community and therefore capacity building has been identified as the recommended mitigating action.
3.18	*A City Imagining* and the Investment Model does not specify particular priority section 75 dimensions. Rather, applicants for funding are required to evidence how and why the people or groups they intend to work with are at risk of missing out. This allows cultural organisations to demonstrate need based on their own considerable experience and expertise working with different groups, allowing for groups with multiple complex identities that can otherwise be overlooked. This is supported by research from Thrive, which recommends a more nuanced "focus on particular demographics in particular areas will be the best way to achieve overall growth in the city's rates of engagement"; and supported by feedback from the *A City Imagining* engagement programme which recognised that individuals cannot be categorised into only one section 75 category.
3.19	*A City Imagining* places particular importance on culture as a driver of social capital, and by building the "capacity of our citizens to allow people to express their own cultural identities" is likely to continue to increased understanding and tolerance of the culture and identities of others. Therefore there is considered a good relations implication that indicates that there may be a differential impact on cultural capacity in the long-term because this new process has pointed to a complex set of circumstances (cultural organisations primarily preserving, promoting or developing the protestant culture have lower organisational capacity) and multiple identities.
3.20	The proposed approach is to allocate a budget of £80,000 in 2020/21 to develop a programme based on best practice examples and a review of existing or previously delivered programmes. The programme would initially be delivered as a pilot with evaluation built in and recommendations for any future support presented to Committee. The three main strands would focus on: - Health audit to better understanding the differences between limited resources, skills and infrastructure (to be supported by overall cultural mapping of the city).

	- Capacity building programme to look at developing high quality festival programmes, partnership working, strategic planning and governance. - Pilot to work with two organisations to deliver programmes in 2020 including leadership programme and support for skills development. <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.21	There are no new financial implications to this report. Proposed programmes including £80,000 for capacity building for PUL communities has been accounted for in departmental budgets for 2020/21 allocated to the implementation of the cultural strategy. Covid-19 will obviously have an impact on the events planned in the next number of months. Some may not go ahead and some may be postponed. We are currently working through all of the implications including the need to support core costs relating to jobs etc. Where it is possible to make cost savings this will be done and factored into the overall cashflow procedures <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.22	An Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment was completed for the Cultural Strategy and is included at Appendix 1. An Equality Screening was completed on the emerging investment model with detailed consideration of cultural multi-annual grants.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: *A City Imagining* Equality Impact Assessment Appendix 2: *A City Imagining* Investment Model Equality Screening

Cultural Strategy for Belfast 2020 - 2030

Equality Assessment at a Strategic Level

August 2019

Access to Information Statement

This document has been developed in Arial 12 point with 1.5 spacing. As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to make sure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We are happy to provide any of the information in this document in alternative formats on request.

Overview and Executive Summary

As part of the development of the Council's Cultural Strategy *A City Imagining* 2020-2030, Belfast City Council carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) at a strategic level to ensure these obligations were met to the fullest possible extent and that the promotion of equality of opportunity was at the core of the Programme. This was undertaken at the same time as the development of the Cultural Strategy, so that the EQIA could help inform the development of the strategy and influence the investment and implementation programme to maximise the potential for positive impacts.

The Cultural Strategy has four key strategic themes that recognise and nurture the role of culture through four spheres:

A City Belonging – focuses on supporting active citizenship and participation in cultural life.

A City Challenging – focuses on diversity through use of public and cultural spaces.

A City Creating – focuses on supporting innovation and creativity across the cultural sectors.

A City Exploring – focuses on Belfast's relationship to the rest of the world both inward and outward including support for cultural tourism.

Further information on the themes and priorities is contained in section 2. The strategy document presents the overall approach and commitments over a ten

year period. This will be supported by an additional body of work that will include the development of initial three year implementation plans that will specifically address the delivery of:

- The priorities set out in the strategy
- The strategic projects set out in the strategy
- The proposed investment and governance model

The implementation plans and the investment model that support the strategy will specifically address the need for targeted initiatives. These will be subject to relevant screening and/or equality impact assessments at an appropriate time when relevant information to conduct a full analysis is available.

Following the 12 week public consultation process, a consultation report has been produced (www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culturalstrategy) and the equality assessment has been updated. This will help inform the ongoing assessment and monitoring of equality implications as part of the ongoing development and delivery of the Cultural Strategy. Key issues emerging from the responses related to:

- Developing a good evidence base to inform decision making, with annual research to develop our understanding on participation levels
- Effective engagement and consultation
- Ensuring that an inclusive and accessible approach to design and delivery

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1. Introduction

1.1 Belfast City Council has developed a 10 year Cultural Strategy for Belfast - *A City Imagining* - and it was decided that a strategic level equality impact assessment should be undertaken, along with full consultation on the draft strategy. Following this period of public consultation; detailed implementation and investment plans will be put in place and will also be subject to appropriate equality assessments.

1.2 This is a new strategic framework for the city and is set firmly within the context of the Belfast Agenda and Local Development Plan to create a vision and coherent framework for Belfast that will fully embed culture in the wider city agenda and to enable Belfast's vision to be a 'culturally vibrant city'. The ten year Cultural Strategy for Belfast recognises that over the years, the Council has made a commitment to strengthening and promoting the cultural scene in Belfast. Significant steps have informed the development of the strategy; notably:

(i) Securing agreement on the first **integrated cultural framework for the city** in 2012. This demonstrated the Council's commitment and leadership in establishing a strong vision for the future cultural city. Developed as a result of significant engagement and consultation with the cultural sector in the city, resulting in an agreed vision and action plans for the city. The vision of the Cultural Framework is that:

> ***By 2020, everyone in Belfast experiences and is inspired by our city's diverse and distinctive culture and arts. Arts and heritage are valued for enriching quality of life and creating wealth, and the city's culture and creativity is recognised throughout the world.***

(ii) Securing agreement for a bid for **European Capital of Culture 2023** by Belfast in partnership with Derry City & Strabane District Council in 2017. This process was designed to enhance the city's cultural vibrancy and strengthen the profile of Belfast as a culturally rich destination. The

development of the bid for European Capital of Culture generated significant interest and momentum; highlighting the potential economic and social impact of investing in cultural and creative development.

1.3 Both the Cultural Framework 2012-2020 and the European Capital of Culture 2023 bid programmes have involved substantial developmental work. This includes a significant programme of engagement and consultation; including engagement with stakeholders, community, voluntary groups representing the arts, heritage, business and culture sectors as well as residents and government departments. In addition there has been regular updates and briefings provided to Belfast City Council's councillors, through the City Growth & Regeneration Committee and through party briefings to focus on the development of the strategy.

1.4 The process of developing this new ten year Cultural Strategy has built on, and been informed by, this engagement and participation. The Strategy will also be supported by Belfast City Council's decision in 2018 to participate in the **Agenda 21 for Culture - pilot cities programme**. This international programme supports the role of culture as an additional dimension, alongside the social, economic and evironmental dimensions, that are needed in order to deliver sustainable city development. Participation in the pilot cities programme provides Belfast with a 2 year framework that highlights the distinct role of culture in policy and place-making. More information on this international programme can be found at the following website: Agenda 21 for Culture.

1.5 The Council have agreed that the Cultural Strategy will be developed in two phases:

- First phase – Cultural Strategy vision and strategic priorities
- Second phase – Cultural Strategy implementation plans and investment programmes

As a result it was agreed internally that the EQIA process would follow this approach:

- Cultural Strategy Equality Assessment - at a strategic level to guide the development of the implementation plans and investment programme
- Cultural Strategy implementation and investment programme would be subject to appropriate screening and assessment as required. The issues identified at the strategic level will guide the development of the implementation and investment programmes.

1.7 The purpose of this Equality Assessment is to:

- consider the potential equality and good relations impacts of the Cutural Strategy at a strategic level focusing on the key inequalities which the strategic themes and priorities can help to reduce;
- provide an outline analysis of data and research on current major inequalities experienced by people in the Section 75 groups in relation to the key commitments under the Cultural Strategy;
- establish the positive equality impacts which the future Cultural Strategy can make.

Section 75

1.8 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between :

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

1.9 In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.10 The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 introduced new duties requiring all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to –

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

1.11 Screening and EQIAs are carried out in accordance with the guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). The relevant guidance currently in place includes:

- Guide to the Statutory Duties (April 2010)
- Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment (February 2005)
- Promoting Good Relations – A Guide for Public Authorities (October 2007).

1.12 The guide to the statutory duties makes it clear that 'policies' is a broad, inclusive term which covers all the ways in which an authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland.[1] The Cultural Strategy is regarded as a policy and subject to the statutory duties.

EQIA methodology

1.13 When undertaking an EQIA, the council closely follows the ECNI guidance which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process :

[1] Guide to the statutory duties, ECNI, April 2010, page 30.

Step 1 : Definition of the aims of the policy

Step 2 : Consideration of available data and research

Step 3 : Assessment of potential and actual impacts

Step 4 : Consideration of measures to mitigate adverse impact

Step 5 : Formal consultation

Step 6 : Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA

Step 7 : Monitoring for negative impact.

1.14 This draft report has been written firstly to provide information to consultees during the formal consultation phase and was subject to a 12 week consultation period, alongside the draft Cultural Strategy. It has now been updated with the findings from the consultation process to provide the Council with all available information on which to base a decision.

2. Aims of the policy

2.1 Belfast's culture and arts scene has developed rapidly over the last 10 years and with the city's first community plan in place and the development of the local development plan for Belfast which sets out a vision of the city for 2035. This Belfast Agenda vision is that by 2035:

> ***'***Belfast will be a city reimagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. ***Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant****, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of the conflict*'

This is further reinforced by the Local Development which sets out an ambitious spatial plan for the city and that by 2035:

> *Belfast will be a globally successful, smart regional city that is environmentally resilient with a* ***vibrant economic and social heart'***

2.2 This vision and commitment for Belfast to be a culturally vibrant city; makes this both an exciting and a challenging time in Belfast's transfomation. In the challenging economic climate, it is vital that the Council shows leadership by establishing a strong vision for our future cultural city and defines its role in taking this forward. The Cultural Strategy presents a 10 year vision for cultural transformation and establishes strategic priorities to guide future creative and cultural capacity and place-making in the city. This provides the framework for the investment and implementation programmes that will deliver on the strategy.

2.3 The ambition of the Cultural Strategy is is set out in the opening cultural statement that has been shaped by the extensive engagement process that has taken place since 2017. This statement recognises that culture has many meanings and that cultural expression can take many forms.

2.4 The Cultural Strategy has four key strategic themes that recognise and nurture the role of culture through four spheres – from the individual, to the community, to the cultural and creative sector and to the city's connections globally. The following strategic themes and priorities have been developed to guide our cultural activity:

2.5 ***Theme 1: A City Belonging***

Cultural belonging can be defined as an individual's feelings in relation to their sense of identity, their relationship to other people around them and their sense of place.

Agenda 21 for Culture states that cultural rights guarantee the ability of everyone to identify with one or several cultural communities and to adapt this choice throughout their life.

The exercise of cultural rights is essential for the development of a sustainable city.

We believe that arts and creative practices can foster the confidence to imagine new and diverse senses of belonging in Belfast. Priorities under this theme will support citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity.

The priorities are:

i. Developing a people focused approach to cultural development by facilitating citizens and sector participation in setting priorities, decision making and in the evaluation of cultural policies

ii. Building the creative capacity of our citzens and cultural sector to allow people to express their own cultural identities

iii. Protecting and promoting cultural heritage in all its dimensions, both tangible and intangible including the plurality of the citys cultural narratives

iv. Enabling a sense of belonging and sense of place through cultural participation

2.6 *Theme 2: A City Challenging*

Globalisation and migration have increased diversity in cities across the world. Different dimensions of diversity intersect in multiple ways between individuals and communities. One of the city's challenges is to create the conditions whereby Belfast's open spaces offer opportunities for diverse encounters with different cultures, ethnicities, lifestyles, ideologies and attitudes.

Priorities under this theme will aspire to create the conditions for dynamic co-creation and synergy in our public realm.

i. Embedding cultural impact in city development and local placemaking

ii. Investing in connected and sustainable infrastructure of quality cultural spaces across the city

iii. Supporting high quality cultural events and activities that are accessible, diverse and inclusive

iv. Transforming under-used public spaces into vibrant and diverse cultural destinations

2.7 *Theme 3: A City Creating*

A culturally vibrant city must take risks. The citizens of Belfast have indicated that they are ready to challenge traditional mind-sets and take a culture-led leap into the future. Cultural, arts and heritage organisations have a key role to play as creative leaders, innovators and challengers.

Priorities under this theme will facilitate and explore new ways of working, taking more risks and helping artists to have more autonomy to engage with citizens in new and creative ways.

i. Increasing the autonomy of the creative sectors to shape the city's evolving, rich and multiple cultural narratives

ii. Supporting cultural excellence, cultural planning and cultural entrepreneurialism by providing support for artistic innovation and imporved networking

iii. Investing in a stronger and more sustainable cultural sector by supporting artists and producers to work beyond boundaries.

iv. Empowering the innovative capacity of the creative economy to connect technology and society

2.8 *Theme 4: A City Exploring*

The depth and breadth of existing partnerships and networks between a wide range of cultural players is already evident in Belfast. The positive impact of these connections has ripple effects across many sectors at a city and regional level as well as securing Belfast's place within the global creative and cultural economy. Belfast will facilitate, support and maintain city, regional and international networks and collaborative partnerships on a range of levels, from the individual artist to established cultural institutions.

Priorities under this theme will sustain and strengthen the city's cultural ecosystem.

i. Strengthening our city, regional and international cultural networks

ii. Growing our sustainable cultural tourism product through local place-making

iii. Encouraging environmental responsibilitity by understanding and adapting cultural behaviours

iv. Increasing the contribution of both public and private cultural sectors to inclusive economic growth

2.9 The Strategy operates at an individual, community, sectoral and city level. It recognises that people are at its the core – everyone who lives, works and visits Belfast will have the opportunity to access, experience, contribute to and be inspired by a diverse, authentic and vibrant culture.

2.10 As a result of the significant programme of engagement and pre-consultation in developing the strategy, culture has been defined in its widest sense – including the formal and professional arts and cultural activities, to people being cultural in their own ways and in their own spaces. The ambition of the strategy is to recognise, value and celebrate the role that culture plays in shaping the city and the lives of those who live, work and visit it by adopting an inclusive and open approach. In this way, we will contribute to the economic ambitions of the city, creating creative spaces and attractive places, building capacity and improving quality of life for the people of Belfast. Through this approach, it contributes to the inclusive economic and social growth of the city.

2.11 To deliver this strategy, we will work in partnership with our city stakeholders, including the culture arts and heritage sectors and strategic stakeholders, to develop supporting implementation plans and investment programmes. We will take an outcomes based approach to deliver on the strategic themes and priorities and in turn, contribute to the Belfast Agenda outcomes.

2.12 The Strategy also includes a commitment to identifying new mechanisms to finance and invest in cultural activity and assets. As the civic leader, Belfast

City Council will take a lead role in developing public-private forms of investment, working with partners, to leverage new investment into the city. The aims of the cultural investment programme are to:

i. Support the cultural life of the city by enabling citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change

ii. Invest in our cultural and creative sector to develop the skills and capacity for production and innovation

iii. Position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking

iv. Establish Belfast as a cultural destination

2.13 The approach is shaped by two external bodies of work:

- **Agenda 21 for Culture** – an international methodology that supports cultural development in cities and regions. The focus of Culture 21 is to embed culture as the fourth dimension of sustainable cities alongside existing economic, social and ecological pillars. Belfast's participation in the Culture 21 pilot cities programme has already been approved and this programme will support the implementation of this strategy.
- **Core Cities Network Cultural Enquiry** – Belfast is a partner member of the core cities network. The enquiry presents a number of practical recommendations on investment and governance of culture in cities. It presents an opportunity to increase the ability of cities to use culture to drive inclusive growth and sets shared priorities for culture along with a more effective approach to investment to maximise the overall return. The development of the investment programme and implementation plans will continue during 2019/20.

2.14 Given the strategic and transformational nature of the ten-year Cultural Strategy for Belfast *A City Imagining*, the equality impacts of the individual programmes, plans and projects, are not specifically considered as part of this EQIA. The programmes, plans and projects to deliver on this strategy, will

continue to be co-designed with stakeholders and partners. These programmes, plans and projects will be subject to equality screening in line with the Council's Equality Scheme and in accordance with the criteria set out in the guidance produced by the Equality Commission.

2.15 This Equality Assessment report provides an assessment of the potential impacts of the overall strategic vision, themes and priorities on the Section 75 groups. This final report has been informed by the feedback received from the public consultation and a summary will be made available on the Council website. (www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culturalstrategy)

3. Analysis of available data and research

3.1 The ECNI guidance requires the council to collect and analyse existing quantitative and qualitative data and research by relevant equality categories in order to make a judgement of the extent of any likely adverse impact. However, these headings simply provide a framework; it is acknowledged that the effects of the Cultural Strategy will be different for each individual person and will not necessarily relate to a specific Section 75 characteristic.

The EQIA includes information on:

- research on the benefits and value of culture and arts;
- data on inequalities in terms of engagement/participation in culture and arts;
- data on the population of the Council area by Section 75 groups (a profile of Belfast is contained in Appendix 1)

3.2 Recognising that this is a new strategic framework for the city and that there will be ongoing development work to produce detailed implementation plans and projects; the analysis within this EQIA focuses on the potential of the Cultural Strategy across the 4 strategic themes.

3.3 The main purpose of this EQIA is to ensure that, in identifying and taking forward implementation programmes that the Council and its partners give due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity by addressing inequalities within and between Section 75 groups. It is therefore important to identify clearly the key inequalities which the Strategy has the potential to address.

Strategic Context and Influences shaping the Cultural Strategy

3.4 The Council has a range of existing grant programmes,development support and direct delivery services that are primarily geared towards promoting and developing cultural activity in the city. Several strategies, frameworks and

delivery plans that direct this activity have been subject to appropriate equality screening in line with the guidance set out by the Equality Commission:

- Belfast Integrated Cultural Framework 2012-2020
- Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy 2015-2030
- Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020
- City Events Annual Delivery Programme

3.5 These strategies have been supplemented in 2017/18 by a mid-term review of the Tourism Strategy and a review of Events and Festivals which have been instrumental in highlighting the need for a more integrated and sustainable model for city-wide programme delivery in order to create a culturally vibrant and attractive city.

Existing funding administered to deliver the Cultural Framework 2012-2020

3.6 The Council currently has a range of small grants and multi-annual funding programmes in place to support cultural life in the city. The primary routes to access this funding have been via the Place & Economy Department's Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Unit.

3.7 The analysis that follows includes an indication of the current funding programmes that have a specific cultural, arts and heritage focus. However, the draft Cultural Strategy recognises that further developmental work to future-proof the delivery and investment model. A summary of the current funding streams is below:

Scheme	**Description**
Core Multi-annual Fund (core revenue support)	The Council committed over £5.8m to support core costs of 56 arts and cultural organisations over a four year period (2016-20).

	Grants range from £30,000 to £150,000 per annum. Multi-annual funding is awarded for a four-year period. It is open to arts and heritage organisations only. An internal evaluation of this fund has supported the need for a longer term, multi-annual funding programme to support and sustain accessible cultural activity but that a more tailored approach to the investment may yield greater results.
Annual Arts & Heritage Fund (core revenue support)	Through cycles of two tranches of funding per year; this fund supports approximately 35 organisations per funding round. Applicants apply every year for a maximum grant of up to £10,000. It is open to arts and heritage organisations only.
Creative & Cultural Belfast	This programme supported 'flagship' projects providing longer term funding for the sector, enabling projects to run over 2-3 years. Belfast City Council and the Arts Council NI jointly funded £900,000 to the Creative and Cultural Belfast programme. Its purpose was "to challenge social exclusion by providing everyone in Belfast with the opportunity to experience high-quality culture, arts and heritage Its target primary beneficiaries were "people and communities [that] are less likely to take part in culture and arts than others due to lack of economic opportunity, educational achievement or other barriers". This included "hard-to-reach" groups already identified in the 2012-2020 Cultural Framework: namely, disabled people, minority ethnic communities and people living in deprived areas.
Community Festivals Fund (project funding)	This fund is match funded by the Department for Communities (formerly Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure). This Fund opens twice a year to recognise the role that festivals can play in increasing social cohesion, celebrating cultural identity and

	strengthening community relations. Festivals can receive up to £10,000 in any tranche. It is open to arts, heritage and community organisations. This fund was subject to an independent evaluation and the evaluation report produced in 2015.

3.11 All applicants are asked:

- to provide a profile of their target audience and participants by gender and age
- indicate whether they comply with the accessibility requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 or, if this is not possible, what reasonable adjustment they are making;
- provide the location of their organisation and the location where activity will take.

3.12 All funding applications are assessed on a range of criteria including how the organisation or project would support good relations and enrich and extend opportunities to take part in culture and arts activities.

3.13 Many organisations operate across the whole or most of the city, and most organisations aim to be inclusive of everyone. While specific Section 75 monitoring was introduced many groups in the cultural sector choose not to complete and return this information. While every effort has been taken to ensure that the data presented is accurate, classification of applications targeting specific Section 75 dimensions was an arbitrary decision based on the knowledge and experience of council officers.

3.14 The Council has an established track record in using culture and arts as a means for engaging hard to reach groups and evaluating their success. The Creative and Cultural Belfast evaluation report, prepared by Council officers,

reported that 1,076 activities were delivered through the seven funded projects, attracting an audience of 102,626 and engaging 9,478 participants. All projects used a range of measures to remove barriers to access and promote inclusion, such as free events, concessionary ticketing, companion tickets, accessible venues, and so on. The evaluation report included an analysis of the level of engagement and participation by Section 75 groups. As the programmes targeted those who were hard to reach, it is likely that the level of engagement with some Section 75 dimensions would be higher than across the main council funding schemes.

3.15 Evaluations of the Creative Legacies programme (2009-2011) and the Creative and Cultural Belfast programme have concluded that culture and arts programmes have been effective tools in targeting hard-to-reach groups in the following ways:

- Stimulating individual change, including increased self-confidence, self-esteem and skills
- Building healthy relations and making connections between groups, including skills transfer and capacity building
- Creating a shared space and civic identity
- Peace building and conflict resolution – participants gained a greater understanding of, willingness to engage with and tolerance of other cultures and traditions

3.16 The evaluations have also provided recommendations to inform the emerging Cultural Strategy for Belfast; as follows:

- Alternative and staged funding models to allow for more time for planning and co-design
- The role of co-funders in programme delivery
- Striving for a one-council approach to and appreciation of culture and arts

- Marketing and communications to maximise social media and capitalise on word-of-mouth mechanism and attention to be given to marketing to tourists
- Training and development needs to support programme planning, including financial and risk management
- Ongoing oversight of evaluation to ensure evidence is collected systematically, efficiently and effectively

3.17 While there are limitations with the current approaches, the research and engagement process that has informed the draft Cultural Strategy have reinforced the Council's commitment to the development of cultural vibrancy and its commitment to an outcomes based approach. The most recent research, carried out by Thrive (2018) recommends 'a focus on particular demographics in particular areas will be the best way to achieve overall growth in the city's rates of engagement'.

Other External Data and Research

3.18 Council Officers have reviewed relevant research and data from other sources as part of the development of Cultural Strategy and this EQIA, including the following:

- Annual Funding Survey 2017/18 Arts Council NI
- Belfast Arts & Culture Baseline – The story so far (Thrive, 2018)
- Belfast City Council Residents Survey 2017 (Social Market Research)
- 10 Year Cultural Framework for Belfast Equality Impact Assessment 2012 (Belfast City Council)
- Engagement in culture, arts and leisure by adults in Northern Ireland: analysis by Section 75 groups: DCAL Research Findings 15/2014-15
- Engagement in culture, arts and leisure by adults in Northern Ireland's local government districts 2017; DfC 2017

- Engagement in culture, arts and leisure by young people in NI (Young Persons Behaviour & Attitudes Survey 2016); DfC 2017
- Opening Doors – an arts led approach to building social capital - Evaluation Report, Arts Council of Northern Ireland Intercultural Arts Programme 2012-2015 (ACNI 2015)
- Older people and engagement in culture, arts and leisure 2015: A literature review DfC 2015
- Five Year Strategic Framework for the Development of the Arts 2019-2024 and Equality Screening (ACNI 2018)

3.19 The Department for Communities (DfC) published statistics in 2017 showing the levels of adult engagement in culture, arts and leisure across the Northern Ireland's local government districts. The continuous household survey figures for the levels of participation and engagement in Belfast are broadly consistent with the figures for NI, as outlined below:

- 87% of residents in Belfast engaged in culture, arts and leisure, compared to a regional figure of 89%
- 81% of people in Belfast surveyed reported that they engaged with the arts and 32% participated in arts activities in the previous year; compared to a regional figure of 82% engaging and 34% participating with the arts
- 78% of people in Belfast attended an arts event, compared to 79% regionally
- 53% of people in Belfast reported that they participated in sports in the previous year, compared to 54% regionally

3.20 In 2018 Thrive carried out a quantitative survey of 2,200 residents selected randomly from across Belfast to establish if and how those residents engaged with arts and culture in the preceding 12 months. This survey broadened the definition of what we mean by culture, so that it includes a range of activities from the less formal and personal activities to the more structured

programme engagement and attendance. The survey baseline reported that 94% of Belfast residents engaged with arts and culture in the previous year. While there are variations amongst certain groups and geographic areas across the city, the engagement level did not fall below 75%.

Consultation

3.21 Council officers undertook extensive consultation and engagement in the development of the Cultural Strategy. This has included:

- Holding 62 civic conversations
- Engaging with 5,361 citizens
- Supporting 625 creators
- Working with 106 artists
- Across 85 places
- Through 137 events

Workshops and briefings were also held with Councillors; a series of workshops with arts and community organisations; workshops, meetings and communications with the heritage sector and other key stakeholders; and presentations to Belfast City Council's Policy Offcers Group, Equality Consultative Forum, Youth Forum and Older People's Forum. In addition meetings of the city's Culture Forum provided vital contributions to the development of the strategy.

3.22 A number of 'deep dive' engagement projects were undertaken throughout 2018/19. The (Y)Our Home Pilot projects took place in neighbourhoods citywide (north, south, east, west and city centre). This programme made connections between artists and citizens through a variety of creative ventures to explore what it means to feel @Home in Belfast and how creative engagement can feed into the Belfast Agenda priorities of Living Here, Working and Learning, City Development and Growing the Economy. Taking place over a period of six months, each project ran for 12 weeks delivering creative sessions led by artists from various disciplines from visual arts to theatre production. Over 500

participants engaged as creators; from primary schools, older people's programmes, migrant support groups, LGBTQ++ groups and support agencies for young people in care. The outcomes of which ranged from film, installation art, theatre showcases, product development and environmental installations, reaching audiences of over 5000 people from across the city.

As an extension of the pre-consultation process, over 15 facilitated sessions on accessing culture, both as an audience member and as an artist/performer, were held across the city for disabled people with each session catering for and consulting on the needs of specific disabilities.

3.23 Most of the culture and arts organisations that were consulted attracted audiences and participants representing all or many Section 75 groupings, and recognised that this included those with multiple identities. However, there is a recognition that there may be benefits in targeting some groups to encourage or increase opportunity, recognition or access to ensure equality of opportunity is felt. This may include organisations targeting specific communities or places; minority ethnic groups; disabled people; children and young people; older people and the LGBTQ++ community.

Limitations, constraints and definitions

3.24 There are a number of inherent difficulties of capturing personal data in a cultural/arts setting, the variety and scale of the cultural scene in Belfast can make it difficult to directly assess its impact. This is particularly pertinent when considering the broad definition of culture that is applied to this Cultural Strategy i.e. that includes individual and informal cultural participation as well as more formalised programme engagement and audience involvement.

3.25 Crucially, it is worth noting the following limitations with the current data and analysis of culture and arts activities:

- In some instances, the collection of Section 75 data is not possible, for example, attendees at a large, city-centre, non-ticketed festival.

- Some cultural organisations feel that recording Section 75 data intrudes on their aim to deliver activities irrespective of cultural or community background.
- Monitoring data supplied via funded organisations is self-reported and not independently verified.
- With the exception of age and gender, funded organisations are not as standard asked to monitor the demographic breakdown of their audience or participants. While every effort has been taken to ensure that the data presented is accurate, in most cases, the classification of applications primarily targeting a Section 75 group is an arbitrary decision based on the knowledge and experience of council officers, but with no truly objective assessment possible.
- The nature and type of art form may influence a person's choice to participate in or attend a cultural activity, rather than represent a specific barrier to taking part. For example, older people are more likely to attend the opera than young people. The Cultural Strategy does not differentiate between or prioritise genres or art-form.

3.26 This Cultural Strategy aims to embed culture, in its widest sense, into many aspects of life in order to increase awareness of the role that culture plays in the city and enrich the diversity and vibrancy of life in the city. The strategic themes and priorities target the individual, community, sectoral and city levels.

3.27 Overall, delivering and investing in cultural life and activity in Belfast, through the Cultural Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly by contributing to the economic, social and environmental regeneration and wellbeing of the city.

4. Assessment of impacts

4.1 This EQIA has been carried out utilising a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative data, from sources both within and external to the council. Much of the general research relates to Northern Ireland as a whole, but is particularly pertinent to Belfast. Where possible, data from the Council's own Section 75 monitoring systems has been included.

4.2 The analysis is presented under the headings of the nine Section 75 equality categories. However, these headings simply provide a framework; it is acknowledged that the effects of the Cultural Strategy will be different for each individual person and will not necessarily relate to a specific Section 75 characteristic. This point was reinforced by consultees in the pre and formal consultation period.

4.3 The purpose of the Cultural Strategy is to recognise and value the role of culture in the city. The draft strategy is based on Agenda 21 for Culture which has its foundation in enabling citizens to exercise their cultural rights to support the development of a sustainable city. This approach states that cultural rights give the ability of everyone to identify with one or several cultural communities and to adapt this choice throughout their life.

4.4 The four strategic themes of the draft Strategy promote active citizenship; inclusion and diversity; new perspectives and connecting Belfast and its place in the world. Therefore, overall the Council considers that, based on previous experience, the Cultural Strategy will deliver significant benefits to Belfast. These include:

- Increasing the levels of engagement and participation in culture and arts events
- Increasing the participation of those from those groups that are harder to reach

- Raising the positive international profile of the city
- Improving the city's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive tourist destination
- Increasing the city's reputation as a cultural destination
- Supporting the growth of the City's creative economy

4.5 However, the council accepts that the need to prioritise investment will result in some users benefiting more than others. The analysis below identifies some of the issues for people in the various Section 75 categories.

4.6 Recognising the strategic nature of this investment across the city, the analysis focuses on the potential of the Cultural Strategy across the aims and objectives. As the detailed implementation plans and investment programmes are developed to deliver on the strategy, the positive impact of the programmes / initiatives to be identified will depend on how each are targeted and located, designed and implemented; and the degree of consultation and involvement of diverse local or relevant communities. Further equality screenings/assessments will be carried out on the implementation plans and investment programmes, as appropriate.

Analysis of data and research and assessment of potential impacts

The assessment is based on an analysis of available data and research and is set out under the categories in Section 75. However, while these headings may provide a framework for analysis, it is recognised that the effects of the proposals will be different for each individual person and will not necessarily relate to a specific Section 75 characteristic.

Strategic Themes and Priorities	**Assessment of impact on section 75 group**
A City Belonging Priorities under this theme will support citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity. The priorities are: v. Developing a people focused approach to cultural development by facilitating citizens and sector participation in setting priorities, decision making and in the evaluation of cultural policies	**Community and Religious belief** In NI and in Belfast, research indicates that the majority of culture and arts activity is all or mainly cross-community. Section 75 analysis of the Continuous Household Survey (2013/14) reports that adults stating that they were of other/no religion were more likely to have attended the arts (88%) and participated in sports activity (65%) in the previous year than either Catholic or Protestant adults. In 2017/18, 91% of people stating that they were of no/other religion were likely to engage with culture; while those from either a Catholic or Protestant background were equally likely to engage with culture (86%). Section 75 equality monitoring forms are provided to successful applicants of BCC funding; however, the vast majority of those in receipt of culture and arts funds choose not to submit these forms. Only 7% (5) forms were submitted in 2016/17 and

vi. Building the creative capacity of our citizens and cultural sector to allow people to express their own cultural identities vii. Protecting and promoting cultural heritage in all its dimensions, both tangible and intangible including the plurality of the city's cultural narratives viii. Enabling a sense of belonging and sense of place through cultural participation	13% (8 out of 58) in 2017/18, therefore it is not possible to provide further analysis on this data. This is reinforced by the results from the public consultation on the draft Cultural Strategy with most people completing the question indicating that they were neither a member of the Protestant or Catholic community (46%). **Political Opinion** As above **Dependants** There is limited evidence of differential impacts on people with and without dependants. In 2017/18, DfC research indicated that 91% of those with dependants engaged with culture compared to 83% of those without. However it is recognised that those with family commitments and/or caring responsibilities may be a barrier to participation/attendance. **Racial Group** Just over 3% of Belfast's population are from a black and minority ethnic background according to the 2011 Census. This is likely to be slightly higher in 2019, with

	increasing numbers of new communities recognised in the city. The culture and arts scene is diverse, and minority ethnic communities in general are well represented. The level of activity specifically targeting minority ethnic communities is considered to correlate with the population share of Belfast, while other activities aim to be inclusive regardless of ethnic background. Applications targeting minority ethnic communities are as likely to secure funding as applications targeting any other Section 75 dimension. It is worth noting that ACNI state that many people responding to their survey choose not to report ethnicity or disability. Research indicates that people from minority ethnic groups can face multiple social, economic and cultural barriers to arts engagement. These barriers to participation may include communications and language; perceived irrelevance of arts to own culture; money; lack of transport; and lack of time and timings of events. **Age** DCAL's analysis of the Continuous Household Survey results by Section 75 category (2013/14) age impacts on engagement rates in all aspects of culture, arts and leisure.

	This trend continues with DfC's 2017/18 research reporting that 97% of 16-24 year olds engage in cultural activity while 69% of those aged 65 years and over engage in cultural activity. ACNI and NISRA's General Population Survey 2016 reports that although the engagement, attendance and participation of older people in the arts is lower than other age categories there has been an increasing trend - a 15% rise in engagement, over 10% increase in attendance, and a 5% rise in participation. Despite a drop in engagement during 2014 to 54.7%, engagement of older people in 2016 is recovering (59.3%). **Disability** 20.3% of people in NI and 23.5% in Belfast have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their daily activities or the work they can do. According to DCAL (now DfC), adults who have a disability were less likely than those who do not have a disability to play sports, attend the arts, museums and libraries. In Belfast, there is a difference between the level of activity primarily targeting disabled people and their population share. While the majority of activity aims to be inclusive of people with and people without disabilities, attendance and participation rates in Belfast are not known.

	Sexual Orientation ACNI's Annual funding Survey 2017/18 reports that 4.8% of programmed ACNI funded activity targets LGBTQ++ communities. Most arts organisations aim to be inclusive of LGBTQ++ people, and there is little information on rates of cultural attendance and participation among this community. However, barriers to participation may include services designed on the assumption that the users are heterosexual and events and activities are not reflective of their culture. **Multiple Identities** The cumulative impact of multiple sources of disadvantage – low incomes, benefit dependency, low skills levels and qualifications – are likely to combine together to impact on an individual's ability to access opportunities to participate and their capacity to participate in cultural activities, heritage and cultural policies. Deprivation levels vary considerably across the city with the majority of the most deprived wards being in north and west Belfast. According to Thrive's audience baseline (2016/17), there is a likely relationship between age, marital status and the level of cultural engagement; as well as a correlation between gender and age and the level of cultural engagement. In addition, engagement and participation levels will vary according to the nature of the cultural activity and individual choice.

A City Challenging Priorities under this theme will aspire to create the conditions for dynamic co-creation and synergy in our public realm. v. Embedding cultural impact in city development and local placemaking vi. Investing in connected and sustainable infrastructure of quality cultural spaces across the city vii. Supporting high quality cultural events and activities that are accessible, diverse and inclusive viii. Transforming under-used public spaces into vibrant and diverse cultural destinations	The aim of the strategy is to retain or increase access to and inclusion in a vibrant inclusive cultural scene, and to create opportunities for cultural participation and expression, including more marginalised and/or deprived communities. Increasing the accessibility of cultural infrastructure, either in terms of getting into these buildings or spaces, or the distances people are required to travel to get there, removes barriers to participation in cultural activities. 94% of people in Belfast have engaged in arts and culture in some way, shape or form in 2016/17 with general agreement around the importance and value of the type of festivals and large scale events which Belfast City Council fund (Thrive 2018); however, there is room for improvement and an opportunity to deepen and solidify the participation. Key to this is recognising that individuals may face multiple barriers to participation and engagement. Applying the Council's Linguistic Diversity Policy and Inclusive Events Guide will be important elements in planning and delivering the strategy to ensure accessible, diverse and inclusive events, places and spaces. **Community and Religious belief** In NI and in Belfast, research indicates that the majority of culture and arts activity is all or mainly cross-community. The majority of Belfast organisations operate across

	the whole or most of the city and are all or mainly cross-community. Funded organisations are not required to record the religious beliefs or political opinions of their audiences and participants. However, while the location of an organisation is not always indicative of their catchment area or typical target audience, for the purposes of analysis, applications for funding were classified according to the postcode of the organisation where this could be associated with a predominantly Catholic or Protestant area.[2] In the 2016/2020 period[3] the vast majority of core multi-annual funding awarded to organisations were based in areas that are not dominated by one single religious belief/community background - only two of the 56 organisation's receiving core multi-annual funding located in a predominantly Catholic community (3.6%)[3] **Political Opinion** As above

[2] Where more than 90 per cent of the population of the Super Output Area was Catholic or Protestant. It should be noted that the above statistics do not include Duncairn 1 and Bloomfield 1 super output areas, in which, respectively, 89.7 and 89.5 per cent of the population are from a Protestant background. A total of 176 applications were received from these areas, mostly from arts organisations based in the Cathedral Quarter, of which 125 were successful.

[3] As a result of Local Government Reform and boundary changes there were some changes to Belfast wards. NISRA census figures have been used as the basis for the community background per ward.

	Dependants There is very limited evidence of differential impacts on people with and without dependants. However it is recognised that those with family commitments and/or caring responsibilities may be a barrier to participation/attendance. **Age** DCAL's analysis of the Continuous Household Survey results by Section 75 category (2013/14) age impacts on engagement rates in all aspects of culture, arts and leisure. In keeping with the social trend and analysis to date, younger people are more likely to participate and engage in cultural activity than other age groups it is likely that they will benefit more from this Strategy than other age groups. Research has indicated that tailoring activities and events that are more likely to attract older people such as music and reading/literature offer the greatest opportunities to create greater participation, engagement as well as contributing to increased vibrancy and inclusion in city life. The most frequently cited barriers to participation by the young and old are access to transport. **Racial Group**

	Just over 3% of Belfast's population are from a black and minority ethnic background according to the 2011 Census. This is likely to be slightly higher in 2019, with increasing numbers of new communities recognised in the city. The culture and arts scene is diverse, and minority ethnic communities in general are well represented. The level of activity specifically targeting minority ethnic communities is considered to correlate with the population share of Belfast, while other activities aim to be inclusive regardless of ethnic background. Funding applications to the Council's Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Team targeting minority ethnic communities are as likely to secure funding as applications targeting any other Section 75 dimension. **Disability** Analysis indicates that disabled people are less likely to attend and participate in culture and arts activities than people without disabilities. The opportunity to attend cultural events at venues and participate in activities taking place within them is constrained if the building's infrastructure has poor physical accessibility.

	While we have not identified any adverse differential impacts on disabled people, there may be an opportunity to improve access and participation. Funded organisations are not required to record the number of disabled people who attend or participate in their activities. All funded organisations are required to comply with the accessibility requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 or, if this is not possible, to make reasonable adjustments. Organisations and projects also employed other measures to include disabled people, such as the use of captioning and audio description. The Council's Inclusive Events Guide is being included in contracts to promote inclusive and accessible events for all. **Sexual Orientation** Most arts organisations aim to be inclusive of LGBTQ++ people, and there is little information on rates of cultural attendance and participation among this community. ACNI's Annual funding Survey 2017/18 reports that 4.8% of programmed ACNI funded activity targets LGBTQ++ communities.

	Most arts organisations aim to be inclusive of LGBTQ++ people, and there is little information on rates of cultural attendance and participation among this community. From 2016-2018, four applications for funding were received for Community Festivals and Arts & heritage Funds to support programmes and projects highlighting specific aspects of sexual orientation. Of these, three applications were successful. Funding applications to the Council's Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Team targeting LGBTQ++ communities are as likely to secure funding as applications targeting any other Section 75 dimension. However, research has indicated that barriers to participation may include services designed on the assumption that the users are heterosexual and events and activities are not reflective of their culture. Through the co-design approach to cultural programmes and the integration of culture in placemaking there is scope to build in more inclusive practice. **Multiple Identities** The cumulative impact of multiple sources of disadvantage – low incomes, benefit dependency, low skills levels and qualifications – are likely to combine together to impact on an individual's ability to access opportunities to participate and their capacity to participate in cultural activities and events. Deprivation levels vary considerably across the city with the majority of the most deprived wards being in

	north and west Belfast. A city development and local placemaking approach provides a neighbourhood and city-wide perspective; transforming under-used public space will ensure that the impact of ease of access, connectivity and affordability are factored into the cultural strategy.
A City Creating Priorities under this theme will facilitate and explore new ways of working, taking more risks and helping artists to have more autonomy to engage with citizens in new and creative ways. i. Increasing the autonomy of the creative sectors to shape the city's evolving, rich and multiple cultural narratives ii. Supporting cultural excellence, cultural planning and cultural entrepreneurialism by providing support for artistic innovation and improved networking iii. Investing in a stronger and more sustainable cultural sector by supporting artists and producers to work beyond boundaries.	In 2016, employment in the creative industries accounted for an estimated 24,000 jobs, representing 2.9% of total employment in NI and just over 2,900 businesses (DfC 2018). Almost two-fifths (38%) of all creative industries were in IT, software and computer services; followed by 12% in film, TV and 7.6% in music, visual and performing arts. As an urban centre, Belfast is a hub for the region's creative sector. This is evidenced in recent research on the employment of Belfast residents (Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, 2018) reports that BCC residents have a high proportion of NI's jobs in creative sectors; for example, over half the jobs in film, Tv and music are held by BCC residents (55%), while just over two fifths of the jobs in creative arts and entertainment are help by BCC residents (41%). However, it is not possible to break this down to an analysis by Section 75 group. A range of enterprise and business start-up and growth programmes are available and have identified creative sector business as a growth sector. These programmes have been equality screened and targeted engagement and support available for

iv. Empowering the innovative capacity of the creative economy to connect technology and society	those groups who are traditionally under-represented (disabled, black and ethnic minority groups, women and those with caring responsibilities). ACNI (2017/18) reported that 8% of their core funded client workforce were from a minority ethnic background; many employed in an artistic capacity. This is an indication that those from minority ethnic groups are well represented in the arts and cultural sector, when considering the proportion in the population. Further research will also be undertaken to ensure an appropriate outcomes focused impact evaluation of Council funded activities. We will also continue to work with the cultural and creative sector to consider effective measures of hard-to-capture audiences, for example, audiences at non-ticketed events. We want to ensure that the impact of our investment is felt across all communities and creates a positive impact, particularly in terms of inclusive economic and social growth for people, communities and the city. **Multiple identities**

	The cumulative impact of multiple sources of disadvantage – low incomes, benefit dependency, low skills levels and qualifications – are likely to combine together to impact on an individual's opportunity and capacity to access and participate in cultural and creative life . Deprivation levels vary considerably across the city with the majority of the most deprived wards being in the inner city areas and north and west Belfast.
A City Exploring Priorities under this theme will sustain and strengthen the city's cultural ecosystem. i. Strengthening our city, regional and international cultural networks ii. Growing our sustainable cultural tourism product through local place-making iii. Encouraging environmental responsibility by understanding and adapting cultural behaviours	This theme builds on the three previous themes to position the city as a connected, outward facing city. Strengthening the city's cultural networks will not only recognise the city's distinct characteristics and events but also build on the city's calendar of diverse cultural festivals and events, including Belfast Mela, Diwali and Samhain, Holi, Chinese New Year and Polish Cultural Week. As the brand and other actions and initiatives develop to deliver on the priorities, such as maritime tourism, the story of Belfast and "Beyond peace", the Council will ensure

iv. Increasing the contribution of both public and private cultural sectors to inclusive economic growth	that these remain inclusive of all people and be subject to appropriate equality considerations, to ensure that there is no differential impact. A number of initiatives to support the tourism infrastructure and visitor management, such as coach parking and tours, neighbourhood tourism trails and routes across the city, have the potential to promote equality of opportunity for both visitors and residents, including those with disabilities. The Inclusive Events Guide and Council's Liguistic Diversity Policy adopted in 2017 will also be applied in the delivery plans for the Cultural Strategy's themes and priorities. Marketing and communication platforms should be inclusive of and respond to the needs of people with different disabilities, race, age and language needs. New signature 'Imagine' festivals and visitor attractions will include design principles to ensure they are inclusive and accessible.

A City Investing The aims of the cultural investment programme are to: i. Support the cultural life of the city by enabling citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change ii. Invest in our cultural and creative sector to develop the skills and capacity for production and innovation iii. Position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking iv. Establish Belfast as a cultural destination	A City Investing outlines the four pillars that will guide the development of the Cultural Investment Programme. 91% of those surveyed by Thrive (2018) agreed to some extent that having culture and arts available in Belfast is important; this applied across genders and age ranges. An important aspect of the Cultural Strategy is to incentivise and invest in the city's cultural offer and to increase future events and activities available for all residents and visitors to participate in. The cultural offer and future events and activities will be designed and programmed to ensure inclusivity, diversity and accessibility in order to create a city that is welcoming and attractive for everyone. Testing new approaches to cultural engagement is likely to enhance and diversify links at a community level which should support increased participation levels. This will be built on best practice and learning from cities elsewhere.

5. Overall assessment of impacts

5.1 The development and implementation of the Cultural Strategy will make an important contribution in terms of the development economic, social and environmental growth and regeneration of the city. In addition it supports the aspirations set out in the Belfast Agenda and the Local Development Plan. The Council believes that the Cultural Strategy strategic themes and priorities will not have specific adverse impacts for any Section 75 group but the analysis of available data and research shows that there are a number of key inequalities that the Cultural Strategy may help to address.

5.2 The main purpose of this EQIA is to ensure that the Council and delivery agents will have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity by addressing inequalities within and between Section 75 groups.

5.3 Feedback from the consultation process has highlighted the importance of building equality implications into the future development of the Cultural Strategy implementation plans and investment programme.

5.4 The importance of engagement and co-design principles is fundamental to the delivery of the Strategy. The gaps in the data have emphasised the importance of the engagement and consultation process in order to understand the nature of cultural impact. Priority 1 of the strategy commits to 'a people focussed approach to cultural development' therefore over the next 10 years this engagement methodology will continue to evolve.

6. Consideration of Measures

6.1 The Cultural Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly, by contributing to economic growth and social progress. It is anticipated, however, that some areas of development may have a differential impact on a number of Section 75 groups in a positive manner by addressing recognised need and these are highlighted below.

- Investment in the Cultural Strategy will help the city to encourage economic growth and position Belfast as a primary tourist destination and international city. This economic growth will provide opportunities to target under-represented groups such as disabled people and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The opportunities for economic growth will provide opportunities for those from deprived communities in the city.
- Seek to maximise the opportunity to participate in cultural activity by ensuring that events, venues and facilities are inclusive and accessible. This will have particular benefits for those groups who currently experience barriers to access, including people from black and minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ++, disabled people, older people and people with dependants.
- The four strategic themes and priorities will also help to reduce segregation and social isolation.

6.2 The potential impacts of the Cultural Strategy will only be realised when the Cultural Strategy investment programme and implementation plans are developed. An equality assessment will be undertaken on the investment programme and equality will be factored in to the design and delivery of the implementation and action plans resulting from the Strategy. It is recognised that the positive impact of programmes / initiatives will depend on how each are targeted and located, designed and implemented; and the degree of consultation and involvement of diverse local or relevant communities.

7. Consultation

7.1 Following a significant programme of pre-consultation and engagement in the development of the draft strategy; the formal consultation period for the draft Cultural Strategy, including this strategic level equality assessment report was carried out over a 12-week period from 17th April 2019 to 10th July 2019.

7.2 During the 12 week consultation period the draft equality assessment report was available on the Council's website consultation platform Citizenspace, together with the draft rural needs assessment and the draft Cultural Strategy *A City Imagining*. A press release was issued on 18th April on the launch of the public consultation. Media coverage took place along with pulse screen public advertising for the initial two weeks of the consultation period; advertising in Queen's Film Theatre, Crescent Arts Centre, The Mac and Lyric Theatre as well as articles in City Matters and through the Council's social media channels (with a Facebook discussion group specifically set up for *A City Imagining* consultation) .

7.2 A composite report on the public consultation is available on the Council's website (www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culturalstrategy). In total, 3,264 people engaged in the process in a variety of ways with over 80 events taking place across the city. The formal consultation period included:

- Exhibitions & workshops in community venues in North, West, South and East of the city
- Opening of pop-up consultation space *A City imagining Hub* in the city centre for a five week period
- Bespoke stakeholder and sector engagement workshops
- Workshops with those from Section 75 groups representing those who may face barriers to participation including those with dependants, young people, LGBTQ++, refugees and asylum seekers.

- In addition to the Council's online Citizenspace Survey platform, there was an opportunity to submit electronic and written responses as well as have one-to-one/drop-in sessions.

7.3 The main issues raised in terms of the equality and rural needs include:

- The strategy document did not reference specific Section 75 groups such as members of the LGBTQ++ community, minority ethnic groups or disabled people.
- The importance of equality of access and equality of opportunity.
- Making information readily available on the accessibility of venues.
- Consider accessibility issues when planning and delivering cultural events/activities, including the cost/pricing and infrastructure issues such as transport and parking.
- Increasing staff capacity and training around the use of language and assistance around disability
- The need for monitoring to be manageable.

7.4 The development of the strategy was strongly influenced by the extensive pre-consultation engagement. Through this process there was a strong message that a truly inclusive civic society embraces all people and that we should challenge the current use of language to enable the city to move forward. Therefore the decision was taken that the Cultural Strategy *A City Imagining* would adopt a language of inclusivity and that specific Section 75 groups would not be referenced.

7.5 The engagement and consultation activity that has informed the strategy will continue to develop and inform the implementation plans and delivery of the strategy.

8. Monitoring for adverse impact

8.1 As part of the investment programme and implementation plans, a monitoring and evaluation framework is being developed. This will consider the need to monitor the equality impacts. As a result of the feedback on the equality assessment, this will also take account of the need to ensure that monitoring requirements are manageable and commensurate.

8.2 In addition, research will be undertaken on an annual basis to inform our understanding of participation and measuring harder to capture audiences.

8.3 The results of ongoing monitoring of the equality impacts will be reviewed on an annual basis and included in the annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. This review will be published on the Council's website.

9. Further Action

9.1 The implementation of the strategy aims to ensure a more inclusive approach to cultural engagement and investment. The potential to promote equality and good relations will only be realised where the delivery is informed by due consideration of the inequalities that need to be addressed. The implementation plans and the investment programme that support the strategy will specifically address the need for targeted initiatives and ensure that the principle of equality is fully realised in the outcomes of the strategy. These will be subject to relevant screening and/or equality impact assessments at an appropriate time when relevant information to conduct a full analysis is available.

Appendix A

Belfast City Profile (by Section 75 category)

Religious belief

Based on the 2011 Census[4], there is a higher proportion of of residents from a Catholic community background (48.8%). 42.3% state that they are from a Protestant and other Christian community background. Compared to the NI level, there is a slightly higher proportion of residents stating that they are of no religious persuasion (7.1%, compared to 5.6% regionally); this has also increased since the 2001 census when 4.2% indicated they were non-religious.

However, there are many neighbourhoods comprising people almost exclusively from one community background; in the 2007 council public survey, 78% of residents described their area as mainly one religion[5]. In the council's 2010 public survey, 51% of those surveyed stated 'that their local area is a place where people from different religious and political backgrounds get on well together'.

Political opinion

In the last local government election in May 2019, eight political parties are represented at Belfast City Council; as follows: 30% for Sinn Feinn (SF); 25% for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), 16% for the Alliance Party, 10% for the Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP), 6.7% for the Green Party, 5% for People before Profit, 3.3% for the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and 3.3% for the Progressive Unionist party (PUP). A total of 60 councillors were elected to Belfast City Council.

[4] NISRA (2011) Census of Population
[5] Ipsos MORI (2007) Survey of Belfast Resident Population

Ethnic background

According to Census 2011, 96.7% of Belfast's population is white. Just over 3% of the Belfast population are from an ethnic background. As is the case in NI, the largest minority ethnic groups in Belfast are the Chinese (0.7%), Indian (0.7%) and Asian (0.6%) communities . The proportion of ethnic groups from a non-white background has increased in Belfast since the 2001 census (1.4%).

While 95% of Belfast's population (aged 3+years) have English as their main language, recent years have seen an increase in the number of migrants to the region and city, with 1.4% of those aged 3+years stating other as their main language and 1.2% of those aged 3+years having Polish as their main language.

Age

Belfast has a lower percentage of young people (aged under 16 years) and a lower percentage of older people (aged 60 years and over) than the NI average. In 2011[6], 19.8% of Belfast residents were under 16 years (compared with 20.9% in NI as a whole) and 19.6% were aged 60 and over (compared with 21.5% in NI as a whole). The Belfast Agenda and Local Development Plan ambitions are putting programmes in place to support the growth of the city's population, by an extra 66,000 people by 2035.

Marital status

A relatively high percentage of residents are single at 45% compared with the NI average of 36.1%. There is also a higher percentage of those who are separated and divorced (11.5%), compared with the NI level of 9.4%. Belfast also has a higher proportion of residents who are in a same sex civil partnership at 0.13%, compared to 0.09% regionally. There are fewer married people at 35.6% compared with the NI average of 47.6%[7].

[6] NISRA (2018) 2017 Mid-Year Population Estimates
[7] NISRA (2011) Census of Population

Sexual orientation

According to ONS statistics, 2.0% of the UK population identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) in 2017. ONS report that 1.2% of the NI population identify themselves as LGB[8]. The council currently has no data specific to Belfast.

However, estimates for the LGB population range from 0.3-10% using different sources. A commonly used estimate of LGB people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is approximately 5-7% of the population.

Gender

Belfast has a slightly higher proportion of females (51.5% of residents). This is slightly higher than the NI figure of 50.8% (NISRA 2017 mid year estimates).

Disability

The Census 2011 showed that 23.5% of Belfast residents has a long term health problem or disability that limits their daily activities or the work they can do, compared with the NI average of 20.3%[9].

Dependants

30.4% of households in Belfast include dependant children, compared with the NI average of 36.5%. 12.1% of households in Belfast consist of a lone parent and a dependant child or children, compared with the NI average of 9.1%.

At the time of the Census, 12.3% of people stated that they provided unpaid care for a to family, friends, neighbours or others; this is slightly higher than the NI average of 11.8%[10].

[8] ONS (2019) Sexual identity, UK: 2017
[9] NISRA (2011) Census of Population
[10] NISRA (2011) Census of Population

Multiple deprivation

On many measures of socio-economic performance there has been a narrowing of the gap between the Belfast region and UK averages; however, on most measures a gap remains. As the Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey noted, exclusion remains a fact of life for a large section of the regional population with Belfast containing more than its proportionate share[11].

Half of the 100 most deprived Super Output Areas in NI are located in Belfast, accounting for 29% of its 174 SOAs; the highest proportion of all LGDs.

Waterworks 2 is ranked as the second most deprived area in NI. 12.4% of the Belfast population are living in households with an income below 60% of the NI median (compared with 25% in NI as a whole) and 13.1% of the working age population are identified as employment deprived (compared with 20.6% in NI as a whole). In terms of access to services, none of Belfast's Super Output Areas fall within the most deprived 100 super output areas in NI[12].

Links:

https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culture

culture@belfastcity.gov.uk

[11] OFMDFM (2008) Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey
[12] NISRA (2017) NI Multiple Deprivation Measures

Equality Screening Template

The Council has a statutory duty to screen. This includes our strategies, plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as the introduction, change or end of an existing service, grant funding arrangement or facility. This screening template is designed to help departments consider the likely equality impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

The screening template has 4 sections:

Section A - provides details about the policy / decision that is being screened

Section B – gives information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts on all equality groups.

Section C - has 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order

Section D - is the formal record of the screening decision.

Section A

Details about the policy / decision to be screened

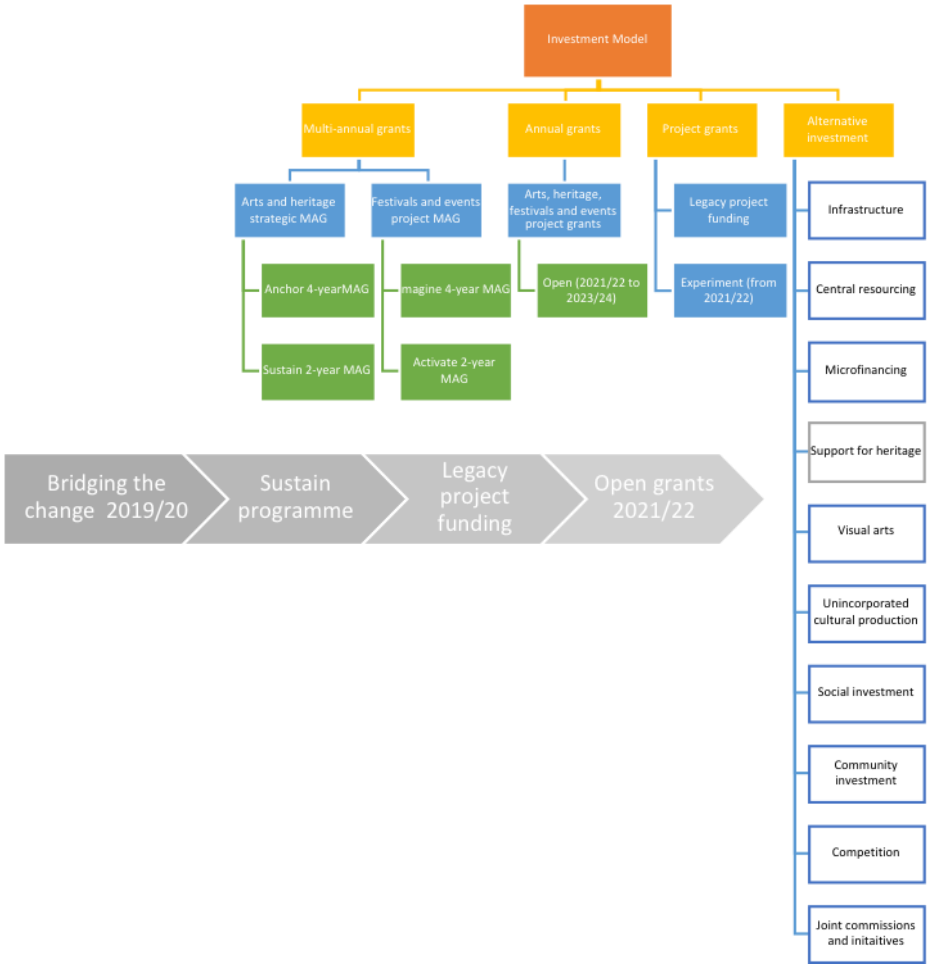
1. Title of policy / decision to be screened:-

A City Imagining Investment Model

2. Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:-

The Investment Model outlines how the council will support the delivery of the strategic priorities set down in the city's new cultural strategy, A City Imagining. A City Imagining will in turn deliver social, economic and cultural outcomes for the people of Belfast and its cultural sector, contributing to the Belfast Agenda. It builds on and replaces the previous strategy, the Cultural Framework for Belfast, and associated funding, including Core Multi-annual Funding (CMAF).

The Investment Model proposes four broad investment strands – multi-annual grants (MAGs); annual grants; project grants; and alternative investment – supported by a Transition programme to help manage the change.



The Investment Model will be introduced in phases.

- MAGs will be awarded in March 2020 for activity running from April 2020 up to March 2024. This strand has been developed in full and included in the Investment Model.
- Legacy project funding – that is project funding that supported the Cultural Framework and was subject to an equality impact assessment (EQIA) in 2012 – will remain substantially unchanged in 2020/21, but replaced by new annual and project grants from 2021/22.
- Annual grants will be introduced from 2021/22 depending on the successful implementation of MAGs. A draft of the new annual grant, Open, has been included in the Investment Model.
- A new project grant, Experiment, will be introduced from 2021/22 depending on the successful implementation of MAGs. An outline of this grant has been included in the Investment Model.
- The Transition programme will assist organisations exiting out of the current CMAF portfolio, which will affect an estimated 20 organisations. Some recommendations relating to Transition have been including in the Investment Model, including that the programme should be tailored to each individual organisation.
- Alternative investment will be introduced subject to further feasibility, design and available resource. A number of recommendations are included in the Investment Model.

This equality screening therefore focus on the Investment Model in general and MAGs in particular as the most developed investment strand. It is expected that more substantive screening of other strands will be carried out at they are designed and implemented.

Multi-annual grants

There are two strands of MAGs available: grants for:

1. Festivals and events with an audience of more than 10,000

2. Arts and heritage organisations with a year-round programme of activity

There are also two tiers of investment available: two- and four-year.

3. Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be screened:-

The Investment Model

The Investment Model "takes the long view required to deliver transformation for the city. It recognises that the first priority must be to invest in a healthy cultural ecosystem."

The aims of the Investment Model are set down in the A City Imagining strategy:

- Support the cultural life of the city by enabling our citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change.
- Invest in our cultural and creative sectors to develop the skills and capacity for production and innovation.
- Position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking.
- Establish Belfast as a cultural destination.

There are also four published investment priorities:

- Anchor: support the cultural infrastructure for a thriving cultural ecosystem
- Activate: empower civic and sectoral engagement, skills and capacity building in order to support inclusive growth
- Experiment: facilitate innovation, catalyst projects and new ideas
- Open: support outward-facing opportunities, including marketing and international cooperation

A City Imagining

A City Imagining, the city's cultural strategy 2020–30, has been developed by the people of Belfast and places culture and creativity at the heart of civic development. Outward-looking, forward-facing, innovative and inclusive, it recognises the impact culture has on:

- Cohesion and permeability
- Identity and confidence
- Attracting investment
- Retaining talent

There are four themes within the strategy:

1. A City Belonging (active participation): Priorities under this theme will support citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity
2. A City Challenging (diversity): Priorities under this theme will aspire to cultivate creative environments for dynamic co-creation and synergy in our placemaking
3. A City Creating (new approaches): Priorities under this theme will facilitate and explore new ways of working, taking more risks and helping artists to have more autonomy to engage with citizens in new and creative ways
4. A City Exploring (our place in the world): Priorities under this theme will Transition and strengthen the city's cultural ecosystem

The draft strategy also identifies a number of milestone projects including 2023 year of culture, the Hub, UNESCO City of Music and major events.

The council carried out a 12-week public consultation and EQIA of A City Imagining. The findings were reviewed, strategy amended and the final report was agreed in September 2019. Relevant findings from the consultation and EQIA have been considered in the design of the Investment Model and development of this equality screening.

In addition to the Investment Model, the council has also developed an implementation plans, and it will also develop a communications plan and an evaluation framework.

4. On whom will the policy / decision impact?

Consider the internal and external impacts (both actual or potential) and explain:-

Staff YES

The Investment Model will involve changes to how staff work.

Service users YES

The Investment Model will benefit people and groups participating in or attending cultural activity.

Other public sector organizations YES

The Investment Model recommends collaboration with other public sector organisations such as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and statutory community planning partners.

Voluntary / community groups / trade unions YES

As investees, third sector organisations are the primary beneficiaries of the Investment Model.

Others, please specify NO

5. Are there linkages to other Agencies/ Departments?

The Investment Model recommends collaboration with other public sector organisations such as ACNI and statutory community planning partners.

Changes in grants allocated under the Investment Model will also impact grants given by other departments.

The Investment Model recommend that one legacy grant, the Community Festivals Fund (CFF), transfers to the council's City and Neighbourhoods Department, subject to further discussion and agreement.

Section B

Information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts for equality and good relations

6. Outline consultation process planned or achieved

Engagement

In the scoping and design stages of A City Imagining, the council carried out extensive engagement including:

- engagement with 5,361 citizens, 625 creators and 106 artists
- 137 events
- “deep dive” engagement workshops with 500 participants and audiences of over 5,000
- 15 consultation sessions with disabled people with each session focused on the needs of specific disabilities
- workshops and briefings with elected representatives
- workshops with arts and community organisations
- workshops, meetings and communications with the heritage sector and other key stakeholders
- presentations to Belfast City Council’s Policy Officers Group, Equality Consultative Forum, Youth Forum and Older People’s Forum
- meetings of the city’s Culture Forum
- ‘As an extension of the pre-consultation process, over 15 facilitated sessions on accessing culture, both as an audience member and as an artist/performer, were held across the city for disabled people with each session catering for, and consulting on, the needs of specific disabilities.

Public consultation

The public consultation on the A City Imagining strategy and EQIA was carried out from April to July 2019.

A press release, advertisements, an article in City Matters and council social media publicly announced the launch of the consultation. Copies of the draft strategy, executive summary and accompanying short film were distributed widely. There were also exhibitions, events, one-to-one meetings and workshops, including with people and groups that may face barriers to cultural engagement, such as people with dependants, LGBTQ+ people and refugees and asylum seekers.

The draft strategy and EQIA were available on the council’s consultation hub, Citizenspace. Consultation questions specifically asked for feedback on the Investment Model and equality issues.

Overall, the consultation reached 3,000 people. The response to the draft documents was overwhelmingly positive, albeit with recognition that success will require new ways of working and additional resources.

The main issues raised in terms of the equality were:

- The draft strategy did not reference specific Section 75 groups such as members of the LGBTQ+ community, minority ethnic groups or disabled people.
- The importance of equality of access and equality of opportunity.
- Making information readily available on the accessibility of venues.
- Consider accessibility issues when planning and delivering cultural events and activities, including cost, pricing and infrastructure such as transport and parking.
- Increasing staff capacity and training around the use of language and assistance around disability.
- The need for monitoring to be manageable.

The public consultation report on the strategy states that "There was a strong endorsement of the need to look at new forms of investment. Understandably, there were calls to balance support for innovation and experimentation with the need to invest in our existing infrastructure. There were some concerns that the open definition of culture that permeates through the strategy may create issues when it comes to funding of activity."

Specific feedback relevant to the Investment Model includes:

- [R]eporting (monitoring and evaluation) procedures could be made simpler
- The proposed cancellation of project grants for events during 2020/21 is a retrograde step which will have an impact on smaller and new festivals and event organisations and should be reconsidered.
- Concerned how existing funding will breed new funding or if existing funding be redirected and starve what exists now.
- A greater emphasis on experimentation and activation should be considered rather than just anchoring existing arts and cultural organisations.
- Belfast City Council could assist the commercial and not-for-profit arts sectors to work together. The revised funding model that BCC is moving to should actively encourage partnerships between commercial and not-for-profit organisations.
- Innovative approaches such as developers' contributions utilising the experience and drive of the commercial/private sector to help support and subvent cultural activity, should be explored especially when the City is still undergoing extensive development and expansion.
- When looking at developing a cultural investment programme for the city it would be important for Belfast City Council to engage with Arts and Business NI consider the findings from its research and utilise Arts and Business NI's extensive experience in public private funding models for the Arts and its growing cross sectoral network. By integrating investment in festivals and events into the overall investment programme there should be an appropriate funding process developed for organisations who have a year round programme incorporating a festival or festivals.
- Festival organisers should have the opportunity to pitch themselves to the council as "signature" or "growth" rather than being automatically categorised and the criteria should be carefully defined to avoid undermining the development potential of certain festivals.
- With regards to "signature" and "growth" events, for those festivals categorised as "growth" there should be active collaboration for creating a route map for that festival to demonstrate how they can become "signature". Appropriate long term investment and additional development support from the council in terms of strategic and business planning should be offered.
- [I]nvestment should continue to be considered on a 3 to 5 year basis to ensure security and strategic vision for the cultural sector. There should remain a flexible approach in terms of the organisation being able to direct the funding where it is most

needed in their organisation rather than prescriptive budget allocations and the level of trust/goodwill that has been demonstrated by council in the CMAF programme.

- We believe that the council could invest better in the sector by considering new ways of working, such as leasing buildings for arts venues or acting as guarantor to allow cultural organisations to buy buildings. Currently rent is the largest overhead of all arts organisations and the money goes straight to private landlords, which does not benefit the city. […] in Ljubljana for instance the councils pay for utilities for galleries centrally (by paying for these as a block the council gets a better deal so it costs less than galleries paying separately and the council funding each gallery separately for utilities).

The A City Imagining EQIA concludes that

> The Cultural Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on all Section 75 groups, both directly and indirectly, by contributing to economic growth and social progress. It is anticipated, however, that some areas of development may have a differential impact on a number of Section 75 groups in a positive manner by addressing recognised need and these are highlighted below.
>
> Investment in the Cultural Strategy will help the city to encourage economic growth and position Belfast as a primary tourist destination and international city. This economic growth will provide opportunities to target under-represented groups such as disabled people and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The opportunities for economic growth will provide opportunities for those from deprived communities in the city.
>
> Seek to maximise the opportunity to participate in cultural activity by ensuring that events, venues and facilities are inclusive and accessible. This will have particular benefits for those groups who currently experience barriers to access, including people from black and minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ++, disabled people, older people and people with dependants.
>
> The four strategic themes and priorities will also help to reduce segregation and social isolation.

A more detailed report on the public consultation is available on the Council's website at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/culturalstrategy.

7. Available evidence

A City Imagining, the Investment Model and their equality assessments have been developed based on evidence from a wide range of sources including the engagement and consultation outlined above.

Strategic context

The strategy and Investment Model review and build on several existing strategies, which were subject to equality screening or impact assessment:

- The Belfast Agenda
- The Cultural Framework 2012–20
- The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015–30
- The Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-20
- The City Events Annual Delivery Programme

The A City Imagining Implementation Plan

The Investment Model is one of several pillars of the A City Imagining strategy. The implementation plan, which was agreed in October 2019, in particular includes a number of complementary actions and priorities including:

- Establish a participative forum open to those resident or working in Belfast
- Develop and deliver a Cultural Ambassadors scheme ensuring representation from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Commission research and publish annual insights into cultural participation
- Deliver eight 3-year (Y)our Home Projects to include projects led by and working with LGBTQ++ groups, new communities, disabled people, older people, schools and multi-lingual communities
- Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people. This could include specific initiatives such as Gig Buddies
- Support employability skills and capacity building programmes for disabled artists and those from minority ethnic groups
- Support innovation and development in technological interventions that address the barriers of language and accessibility in cultural participation, i.e., automated/mobile audio description of events/exhibitions
- Complete an accessibility audit of cultural venues to publish accurate access information on an online platform

Previous Investment Model

Core Multi-annual Funding

One of the key innovations under the Cultural Framework was the migration of all strategic grants to three- to four-year CMAF funding contracts. This created a portfolio of up to 56 CMAF arts and heritage organisations. Individual grants ranged from £10,000 to £150,000 per year. The total annual budget peaked at just under £1.5 million per year.

An internal review of CMAF from 2016 to 2018 found that:

- Funded organisations achieved 92 per cent of their audience targets; 90 per cent of their participation targets; and 90 per cent of their projected income.
- 552,738 people participated in workshops, classes and other activities put on by our funded organisations.
- 8,093,929 people came to shows, events and other activity put on by CMAF organisations.
- Investment helped to support, on average, 294 jobs per year, and create a total of 26,166 employment opportunities for artists.

However, it also found evidence that:

- There should be more segmentation of funding based on strategic priorities.
- Core multi-annual funding can restrict innovation, sectoral development and cultural practice.

Arts and Heritage Project Fund

The arts and heritage project fund (AHPF) opened biannually for projects that supported the Cultural Framework themes. The maximum grant available was £10,000, and the annual budget was £160,000.

An independent evaluation of Belfast City Council's small grants by Community Evaluation NI found that AHPF delivers effectively on attracting audiences, providing a range of arts and supporting artists. However, project efficacy could be improved by focusing on outcomes, not themes.

Community Festivals Fund

The council also operates CFF on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC). DfC provides *c.*£75,000 offers per year to the council on condition that the council provides match funding. This means that £150,000 is invested in community festivals each year. However, the council has limited control over the fund's purpose, impact and design, and in the context of a new cultural strategy, it may be an opportunity cost. A 2017 independent evaluation found that CFF provides benefit by enabling communities to celebrate their own culture, but:

- There is a tension between the criteria regarding innovation and quality art, and the desire to create Transitionability and community engagement in festival design and delivery. This is reflected in the funding of two types of festivals, those driven by the community and using a range of arts and those organised by festival arts organisations that seek to engage the community.
- There could be better demonstration of how funding is improving community ownership of larger, generic, festivals.

Creative and Cultural Belfast

Between 2012 and 2016, Belfast City Council in partnership with ACNI ran the Creative and Cultural Belfast (CCB) programme, a large project fund which invested £900,000 in seven arts and heritage projects. Projects had to be cross-city, cross-community and engage people and communities at risk of social exclusion.

An internal evaluation of CCB found that the programme made a significant contribution to social capital, equal opportunities and good relations:

- 19 per cent of participants were aged over 65
- 14 per cent participants had a disability
- 44 per cent of participants from deprived areas
- 87 per cent of audience felt it was good to be sharing the experience with other people
- 93 per cent of audiences felt welcome and at ease in a strange part of the city
- 92 per cent of audiences agreed the event made them feel proud of the city
- 6,514 people who had not engaged with arts before now more likely to take part in the future
- All projects used a range of measures to remove barriers to access and promote inclusion, such as free events, concessionary ticketing, companion tickets, accessible venues, and so on.

Resilience

Again in partnership with ACNI, in 2018 the council developed the £600,000 Resilience organisational development programme, which benefitted 14 large organisations (that is, with

turnover in excess of £400,000). This programme was innovative as cash funding was a minority, secondary benefit (up to £25,000 per organisation): all participating organisations first went through a tailored package of support including organisational diagnostics, mentoring and training.

City Events Programme

The council's City Events Unit (CEU) manages an annual programme of civic events. The events are delivered in five ways:

1. Events programmed and produced by CEU such as the Maritime Festival, Halloween Monster Mash and Christmas Lights Switch-on.
2. Supporting partners to bring events that are likely to generate significant economic impact. Historically, these have been sporting events such as the 2017 Women's Rugby World Cup, UEFA Women's U19 Euros and IAAF World 24-hour Race.
3. CEU also regularly bids to attract major events to the city, such as the 2015 Tall Ships Races and MTV Europe Music Awards in 2011, and then delivers this activity in partnership with key city stakeholders.
4. Support for Sport (SfS) project funding for sports events. The maximum grant available is £10,000 per event, and the annual budget is *c.*£60,000.
5. Currently, CEU direct supports the Belfast City Marathon Limited, which was originally established by the council. However, it has been agreed that this arrangement will cease by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

Festivals and events review

In 2017/18, Festivals and Events International (FEI) was commissioned to review Belfast's festivals and events product and make recommendations to help Belfast become an events destination – that is a city with an international reputation for world-class events and festivals that attract visitors from around the world.

FEI identified nine council funding schemes that support festivals and events, generating 315 separate funding agreements in 2016/17.

Overall, FEI considered that while small "local" and "neighbourhood" festivals and events are valuable in terms of social capital, current investment is disproportionate and detrimental to the development of large "growth" and "signature" festivals and events that can support economic growth.

Equality monitoring and evaluation

All applicants for funding were asked in the application form to:

- profile their target audience and participants by gender and age
- indicate whether they comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- provide the location of their organisation and the location where activity will take

Applications were then assessed against criteria including access and inclusion to cultural activity including among named groups most at risk of social exclusion, such as older people, disable people and people from minority ethnic communities.

Successful applicants were required to complete one or more monitoring reports (depending on the fund awarded). This included a separate, optional, anonymised section 75 monitoring questionnaire that asked funding recipients to provide a breakdown of their organisation's

board and beneficiaries by section 75 dimension. However, most organisations opted not to complete this questionnaire, and the results of this cannot be considered significant.[1]

Regardless, most organisations aim to be inclusive of everyone. Some organisations or initiatives, such as CCB, target specific people or communities based on a particular need such as representation or inclusion, particularly among section 75 dimensions. Most organisations also operate outreach or engagement targeted at harder-to-reach people and communities, including section 75 dimensions.

Third-party evidence

Other relevant data has been taken in to account in the development of A City Imagining, the Investment Model and this equality screening. This includes:

- 2017–18 Annual Funding Survey Findings (ACNI)
- Belfast Arts and Culture Baseline 2016/17 (updated 2018; Thrive)
- Experience of culture and arts in Northern Ireland, 2017/18 (DfC)
- Experience of heritage by adults in Northern Ireland 2017/18 (DfC)
- Experience of Museums and Science Centres in Northern Ireland 2015/16 (DfC)
- Experience of Sport in Northern Ireland 2017/18 (DfC)
- Regularly Funded Organisation Survey Results 2010/11 (ACNI)
- Belfast City Council Residents Survey 2017 (Social Market Research)
- Cultural Framework for Belfast Equality Impact Assessment 2012 (Belfast City Council)
- Engagement in culture, arts and leisure by adults in Northern Ireland's local government districts 2017 (DfC)
- Engagement in culture, arts and leisure by young people in NI 2016 (DfC)
- Older people and engagement in culture, arts and leisure 2015: A literature review 2015 (DfC)
- Five Year Strategic Framework for the Development of the Arts 2019–24 and Equality Screening 2018 (ACNI)

Layers of impact

The council's investment can have an impact in three main ways:

1. The immediate impact is on the organisations or investees

2. On beneficiaries of the programmes and activities of organisations receiving the investment. This can include participants and attendees; cultural practitioners, such as artists and coaches; and volunteers.

3. Contribution to societal or population level impact, such as social inclusion, cultural transformation or inclusive growth

Where appropriate, the different layers of impact have been identified below.

[1] Only 7 per cent forms were submitted in 2016/17 and 13 per cent in 2017/18.

Limitations, constraints and definitions

- A City Imagining in based on a broad definition of culture including arts, heritage, sport, festivals and events. Much of the research outlined above also considers these strands in isolation.
- Most research in to culture or its different elements focuses on its public consumption, such as theatregoing, rather than private or informal consumption, such as reading.
- In some instances, collection of section 75 data is not possible: for example, attendees at a large, non-ticketed festival.
- In some instances, collection of section 75 data is considered undesirable: for example, some cultural organisations have reported that it creates barriers among participants or conflicts with their ethos of inclusivity regardless of section 75 dimension.
- Monitoring data supplied via funded organisations is self-reported and not independently verified.

General consideration of the Investment Model

MAG

As is inevitable as with all strategic change, some organisations will be positively impacted by the Investment Model and some will be negatively impacted. However, modelling the impact of this change has not identified any differential based on section 75 dimensions.

Annual and project funding

The recommended change from biannual AHPF to annual Open funding may disadvantage smaller organisations that lack the capacity to plan far in advance depending on when their activity is scheduled to happen. However, notably, the final quarter of the financial year (January to March) tends to be a fallow period for cultural activity and funding. Furthermore, this change is not considered to have a differential impact on groups working with or representing section 75.

The recommendation to introduce micro-financing, which would be open on a rolling basis, may also be particularly suitable for small organisations.

It is proposed that the new project fund, Experiment, opens biannually.

However, that council funding is tied to financial years may continue to be problematic for organisations programming activity tied to different luni-solar calendars. These tend to be particular religious and cultural celebrations, such as Easter and Diwali. This requires further council-wide (that is, outside the scope of the Investment Model) consideration.

Community Festivals Fund

It is proposed that CFF is transferred to the council's City and Neighbourhoods. This proposal is in keeping with FEI recommendations and creates separation between festivals of different size and purpose. In so doing, it may increase opportunities for community-driven festivals, including those working with or representing section 75 groups, to avail of funding.

Section 75 category	**Details of evidence/information and engagement**

Religious belief	Based on the 2011 Census, 48.8 per cent of Belfast residents are from a Catholic community background; 42.3 per cent are from a Protestant or other Christian community background; and 7.1 per cent are of no religious persuasion. According to DfC, in 2017/18, people from the two main religions, Catholic and Protestant, were equally as likely (86 per cent) to engage with culture, including arts, libraries, museums, PRONI and places of historic interest. However, people of other or no religion were more likely to engage with culture (91 per cent). 22 per cent of people who responded to the A City Imagining public consultation indicated that they were a member of the Protestant community; 23 per cent were Catholic; and 46 per cent indicated they were a member of neither community.
Political opinion	In the May 2019 local government elections, 28.2 per cent of first preference votes were cast for Sinn Féin, 21.6 per cent per cent for the Democratic Unionist Party, 15.7 per cent for the Alliance Party, 9.1 per cent for the Social, Democratic and Labour Party, 6.2 per cent for the Ulster Unionist Party, 6 per cent for the Green Party; 5.2 per cent for People Before Profit; 3.1 per cent for the Progressive Unionist Party. A total of 60 councillors were elected to Belfast City Council.
Racial group	According to 2011 Census • 96.7 per cent of Belfast's population is white. However, the proportion of the population from different ethnic groups is considered to have increased since the census. • The largest minority ethnic groups in Belfast are Chinese (0.7 per cent), Indian (0.7 per cent) and Asian (0.6 per cent) communities. • 95 per cent of Belfast's population (aged 3 years and over) have English as their main language; 1.4 per cent state "other" as their main language; and 1.2 per cent have Polish as their main language Research indicates that people from minority ethnic groups can face multiple social, economic and cultural barriers to sports, arts and other cultural engagement. These barriers to participation may include communications and language; perceived irrelevance of arts to own culture; money; lack of transport; and lack of time and timings of events. In 2017/18, ACNI reported that 2 per cent of the workforce of their core-funded clients were from a minority ethnic background, while 8 per cent of core-funded activity specifically targeted minority ethnic groups. A wide range of activity celebrating, targeting or otherwise engaging minority ethnic communities was supported under Cultural Framework investment, such as the Belfast Mela and the Intercultural Tempest.
Age	Belfast has a lower percentage of young people (aged under 16 years) and a lower percentage of older people (aged 60 years and over) than the NI average.

	On Census day 2011, 19.8 per cent of Belfast residents were under 16 years (compared with 20.9 per cent in NI as a whole) and 19.6 per cent were aged 60 and over (compared with 21.5 per cent in NI as a whole). According to DfC's research into cultural engagement in 2017/18, engagement declines with age, from 97 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds engaging to 69 per cent of those aged 65 and over. Research shows that the most likely indicator of whether a person will engage in arts or sports in older age is whether they engaged in arts or sports in their youth, which may support youth engagement as a long-term priority. 14 per cent of activity core-funded by ACNI in 2017/18 targeted older people compared to 37 per cent targeting children and young people. However, there are also differential impacts depending on type of culture and activity (sports, arts, heritage, participation, attendance, and so on). Thrive's 2016/17 audience baseline identified that there is a likely correlation with marital status: that is, older, single people are less likely to engage with culture. Thrive also identified that the majority (45 per cent) of adult audiences for outdoor festivals and events are aged 16 to 34, while only 9 per cent are aged 65 and over. The only artform that engages a higher percentage of the older population than the general population share is literature.
Marital status	According to the 2011 Census, a relatively high percentage of residents are single at 45 per cent compared with the NI average of 36.1 per cent. There is also a higher percentage of those who are separated and divorced, 11.5 per cent, compared with the NI level of 9.4 per cent. Belfast also has a higher proportion of residents who are in a same sex civil partnership at 0.13 per cent, compared to 0.09 per cent regionally. There are fewer married people at 35.6 per cent compared with the NI average of 47.6 per cent. According to DfC, in 2017/18, married or cohabiting and single people (88 and 89 per cent respectively) were more likely than separated or divorced and widowed people (83 per cent and 67 per cent respectively) to engage with culture, including arts, libraries, museums, PRONI and places of historic interest. Barriers to engagement may include cost and lack of people to go with. As outlined above, Thrive's 2016/17 audience baseline indicates there is a likely correlation between age, marital status and cultural engagement.
Sexual orientation	According to ONS statistics, 1.2 per cent of the NI population identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual in 2017, compared to 2.0 per cent of the UK population. There is no equivalent figure for Belfast. However, estimates range from 0.3 to 10 per cent according to different sources. A commonly used estimate for the UK population, accepted by Stonewall UK, is 5 to 7 per cent. ACNI's Annual Funding Survey 2017/18 reports that 5 per cent of core-funded activity specifically targets LGBTQ+ communities, and under the Cultural Framework, Belfast City Council supported a number of events and activities targeted at LGBTQ+ communities such as Belfast Pride and Outburst Queer Arts Festival. However, there is little information on rates of cultural attendance and participation among this community. Barriers to participation may include services

	designed on the assumption that the users are heterosexual and events and activities that are not reflective of their culture.
Men and women generally	Belfast has a slightly higher proportion of females (51.5 per cent of residents). This is slightly higher than the NI figure of 50.8 per cent (NISRA 2017 mid-year estimates). According to DfC, in 2017/18, women in NI were more likely to engage with culture than men (89 per cent compared to 84 per cent). However, there are also differential impacts depending on type of culture and activity (sports, arts, heritage, participation, attendance, and so on). There are also differential impacts according to multiple identities: for example, young men are harder to engage than young women or men generally.
Disability	The Census 2011 recorded that 23.5 per cent of Belfast residents have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their daily activities or the work they can do compared to the NI average of 20.3 per cent. According to DfC, people with disabilities were less likely to engage in culture than people without disabilities (74 per cent compared to 91 per cent). In 2017/18, ACNI reported that 8 per cent of the workforce of their core-funded clients were disabled people, while 14 per cent of core-funded activity targeted disabled people. The Cultural Framework for Belfast provided core funding for disability and all-ability arts organisations such as Kids in Control, Open Arts and Arts and Disability Forum (now the University of Atypical). All funded clients complied with the DDA; a number of venues participated in the Arts and Disability Charter Mark scheme; and other inclusive initiatives include companion ticketing and relaxed performances. However, according to Thrive, disabled people are significantly less likely to attend outdoor events. According to 2010/11 ACNI statistics, disability arts organisations may be more reliant on public sector subsidy (93 per cent of income) than any other type of arts organisations (average 59), with an average earned income of just under 5 per cent compared to 37 per cent across the sector. This may make disability arts organisations particularly vulnerable to policy changes.
Dependants	30.4 per cent of households in Belfast include dependent children, compared with the NI average of 36.5 per cent. 12.1 per cent of households in Belfast consist of a lone parent and a dependent child or children, compared with the NI average of 9.1 per cent. On Census Day 2011, 12.3 per cent of people stated that they provided unpaid care for a to family, friends, neighbours or others. This is slightly higher than the NI average of 11.8 per cent. According to DfC, in 2017/18, 91 per cent of people with dependants engaged with culture compared to 83 per cent of those without. This may a reflection on

	the volume and variety of programming aimed at children or families, and according to Thrive's research, the majority of Belfast residents feel that family-friendly events are important, regardless of whether they have dependent children living home. There is likely to be differential benefits for different groups with dependants, such as lone parents. It is also likely that people with caring responsibilities for older people and disabled people face additional barriers including transport, cost, time and need for respite care.

8. What is the likely impact (indicate if the policy impact is positive or negative) on <u>equality of opportunity</u> for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? What is the level of impact?

Section 75 category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	Organisations Council grants cannot be allocated to groups or activities that discriminate against any particular religious body. People The Investment Model is most likely to positively impact people of other of no religion, who are most likely to engage in culture (91 per cent). However, people from the two main religions are equally highly likely to engage in culture (86 per cent). Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life.	Minor positive
Political opinion	Council grants cannot be allocated to groups or activities that discriminate against any particular political grouping or that promote any particular political party or party political activity.	None
Racial group	Organisations Council grants cannot be allocated to groups or activities that discriminate against any particular racial group. The proposed introduction of a range of investment strands to suit different needs, including two-year multi-annual grants, annual programme support and microfinancing, means the council can be more	Minor positive

	responsive to and supportive of changes in the cultural sector, which may include, for example, new organisations or festivals developing in response to newcomer communities. While council funding is not based on track record to ensure that it is accessible to new organisations, shorter-term funding and microfinancing may help demonstrate new organisation's capacity to manage public funding and lever funding from other sources. People The arts scene is diverse, and minority ethnic communities in general are well represented. The level of activity specifically targeting minority ethnic communities is higher than the minority ethnic population make-up of Belfast, and other activities aim to be inclusive regardless of ethnic background. Nevertheless, people from minority ethnic communities do face additional barriers to participation such as relevance, language, cost and lack of relevance. There may also be different differentials for different types of cultural engagement, such as sports, heritage, attendance and participation. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting "an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life […] particularly those people currently most at risk of missing out."	
Age	Organisations The Investment Model aims to support a diverse range of organisations targeting diverse people and communities with different cultural tastes. However, organisations working with children and young people were strongly supported under the Cultural Framework, and this is likely to continue under A City Imagining, reflecting the make-up of the cultural ecosystem. People Children and young people are more likely to benefit from the Investment Model as the highest consumers of culture. This is endorsed as a priority by Belfast residents both with and without children. Sixteen to 34 year olds are most likely to naturally benefit from the introduction of MAGs for festivals and events,	Minor positive

	including outdoor events. However, MAGs applicants will be assessed on how they intend to engage people currently at risk of missing out, which may include older people, who are less likely to attend outdoor events. Strategic impact There is evidence that supporting youth engagement benefits older people in the long-term as the single most important determinant of lifelong cultural consumption.	
Marital status	The Investment Model will positively impact on all people regardless of marital status; however, it is most likely to benefit married or cohabiting and single people who are more likely to engage with culture. Applicants to MAGs and Open will be asked to demonstrate how their activity contributes to A City Belonging and engages people currently missing out. This may include single people and people with multiple identities, such as older widowed people.	Minor positive
Sexual orientation	There is limited evidence of differential impact on LGBTQ+ people. However, they may face additional barriers to cultural engagement. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting “an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life […] particularly those people currently most at risk of missing out.” This may benefit activity targeted at LGBTQ+ people and encourage applicants to consider the needs and interests of the LGBTQ+ community.	Minor positive
Men and women generally	Women are more likely to engage with culture generally and more likely to benefit from the Investment Model. It is likely that some activity supported under A City Imagining, such as music festivals or sports event, will have a greater appeal to young men, who historically have proved harder to engage.	Minor positive
Disability	Organisations All applicants for funding are required to comply with the DDA. Applicants to MAGs in particular are further required to state how they ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably than people without a disability. As there is strong evidence of differential cultural	Minor positive

	consumption, applicants for funding with a primary disability or all-ability remit should be able to strongly demonstrate impact on disabled people and the A City Belonging theme. However, if such organisations are unsuccessful, they may have less opportunity to redress with other income. ## People While people without disabilities are more likely to engage in culture, it is likely that disabled people will continue to be supported to engage with culture through support for organisations outlined above. A number of mitigating initiatives, such as Gig Buddies, support for disabled artists and an accessibility audit have already been built in to the A City Imagining implementation plans. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting "an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life […] particularly those people currently most at risk of missing out." However, disabled people are less likely to attend outdoor festivals and events, and therefore less likely to benefit from the introduction of festivals and events MAGs.	
Dependants	## Organisations Organisations working with children and young people and their families were strongly supported under the Cultural Framework, and this is likely to continue under A City Imagining. ## People People with dependent children are more likely to engage in culture. This may be as a result of public policy and programming responding to awareness of different barriers for parents, such as cost, transport, lack of facilities and childcare. There is limited evidence of differential impact on people with adult dependants. However, it is likely that this dimension also faces additional barriers. Activity intended to benefit disabled people, such as companion tickets and Gig Buddies, may also benefit carers.	Minor positive

9. Are there opportunities to better promote <u>equality of opportunity</u> for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief		People from the two main religious groups are equally likely to benefit.
Political opinion		People from the two main political groups are equally likely to benefit.
Racial group	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. In addition, it is recommended that the council considers providing additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development relevant to minority ethnic audiences.	
Age	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. In addition, it is recommended that the council considers providing additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development of under-engaged audiences including older people.	
Marital status	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented.	
Sexual orientation	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. In addition, it is recommended that the council considers	

	providing additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development relevant to LGBTQ+ audiences.	
Men and women generally	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented.	
Disability	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. In addition, it is recommended that: • The council should work with other key policymakers in the city to agree and monitor key population indicators and programme performance measures relating to participation and attendance by disabled people. • The council should consider providing additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development of under-engaged audiences including disabled people • Support for outdoor events promoters should include the promotion and implementation of the council's Inclusive Events Guide. • Cultural festivals should be included in the accessibility audit.	
Dependants	Opportunities to promote equal opportunities have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. In addition, it is recommended that: • Additional support and resources should consider the audience development to support and engage carers. • Support for outdoor events promoters should include the dissemination of the council's Inclusive events guide. • The council considers updating the Inclusive Events Guide to consider the needs of carers not just as "personal assistance", but as consumers of culture in their own right.	

10. To what extent is the policy likely to impact (positive or negatively) on <u>good relations</u> between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? What is the level of impact?

Good relations category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	Most activity supported through the Cultural Framework was all or mainly cross-community. Festivals and events in particular have the ability to bring people together in shared celebration and increase community and civic pride. A City Imagining places particular importance on culture as a driver of social capital, and by building the "capacity of our citizens to allow people to express their own cultural identities" is likely to continue to increased understanding and tolerance of the culture and identities of others.	Minor positive
Political opinion	Most activity supported through the Cultural Framework was all or mainly cross-community. Festivals and events in particular have the ability to bring people together in shared celebration and increase community and civic pride. A City Imagining places particular importance on culture as a driver of social capital, and by building the "capacity of our citizens to allow people to express their own cultural identities" is likely to continue to increased understanding and tolerance of the culture and identities of others.	Minor positive
Racial group	Most activity supported through the Cultural Framework was all or mainly cross-community. Festivals and events in particular have the ability to bring people together in shared celebration and increase community and civic pride. A City Imagining places particular importance on culture as a driver of social capital, and by building the "capacity of our citizens to allow people to express their own cultural identities" is likely to continue to increased understanding and tolerance of the culture and identities of others.	Minor positive

10. Are there opportunities to better promote <u>good relations</u> between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	Opportunities to promote good relations have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting “an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life [and has] the confidence, knowledge and skills to express their own beliefs, values, customs and identity – and understand those of others.”	
Political opinion	Opportunities to promote good relations have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting “an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life [and has] the confidence, knowledge and skills to express their own beliefs, values, customs and identity – and understand those of others.”	
Racial group	Opportunities to promote good relations have been designed in to the policy as described above and will continue to be developed as other investment strands are designed and implemented. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting “an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life [and has] the confidence, knowledge and skills to express their own beliefs, values, customs and identity – and understand those of others.”	

Section C

Belfast City Council also has legislative obligations to meet under the **Disability Discrimination Order** and Questions 12-13 relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

11. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for the Council to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Explain your assessment in full

Yes. A City Imagining places particular importance on culture as a driver of social capital, creating bonds within and between different communities. It asserts that beneficiaries should be "active agents of change and co-creators" creating opportunities for disabled people to determine the terms of their own engagement and activity that positively and accurately reflects their own interests and identity. Scoring criteria for MAGs and Open include assessment of contribution to the A City Belonging priority, including supporting "an inclusive city where everyone actively participates in cultural life [and has] the confidence, knowledge and skills to express their own beliefs, values, customs and identity – and understand those of others." It is recommended that the council consider providing additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development of disabled audiences.

12. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?

Explain your assessment in full

Yes. As outlined above, the Investment Model is likely to provide opportunities to increase participation by disabled people in public life, including through investment in disability and all-ability organisations and other organisations engaging disabled audiences.

14. Multiple Identities

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy with multiple identities

Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

Where there is specific evidence of differential impact on people or groups with multiple identities, such as young males or single older people, this has been detailed above.

Generally, It is likely that people who fall in to multiple section 75 dimensions are at higher-risk of missing out because their needs are more likely to be complex and less likely to be considered or understood.

In a move away from CMAF and other Cultural Framework funding, A City Imagining and the Investment Model does not specify particular priority section 75 dimensions. Rather, applicants for funding are required to evidence how and why the people or groups they intend to work with are at risk of missing out. This allows cultural organisations to demonstrate need based on their own considerable experience and expertise working with different groups, allowing for groups with multiple complex identities that can otherwise be overlooked.

This is supported by research from Thrive, which recommends a more nuanced “focus on particular demographics in particular areas will be the best way to achieve overall growth in the city’s rates of engagement”; and supported by feedback from the A City Imagining engagement programme which recognised that individuals cannot be categorised into only one section 75 category.

15. Monitoring Arrangements

Section 75 places a requirement the Council to have equality monitoring arrangements in place in order to assess the impact of policies and services etc; and to help identify barriers to fair participation and to better promote equality of opportunity.

Outline what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.

<table>
<tr><th>Equality</th><th>Good Relations</th><th>Disability Duties</th></tr>
<tr><td>Grant applicants will be asked to complete an equality monitoring questionnaire. This will establish whether there is any differential in terms of application.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Grant recipients will be asked to complete equality monitoring questionnaires. This will determine if there is any differential in terms of grants awarded.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Grant recipients will be asked to complete equality monitoring questionnaires. This will determine if there is any differential in terms of impact.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Completion of equality monitoring questionnaires should be monitored, and the questionnaire should be reviewed and revised to improve completion rates if this remains low.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">It is recommended that the council should work with other key policymakers in the city to monitor key population indicators and programme performance measures, in particular participation and attendance by disabled people.</td></tr>
</table>

A City Imagining monitoring and evaluation framework is being developed. This will consider equality impacts and appropriate evidence collection.
The A City Imagining EQIA monitoring will be reviewed annually and included in the annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. This review will be published on the council's website. It will include the Investment Model.

Section D

Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened
A City Imagining Investment Model

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for –

X	equality of opportunity and good relations
X	disabilities duties

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is – *(place an X in the appropriate box below)*

	~~*__**Screened In**__ – Necessary to conduct a full EQIA~~

	~~*__**Screened Out**__ – No EQIA necessary (no impacts)~~ ~~Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached:~~

* **Screened Out -** Mitigating Actions (minor impacts)

- Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached:

The opportunity to increase engagement in culture by section 75 dimensions most at risk of missing out is embedded in the parent strategy, A City Imagining, and its themes and priorities have been embedded in the Investment Model.

Based on the research and analysis above, the Investment Model has minor positive differential impacts and the following people and groups in particular are more likely to benefit from the programme:

- Children and young people
- Parents with dependent children
- People aged 16 to 34

- Explain what mitigating actions and / or policy changes will now be introduced:

- A number of proactive policy decisions have already been built in to the programme as detailed above. This includes prioritisation of people and communities current most likely to miss out; and requirement for applicants to comply with the DDA and set down how their organisation and activities are inclusive of disabled people.
- Section 75 monitoring has been included in applications for MAGs and should be included at application and monitoring stage for all grants. Completion rates be monitored, and the questionnaire should be reviewed and revised accordingly.
- The council should collate and consider data gathered through section 75 monitoring and use it to inform policy and practice at regular intervals.
- The council should work with other key funders and agencies in the city to streamline the collection of monitoring data. This is likely to reduce the administrative burden on both funders and recipients, improve the quality and frequency of responses, and provide more robust data.
- The council should work with other key policymakers in the city to monitor key population indicators and programme performance measures, in particular participation and attendance by disabled people.
- The council should consider providing additional support and resources to support sector-wide audience development of under-engaged audiences, in particular disabled people and older people; people and groups where there is evidence of additional barriers, such as LGBTQ+ and carers; and people with multiple identities.
- Support for outdoor events promoters should include the promotion and implementation of the council's Inclusive Events Guide.
- Cultural festivals should be included in the accessibility audit.
- The council should consider updating the Inclusive Events Guide to consider the needs of carers not just as "personal assistance", but as consumers of culture in their own right.
- It is recommended that more substantive screening of other Investment model investment strands be carried out at they are designed and implemented.

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	'Putting you first, Transforming customer experience' public consultations and equality screening decision
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of report or summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform members of the • Findings of the consultations on Council's 'Putting you First' customer vision • Outcome of the Equality Screening process.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Members are asked to: • To note the analysis of the public consultation via our website • To note the analysis of the public consultation at Belfast venues • To note the Equality Screening decision to screen out with mitigating actions (minor impacts).

3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Members are reminded that at its meeting in November 2019. Council agreed to consult on our customer focus vision entitled 'Putting You First, Transforming Customer Experience'. At that stage the Customer Focus Programme had undergone an initial screening and the recommendation was that we defer the final decision in relation to the outcome to allow for consultation feedback, including Section 75 groups. It was agreed that feedback from the consultation would be used, if applicable, to update the initial screening and then a view would be taken as to the best screening outcome decision. The vision, which is attached at Appendix 1, sets out how we plan to provide our customers with a quality and appropriate customer experience and service.
3.2	Understanding customers' needs and expectations is an important part of our equality and customer research in order to help shape our customer experience. In keeping with the Council's statutory obligations under equality and rural screening, two consultation methods have been used to date: A -Public Consultation via council's website using the Citizenspace platform B-Public Consultation at venues across Belfast **A- Public Consultation (Citizenspace)**
3.3.	The Citizenspace consultation commenced on the 11th November, 2019 and closed on 2nd February, 2020. It was promoted on our website, social media, and by email to approximately 180 stakeholder organisations and a number of presentations were made to equality groups. It was also widely promoted during the venue based consultations and to internal stakeholders on Intranet.
3.3.1	In total there were 39 responses to the Citizenspace survey of which 28% resided in North Belfast, 18% in South Belfast, 28% in East Belfast and 15% in West Belfast. 23% of respondents were male, 33% female (44% didn't answer the question). Of the age groups that responded the biggest share was 35-44 year olds with 33%. Followed by 55-64 year olds at 13% (44% didn't answer the question). The consultation's questions included. 1. Customers' opinions on the Programme's Framework (14 Responses) 2. Customers' opinions on the draft Customer Charter (8 responses) 3. Customers' opinions on our customer experience principles (39 responses) 4. Customers were asked '*Are you aware of any equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with our draft vision*?' (36 responses)

5. Final comments or suggestions for improvement (11 responses)

3.3.2 **Responses to Question 1**-*Customers' opinions on the Programme's Framework*

There were 14 responses to this question. Responses were categorised as either, A-*Positive*, B-*Suggestions* or C-*Concerns*. In total there were five concerns raised. Two were relevant to the programme and are already being addressed as part of the programme's planning and implementation. Two were operational about our recycling service and street cleansing. Both of which will be raised with the relevant services as part of the 'you said, we did' approach.

3.3.3 **Responses to Question 2** -*Customer's opinions on the draft Customer Charter*

There were 8 responses to this question, Again responses were categorised as either, A-*Positive*, B-*Suggestions* or C-*Concerns*. There was only one concern which was a wider statement around the customer focus programme's credibility and can be discounted as a general unsubstantiated comment.

3.3.4 **Responses to Question 3-** *Customers' opinions on our principles*

There were 39 responses to this question.

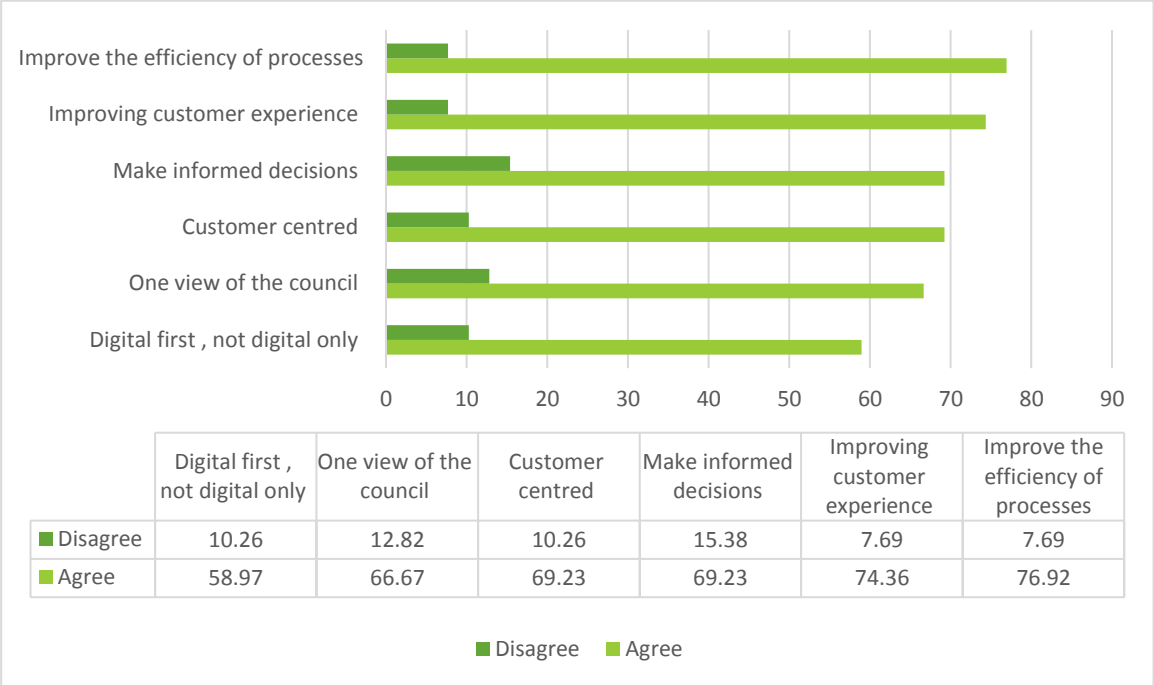
A key part of the Citizenspace questionnaire was to seek customers opinions on the customer focus programme's principles, as outlined in our vision as follows:

- **One view of the council**
  Consistent joined-up approach underpinned by standards to get things right first time.
- **Customer Centred**
  Customer centred to improve your customer experience so you receive a seamless joined up service, regardless of the issue.
- **Make informed decisions**
  Provide greater insight and analysis to provide services that meet your needs, both now and in the future, by continuous review and improvement.
- **Digital first, not digital only**
  Enable you to choose, making sure you have fair access to the services we provide, offering more self-serve opportunities and providing support if you need help to get online.
- **Improving customer experience**
  Provide access to the right information at the right time and from anywhere. We will design our services around your needs.

- **Improve the efficiency of processes**

  Give value for money and provide efficient services.

Fig 1- Customer Focus, Programme Principles, *Agree or Disagree*



	Digital first , not digital only	One view of the council	Customer centred	Make informed decisions	Improving customer experience	Improve the efficiency of processes
Disagree	10.26	12.82	10.26	15.38	7.69	7.69
Agree	58.97	66.67	69.23	69.23	74.36	76.92

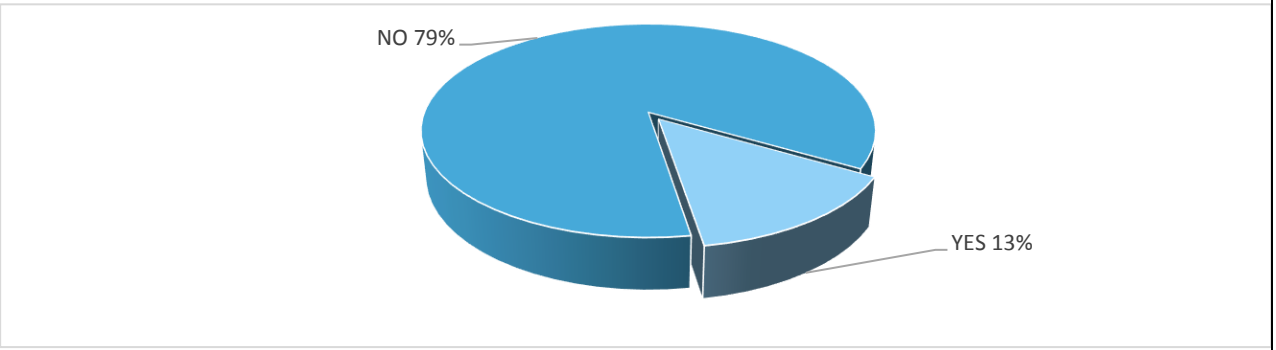
3.3.5 As can be seen from Fig 1 above, the vast majority of responses were in *favour* of *each* principle, and only a small percentage disagreed. The high levels of customer support for all six principles (identified as part of our outline business case and tested during the discovery and planning phases) strongly suggests customers have endorsed the principles as a sound basis for the customer focus programme going forward.

In particular, customers rated most highly '*improve efficiency of services'* followed closely by '*improving customer experience'* and '*make informed decisions'*. Given the importance of *digital first*, *not digital only*' to the programme's long term success that this principle reached almost 60% agreement is both reassuring and significant.

As with previous questions additional comments provided by customers to Question 3 were categorised by–A *Positive*, B-*Suggestions* and C-*Concern*s. Six customers responded to this part of the question. One of the concerns raised (4 in total for Question 3) related directly to the vision and encouraged a multi-channel approach, otherwise they were general in nature and therefore, has not necessitated any amendments to the vision document. Any operational comments will be passed to services as appropriate as part of the 'you said, we did' approach.

3.3.6	**Responses to Question 4** *'Are you aware of any equality, good relations, or rural need implications associated with our draft customer vision?'*

Fig 2- Customer Focus Programme, equality, good relations and rural needs implications



There were 36 responses to this question

Almost 80% of respondents did not identify any equality, good relations or rural implications. Additional comments were made by five customers, none of whom raised any concerns. However, there were four suggestions only two of which were relevant to the customer focus programme. One was highlighting digital exclusion being more prevalent in disadvantaged areas and secondly the need to engage with new and disadvantaged communities. The customer focus programme will provide for mitigating actions in both cases.

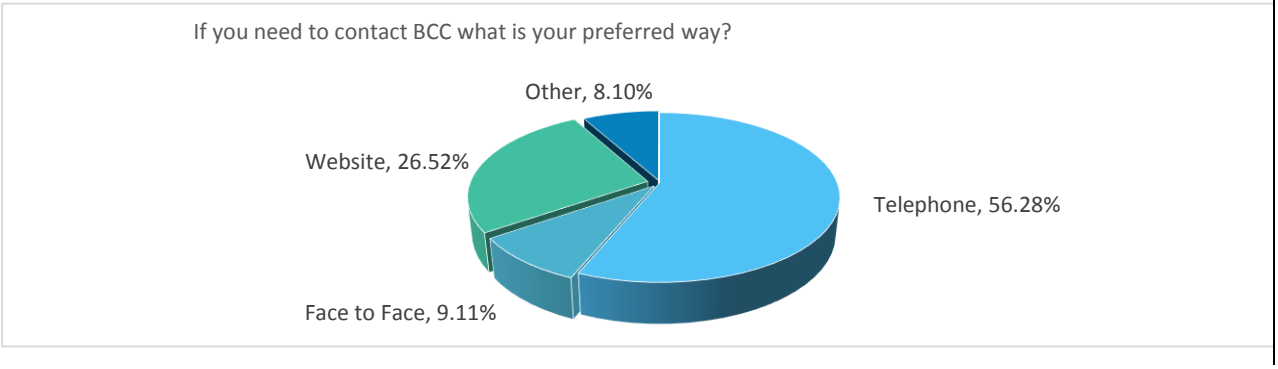
3.4 **B-Public Consultation at Belfast venues**

The venues based consultation took place in venues across the city from 13th to 24th January, 2020.

3.4.1 The locations chosen for the consultations were:

- Olympia Leisure Centre
- Grove Wellbeing Centre
- Kennedy Shopping Centre
- Girdwood Community Hub
- City Hall
- Connswater Shopping Centre

Sixteen staff in rota, drawn from the Customer Focus Delivery Board and Project Teams, facilitated the engagement at each venue. Marketing and research material was designed and printed including pop up stands, an explanatory/promotional leaflet and a postcard based questionnaire. It's a credit to all staff involved that a total of 425 members of the public were consulted over 11 sessions during the two week period. As a result further useful insights were gained in addition to

	the Citizenspace consultation and the previous and comprehensive customer and stakeholder research already undertaken during the business case and discovery phases.
3.4.2	Our engagement with customers included explaining the merits of the customer focus programme and informing them of the full consultation available on-line while taking the opportunity to ask each customer three straightforward questions. Overall customers' attitude to the venues based consultation was overwhelmingly positive, friendly and willing to give of their time to answer the questions as best they could.
3.4.3	Two questions were quantitative and one was qualitative. Question 1 was developed to inform our understanding of customers preferred contact channels while Question 2 was posed to get customer feedback on the key elements of the council's draft customer charter. Question 3 was designed to identify possible pain points and garner customers' ideas for improvement. Question 1- *If you need to contact Belfast City Council what is your preferred way?* • *Telephone* • *Face to Face* • *Website* • *Other* Question 2 - *What do you think should be the most important aspects of our customer service? Please rank 1-5 with 1 being the most important.* • *Value for Money* • *Accessibility* • *Knowledgeable Staff* • *Speed of Response* • *First Time Resolution* Question 3 - *Do you have any suggestions on how we can make your customer experience better?*
3.4.4	**Fig 3- Venues Consultation Analysis -***Question 1 Findings* 

Question one demonstrated that by far the most preferred method to contact the Council is by telephone. It should be no surprise that almost 60% of respondents use or prefer this channel. 27% prefer on-line, followed by Face to Face with 9%. Other channels accounted for 8% and in the majority of cases email was their preferred choice.

This highlights and reinforces the customer focus programme's approach to provide customers with a well-designed and function-rich website which ensures Council's services are readily accessible and easy to use on-line. And, helps us focus on the challenge ahead in persuading customers to channel shift to on-line formats, from the more costly choices of telephone and face to face.

3.4.5 **Fig 4 -Venues Consultation Analysis -***Question 2 Findings*

Overall the ranking produced a narrow deviation with only 6% separating the lowest and highest ranking choice. Importantly, accessibility was cited by 1 in 5 customers as important, again reinforcing the need for our web site to provide a wide range of services.

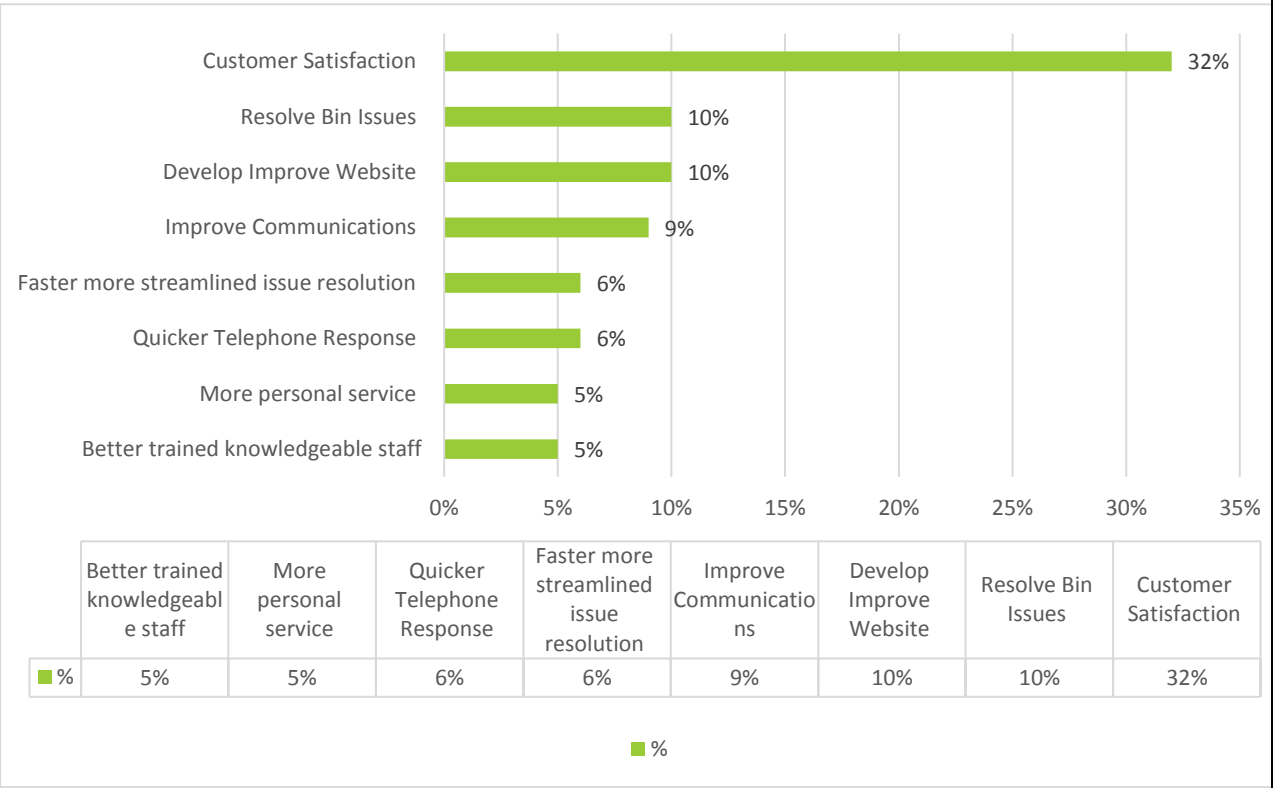
In order of preference (Ranking 1) the most important aspects of our service to respondents are;

- Speed of Response
- Knowledgeable Staff
- Accessibility
- Value for Money
- First Time Resolution.

By adding together *Speed of Response* and *First Time Resolution* demonstrates that 4 out of 10 customers value, above all else, their issues being resolved quickly and once and for all.

Taking all five categories individually, Accessibility, Knowledgeable Staff and Speed of Response all had the highest percentages for Ranking 1, with 28%, 29% and 33% respectively. Value for Money and First Time Resolution had the highest percentage in Ranking 5 with 31% and 29% respectively.

3.4.6 **Fig 5- Venues Consultation Analysis -***Question 3 Findings*



Following an in-depth review of the venues consultations' *qualitative* responses it is gratifying to report that the largest category was satisfied customers who were happy to put on record their satisfaction with a wide range of our services.

Figure 5 clearly sets out the areas of most importance to customers who were consulted. All of the categories listed above are an intrinsic part of the customer focus programme and when implemented will successfully address the issues recommended by customers.

3.5 **Equality Screening**

Our customer vison, *'Putting you first. Transforming Customer Experience'* sets out for customers how their customer experience will improve and develop and what level of service they can expect when engaging with us. It explains that Council is on a pathway of continuous improvement and that improving customer experience and service is a corporate priority and central to the successful

	delivery of all our services. This is described in a number of *statements of intent* in our **'***Putting you first. Transforming Customer Experience'* vision and approved as a key principle from the customer programme business case undertaken by Deloitte Consulting in 2017.
3.5.1	The Putting You First consultation exercise should be considered an overall success providing useful insight into what customers' value in key aspects of customer experience and service. Equally, it shows first hand, that customers appreciate our seeking out their views and are more than willing to engage with Council in all aspects of the services we provide. Following the drafting of the equality screening in August 2019, it was agreed to defer the screening decision until public consultations were undertaken. As reported earlier the consultations took place from November 2019 to February 2020. A total of 464 customers were consulted directly and only minor impacts were identified or evidenced in the screening. Mitigating actions have already been identified and will remain under review for the duration of the programme. The document is sufficiently visionary not to warrant any amendments in light of the consultations, at this point.
3.5.2	**Equality Screening Decision** The screening decision, approved by the Equality & Diversity Officer, is *screened out with mitigating actions (minor impacts)*. The minor impacts relate to the racial (minor), religious belief (minor positive), age (minor positive), disability (minor positive) and dependents (minor positive), equality groups. In particular, this was highlighted as part of the consultation and engagement with the Migrant Forum. Mitigating actions will include use of language, accessibility improvements to the Council's on-line services, community based training and assistance and the more effective promotion and communication of all Council services and their impact on residents, amongst others.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	None at present
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	Consultation is now complete and the recommendation is to screen out with mitigating actions.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 Putting You First Vision document

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Putting you first

Transforming customer experience

[DRAFT FOR CUSTOMER CONSULTATION]

Belfast City Council

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Our customer vision

Providing easy to use and accessible services, whenever and wherever you need us.

Introduction

Belfast City Council has embarked on a customer experience transformation programme to provide quicker and better experiences to all our customers. Over the next three years (2020 -2023), we will begin putting in place the foundations to transform our customer experience, offering increasingly easy to use and accessible services.

Our customers

Our customers include everyone who lives, works, visits, learns or does business in Belfast. Our customers also include our own staff – around 62% also live in the Belfast area. In order to deliver the very best service to all our customers, it is more important than ever that we understand who they are and what they want from us.

We are committed to ensuring all our customers, whatever their needs, have an excellent customer experience across all channels when they deal with us. We know that while some residents prefer traditional ways of contacting us, an increasing number of our customers would use digital self-serve facilities if they were improved and available, or are willing to use digital channels if supported. We will support customers who want to get online.

Putting you first

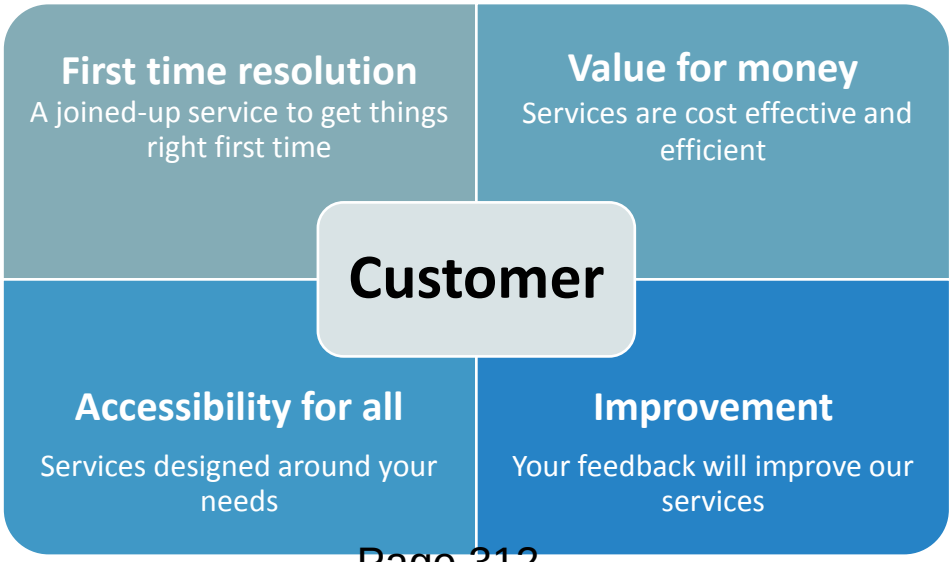
Our Putting You First vision sets out how we intend to provide services to our customers. We have consulted extensively with our customers and this highlighted the challenge for us to satisfy the varied and more demanding expectations of our customers.

Some common themes emerged when we asked what we could do to improve.

You want us to:

- make it easier to contact us,
- have more services online, and
- be more responsive to your needs.

Our approach is to provide you with consistent and joined up services whenever possible, underpinned by easily understood standards. This is set out in our draft customer charter on page 16.



We will actively ask you for feedback and use it to make decisions about how to improve our services. We will make it easier for you to find the information you're looking for, whether it's online, by phone or face-to-face so you can access information in the way you would prefer. We will simplify our processes and make them more efficient.

We know that many people prefer to use digital services. It's quick and easy. We know our customers are using their smartphones and tablets more and computers less frequently when going online.

Our Putting You First framework sets out to provide you with the best possible customer experience and service. And, that our approach is about accessibility and inclusion for all our customers.

This will include a new convenient, multi-channel customer hub for customers accessing the council. We will be putting significant investment into a brand new website including important enhancements to increase self-serve opportunities and provide support for customers who aspire to use digital channels but might need assistance in getting online.

Putting You First Framework

You can look forward to…

- A quicker response and issues sorted on the first point of contact, where possible.
- better information about where your enquiry is up to.
- more opportunity to get things done yourself.

You can choose…

- to contact the council online at a time to suit you.

You can trust…

- we will endeavour to deliver an excellent service.
- if you do have cause for complaint we will try to resolve your issue at the earliest opportunity.
- that we will only use and share your details within the council, where appropriate, to give you the best possible service.
- we will treat all your personal details confidentially in accordance with GDPR

You will feel…

- that you have been valued as a customer.
- confident in making future enquiries and transactions online.
- encouraged to give feedback on how your contact was handled (good or bad) and know this will be listened to.

You will know…

- that we are aiming to provide the best possible service.
- the response and information you get will be correct and we are providing a value for money service.

We will…

know that we are improving our services as we have identified a number of performance indicators that will keep track of our progress. In support of our transformation, we are starting to put in place a range of customer service standards that will underpin our services to you. For example, you'll be asked your views on our customer experience more often so we can make changes and improvements more quickly, offering a more agile, effective and efficient council.

Our customer experience principles

One view of the council
Consistent joined-up approach underpinned by standards to get things right first time.

Customer Centred
Customer centred to improve your customer experience so you receive a seamless joined up service, regardless of the issue.

Make informed decisions
Provide greater insight and analysis to provide services that meet your needs, both now and in the future, by continuous review and improvement.

Digital first, not digital only
Enable you to choose, making sure you have fair access to the services we provide, offering more self-serve opportunities and providing support if you need help to get online.

Improving customer experience
Provide access to the right information at the right time and from anywhere. We will design our services around your needs.

Improve the efficiency of processes
Give value for money and provide efficient services.

1. One view of the council

Customer expectations are changing quicker than ever. People now want timely, secure, round the clock access to facilities, and our services are no different.

By doing more of your business with us online, you will be able to do things quicker and better and it will help us target our resources more effectively.

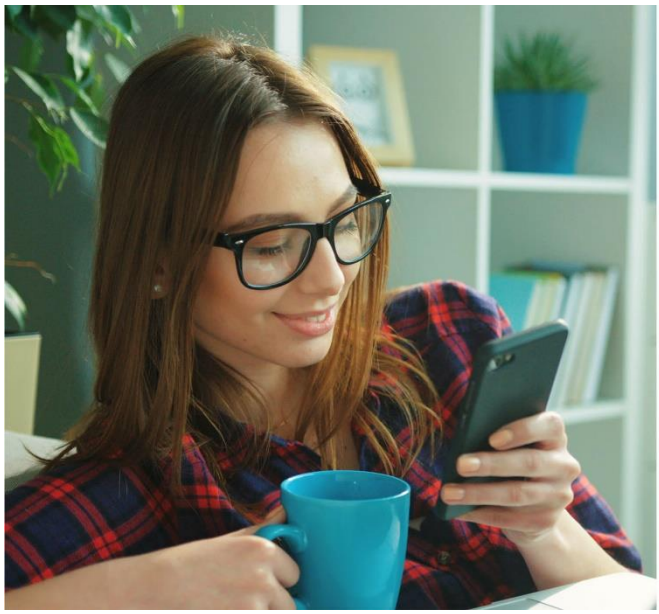
Looking forward, our website will allow you to securely access a whole range of services. Increasingly you will receive information that is more tailored to your needs. We will be able to anticipate your needs more effectively and the range of information you can access and services you can request will increase over time.

Very soon we will start planning to provide you with a more personal service. For example, in the future if you have a current query, you'll be able to see the status of that query and when a response is expected.

You will also be able to book and pay for an increasing number of services online. Including, for example, if you wanted to order a new waste bin, you would do this by completing a form on our website and pay for any charges at the same time. You will then be able to track the status of your order.

We will:

- improve our technology so you can do more things online,
- join up all the services you receive so that all your information is in one place,
- improve our back office processes so we can easily provide you with status updates on any queries you have made,
- use social media to get messages out there so you may not need to get in touch as often,
- send messages about things that are important to you,
- put all possible services online so that you are in control,
- allow any payments to be made securely online.



2. Customer centred

However you contact us, you will receive consistent advice, information and access to services. Digital options will offer a quicker and better experience when you need to contact us.

We will:

- enable you to do more of your transactions or requests online, where before you may have needed to telephone or visit,
- provide information about all of our services online,
- make it easier for you to contact us online,
- support and develop our staff to offer the best possible service and ensure they have the right skills, knowledge and tools to help you,
- improve customer experience through all available channels.
- we will treat all your personal details confidentially in accordance with GDPR

3. Make informed decisions

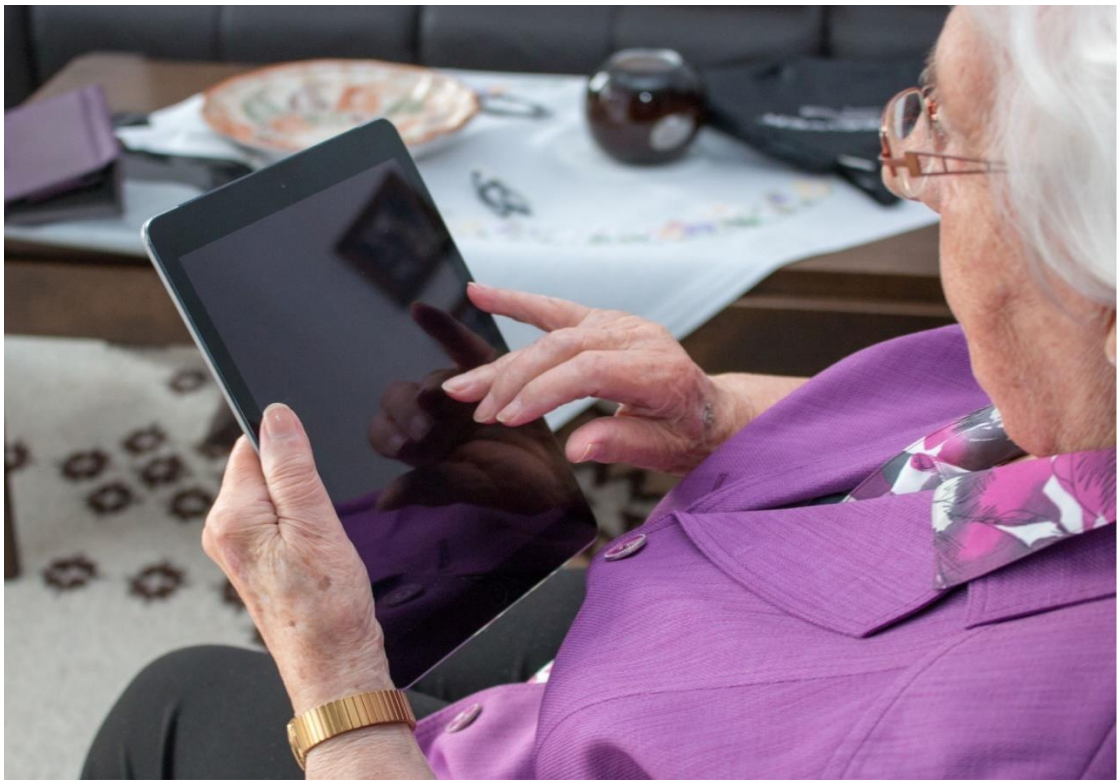
Customer insight is about knowing our customers better so we can provide an improved service to you. If we understand what is important to you and how you use our services, we can prioritise our resources to support you better.

We will be able to send you information about issues or events that may be relevant to you and tailor the service you receive.

Also, if we receive lots of reports about a particular issue in a certain area, we will be able to target our services where they are needed most.

We will:

- improve our 'report it' system so it is easier for you to use and can advise our services,
- use a combination of social media, email and SMS to send relevant information to you,
- ensure we have the most up to date information about you so we can best serve your needs.



4. Digital first, not digital only

We will help those who don't have the technology or the skills to access our services online.

We know around 88% of our customers are online and already do a lot online. We also recognise that not everyone has the skills, access to the internet or equipment to take advantage of our digital services. We will help more of our customers get active online as we know being online can help save you time and is more convenient. However, you will still be able to contact us by phone or visit us.

We will encourage people that do have the skills to do things online to help support those who do not. This may be done through support in the community, on the phone or at our customer hub.

We will:

- encourage all our customers to use digital methods to contact us,
- continue to offer support to those who need it,
- change the way we deliver services so that we can offer support to people who need it,
- continue to provide technology for public use.

5. Improving customer experience

We want to make it easier for you to give us important feedback and we will have more opportunities for you to tell us what you think. We need to know how you feel about our services so we can share good practice on what we're doing well and improve areas which you aren't as happy with. This will help us improve overall customer satisfaction.

As we change how we deliver services, and move more of our services online, we will consult and be asking you to test things out for us. We will listen and respond to what you tell us. Your feedback about our online services will help us create a better service.

We will:

- test new digital services with you and use your feedback to improve,
- identify more opportunities for you to tell us what you think,
- use information about how you use our website to tailor and improve our service,
- make sure your feedback on council services is used to improve and change what we do.

6. Helping communities

We became responsible for community planning in 2015 as a result of Local Government Reform. It's about making sure public services work together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people.

We have been asking residents and organisations in Belfast to tell us what kind of city they want for the future and what we should be focusing on now to make this happen. People told us that they want a city that provides a high quality of life for everyone who lives here and for the city to be a great place to work, study, visit or set up and grow your business.

The Belfast Agenda community plan was created by a partnership of key city partners, residents and community organisations.

Belfast also has a vibrant and active voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, playing a valuable role in the social, economic and environmental fabric of city life.

In many of our communities, there are groups who are informally providing services and community support. These groups offer real value to their communities and we want to make sure we help and encourage this kind of community capacity building and self-support.

There may be occasions where community groups want to do some volunteering in the local area and this is also something we would encourage.

We believe communities can offer informal advice and guidance, helping each other to do things for themselves rather than having to contact the council, making it quicker, easier and better for them. This would reduce pressure on council services and help community enterprises to develop. We are reviewing our community provision capacity at the moment to support access to neighbourhood services.

7. Improve the efficiency of processes

We will lead and embrace the shift to digital ways of working and change our behaviour to make sure we are able to serve you in new ways. A process of continuous improvement.

We will guide and support our staff to do things differently to improve the overall customer experience you get. Our staff should have access to records when out visiting you at home. Our digital team will help us to make sure we get the right information to you when you need it.

We will:

- give our staff the equipment and skills to deliver services to customers more effectively and efficiently,
- remove paper where possible to make our services more efficient and save money,
- change the way we work so our processes are streamlined,
- improve how we securely share data so we can respond better to your needs,
- make sure our all systems and processes are digital ready,
- continue to embrace new technologies to ensure we are constantly improving,
- work with our elected members to support them to use digital ways of working.

Conclusion

We will know our 'Putting you First' is successful when you:

- find it quicker and easier to access our services and information,
- get the service you need first time,
- can access services and view your contact history in one place,
- are satisfied or very satisfied with the service and information you receive. We will gather feedback so we can check this.

Delivering our shared vision in this way will give you greater choice, more control and improved access to our services. Easy-to-use digital tools will give you your own personalised service. It's a journey we will make together.

You will be able to access council information and services through a range of channels.

We will have a workforce with the right skills and tools for the future to inform and guide you to the right services for you. We will be working closely with our communities to increase access and support to our services and will have strong partnerships in place that allow us to support people through options for self-serve.

We see success in delivering Putting You First as excellent customer experience, fit for purpose services and responsive as our customers' needs change.

Draft customer charter

Customer charter

Belfast Agenda: Developing our city, driving growth, and creating a great city and neighbourhood living experience

Belfast City Council

Our customer vision

Our customers are:

- ✔ at the core of everything we do, anyone who comes into contact with us for any reason.
- ✔ residents and everyone who works, visits, learns or does business here.

We want to:

- ✔ be an outstanding service provider and will strive to always provide a high standard, cost effective and consistent level of service.
- ✔ be helpful, courteous and respectful.
- ✔ get things right – first time, every time.
- ✔ make sure our customers have fair access to the services we provide.
- ✔ use Plain English when we write or speak to you.
- ✔ provide services that meet our customers needs both now and, by continuous review and improvement, in the future.
- ✔ respect your confidentiality at all times.

Our customer commitment

First time resolution

We want:

- to get things right first time.
- you to receive a seamless, joined up service – regardless of the issue.

Value for money

We want to make sure:

- you get value for money.
- our services are cost effective.
- we provide efficient services.

Accessibility for all

Our services will be:

- designed around your needs
- available when and where you need them
- simple and easy to access.

We will:

- use technology to improve accessibility and flexibility.
- design services to be digitally accessed and offer more self-serve opportunities.
- provide support if you need help getting online.

Improvement

We will:

- use your feedback to make our services better, faster and easier to use.
- involve you in developing new ways of delivering services.
- investigate all complaints thoroughly, within the agreed timescales and learn from our mistakes.
- continually monitor our performance and report back to customers on how we have performed.

Complaints, comments and compliments

Your feedback is important to us.

Let us know if we've delivered a good service or if you've a suggestion for improvement.

As our customer you have every right to expect the best possible services. And, when we fall short, you have the right to complain. A copy of our complaints, comments, and compliments policy can be found at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/feedback.

How to contact us

T: 028 9032 0202
E: enquiries@belfastcity.gov.uk
@belfastcc
www.facebook/belfastcitycouncil

Cecil Ward Building,
4-10 Linenhall Street
Belfast, BT2 8BP

What we ask of you

In return you:

- treat our staff with courtesy and respect.
- be considerate and polite to other customers.
- provide us with further information if requested.

We're committed to making sure that our publications are available to all sections of the community and will consider providing this in other formats. If you need an alternative format, please call 028 9050 0510.

Contact us:

Customer Focus Programme

9 Adelaide

9-21 Adelaide Street

Belfast

BT2 8DJ

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028 9032 0202

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Belfast City Council

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	'Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland: A Call for Evidence'- Response from Belfast City Council
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Grainia Long, Commissioner for Resilience
Contact Officer:	Clare McKeown, Sustainable Development Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future		X		
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To consider for approval Belfast City Council's response to the 'Call for Evidence' from the Department for the Economy on a future Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland. The department is developing a new Energy Strategy to replace the existing Strategic Energy Framework. The publication of this Call for Evidence is part of an on-going public engagement process to inform and shape this strategy. The department aims to have a draft Strategy for presentation to the Minister for the Economy by the end of 2020. Belfast City Council officers have engaged proactively with the department on the development of a forthcoming strategy, and this work will continue beyond our submission to the call for evidence.
1.2	

	Members should note that a change to the date of the March meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis has meant this document does not include the recommendations from the Working Group. A further paper, outlining the recommendations of the All Party Working Group meeting on the 18th March may be circulated as a late paper, in advance of SP&R.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to • Consider Belfast City Council's response to the Call for Evidence, and to note that continued detailed engagement with the department on the development of the strategy will continue.
3.0	**Main Report**
	Key points to note
3.1	A new Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland represents an important opportunity to decarbonise the region's economy and enable Northern Ireland to meet the objectives set by the UK government to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The pace of decarbonisation set by UK government will have a critical impact on Northern Ireland's economic strategy, its climate planning and fuel poverty levels among its most vulnerable households.
3.2	Belfast Agenda is the community plan for the city of Belfast, and it includes a core commitment to inclusive growth- improving the wider outcomes for people in Belfast by addressing the issues of poverty, economic inactivity, unemployment and underemployment. We have assessed the ambitions set out in the 'Call for Evidence' against the priorities and objectives in the Belfast Agenda.
3.3	Belfast City Council welcomes the core principle in the document to adopt a whole systems approach to energy policy, from energy source to end consumer, incorporating heat, power and transport.
3.4	The response below follows the structure set in the consultation paper. We have provided answers where Belfast City Council has a stated position, and not commented on areas where we do not feel it is possible or necessary to respond.
	Finance & Resource Implications
3.5	None
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment
3.6	None

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix One- Belfast City Council response to Department for the Economy Energy Strategy- Call for Evidence Appendix Two- Department for the Economy 'Call for Evidence' document.

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Appendix One – BCC Response to the Call for Evidence on an Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A forthcoming Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland represents an important opportunity to decarbonise the region's economy and enable Northern Ireland to meet the objectives set by the UK government to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The pace of decarbonisation set by government will have a critical impact on Northern Ireland's economic strategy, its climate planning and fuel poverty levels among its most vulnerable households.

1.2 Belfast Agenda is the community plan for the city of Belfast, and it includes a core commitment to inclusive growth- improving the wider outcomes for people in Belfast by addressing the issues of poverty, economic inactivity, unemployment and underemployment. We have assessed the ambitions set out in the 'Call for Evidence' against the priorities and objectives in the Belfast Agenda.

1.3 Belfast City Council welcomes the core principle in the document to adopt a whole systems approach to energy policy, from energy source to end consumer, incorporating heat, power and transport.

1.4 The response below follows the structure set in the consultation paper. We have provided answers where Belfast City Council has a stated position and where it is appropriate for us to respond.

2.0 Energy in Northern Ireland

2.1 The forthcoming Energy Strategy is critical to enabling Belfast to realise its ambitions in the Belfast Agenda and its transition to an inclusive low-carbon climate resilient economy. Conversely, greater urban development in Belfast could help facilitate some of the ambitions of a future Energy Strategy. The strategy should be an enabler for innovation in the energy industry as it decarbonises at pace and should be a driver for high quality jobs in the industry across Northern Ireland. The ambitions in the strategy should signal strong policy intent on the scale and rate of decarbonisation in Northern Ireland, and this in turn will provide the clarity and certainty necessary for investors to play their part in the energy transition.

2.2 The strategy offers the opportunity for Northern Ireland to firmly set out its intentions as a sustainable region of the UK, and one which is prioritising clean growth- integrating our ambitions on climate change with our economic goals.

2.3 Lessons should be learned from jurisdictions where the energy strategy has been effectively integrated with wider economic and climate change strategy. It is critical that Northern Ireland begins the process of integration of these important goals, in the development of long-overdue legislation on climate adaptation and mitigation.

2.4 The Scottish Government strategy for power, heat and transport is useful because it emphasises the importance of systems change in decarbonisation.

2.5 The Welsh Assembly Government has also developed a strategy called 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales', which brings together a range of policy interventions and pathways to decarbonisation on a sector–by-sector basis. Best practice globally suggests that sectoral pathways are effective in decarbonising local economies.

2.6 When considering linkages to other jurisdictions, the key consideration should be to ensure ongoing resilience of Northern Ireland's energy system while also maximising opportunities to innovate through greater economic connectivity.

2.7 When considering implementation of the Committee on Climate Change report, at the very least, the report should be implemented in its entirety. Furthermore, the report of the Committee on Climate change was based on advice requested by DAERA on possible policies and strategies that could deliver economy-wide emissions reductions of 35%, 40% and 45% against 1990 levels by 2030. The recommendations therefore reflect the advice sought, and as many of them remain highly relevant, the report should be considered as a critical guide to the development of a future Northern Ireland Energy Strategy. However, the spirit and intent of the report has been superseded by the passage of the Climate Change Act last year which set a net zero carbon target for the UK by 2050. Future strategies should therefore work to this new target, and as such, the advice of the Committee on Climate Change may need to be revised or reconsidered given the importance of the 2050 target.

2.8 Belfast City Council agrees that a 30-year timeframe is obviously necessary to meet the UK 2050 net zero carbon target. However, the IPPC and other global institutions have called for a transformative shift to decarbonised economies in this decade and so it is essential that critical milestones are set for 2025 and 2030 in order that that sufficient progress is made over the next ten years. This is also a key conclusion of the recent 'Mini Stern' undertaken to provide an economic analysis of decarbonisation in Belfast. The Energy Strategy for Scotland has prioritised actions within this decade, i.e. to 2030, and Belfast City Council would recommend a similar approach.

3.0 The Energy Transition in Northern Ireland

3.1 The unique characteristics of Northern Ireland are set out within the Committee on Climate Change report 'Reducing Emissions in Northern Ireland', and Belfast City Council has nothing further to add.

3.2 Belfast City Council is undertaking several programmes of work to support energy transition:

- It has produced a draft Resilience Strategy which has as its core ambition, the transition to an inclusive, low-carbon, climate resilient economy in a generation, i.e. no later than 2050. The strategy contains a number of recommendations for Council and its Community Planning Partners to take in the coming years towards the achievement of that goal. The draft strategy is currently out to consultation and can be accessed here https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/chief-executives/rmclbelfast-resilience-strategy/
- The Council's Energy Team lead its work to proactively enhance energy efficiency within the Council. In 2018-19, carbon dioxide emissions from Council buildings had decreased by 55% on the 1992-93 baseline.
- To play a key role in convening delivery of the objectives in the Strategy, the Council has established a Resilience and Sustainability Board, made of up Community Planning Partners.
- The Council is currently in the process of developing its own climate adaptation and mitigation plan, which will include targets and actions for decarbonisation and energy transition, and will be produced by mid-2021.
- The Council's draft Local Development Plan Strategy outlines the council's local policies and site-specific proposals for new development and the use of land in Belfast. It will be a critical spatial tool for ensuring a sustainable city. The draft policies seek to support both energy efficient developments and infrastructure by providing the opportunity to develop local renewable energy schemes and ensuring that new developments are both resource and energy efficient.
- Belfast City Council is currently proactively reviewing the energy efficiency of its transport fleet and aims to develop a revised strategy to decarbonise its fleet over time. This work is underway as a core corporate priority.
- Belfast City Council has prioritised how it can boost city connectivity within its 2019-2023 Corporate Plan, to support a modal shift to sustainable means of transport such as walking, public transport and cycling.

3.3 Targets in the strategy must be aligned with broader government-wide ambitions on climate change; it is critical therefore that the future strategy is developed in tandem with climate strategy and economic strategy, as is the case in other jurisdictions. The economic

and decarbonisation ambitions of cities and local authorities in the region should also inform the targets set in the strategy, to ensure alignment of purpose and increase the potential for delivery in due course.

3.4 As part of its work with the Place Based Climate Action Network, Belfast has undertaken an economic analysis of decarbonisation in the city. Taking the IPCC target to limit average global levels of warming to 1.5 degrees, the so-called 'Mini Stern' divided the global carbon budget up by population and gave Belfast a total carbon budget of 15.6 million tonnes through to 2050. Based only on the fuel and electricity used within its boundaries, Belfast currently emits c.1.7 million tonnes of carbon a year. This means that Belfast will use up its share of the carbon budget through to 2050 in just over 9 years.

3.5 The 'Mini Stern' analysis also provides a 'net zero carbon roadmap' for Belfast. It concludes that Belfast could stay within its carbon budget by reducing its emissions by 9.4% year on year. This would mean that to transition from its current position where its emissions are 33% lower than 2000 levels to a local pathway that is consistent with the world giving itself a 66% chance of avoiding dangerous climate change, Belfast should adopt carbon reduction targets (from present levels) of:

- 63% by 2025,
- 78% by 2030,
- 86% by 2035,
- 92% by 2040,
- 95% by 2045,
- 97% by 2050.

3.6 At the time of writing, we are undertaking further analysis of the data in the Mini Stern, however it is highly likely that this analysis informs the city's ambitions for decarbonisation in the future. This means that a step change in decarbonisation must take place by the end of this decade.

3.7 In our view, a forthcoming Energy Strategy should contain similar levels of ambition to drive decarbonisation and ensure Northern Ireland stays on course to meet its 2050 target.

4.0 Consumers

4.1 Belfast City Council believes that an inclusive energy transition should be a core objective of a future Energy Strategy. A future strategy should have the reduction of fuel poverty as a specific goal, and this should drive other measures in the strategy. The relationship between a forthcoming Energy Strategy, future Building Regulations and future Local Development Plans are critical in this respect, and a future strategy should attempt to ensure coherence across all three, so that they are aligned in the best interests of consumers.

4.2 Population trends, mobility and development patterns will be critical determinants of energy demand and use over the long term. Transition to a low-carbon economy will require more sustainable patterns of development, so the availability of effective energy infrastructure will be an essential driver in enabling consumers to exercise meaningful choice in where they live, how they travel and what they consume.

4.3 Given our commitment to inclusive growth, Belfast City Council is keen to ensure that future energy strategy ensures strong consumer engagement and protection, while also empowering and enabling communities through the development of local community energy systems and networks. We support approaches that engage and involve people in energy supply, as this has positive impacts for good urban behaviour, e.g. more efficient energy behaviour and reduced consumption.

4.4 The proposed strategic position of "enable and protect" is the appropriate policy stance. Incentives to reward energy efficient behaviour will be critical levers to pull; consideration should be given to the adoption of incentives e.g. financial incentives for using energy during times of reduced demand. A permanent and appropriately funded source of independent advice to the consumer should be a critical pillar of a future energy strategy.

5.0 Energy Efficiency

5.1 Energy efficiency should be a central priority of a future Energy Strategy, in particular because of the high levels of energy inefficiency in Northern Ireland's housing stock. Its importance in ensuring an effective energy system cannot be overstated. Belfast City Council would echo the recommendation of the 2019 House of Commons report that improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock is a national infrastructure priority[1].

5.2 Belfast City Council would support a new, legally binding standard for home energy efficiency. The target should be science based, reflect progress thus far, and further reflect the UK's legal obligations in respect of progress towards the UK net zero carbon target, and any future milestones or targets set at UK level. The Council notes with interest the approach taken by Scotland in its energy strategy to define an 'energy productivity' target of 30% by 2030 - a measure of the combination of energy consumption and the output of the economy. According to the strategy, 'Enhanced energy efficiency and improved productivity will help curb energy consumption without limiting growth – enabling the continued reduction in emissions whilst still growing the Scottish economy. It can make businesses more competitive by improving their productivity in respect of each unit of energy consumed, with investment in industrial energy efficiency reducing operating costs and protecting against some or all of any rise in energy prices.'

5.3 The forthcoming review of Building Regulations for Northern Ireland should consider standards for low to zero carbon buildings as a matter of priority. The development of a Future Homes Standard in England offers a useful framework for comparison; however, given the unique circumstances at play in Northern Ireland, it may be necessary to be more ambitious than the standards set elsewhere.

5.4 Given the particular characteristics of homes in Northern Ireland, it is essential that a future Energy Strategy is an enabler for a large-scale programme of deep retrofit across Northern Ireland as well as driving standards for low-carbon buildings. The strategy should inform an ambitious approach to transforming our built environment which should have decarbonisation, virtual eradication of fuel poverty, and inclusive economic growth as priorities.

[1] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmbeis/1730/1730.pdf

6.0 Heat and Power

6.1 Belfast City Council believes that a forthcoming Energy Strategy provides an opportunity to be ambitious in setting a pathway for decarbonisation that builds on the growth in renewables in the wider energy sector. We note the research from other countries where it has been possible to transition from oil to entirely clean renewable systems, and would strongly recommend that this is the stated ambition in the document, with key milestones in place for transition. We would recommended that further advice is sought from the UK Committee on Climate Change on the approach to be taken in the strategy.

6.2 The previous Energy Strategy set targets for electricity generated from renewables which were then considered ambitious, and which were met, and exceeded. Strong and ambitious policy intent on a new target will be critical to giving confidence to investors and to giving the direction required by the industry to drive momentum towards a decarbonised and integrated energy system.

6.2 Belfast City Council supports the development of district heating schemes, and would welcome the opportunity for further engagement with the Department in this regard. It is our view that evidence from across Europe demonstrates the important role that district heating networks can play in ensuring effective heating systems at a local level. The development of this strategy provides a timely opportunity to explore their potential further, in the best interests of consumers.

7.0 Transport

7.1 Relative to other capital cities, Belfast still has a carbon intensive transport system, with the majority of journeys still made by car. As an urban area, there is considerable potential for growth in low-carbon transport at scale, to offer meaningful choice to people travelling to the city, and within the city. A forthcoming energy strategy should ensure maximum coherence between transport policy and energy policy and given the 2050 target, should begin to set targets for the elimination/step reduction in high carbon forms of transport in favour of low-carbon transport within this decade.

7.2 Belfast's draft Local Development Plan and its Resilience Strategy both emphasise the importance of active travel in building attractive and sustainable patterns of development. A forthcoming energy strategy should provide a strong policy signal towards low-carbon transport options as the preferred modes of travel in Northern Ireland.

7.3 Belfast City Council is currently involved in pilot programmes to explore options for roll-out of EV infrastructure across the city. Findings from these programmes can be shared with the Energy Team in the Department for the Economy to help inform a forthcoming Energy Strategy.

8.0 Energy and the Economy

8.1 The forthcoming Energy Strategy is critical in enabling Belfast to realise its ambitions in the Belfast Agenda and its transition to an inclusive low-carbon climate resilient economy.

8.2 It should be an enabler for innovation in the energy industry as it decarbonises at pace and should also be a driver for high quality jobs in the industry across Northern Ireland. The ambitions in the strategy should signal strong policy intent on the scale and rate of decarbonisation in Northern Ireland, and this in turn will provide the clarity and certainty necessary for investors to play their part in the energy transition.

8.3 The strategy offers the opportunity for Northern Ireland to firmly set out its intentions as a sustainable region of the UK, and one which is prioritising clean growth- integrating our ambitions on climate change with our economic goals.

8.4 The challenges associated with decarbonising Belfast's economy are complex. However current available analysis suggests:

- The economy is heavily dependent on carbon intensive systems – leaving the city's economic growth dependent on an increasingly expensive fuel source. 32% of the city's housing is powered by oil; water and waste-water infrastructure is fossil fuel dependent; large sections of the city's economy are dependent on carbon intensive transport- car use remains the dominant form of travel. Few of these carbon intensive 'systems' sit wholly within the control of one organisation and so decarbonising the city's economy and taking economic advantage of energy transition will require collaboration, and alignment with regional and national policy.

- Less than 10% of the city's economy is circular. As the cost of carbon increases, and other cities increase levels of investment in the circular economy, this could impact on Belfast's competitiveness.

- Belfast is currently a net importer of energy. This leaves the city exposed to a number of potential risks- volatility in the cost of energy; long-term energy security and some lack of control over the pace of decarbonisation. In turn, this could reduce the city's competitiveness, as cities that are energy independent are able to decarbonise rapidly, and on their own terms.

8.5 However, well-planned and designed decarbonisation will also present substantial economic opportunities. The Mini Stern shows that Belfast could close the gap between its projected emissions in 2050 and net zero emissions by 38% through the adoption of cost-effective options in houses, public and commercial buildings, transport and industry. Adopting these options would reduce Belfast's total energy bill in 2030 by £286M p.a. whilst also creating between 500 and 1,400 jobs in the city. Their adoption could also help to generate wider benefits, for example by helping to tackle fuel poverty, reducing congestion, improving ambient air quality and enhancing public health.

8.6 There is limited data currently available on how a decarbonised economy could impact on employment in Belfast. The 'Green House Think Tank' summarises jobs estimates for Northern Ireland using its own 'Climate Jobs Project' modelling[2]. It projects net job gains in NI in the reuse and recycling sectors; net job gains in transport; considerable gains in building retrofit; net job losses in land and food (including agriculture) and net job gains in renewable energy. However, the data is limited- it does not include freight and provides

[2] https://greenhouse.chiltern.org.uk/regional_reports/Region_Climate_Jobs_Summary_v2019a_UKN.pdf

little insight at a Belfast level. It does not take account of an increase in the circular economy, climate adaptation and work to train and upskill the workforce. Alignment between energy strategy ambitions and the wider industrial strategy is therefore critical to protect and grow jobs in Northern Ireland throughout the period of decarbonisation.

8.7 The Energy Strategy should therefore ensure that it is aligned with the ambitions of the UK Industrial Strategy which identifies 'Clean Growth' as a Grand Challenge, *'The move to cleaner economic growth – through low carbon technologies and the efficient use of resources – is one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time. By one estimate, the UK's clean economy could grow at four times the rate of GDP. Whole new industries will be created and existing industries transformed as we move towards a low carbon, more resource-efficient economy.'* The vision and ambitions within the UK Industrial Strategy should strongly inform the future Northern Ireland Energy Strategy.

8.8 Targets in the strategy must be aligned with broader government-wide ambitions on climate change; it is critical therefore that the future strategy is developed in tandem with climate and economic strategies, as is the case in other jurisdictions. The economic and decarbonisation ambitions of cities and local authorities in the region should also inform the targets set in the strategy, to ensure alignment of purpose and increase the potential for delivery in due course.

9.0 Delivery Framework

9.1 Smart data must be a critical pillar of a future Energy Strategy, and will be necessary to power the efficient and effective operation of a 'whole systems' approach. As the availability of data increases, it will increasingly inform decisions on system optimisation will enable more efficient use of the assets connected to the system, and may avoid the need to build out new, expensive generation to meet peaks in demand. Good data will help underpin the effective operation of a more distributed system. However, a new data ecosystem requires investment, and this should be prioritised in the development of a new strategy.

9.2 The range of powers and responsibilities for decarbonising energy – and indeed decarbonising the economy more generally are spread across central government. This could potentially make the objectives in the future strategy more difficult to realise. A useful next step, to ensure we have optimum governance and an operating model in place to decarbonise our energy system, would be to undertake a mapping exercise to compare the spread of powers and responsibilities in NI with the approach taken in other jurisdictions. We should seek examples of best practice before forming a view on 'what works'.

9.2 Belfast City Council considers itself a critical delivery partner for a future Energy Strategy and this may involve changes to our powers and responsibilities to meet the objectives we have set out in this response. Our strategic planning powers, our ability to convene partners at a city level, and our city-to-city global networks make us very well placed to ensure that decarbonisation of our energy system continues at pace. We look forward to positive future discussions on the role we can play to support a future Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland.

March 2020

SKILLS TO SUCCEED

Department for the Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

ENERGY STRATEGY

Call for Evidence

December 2019

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Foreword

Foreword

In the absence of an Executive since January 2017, the Department for the Economy has been considering how to advance proposals for an energy strategy that will enable new and challenging decarbonisation targets. This publication represents the beginning of an on-going public engagement process to inform and shape those proposals. Our intention is to have a draft strategy for presentation to a future Minister for the Economy by the end of 2020. Ultimately, decisions on a new strategy can only be taken by Ministers. However we are eager to advance public engagement throughout the process.

The context for energy has changed substantially since the 2010 Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) was published. In June 2019, the UK became the first major economy to commit to a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This 'net zero' target represents a significant step-change in the commitment to addressing the climate crisis.

The SEF facilitated a significant increase in low carbon electricity, and the target of 40% electricity from renewable sources has been exceeded ahead of the 2020 date. However, policy to achieve the 10% renewable heat target was poorly designed and the target was not achieved. This demonstrates the importance of robust, reliable and evidence-based policy making going forward.

Any new strategic direction for energy in Northern Ireland must consider the existing energy mix and how it will be reshaped. It must also consider energy demand reduction. This means whole systems thinking, from energy source to end consumer, incorporating heat, power and transport. The impact on society, as a whole, and consumers, individually, will be of fundamental importance.

There are undoubtedly challenges ahead with formulating and delivering a new strategic direction for energy. It will only be achieved through collaboration and joined-up delivery across government departments, the energy sector, and other key stakeholders such as local government, consumer representation bodies and academics. In addition, the transition to lower carbon energy also represents an opportunity to educate the public on some of the adverse human health and environmental implications of energy usage, as well as an opportunity to transition Northern Ireland's energy use in a co-ordinated, optimal and efficient way.

I am grateful for the support from my Permanent Secretary colleagues, from colleagues in local government, Utility Regulator, Consumer Council, from senior figures across the energy sector and from those who represent the best interests of consumers, especially vulnerable consumers. **This is your opportunity to shape the proposals to the next Minister for the Economy.**

Mike Brennan, Permanent Secretary

1.

General Information

1. General Information

Issued: 17 December 2019
Respond by: 5pm on 20 March 2020
Respond to: Please send your response to:

energystrategy@economy-ni.gov.uk

Or alternatively by post to:
Energy Strategy
Department for the Economy
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
Belfast
BT4 2JP

Quote the reference "**Energy Strategy Call for Evidence 2019**"

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Call for Evidence Responses

The Department for the Economy (hereafter referred to as DfE or 'the Department') will publish responses on its website following completion of the Call for Evidence process. If a respondent is an individual acting in a private capacity they should indicate whether or not they wish their name to be withheld or disclosed when responding.

Where responses from companies and individuals responding in a professional capacity are to be published, the Department will remove contact details only.

Responses to this Call for Evidence, may be subject to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). All disclosures will be in line with the legislation. If a respondent feels information they provide should be treated as private or confidential, then they should explain to us why so that this may be considered should a request be received.

All personal data will be processed in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act / General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). For more information please see our privacy notice.

Purpose of Document

This Call for Evidence is the first stage in the process of developing an energy strategy. It asks recipients to provide evidence, data and views on a wide range of high level issues that may assist in developing the direction of the future energy strategy, including the role of consumers, energy efficiency, heat, power and transport. We are keen to hear from a wide range of bodies, groups and individuals, from within the energy sector and also more generally across society.

There are multiple questions within each section of the document. **Please respond to as many (or as few) areas as you wish**.

The publication of this Call for Evidence will also be supported by a series of targeted engagement events. **If you feel that such an event would benefit you or a group with which you are associated, please contact us.**

List of acronyms

AWS	Affordable Warmth Scheme
CCC	Committee for Climate Change
CCNI	Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
CCUS	Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage
CEP	Clean Energy Package
CfD	Contracts for Difference
CNG	Compressed natural gas
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
EU	European Union
GB	Great Britain
GHG	Greenhouse gas
LGV / HGV	Large Goods Vehicles / Heavy Goods Vehicles
LNG	Liquefied natural gas
LPG	Liquid petroleum gas
NI	Northern Ireland
NIAUR	Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation
NIRO	Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation
NISEP	Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme
PfG	Programme for Government
RHI	Renewable Heat Incentive
SEF	Strategic Energy Framework
SEM	Single Electricity Market
UK	United Kingdom
ULEV	Ultra-low emission vehicles
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

2.

Energy in Northern Ireland

2. Energy in Northern Ireland

Energy (with the exception of nuclear energy) is a policy area devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. Its importance, together with the need to combat climate change, was recognised by the Executive formed in 2016 in its Programme for Government (PfG). The PfG Outcomes Framework provides the basis for the Outcomes Delivery Plan which is used to give strategic direction to the work of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

The energy strategy has the potential to impact positively on eight of the twelve PfG Outcomes:

- Outcome 1: "we prosper through a strong, competitive economy"; e.g. through developing economic opportunities and improving the skills of the workforce in the energy sector;
- Outcome 2: "we live and work sustainably protecting the environment"; e.g. through achieving net zero carbon by 2050 and delivering improvements in air quality;
- Outcome 4: "we enjoy long, healthy, active lives"; e.g. through a cleaner environment and reduced levels of pollution from heating, power and transport;
- Outcome 5: "we are an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential"; e.g. by enabling opportunities for people and companies to develop, use new technologies to manage, use and generate energy;
- Outcome 6: "we have more people working in better jobs"; e.g. through the opportunities represented by installing advanced energy solutions including new heating technologies and servicing the smart energy sector;
- Outcome 8: "we care for others and we help those in need"; e.g. by tackling fuel poverty;
- Outcome 10: "we have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest"; e.g. through cleaner transport, long-term policy certainty and enabling a positive contribution to the climate;
- Outcome 11, "we connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure"; e.g. by ensuring better access to a range of energy sources across Northern Ireland.

Whilst the level of aspiration is high, it is also acknowledged that these benefits will only be accrued by successful joined-up working across government, including working more closely with local government and the private sector. As always, in delivering an outcomes-based work programme, it is accepted that achieving real change and improvement at population level will require sustained collaborative effort over many years. This is particularly true in the energy sector where investment and delivery can require significant time and financial resources.

Wider policy and legislative context

Energy policy is shaped significantly by policy and goals at global, European and national levels. These include ambitions for decarbonisation, European targets for energy efficiency and EU energy market integration, particularly with regard to the all-island Single Electricity Market (SEM).

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - This is the main forum for international action on climate change. The **Paris Agreement (2015)**[1] is a landmark global arrangement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future. The Agreement requires all parties to put forward their best efforts through "nationally determined contributions", to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead, and to report regularly on their emissions and implementation efforts. **It specifically aims to keep global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C.**

European Union - In response to the Paris Agreement the EU produced its own energy strategy in 2015 – the **Energy Union**[2]. It consists of five mutually reinforcing dimensions: (1) security, solidarity & trust, (2) a fully integrated internal energy market, (3) energy efficiency, (4) climate action – decarbonising the economy and (5) research, innovation and competitiveness.

In order to meet its Energy Union objectives, and to be able to deliver on the Paris Agreement, the EU subsequently issued the **Clean Energy Package (CEP)**[3]**.** This is essentially a rulebook containing legislation for member States to adopt and enables them to collaboratively plan, implement, monitor and evaluate policies on the following areas: (a) energy efficiency; (b) renewable energy; (c) energy performance in buildings; (d) electricity market design; (e) governance; (f) risk preparedness; and (g) EU regulatory co-operation.

As of the date of publication of this document uncertainty remains about the terms and timing of EU Exit, including the future relationship between UK and EU energy policy and markets. We will take such developments into account in progressing work on the energy strategy.

1 https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement
2 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/building-energy-union
3 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/clean-energy-all-europeans

United Kingdom **-** The UK has gone further than the EU in legislating for 100% carbon reduction. The **UK Climate Change Act** 2008[4] is the basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change. It requires that emissions of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) are reduced and that climate change risks are addressed. The Act was amended in 2019 to require the UK to have a 100% reduction in GHGs by 2050 from 1990 levels, commonly referred to as the 'net zero 2050' target. All administrations, including NI, contribute to the UK carbon budgets. Legally-binding carbon budgets act as stepping stones towards the 2050 target and provide a pathway to meet the overall UK climate change target.

As well as being covered by the Climate Change Act 2008, Scotland and Wales also have separate climate change policies, which in turn impact their energy strategies and policies.

Scotland - Scotland has passed a **Climate Change Act** 2019[5] which commits it to a net zero carbon economy by 2045. "The Future of Energy in Scotland – Scottish Energy Strategy"[6] sets out the vision for the future energy system in Scotland. Its 2050 vision is: "**a flourishing, competitive local and national energy sector, delivering secure, affordable, clean energy for Scotland's households, communities and businesses".** The vision is guided by **3 core principles**: (1) a whole system view; (2) an inclusive energy transition; and (3) a smarter local energy model. The main strategy document was accompanied by separate documents on, for example, local heat and energy efficiency.

Wales - The Welsh government created the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**[7] which requires public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions on, among other things, persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. **Prosperity for All: Low Carbon Wales (2019)**[8] sets out their approach to cut emissions and increase efficiency in a way that maximises wider benefits for Wales, ensuring a fairer and healthier society. Work is already underway on a plan to meet net zero emissions.

Ireland - In June 2019, the Government of Ireland published its "**Climate Action Plan 2019**[9], stating that achievement of the Paris Agreement targets will require a profound change in the systems and practices supporting the Irish economy and society. Energy-related actions in the plan include an increase in electricity from renewables to 70% by 2030, stricter requirements for new buildings and acceleration of the uptake of electric cars and vans so that by 2030 all will be electric.

4 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents
5 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/enacted
6 https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-energy-strategy-future-energy-scotland-9781788515276/pages/1/
7 https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/
8 https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/low-carbon-delivery-plan_1.pdf
9 https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5350ae-climate-action-plan/

Investing in the Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society 2018-2027[10] states that Ireland's energy system requires radical transformation in terms of energy generation and usage. It notes that investment in renewables must be complemented by limited growth in demand, improved energy efficiency, diversified supply sources through greater interconnection and storage options; thus increasing capacity to electrify heat and transport.

In addition, several key elements of the NI energy sector have direct links with Ireland, including a single wholesale electricity market on the island and common usage of gas transmission infrastructure (albeit under separate regulatory regimes).

Northern Ireland – The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is the lead department for climate change in NI. DAERA recently issued a public discussion document on an Environment Strategy for NI[11] which included a suggested draft outcome: 'We have reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved climate resilience'.

The pathway towards economy-wide GHG reduction requires action from all government departments and in 2018 the DAERA Permanent Secretary sought advice from the Committee for Climate Change (CCC) on recommendations on emissions reductions of 35%, 40% and 45% by 2030. The CCC is an independent, statutory body whose purpose is to advise the UK Government and devolved administrations on emissions targets and report to Parliament on progress made in reducing GHG emissions and preparing for climate change.

The CCC delivered the 'Reducing emissions in Northern Ireland' report in February 2019[12]. It stated that NI's fair contribution to the UK's fifth carbon budget requires emissions reductions of at least 35% against 1990 levels by 2030 and noted that current policies are insufficient to achieve the required reduction. However, it also outlined that there are excellent opportunities to close this gap and potentially reach a 45% reduction by 2030. A series of policy recommendations were made in the report, some of which are outlined in Figure 1. It is important to note that the report was published prior to the UK government committing, in June 2019, to a net zero target by 2050.

10 https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/18/8155042-Investing%20in%20the%20Transition%20to%20a%20Low-Carbon%20and%20Climate-Resilient%20Societ....pdf
11 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/esni-public-discussion-document
12 https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in-northern-ireland/

Figure 1: Committee for Climate Change recommendations for energy priorities to 2030

"Reducing emissions in Northern Ireland" February 2019 states that, in respect of energy, policy makers should focus on:

- The lack of route to market for new low-cost intermittent renewables in the electricity sector;
- Support to incentivise consumers to install low-carbon heating in homes off the gas grid;
- Options to incentivise energy efficiency improvements in homes;
- More rapid deployment of Electric Vehicles (EV), more stringent conventional vehicle standards and transport behaviour change.

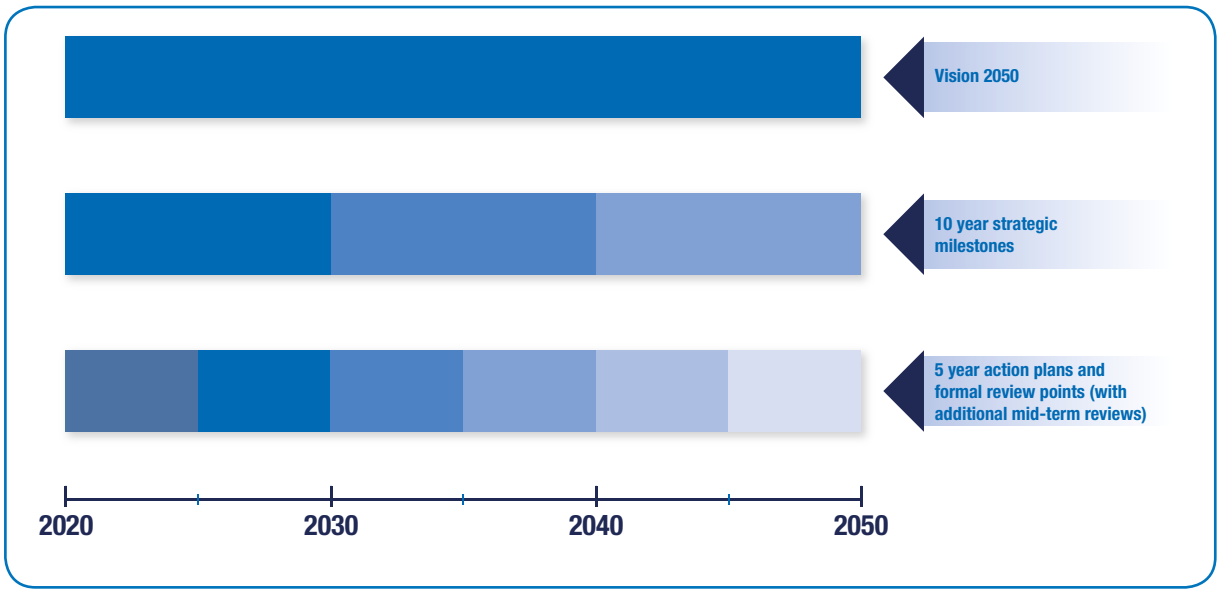
A Northern Ireland Energy Strategy

As described earlier, the UK Climate Change Act commits the UK to a 100% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050 from 1990 levels. In this context we need to assess the potential pathways to reach a net zero 2050 target for the energy sector in NI while meeting the energy needs of the population sustainably and cost-effectively. This document sets out key issues for consideration including: the role of the consumer; energy efficiency; energy for heat, power and transport; and other issues such as security of supply, data, the economy and new skills and technologies. These issues are connected and none can be considered in isolation. We believe that a whole systems approach will be required to transition towards a net zero carbon energy sector.

Timeframe

The strategy must consider an overall 2020 to 2050 timeframe, given the UK government's legislative commitment to 'net zero carbon' by 2050. This may include interim targets or objectives along the way (such as by 2030 and 2040). Some of these potential targets are discussed in the relevant sections. In effect, this allows the policy horizon to split into five year action plans for delivery as shown in Figure 2. These allow comprehensive formal review points every five years, with 'mid-term' reviews, to assist with re-scoping priorities, re-assessing cost impacts and taking account of new technologies. This would provide twelve review points in this fast-moving environment during the 30-year period.

Figure 2: Energy Strategy road map



A joined-up approach

DfE is the lead department responsible for providing the strategic vision for the future of energy in NI, as well as key aspects of the energy legislative framework including the licensing and regulatory framework and a range of consumer protection issues.

However, a holistic view of energy in terms of heat, power and transport and the interrelationship between these means that any energy strategy will influence and be influenced by policy across a range of departments as shown in Figure 3. The development of an energy strategy must therefore involve collaboration and policy coordination.

For example, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has lead responsibility for transport and regional and strategic planning; the Department for Communities (DfC) has fuel poverty, housing and social policy responsibilities within its remit; and the Department of Finance (DoF) has responsibility for building regulations and energy performance certification of buildings. Invest NI has a role in respect of energy efficiency in the commercial and industrial sector; and local government has responsibilities for local planning and community development. DAERA is also currently developing a Clean Air Strategy, which includes tackling air pollutant emissions from road transport, industry and home heating.

Furthermore, the increased powers at local government level with respect to the determination of the majority of planning applications as well as preparing Local Development Plans for their areas mean that they have an important role to play.

The roles of government departments in developing and delivering an energy strategy are discussed further in section 9.

Figure 3: Energy Responsibilities across Government

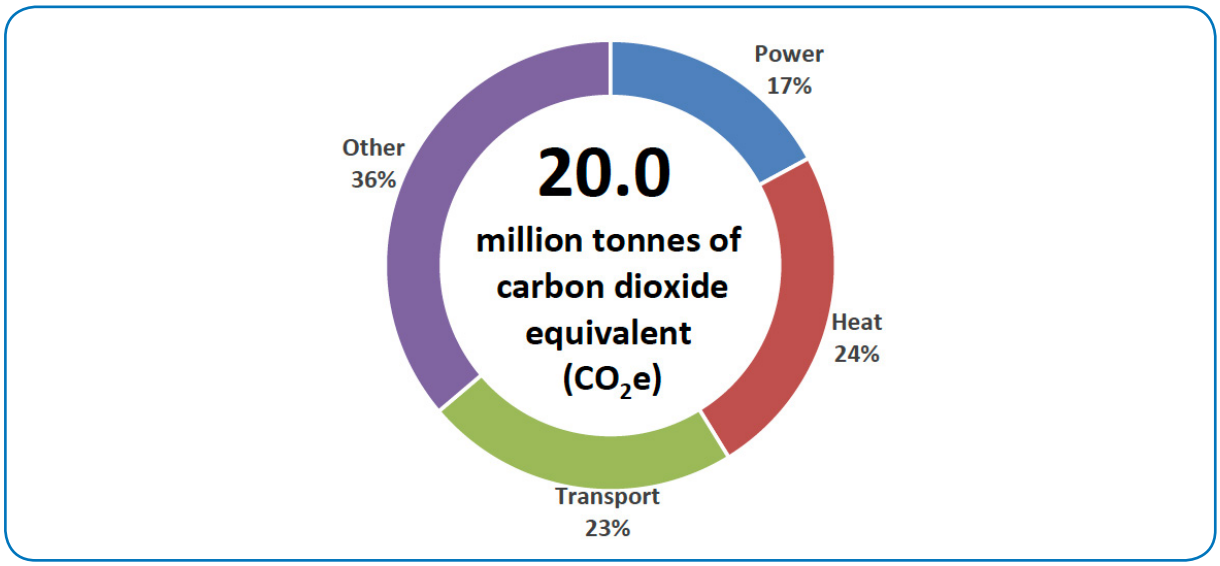
Energy and Climate in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's contribution to the UK fifth carbon budget requires emissions reductions of at least 35% against 1990 levels by 2030.[13] GHG emissions in 2017 were estimated to be 20 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, a decrease of 3% compared to 2016. The longer term trend shows a decrease of 18% compared to the base year (1990).

The largest sectors in terms of emissions in 2017 were agriculture, transport and energy supply, of which agriculture is the largest, comprising 27% of GHG emissions. The largest decreases since 1990 have been in the energy supply, waste management and residential sectors[14].

13 https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in-northern-ireland/
14 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-greenhouse-gas-inventory-1990-2017-statistical-bulletin

Figure 4: Greenhouse gas emissions across heat, power and transport in Northern Ireland, 2017



Note:
1. The 'other' category includes emissions from waste management, land use change and industrial process and the remaining proportions from residential, business and agriculture.
2. Heat emissions include 98% of total residential sector emissions, 85% of total business sector emissions, 100% of total public sector emissions and 0.1% of total agriculture sector emissions.

Source: https://naei.beis.gov.uk/reports/reports?section_id=4

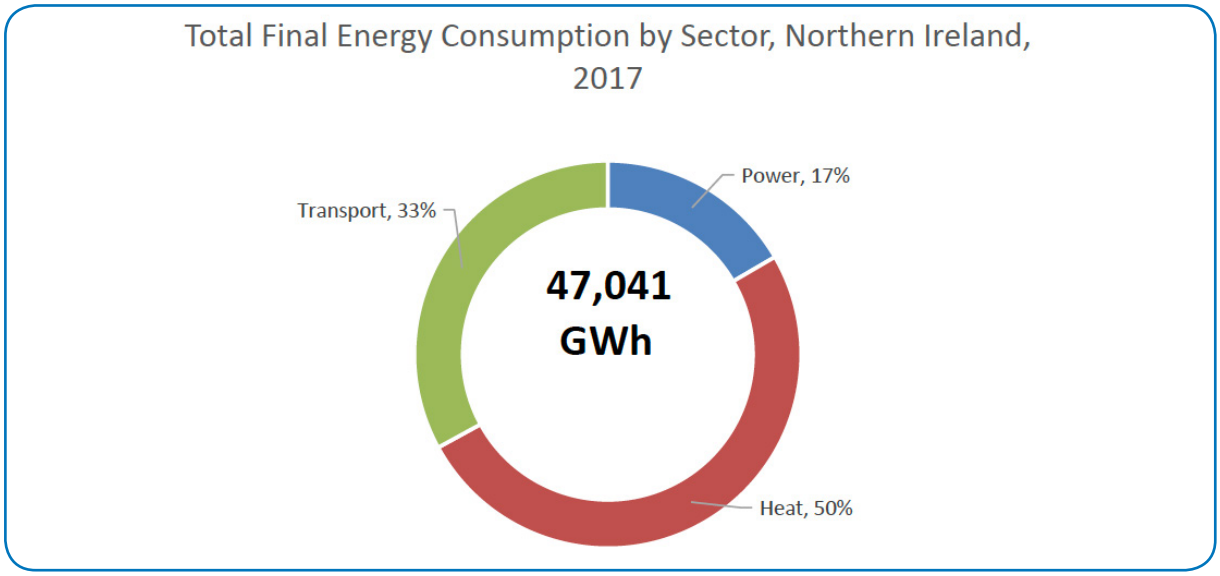
All departments have a collective responsibility to implement policies, strategies and actions that reduce emissions. Action on climate change in NI is coordinated through a cross departmental working group, known as the 'Future Generations' group. DAERA, as the lead department for climate change in NI, chairs group meetings and coordinates and reports on cross departmental action.

A 'Future Generations' programme of work is being developed to set out how NI emissions will be reduced. Policy themes of primary interest are: (a) Agriculture; (b) Energy & Energy use; (c) Transport; (d) Business & Investment; (e) Buildings & Housing; and (f) Education.

The NI energy strategy intends to address energy and energy use, giving due consideration to energy consumption across heat, power and transport.

Energy Consumption in Northern Ireland

Figure 5: Final energy consumption across heat, power and transport in Northern Ireland, 2017



Note:
1. All data is from BEIS Sub-national Final Energy Consumption tables except for gas and electricity which is taken from the Utility Regulator's Quarterly Transparency Reports.
2. Excludes consumption fed directly to power stations (these fuels are used to generate electricity which are counted in electricity consumption figures), aviation, shipping and non-energy use of petroleum and natural gas.
3. Not all data may relate to the calendar year, so the final energy consumption statistics do not necessarily cover a fixed annual period. The figures are estimates are based on the use of a number of different information sources, and as a result are subject to potential modelling inaccuracies.

Questions

Q1. What lessons can we learn from elsewhere in addressing energy within an overarching climate action framework?

Q2. What are the key considerations for decarbonising Northern Ireland's energy sector given existing linkages to other jurisdictions?

Q3. To what extent should Northern Ireland implement the key energy-related recommendations from the CCC 'Reducing Emissions in Northern Ireland' report?

Q4. Do you agree with the 30-year timeframe? If not, please state your preferred approach and reasons.

3.

The Energy Transition in Northern Ireland

3. The Energy Transition in Northern Ireland

Our energy system, in common with those worldwide, is undergoing unprecedented change. The key driver of the change is the need to reduce energy-related emissions, particularly CO_2, in order to limit climate change. This is generally referred to as the energy transition and it will have impacts on energy consumers and the energy industry in NI. It will impact on workers and the wider economy, as well as our society and environment.

In order to deliver sufficient clean energy in a cost competitive way to meet all our needs across heat, power and transport, we expect to see significant disruption to the established energy industry, markets and business models. We further expect to see new and changing patterns of both energy supply and demand. Renewable energy and energy efficiency measures can potentially achieve significant carbon reductions but the transition is also being driven by innovation and technology. Supplier-consumer business models are likely to evolve, with more data enabling more innovative practices for suppliers and consumers. We may also see new intermediaries arise to take advantage of increased opportunities for self-generation, storage and time of use choices for all consumers.

Considerable uncertainty remains about the pathway we should follow, what technologies we should adopt, over what timeframes and with which key transition points.

The energy transition should provide solutions to energy related challenges and create value for business and society without compromising affordability and security, resilience and reliability of supply. The transition, therefore, needs to be cost effective, secure and equitable. Interventions or actions which bring additional benefits in terms of protection of human health and the environment should also be prioritised.

We discuss value and costs for the consumer in section 4 and security of supply in section 9.

Whole energy systems

Currently our energy sector has many interdependencies but is not an integrated system. By adopting a whole systems approach, such as that shown in Figure 6, we can integrate the energy system's supply and demand with other sectors such as water, transport, telecommunications and ICT, new fuels such as hydrogen and increase overall system flexibility. However to do so requires not only physical solutions and technical enablers but also market enablers such as economic, regulatory, and policy frameworks to ensure optimal outcomes over time.

Figure 6: Whole Systems Approach

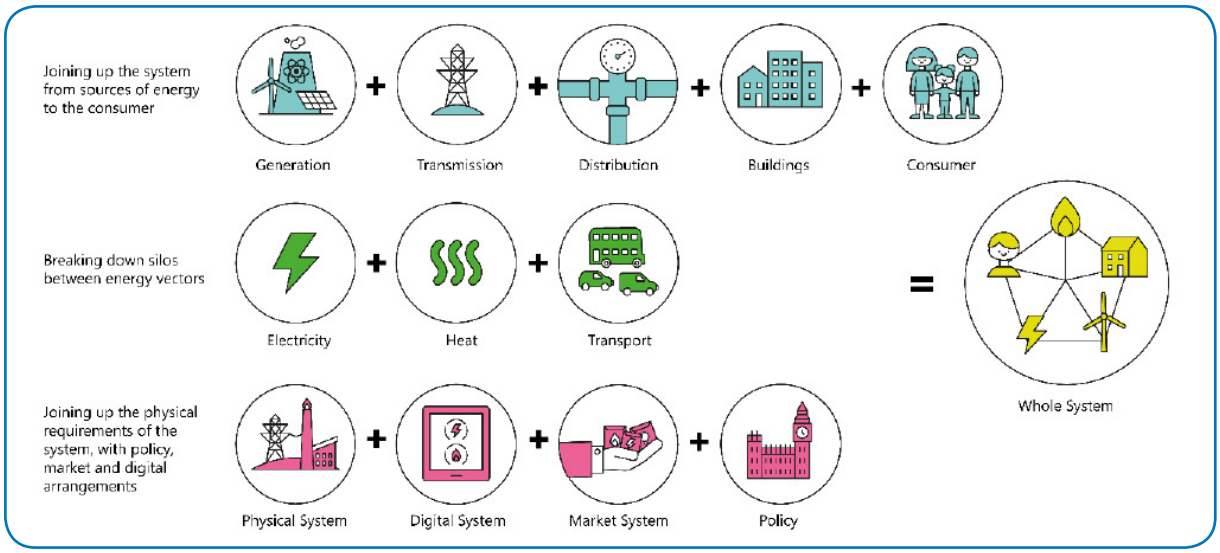


Image credit: Energy Systems Catapult, UK

The Energy Technologies Institute[15] states that a whole system approach for energy means:

"Developing a portfolio of options for clean energy in all its various uses (electricity, heating and transport), and crucially by fitting them together in the best combinations to deliver value for business and consumers. The energy system is not just generation, networks or demand; or electricity or gas; or heating, industry or transport – it is all of these things. Decisions taken in one part of the energy system have implications elsewhere in the system"

The implications of the whole system approach for our new energy strategy are wide and material. At the highest level, it means that we need to think, prioritise, and plan for the energy system in a cross-sectoral and cross-stakeholder way. The remainder of this document is structured to reflect some of the key component parts of the whole system approach: consumer outcomes and actions, energy efficiency, heat, power, transport, security of supply, consumer and system data, and the regulatory and legislative framework required to facilitate these.

Questions

Q5. What are the unique characteristics of Northern Ireland that need to be considered in a net zero carbon energy transition?

Q6. Is your organisation undertaking or planning to undertake projects to support the energy transition? If so, please provide further details.

15 https://www.eti.co.uk/about

4.

Energy Consumers

4. Energy Consumers

Introduction

Ultimately the energy transition should be focused on benefiting energy consumers – both domestic and non-domestic. This will include consideration of energy costs as well as broader economic, health-related and environmental perspectives.

The transition to a low carbon economy will fundamentally change how energy is produced and the way households and businesses purchase and use energy. The historic landscape for our energy consumers was relatively simple, with a small number of generators, fuel choices, limited tariff options, no self-storage options and a simple supplier-customer relationship. The energy transition means that self-generation, storage options, data usage and time-of-use tariffs will increasingly provide opportunities for how domestic and business consumers interact with the future energy system (if they choose to do so).

Consumers of energy have already begun to become producers of energy, as demonstrated by the 23,000 micro-generation sites, primarily domestic solar panels across NI. There are also changes to the types of energy consumed across different modes, such as domestic electricity being used to power electric vehicles in place of conventional transport fuel. The transition involves moving towards a 'smarter' energy system and as many people as possible must be able to benefit by accessing new ways of buying, selling or indeed storing energy. We need to enable this through a policy and regulatory framework that is fit for the future.

Where we are now

Customer Numbers

The total number of electricity customers in NI stands at over 887,000: 813,000 domestic and 74,000 non-domestic customers. Around 45% of domestic customers use prepayment meters – much higher than the figure in the rest of the UK[16].

The total number of gas domestic customers is approximately 253,000: 81,000 credit and 173,000 prepayment customers[17]. There are 14,000 non-domestic gas customers. The NI Authority for Utility Regulation (hereafter referred to as NIAUR or 'Utility Regulator') price control for NI's gas distribution networks for 2017-2022 indicates that the total number of forecast new gas connections in NI in that period is 90,000 (bringing the total to around 340,000)[18].

16 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/2019-11-14%20Transparency%20Report%20Q3%202019%20FINAL.pdf
17 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/2019-11-14%20Transparency%20Report%20Q3%202019%20FINAL.pdf
18 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/gd17-final-determination

It is estimated that around two thirds of homes use heating oil as their primary heating sources (around 520,000). Heating oil usage is not regulated or metered, unlike the electricity and natural gas industries so it is not possible to identify an exact number of homes using heating oil.

Prices and price comparisons

The latest electricity price comparison for the domestic consumers shows that NI compares well with other parts of the UK and the EU (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Comparison of domestic electricity prices across Europe[19]

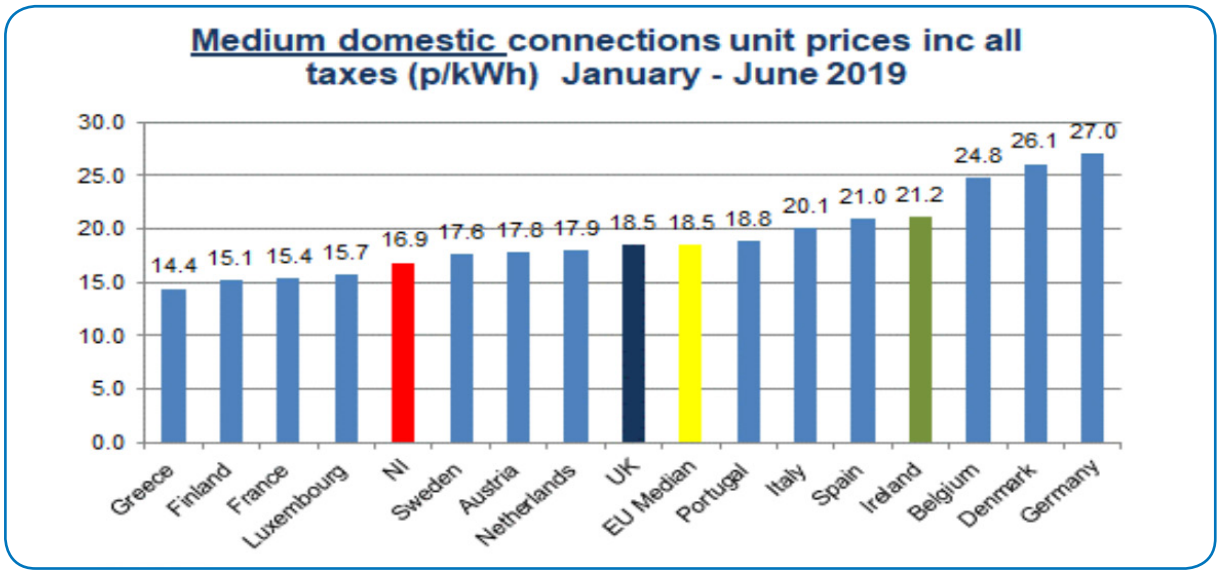
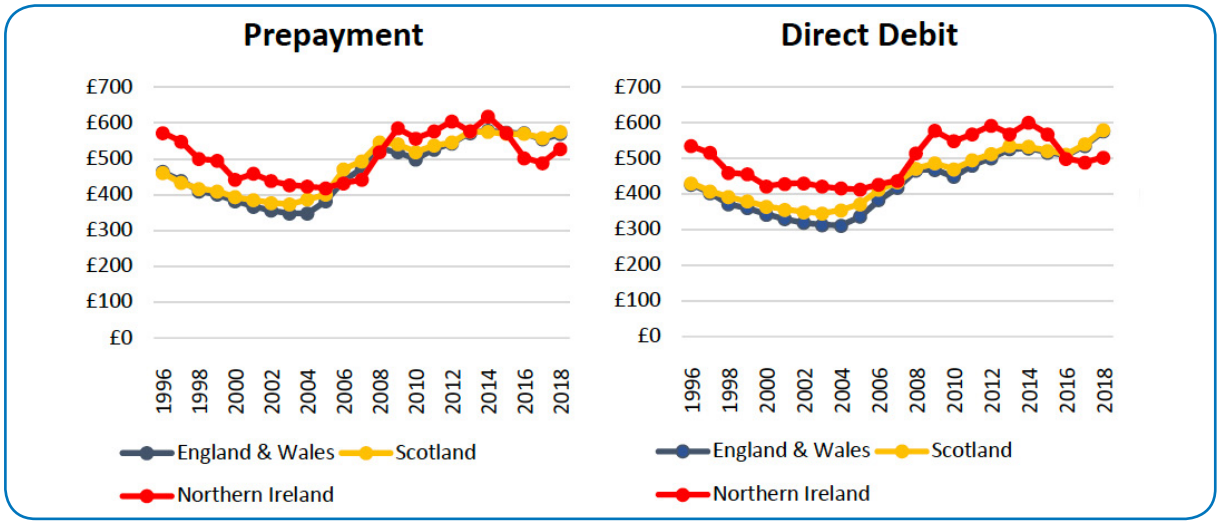


Figure 8 graphs show the average annual domestic standard electricity bills for UK countries (based on consumption of 3,800 kWh/year). The graphs reflect the two most common payment methods used in NI and show NI's improving position.

19 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/2019-11-14%20Transparency%20Report%20Q3%202019%20FINAL.pdf

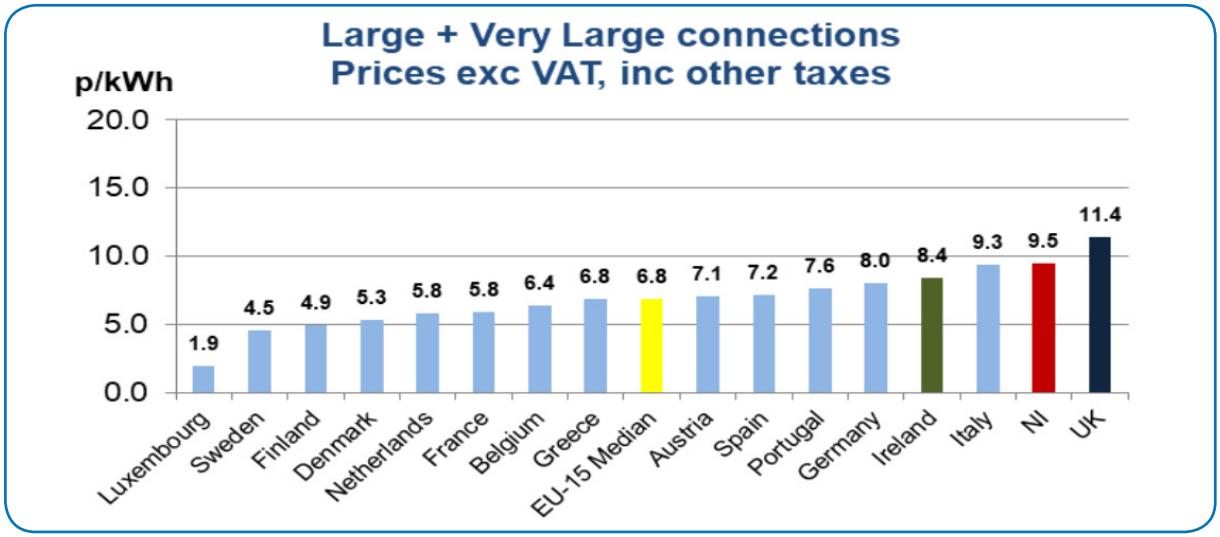
Figure 8: Average annual domestic electricity bills across the UK[20]



Similarly, smaller non-domestic customers (who make up around two-thirds of total non-domestic customers) have electricity prices slightly lower than the EU median.

However, the largest non-domestic customers experience higher electricity costs than most other EU countries, although are still lower than the UK average (Figure 9).

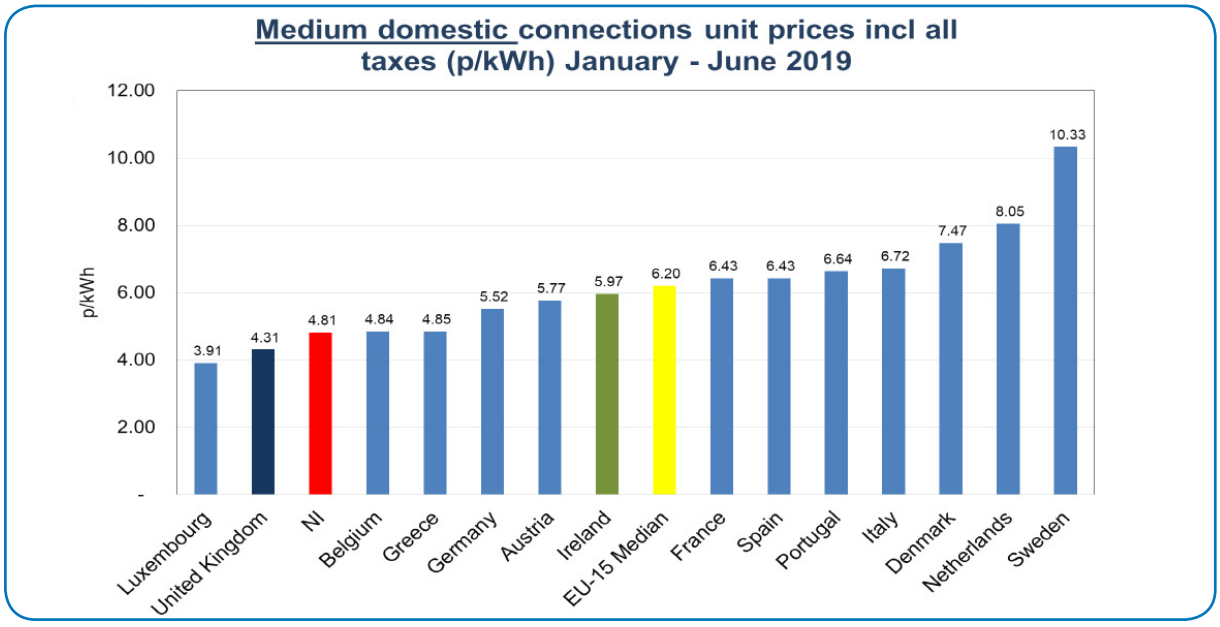
Figure 9: Comparison of non-domestic electricity prices across Europe[21]



20 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/annual-domestic-energy-price-statistics
21 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/2019-11-14%20Transparency%20Report%20Q3%202019%20FINAL.pdf

Natural gas domestic customers also experience prices well below the European average in the latest price comparisons (Figure 10). As yet, published data is unavailable on non-domestic gas price comparisons.

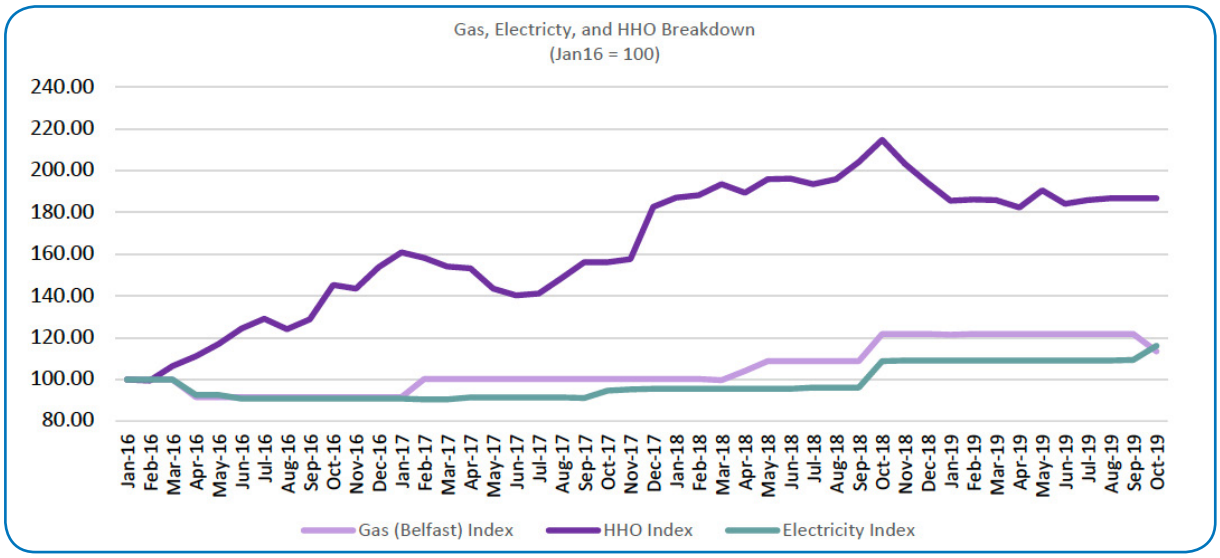
Figure 10: Comparison of domestic gas prices across Europe[22]



Around 68% of NI households used home heating oil in 2016[23]. The Consumer Council for NI (CCNI) tracks changes in household gas, electricity and home heating oil prices respectively in NI through the Home Energy Index. This Index is a number that shows the extent to which a price has changed from a base over a given period. Since January 2016 this Index has increased by 37, and demonstrates the variability and increasing costs of home heating oil (Figure 11)[24].

22 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/2019-11-14%20Transparency%20Report%20Q3%202019%20FINAL.pdf
23 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-18-19-full-copy.PDF
24 The Consumer Council Home Energy Index – October 2019 Bulletin

Figure 11: Gas, electricity and home heating oil breakdown for NI (January 2016-October 2019)[25]



Fuel poverty and energy affordability

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its total income on all heating and electricity bills. In 2016, 22% of households in NI were in fuel poverty, accounting for 160,000 households. This reduction from 42% in 2011 can be attributed mainly to a drop in oil prices during the survey period in 2016, along with continued home energy efficiency measures[26]. Beyond this, fuel poverty is a problem not just of energy prices, but also impacts upon health and social outcomes.

Cost Competitiveness

Cost competitiveness is vitally important for non-domestic customers, and therefore the energy transition needs to take account of the high electricity prices paid by our largest energy users. The energy transition has already provided opportunities for large business users through renewable self-generation and demand-side response, and will provide opportunities for future system services.

It is important to note that, other factors contribute to overall non-domestic cost comparisons and competitiveness. Research by DfE[27] previously showed that, when other costs such as wages, rent and so on were considered, NI's competitive position improved further relative to other jurisdictions.

Improvements in energy efficiency will benefit domestic customers in fuel poverty, as well as help non-domestic business efficiency and competitiveness. This is considered in section 5.

25 The Consumer Council Home Energy Index – October 2019 Bulletin
26 https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Community/Home-Energy-Conservation-Authority-Annual-Progress
27 https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/cost-doing-business-northern-ireland

Suppliers

There is currently a relatively simple one-way supply model relationship between suppliers and consumers in NI. Apart from supplying energy, they provide bills and usage information and do so in compliance with relevant codes of practice. In the domestic supply sector, NI has five electricity and two gas suppliers, while in the non-domestic sphere there are nine electricity and six gas suppliers, which are regulated differently. More supplier flexibility may enable better responsiveness to consumer needs, including the opportunity to better address fuel poverty.

Key issues for consideration

Affordability and Fuel Poverty

There will be costs and benefits associated with the energy transition. Affordability for consumers remains an important consideration. NI's relatively positive picture on price comparisons must be seen against a backdrop of high benefit dependency and lower average wage levels. On average, NI households also spend more per week on petrol and diesel than anywhere else in the UK. Other energy transition changes, therefore, such as electrification of transport, could also impact overall affordability[28]. DfC's upcoming Fuel Poverty Strategy will be developed in the context of energy initiatives that might help eradicate fuel poverty in NI in the future.

Cost Competitiveness

Competitive prices for the majority of businesses need to be seen alongside the fact that our largest energy users pay among the highest costs in Europe. We need to consider the relative cost-competiveness of these large energy users. The balance of costs for large energy users and other consumers is also important, as increased self-generation and potential disconnection from the electricity network could cause a proportionately higher cost to fall on the smaller business and domestic users.

Enabling and protecting

Over the course of the next 30 years, the role that consumers play in the energy system is likely to change significantly. For example:

- An increase in "smarter" grids, appliances and home energy systems which can respond more flexibly to demand and supply ;
- Opportunities for self-generation, self-storage, selling power back to the grid; and
- More "time of use" information, options and flexibility.

28 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/datasets/detailedhouseholdexpenditurebycountriesandregionsuktablea35

These may mean that there is more choice for consumers, but also more decisions, complexity and potential confusion. This may require a more subtle understanding of the definition of the consumer, as well as the regulatory impacts of these changes. We note and welcome the initiation of the NIAUR "Consumers in Transition" project to better understand the consumer and regulatory consequences of the energy transition.

We believe that the energy transition must ***enable*** customers. By this we mean sufficient information and control to those willing and able to maximise the opportunities from system flexibilities and become active participants.

There is a role for policy to facilitate this. For example, Ireland has a pilot grant scheme for solar PV installations in domestic properties to incentivise uptake[29]. The UK Department for Transport has consulted on altering building regulations in England to require EV charge points in residential and non-residential buildings[30]. Enabling more active consumers is likely to require more data accessibility and management, as well as opportunities for flexible responses to high energy demand through flexible tariffs, self-generation and energy storage opportunities.

There will of course, continue to be those who are vulnerable and/or do not make active and informed decisions about energy. There will be a need for ***protections*** to ensure these consumers are not left behind. For example, a system where many consumers do not consume energy from the grid, but still require it for backup and security, may require new regulations and cost models to be developed to protect all other consumers. While the transition to a lower carbon energy supply comes with the risk of deepening fuel poverty, it also offers the opportunity to effectively end it once and for all.

Data has the potential to help consumers manage their energy, achieve savings and encourage their participation in the energy transition. Suppliers of electricity and gas may also see value in accessing and using consumer data. These issues are addressed in section 9.

Information & Advice

Regardless of whether consumers are active, passive, domestic, industrial or vulnerable, it is important that everyone has access to fair, impartial and comprehensive advice and information to allow informed decision making. Energy is a challenging area for domestic consumers with 46% not understanding correspondence from energy suppliers[31]. There are many partial and disparate sources of information available to NI energy consumers, including the CCNI, NIAUR, NI Energy Advice Line, supplier correspondence and a range of departmental policies and guidance. We want to work towards a future where energy consumers can access the information they need much more easily.

29 https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/solar-electricity-grant/
30 Department for Transport, Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential and Non-Residential Buildings
31 Utility Regulator, Domestic Consumer Insight Tracker 2018/19

Energy Communities

The CEP advocates for a direction change by empowering citizens in the energy transition.

The requirement to transition to lower carbon energy provides the opportunity for different models of energy provision such as Citizen Energy Communities. There is a growing emergence of citizen energy initiatives through cooperative models across many European countries. It enables local communities to take collective action to improve energy efficiency and reduce, purchase, manage and generate their own clean, renewable energy. Drivers for citizen energy communities include competitive energy prices and investment returns; a fair energy transition by tackling fuel poverty; and proactively mitigating climate change at a local level[32].

Questions

Q7. How should we ensure that energy remains affordable for domestic consumers? What approach should be taken to eradicate fuel poverty?

Q8. What steps could be taken to improve the relative cost competitiveness of larger non-domestic consumers?

Q9. Is a strategic position of "enable and protect" the correct policy stance?
a) What policies or schemes are needed to enable active consumers?
b) What policies or schemes are needed to protect vulnerable consumers?

Q10. What types of advice and information are required by all consumers and what are the best mechanisms for facilitating this?

Q11. Are there examples of successful citizen energy projects in Northern Ireland and elsewhere that have delivered improved energy efficiency and/or clean energy to local communities?

Q12. What opportunities are there in both urban and rural areas for citizen energy communities in Northern Ireland? What role could government have in facilitating these?

Q13. What evidence can you provide that identifies the challenges and opportunities for NI energy consumers in decarbonising energy?

32 https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/64524/EU-CEP-2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

5.

Energy Efficiency

5. Energy Efficiency

Introduction

Energy efficiency might be defined as minimising the energy we need to heat and power our homes, businesses and transport, thereby decreasing overall energy demand. As well as reducing GHG emissions, improving the energy efficiency of existing homes and buildings also presents significant opportunities, such as helping to eradicate fuel poverty and its associated health problems; stimulating sustainable jobs; improving air quality and boosting the building industry. Improving energy efficiency within other sectors, such as power and transport, will be covered in respective sections later in this document.

There are a number of energy efficiency support schemes targeting different energy users in NI. However, given that the vast majority of existing housing stock will still be standing in 2050, it is vital that we find efficient means of retrofitting dwellings to net zero standards, as well as looking at regulations for new housing stock.

In the past energy efficiency measures in NI have mainly focused on affordability and heat. However, energy efficiency cuts across all energy producers and consumers. While the energy efficiency of buildings is a key focus given that heat accounts for half of energy consumed in NI, we also need to consider how best to drive consumer behaviour, the impact of energy efficiency measures on the most vulnerable in society and the need to grow local industry by maximising the skills and capacity within the sector.

Where we are now

The Energy Efficiency Directive[33] set a UK energy efficiency target of 20% by 2020. The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) is currently the only NI policy measure contributing recorded energy savings to the UK under the Directive. A review of the NISEP is being carried out[34], with the scheme having been extended to March 2022 to ensure no gap in support while the future of energy efficiency provision is decided. Funded by all electricity consumers, the NISEP is 80% ring-fenced for vulnerable customers, with the remaining 20% used for schemes that target non-priority domestic households and/or the commercial sector.

33 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012L0027
34 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/190815_Review%20of%20NISEP%20Discussion%20Paper.pdf

A number of NI departments have energy efficiency remits targeting different energy users via a range of projects and support mechanisms in order to meet local and EU requirements:

- **DfE** is responsible for energy efficiency policy with particular vires for promotion of energy efficiency in the community and voluntary sector and businesses (via Invest NI's Energy and Resource Efficiency Schemes);
- **DfC** has legislative authority for domestic energy efficiency programmes and grants, as well as fuel poverty and wider housing policy;
- **DoF** is responsible for promotion of energy efficiency in the public sector and the development and implementation of policy and legislation relating to building regulations and energy performance certification of buildings;
- **DfI** is responsible for regional and strategic planning, and infrastructure policy; and
- **Northern Ireland Housing Executive** is the Home Energy Conservation Authority for NI; it delivers a number of schemes including the Affordable Warmth Scheme (AWS) and Boiler Replacement Scheme on behalf of DfC.

Energy efficiency measures can also work in synergy with Clean Air measures, such as Smoke Control Areas[35], since these promote clean and efficient household heating. Energy efficiency can also come about through decisions made in relation to infrastructure that uses energy, such as street lighting.

Government is leading by example on energy efficiency. DfE is sponsoring the Strategic Investment Board to deliver an Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030[36] for NI central government. This will establish effective energy management processes that unlock value and lower net energy consumption by 30% by 2030 across Government from a 2016-17 baseline.

Key issues for consideration

Currently there is no standalone NI energy efficiency goal or target. This means that it is difficult to quantify or measure our ambition and monitor our performance. Potential metrics that could be used for target setting include:

- An overall energy consumption measure (as adopted by the EU and its Member States);
- Minimum building Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings (as set out in Energy Efficient Scotland and Ireland's Climate Action Plan); and
- Primary energy (principal performance metric) and CO_2 (secondary metric), as set out in the Future Homes and Buildings Regulations proposals (England).

35 https://www.airqualityni.co.uk/laqm/smoke-control-areas
36 https://sibni.org/project/energy-management-strategy-and-action-plan-to-2030/

We are seeking evidence that can help inform the setting of the most appropriate target or targets for NI, particularly drawing from research or best practice from elsewhere.

Building regulations will play a key role in determining the energy efficiency, heating requirements and carbon emissions of new homes, of which there were 8,424 in NI in 2018-2019[37]. They also set standards for retrofitting existing homes when building work is being carried out. Building standards might consider future-proofing for low carbon heating for new homes and buildings. For example, the Future Homes and Building regulations[38] proposals coming forward in England will seek to ensure that buildings constructed from 2025 will be the zero carbon (or very near it) stock in place for 2050. Getting standards right now is likely to be much more cost-effective than retrofitting to the same quality and standard later.

Achieving zero carbon housing stock would require a significant retrofit programme as it is estimated that 85% of our homes will still be standing in 2050. Significantly improving the energy efficiency of the more than 800,000 existing homes and buildings in NI will require investment, consumer buy-in and a comprehensive range of supporting policies.

The DfC AWS Scheme currently retrofits approximately 3,000 homes with energy efficiency measures per year, although these are not to carbon neutral standards. This scheme is targeted where levels of fuel poverty risk is highest. The Energy Saving Trust[39] estimates that each household participating in this scheme will save on average around 118,000 kWh of energy, £4,000 of fuel costs and 25,100 kg of CO_2 throughout the lifetime of the energy efficiency measures. The AWS does not offer any renewable heating solutions or other forms of insulation and the assisted homes will not reach carbon neutral level.

The majority of current energy efficiency support and programmes for households is aimed at the most vulnerable customers. As indicated earlier in this paper, this support is essential to reduce bills, improve health outcomes and ultimately save lives of those who need help the most. However, meeting an ambitious energy efficiency vision will require a focus on energy savings across a much broader range of consumer groups.

We would therefore like evidence on what potential funding models could be utilised for energy efficiency support going forward, with consideration to the specific needs and ability to pay of different consumer groups, including social housing, the private rented sector, non-residential buildings and owner-occupied homes.

37 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-18-19-full-copy.PDF
38 https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-homes-standard-changes-to-part-l-and-part-f-of-the-building-regulations-for-new-dwellings
39 https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/

For example, to overcome known financial barriers to the installation of energy efficiency improvements and home renewables, the Scottish Government fund a range of financial support schemes for owner occupiers, tenants, and private landlords in Scotland. Key schemes include:

- Warmer Homes Scotland (Scotland's national fuel poverty programme);
- Home Energy Scotland loans and cashback;
- Equity loans;
- Area based schemes; and
- Pilot programmes.

It will also be important to better understand what other non-funding measures could facilitate greater levels of energy efficiency uptake. At present in NI there is no current requirement for a property to have a specific EPC rating before it can be rented, in comparison with England and Wales, where it is now deemed unlawful to let properties with an EPC rating below an 'E' rating[40]. Scotland is also proposing more stringent EPC targets - Band C - by 2030[41].

DfC has carried out a review of the role and regulation of the private rented sector and the standard of properties, including plans to introduce a minimum energy efficiency standard for the private rented housing sector. A public consultation exercise[42] was carried out in 2017 which proposed to introduce legislation around EPC ratings similar to that in England, although the absence of an Executive prevented further progress. This also highlighted that there was little assistance available to landlords for them to make such investments. Such measures may be effective in improving energy efficiency for this sector, although they do not cover other tenures.

As energy efficiency responsibilities are spread across multiple departments there is a wide range of policies and interventions. Feedback suggests this is leading to confusion and inconsistency in how we support energy efficiency across different groups of consumers. We address the issue of advice and information in section 4. We address the issue of departmental responsibilities in section 9.

40 Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) in the Energy Efficiency Regulations 2015 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111132432/contents

41 https://www.gov.scot/publications/energy-efficient-scotland-frequently-asked-questions-private-rented-sector/

42 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/communities/private-rented-sector-proposals-for-change-consultation.pdf

Questions

Q14. What, if any, energy efficiency target or targets should be set for Northern Ireland?

Q15. How should we define, measure and monitor energy efficiency to optimise its potential in our homes, business, economy and environment?

Q16. What are the most important policy levers for government to ensure zero carbon in:

a) New domestic and commercial buildings by 2050?

b) Existing domestic and commercial buildings by 2050?

Q17. What should the future of energy efficiency support look like and who should be the key delivery bodies?

6.
Heat

6. Heat

Introduction

Heat accounts for half of our total energy consumption in NI (Figure 5) and around 52% of household energy bills are, on average, spent on heating[43]. It is central to our lives - we use it for heating our homes, heating water and cooking. Heating and cooling are also vitally important for business and industrial processes.

The primary energy fuel mix for heating in NI is varied. It includes oil, natural gas, liquid petroleum gas (LPG), coal, peat and wood, as well as electricity, although there is a predominance of home heating oil. Approaches to heat decarbonisation may be influenced by locational factors based on availability of different technologies and heat sources.

Space heat decarbonisation is very closely linked to the energy efficiency of buildings, as well as the behaviours and actions of its occupants. Decarbonising the heat sector will require a combination of reducing heat demand through energy efficiency investment and reducing the carbon intensity of the remaining heat.

It is worth noting that there are also air quality problems associated with household heating in NI. The relatively high use of use of solid fuels as secondary heating sources, in particular coal, peat and wood, is associated with high levels of certain air pollutants and with pollution episodes, especially during winter[44].

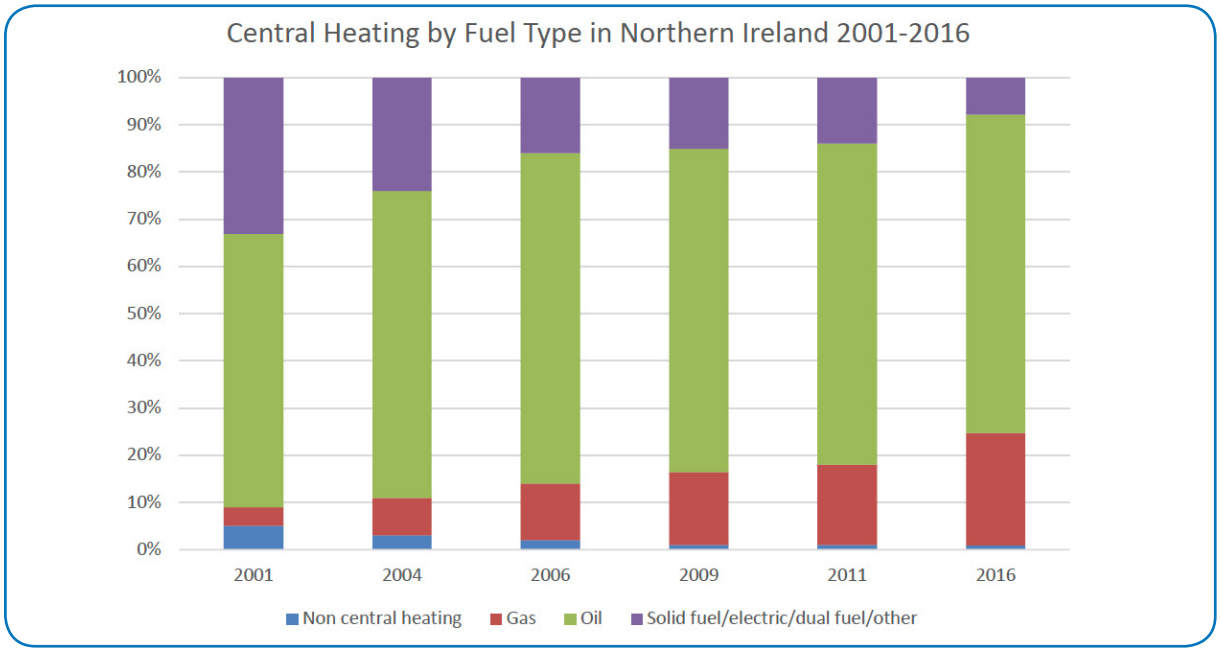
Where we are now

Around 68% of homes in NI use heating oil[45]. The NI boiler replacement scheme helps owner occupiers whose household income is less than £40,000 to replace inefficient boilers (i.e. replacing an inefficient boiler with a more energy efficient condensing oil or gas boiler, switching from oil to gas, or switching to a wood pellet boiler). To date, 32,000 boiler replacements have been completed under the scheme.

At present approximately 267,000 premises are connected to the gas network, with connections available to a further 200,000 homes and businesses. Figure 12 shows the preponderance of oil central heating and the growth of gas since 2001.

43 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/datasets/detailedhouseholdexpenditurebycountriesandregionsuktablea35
44 DAERA real time monitoring information on air pollution levels: www.airqualityni.co.uk
45 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-18-19-full-copy.PDF

Figure 12: Central heating by fuel type 2001 - 2019[46]



Currently, a very small number of homes are heated through electricity. Economy 7 is possibly the most familiar of these, and is used to store energy when costs are lower and release it back into the home as thermal energy.

Heat networks can take energy from a range of sources and offer the potential to both increase the use of low carbon sources (such as geothermal energy) and to capture waste heat from industrial processes. There were approximately 90 heat networks in NI in 2016, a significant proportion of which are communal heat networks in social housing[47]. There are few substantial heat networks (serviced by a central heat source) outside larger industrial or commercial sites and the social housing sector.

Under the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) support schemes there are around 4,500 biomass boiler installations (2,000 non-domestic and 2,500 domestic) along with a few heat pumps.

NI also has potential for geothermal heat, which is largely untapped. Shallow heat pumps and borehole heat exchange can be used for heating and cooling. Given the geographical nature of geothermal heat, it is important to understand the locational matching of supply and demand, although we do not have such a map for NI.

46 https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-18-19-full-copy.PDF
47 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heat-networks

Switching from an ageing oil boiler to a modern condensing natural gas boiler can deliver a substantial reduction in CO_2 emissions i.e. from a range of 310-550 gCO_2 /kWh to 210-380 gCO_2 /kWh. This is delivered through reducing fuel emissions[48] as well as through heating system efficiency gains. Well-installed ground source electric heat pumps running at high efficiency have a carbon footprint of 70-100 gCO_2 /kWh[49] (assuming low carbon electricity and assuming the designed coefficient of performance is delivered and sustained). Policy on switching fuels for household heating should take account of the benefits of switching to cleaner alternatives, such as gas and electric heating.

It is important to note that the carbon footprint of electric heating technologies depends to a large extent upon the carbon footprint of the electricity used. OFTEC, a representative body for the heating oil industry in the UK, is outlining the potential for low carbon liquid fuel options to replace fossil fuel heating oil.

Energy efficiency measures are required to reduce overall heat demand and make lower-carbon heat sources more effective in existing premises. The approach to energy efficiency is discussed in section 5.

Key issues for consideration

Currently, in NI, the total amount of heating (or indeed, cooling) load is not measured. Whilst it is possible to generate a 'best guess' estimate of how much heat is generated by fuel source, there is no agreed formal methodology to do this.

The majority of premises (homes and businesses) are heated by oil or natural gas. It is estimated that less than 10% of heating is provided by electricity, solid fuel, biomass and other sources[50]. We would be keen to receive evidence of how to formally monitor heat production on an ongoing basis.

Modelling and analysis would then be able to establish the carbon intensity of the baseline heat production as well an estimated total heat production as the new decade begins. With this understanding we could then assess the potential relative impact of various decarbonisation pathways, including:

- Demand reduction: delivery of energy efficiency investments, including alternative technologies; and
- Supply shift: the substitution of higher carbon emitting energy sources with lower carbon and zero carbon emitting energy sources.

48 Kerosene emits 0.24675KgCO2 per kWh whilst natural gas emits 0.18385KgCO2 per kWh. Source: BEIS greenhouse gas conversion factors 2019: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2019

49 https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0523/POST-PN-0523.pdf

50 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/northern-ireland-carbon-intensity-indicators-2019.pdf

There is also a significant locational aspect to energy for heating. We may need to consider segmenting the current heating landscape as follows:

- Premises with and without access to the natural gas grid;
- Urban areas that could be supplied by heat networks;
- Low density/rural areas where district heating and gas networks may not be viable;
- Resource availability of geothermal heat sources; and
- Urban areas where air quality may impact desirability of biomass heating.

Oil

The CCC recognises both the challenge and opportunity of NI's high dependence on oil. They note the potential for a large expansion of 'low-regret' low-carbon heating due to the high proportion of households off the gas grid that are currently fitted with oil boilers. In its February 2019 report, CCC calculates that retrofitting 25% of NI's oil-heated homes to heat pumps by 2030 could bring significant savings of carbon emissions[51].

Natural Gas

Energy legislation requires the Department and the Utility Regulator to oversee the development of an efficient and economic natural gas industry. Switching to natural gas from heating oil is reducing carbon emissions now and into the medium-term. Looking forward to the longer-term, however, net zero carbon in 2050 cannot be achieved through the use of natural gas unless the carbon is removed through carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) and therefore important decisions will be needed on the future of the natural gas infrastructure.

Indeed, the CCC reported that CCUS would be essential to achieving net zero carbon[52]. Carbon capture could deliver the decarbonisation of natural gas and enable continued use of the natural gas pipeline infrastructure. However, there are as yet limited examples of this technology at scale and it is likely to require substantial financial investment. It should be noted that commercially viable carbon capture for CO_2 storage technology does not exist at the present time. We discuss CCUS in section 9.

Consideration might be given to the potential for the injection of biogas (biomethane), produced by the anaerobic digestion of organic material, into the natural gas network. This is currently being done in GB and Ireland, however, the regulatory environment in NI does not currently facilitate injection.

51 https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in-northern-ireland/
52 https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/

There is also potential to use curtailed wind to produce hydrogen through electrolysis. This could be an initial small but necessary step in gas decarbonisation. It would be important to understand the value of generating hydrogen in this way which could better utilise the currently constrained wind potential. Trials are progressing in GB to evaluate the potential to blend hydrogen into the natural gas network.

Electric Heating and Heat Pump Technology

As electricity from the grid continues to reduce in carbon intensity, there is potential to reduce emissions through low-carbon electrification of heat, primarily through use of heat pumps and/or direct electric heating. Shallow ground source heat pump systems can be deployed in many locations throughout NI, including sites off the gas grid. Electrification of heat would mean higher levels of electricity demand, which would have impacts on, firstly, the required network infrastructure and its management and, secondly, electricity generation capacity. This impact over the 30-year pathway will need to be considered carefully (see Power, section 7). The deployment of low-carbon heating such as heat pumps in new-build and 'off the gas grid' existing properties (as well as in low-carbon heat networks), is seen by the CCC as a cost-effective and low-regret opportunity[53].

There is also potential for use of hybrid heat pumps, which can use both fossil fuel and low carbon heat sources, as well as thermal energy technologies.

The UK's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published a consultation on a new 'Future Homes Standard for England' which suggests heat pumps may soon become a more cost-effective method for new homes to achieve uplifted carbon performance standards, particularly where there is no access to the gas grid[54].

LPG

There is a relatively small number of LPG users in NI – an estimated 5,000 consumers, and two LPG suppliers. LPG costs are higher than natural gas and it is not a regulated fuel source.

District Heating and Heat Networks

Heat networks are an efficient method of delivering heat to multiple users. There may be opportunities to enable district heating and heat networks. This can enable economies of scale, as the generation of heat in one large plant can often be more efficient than production in multiple smaller ones. It may also enable the balance of supply and generation of heat, across location and over time, depending on network size. Heat networks can be supplied by a diverse range of sources including power stations, 'energy from waste', heat pumps, geothermal sources and combined heat and power plants.

53 https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CCC-2018-Progress-Report-to-Parliament.pdf
54 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836925/REQUEST.pdf (ref: paragraph 3.26)

Geothermal energy

This can be used for both heating and cooling and NI has substantial, but largely untapped, geothermal potential. The use of deep geothermal energy depends on the presence of suitable rocks underground and so it is important to know the geographical distribution of both the geothermal resources and the heat demand. Although we have some information about the deep geothermal energy resources, detailed maps of heat demand throughout NI are not currently available.

Consumer aspects of heat decarbonisation and government support

Energy efficiency upgrades and new heating technology will involve a range of disruption to consumers. According to Ofgem *"the challenge for heat policy, compared to, for example the decarbonisation of electricity, is that it is not simply limited to technological developments, new business models and system integration but also extends to significant issues around consumer acceptance of changes within their property, which may often be on a mandatory basis"*[55].

We therefore need to consider how heat decarbonisation will impact consumers. This will require a better understanding of upfront costs and longer-term benefits and will also need to take into account issues such as the coordination of energy efficiency measures with heat source changes, fuel poverty levels and ensuring that consumers have the right level of information available to them.

Businesses need heating and cooling for productive workplaces and heat is integral to many industrial processes. Hot water use is particularly significant in the health, hospitality, emergency services and education sectors, driven by demand for washing facilities. Cooking and catering require heat and are important for many businesses, especially those in the hospitality sector.

Renewable Heat Incentive

Outside the established heat sources of oil and gas, the key intervention on heat policy in NI was the RHI, launched in 2012. While this was designed to incentivise the use of a number of alternative, sustainable heat technologies including heat pumps and solar technology, it became associated almost exclusively with biomass boilers. Flaws in the tariffs available for biomass users accredited to the Non-Domestic RHI scheme meant the scheme significantly exceeded its budget, putting wider public services at risk. Ultimately, the schemes were closed to new applicants in 2016, cost controls have been implemented through amended tariffs and the scheme remains the subject of litigation.

55 https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2016/11/ofgem_future_insights_programme_-_the_decarbonisation_of_heat.pdf

This support scheme for renewable heat did not deliver the targeted outcomes. Lessons have been learned and it is vitally important that any required future support schemes to facilitate decarbonisation of our homes and or businesses are considered in this context.

Questions

Q18. What is the appropriate pathway and timeline for the decarbonisation of heat between now and 2030, and subsequently to 2050?

Q19. What are the appropriate ways to measure the progress of decarbonising heat?

Q20. What are the most cost-effective and sustainable steps that government might take to accelerate the reduction of the carbon intensity of heating fuels?

Q21. Is decarbonisation of the gas grid a viable option and what evidence can be provided on both the speed and affordability of decarbonising the gas grid?

Q22. What evidence can you provide on the opportunities for district heating schemes in Northern Ireland and where should responsibility lie for facilitating these?

Q23. Can you provide any evidence or information on the opportunities for geothermal heat supply?

7.

Power

7. Power

Introduction

Electricity accounted for 17% of NI's total energy consumption in 2017 (Figure 5) and a similar proportion of GHG emissions (Figure 4). In general, there has been a slight downwards trend in annual electricity consumption in NI over the period 2010-2017[56].

Traditional electricity infrastructure was built to handle one way power flows from large centralised fossil fuel generators. The transmission and distribution grids then transported that electricity to end use consumers. The grids were designed to meet a peak electricity demand which only occurred for a couple of hours each year. This was fit for purpose and appropriate to the time.

Renewable electricity changed this and our future electricity system is likely to be even more different. We will continue to move away from relying on the electricity produced by a small number of large power plants. Generation will increasingly be located closer to consumers. The grid will need to be more flexible, handle more renewables, integrate more technologies and facilitate more engaged, active and informed consumers, whilst continuing to ensure secure and affordable electricity supply.

Where we are now

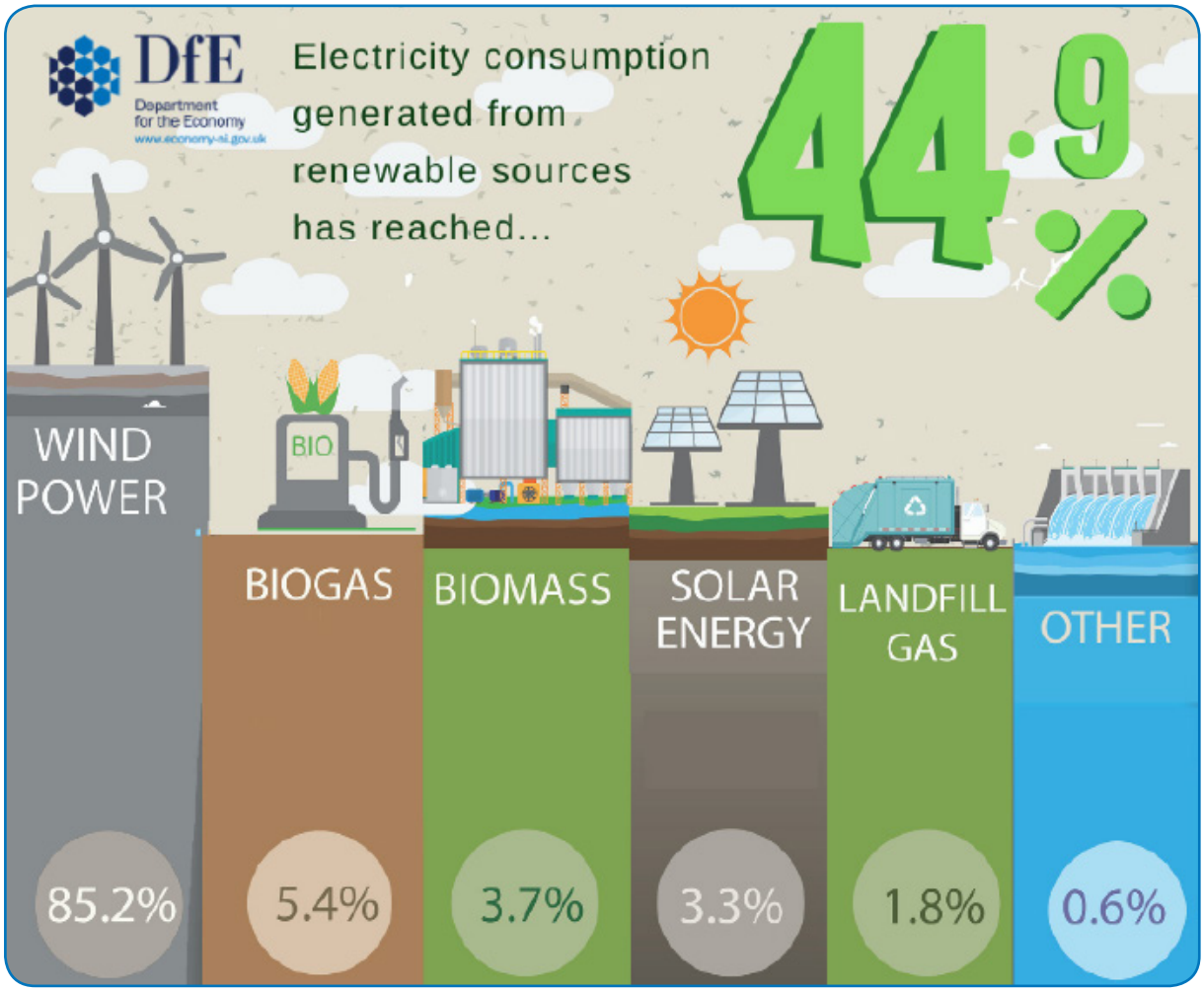
SONI is the electricity system operator for NI and NIE Networks owns the electricity transmission and distribution network, as well as operating the electricity distribution network which transports electricity to over 887,000 customers[57].

Our current electricity infrastructure has around 2.7GW of dispatchable capacity which includes three fossil fuel large scale generators at Ballylumford, Kilroot and Coolkeeragh, and the Moyle interconnector which connects us to the GB energy system[58]. Peak electricity demand in NI is around 1.8GW.

There has been a significant increase in renewable energy capacity installed, rising from 0.3GW in 2010 to around 1.65GW in 2019[59]. The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO), which is now closed, has been the main policy measure for supporting the development of renewable electricity, with around 23,700 stations accredited. This has increased the proportion of renewable electricity consumption from around 3%, when it was introduced in April 2005, to 45% for the twelve month period ended September 2019. The majority of this electricity was generated from onshore wind (Figure 13)[60].

56 https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/energy-northern-ireland
57 https://www.uregni.gov.uk/sites/uregni/files/media-files/2019-11-14%20Transparency%20Report%20Q3%202019%20FINAL.pdf
58 Eirgrid, All-island Generation Capacity Statement 2018-27
59 Eirgrid, All-island Generation Capacity Statement 2018-27
60 https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/electricity-consumption-and-renewable-generation-northern-ireland-year-ending-september-2019

Figure 13: Renewable electricity generation (October 2018 – September 2019)



Source: www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/electricity-consumption-and-renewable-generation-statistics

The SEM's DS3 programme has been a key contributor to this achievement, enabling the grid to accommodate 65% of renewable generation at any given time, whilst NIE Networks has facilitated large numbers of connections to the transmission and distribution networks.

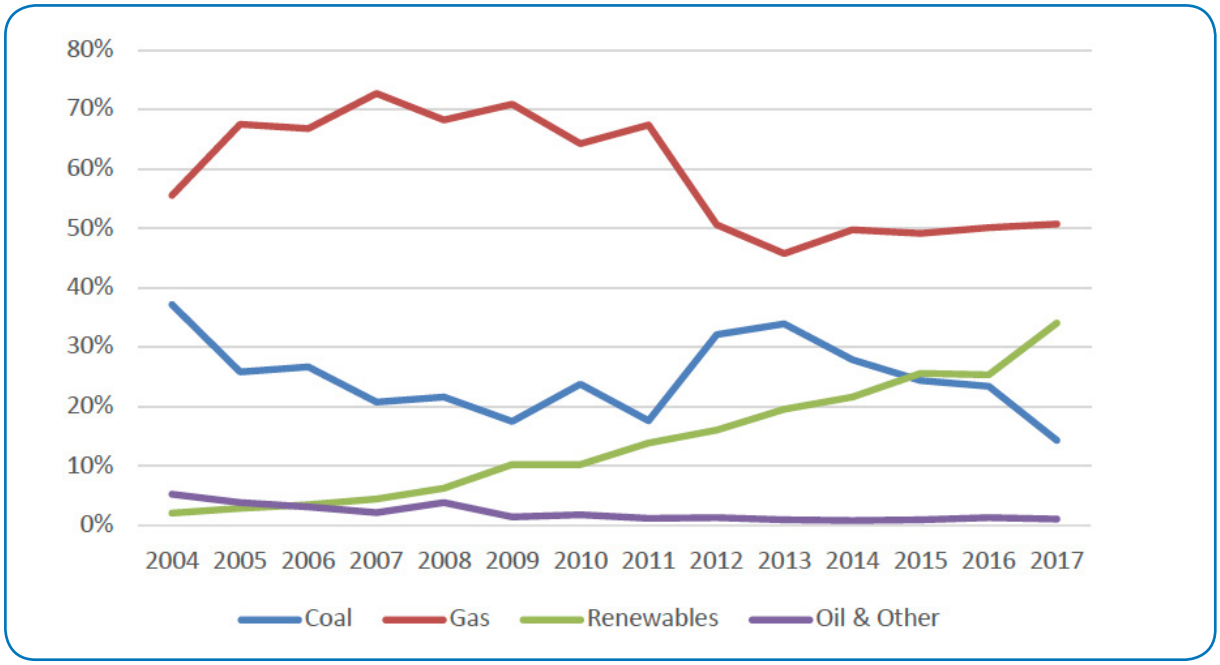
Power has been the major success story in reducing carbon emissions in NI, with energy supply (mainly electricity generation) emissions falling by 59% from 2000 to 2017. GHG emissions per unit of electricity generated decreased by 36% between 2004 and 2017[61]. This has been driven by the growth of renewable generation in NI, a shift away from coal use towards gas for electricity generation, and improvements in energy efficiency.

61 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/northern-ireland-carbon-intensity-indicators-2019.pdf

However, the carbon intensity of electricity in Northern Ireland is approximately 70% greater than the equivalent UK carbon intensity of electricity (406 gCO_2/kWh in 2017 in NI compared to 238 gCO_2/kWh in 2017 for the UK).[62]

This is consequence of the overall generation mix, including the higher proportion of coal and gas-fired generation in NI, and the use of nuclear elsewhere in the UK[63].

Figure 14: Changing Composition of Power Generation in Northern Ireland[64]



Since 2007, NI and Ireland have jointly operated a single wholesale electricity market, known as the SEM. This means that wholesale electricity is traded across the island through a single pool, in order to increase competition, efficiency and security of supply. Optimal operation of the SEM requires effective connection of the NI grid to that in Ireland to facilitate the most efficient flows of electricity across the island. The existing NI to Ireland electricity network connection is proposed to be enhanced by a new North-South Interconnector which will enhance security of supply, put downward pressure on costs for consumers and facilitate more renewables on the system.

62 Northern Ireland: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/northern-ireland-carbon-intensity-indicators-2019.pdf
United Kingdom: UK power emissions were 73,082 ktCO2e (https://naei.beis.gov.uk/reports/reports?section_id=4) and energy produced was 307,504 GWh (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770766/Regional_Electricity_Generation_and_Supply.pdf) resulting in carbon intensity of 238 gCO2/kWh.

63 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770768/Regional_Electricity_Generation_and_Supply.pdf

64 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/energy-trends-december-2018

Key issues for consideration

NI has exceeded its 40% renewable electricity consumption target. We now need to set a new target supporting the pathway to lower carbon energy. Ireland and Wales have both set targets of 70% by 2030, with Scotland aiming for 100% by 2020. Our starting point is to consider three options – one the same as Ireland and Wales (70%), one below (60%) and one above (80%). We would request input on what would be a stretching but achievable ambition for an NI target to 2030, taking into account the level of investment required and potential costs and benefits to consumers.

Meeting an ambitious new target will require significant investment in infrastructure. In addition to new or upgraded transmission and distribution infrastructure, there will need to be large-scale deployment of renewable technologies. NIE Networks will likely have to connect many more micro-generators to the distribution network, and a consultation has been published to inform the approach to widening access to this[65].

In relation to large-scale generators that connect to the transmission system, SONI has a legal responsibility to connect parties who request connections and an innovative approach of pre-selecting sites and clustering renewable developments has been trialled[66]. This has the potential benefits of reducing the visual impact of new infrastructure on local communities, speeding up the planning process and allowing both SONI and NIE Networks to more strategically plan connections and upgrades to the network.

Evidence is sought as to what approach would be preferable to balance the need for new infrastructure with costs for consumers and acceptability for local communities. The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI[67] provides a strategic planning policy framework on a range of important planning matters, including for 'Renewable Energy' development.

In addition to deploying more renewable technologies, we also need to better utilise what we already have. Constraints on generators and curtailment of wind power more broadly are common occurrences[68] and we need to look at innovative ways to reduce this. Battery storage, for example, offers opportunities to use renewable power when it is needed, rather than when it is generated. Interconnection allows us to export surplus renewables to elsewhere while district heating and wider deployment of heat pumps might offer opportunities for renewable electricity to displace fossil fuel. We would request evidence on innovations and solutions that can help to achieve a future renewable electricity target, in addition to deploying established generation assets.

65 https://www.nienetworks.co.uk/getmedia/c226929a-3d68-4c2e-b5ab-17195267fdba/Greater-Access-to-the-Distribution-Network-in-Northern-Ireland-Consultation.pdf.aspx
66 http://www.soni.ltd.uk/media/SONI-Agivey-Cluster-Project-2017-Brochure.pdf
67 https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/spps_28_september_2015-3.pdf
68 http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Annual-Renewable-Constraint-and-Curtailment-Report-2018-V1.0.pdf

Significant investment will be needed in the future to deliver higher levels of low carbon electricity. Whilst the SEM provides revenue streams for power generators, with the closure of the NIRO in 2017 there is no support scheme available in NI to support investment and reduce risk for investors. However, this is set within a context where costs have fallen[69] and some subsidy-free projects are emerging. Both GB and Ireland have auction-style mechanisms in Contracts for Difference (CfD) and the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme. Evidence is sought on how to bring forward new renewable electricity projects, whether a support scheme is required, what this might look like and the level of support needed for each technology.

Onshore wind and solar PV may be expected to be the cheapest and most readily deployed technologies for NI in the medium term. However, diversity of technology mix is vital to enhancing security and affordability of supply and minimising levels of system constraints or curtailment of renewable assets. Offshore renewables, in particular, offer a significant opportunity to develop additional large scale renewable capacity. The latest CfD auction results highlight just how far costs have come down, with the subsidy price for offshore wind cheaper than the costs of either gas or nuclear[70]. We invite evidence around what offshore and marine renewables opportunities there are in NI, and what barriers government needs to overcome to realise these.

Questions

Q24. What is the appropriate pathway for the decarbonisation of power from now to 2030, and subsequently to 2050?

Q25. What target for electricity consumption generated from renewable sources by 2030 is ambitious, achievable and affordable?

Q26. How can the new infrastructure necessary to meet a new renewable electricity target be delivered in a timely, affordable and acceptable way for consumers and society?

Q27. What innovations and solutions could contribute to meeting a new renewable electricity target?

Q28. What market incentives and support are necessary for investors to deliver the investment in renewable generation assets at a scale that will achieve a new renewable electricity target?

Q29. What steps need to be taken by Government to facilitate investment in offshore and marine renewables for NI?

69 International Renewable Energy Agency, Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2018

70 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contracts-for-difference-cfd-allocation-round-3-results/contracts-for-difference-cfd-allocation-round-3-results

8.

Transport

8. Transport

Introduction

The transport sector is a key consumer of energy and producer of GHG emissions. Our modern and mobile lifestyles have placed an increasing demand on our transportation networks which have largely been developed around the car. Transport accounts for approximately 33% of energy consumed in NI (Figure 5) and contributes 23% of GHG emissions (Figure 4). Therefore, decarbonising energy use for transport, taking into account both the transport of people and goods across NI, is an important consideration within an overarching energy strategy.

Encouraging a modal shift to active travel (walking and cycling) will have a significant impact on reducing energy use from transport, whilst improving health and well-being. However, it is recognised that walking or cycling will not always be a viable option. Reduced reliance on private vehicle use, together with greater use of public transport and ultra-low emissions vehicles (ULEV), will also be key to achieving energy efficient, cleaner road transport.

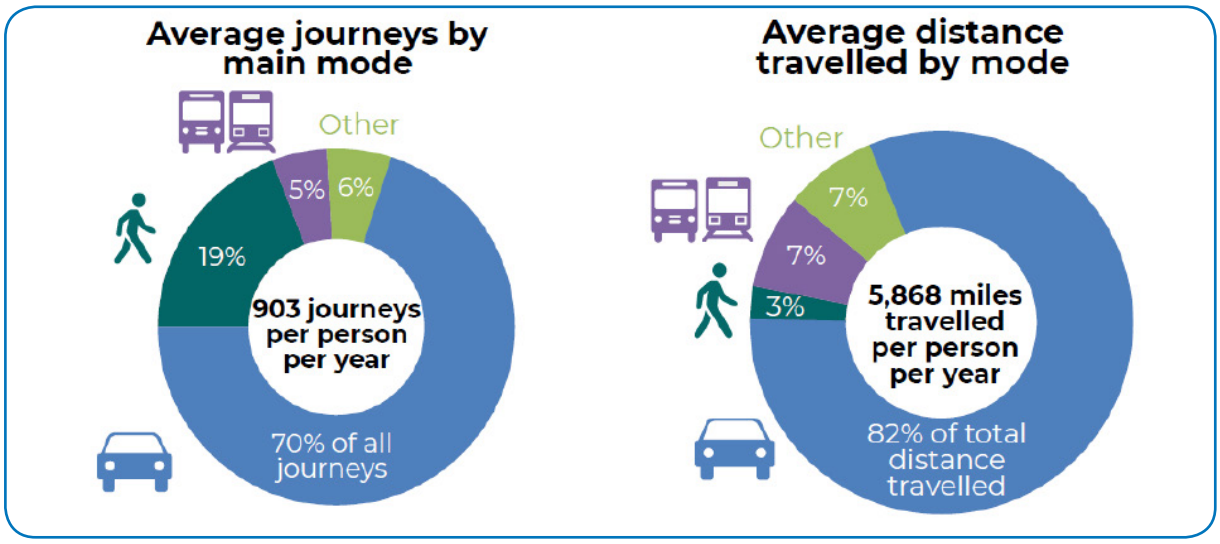
Electrification of road vehicles also has the potential to lower carbon emissions and reduce emissions of nitrogen dioxide, a toxic air pollutant found in raised levels in some of our towns and cities.

Where we are now

Figure 15 illustrates the proportion of journeys made and average distance travelled by the main modes of transport between 2016 and 2018[71]. Of the average 903 journeys made per person per year, just under one quarter (24%) of all journeys were taken by walking and public transport (rising to 25% when including cycling journeys), whilst 70% were made by car (as a driver or passenger). During 2016-2018, 82% of the total distance travelled per person was by car.

71 Department for Infrastructure, Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2016-18, NISRA.

Figure 15: Journeys made and distance travelled in Northern Ireland, 2016-18



The figures demonstrate that NI is still characterised by high use of private cars. At the end of 2018, there were 1.2 million licensed vehicles in NI, an increase of 1.9% compared to the previous year. Of these, cars account for around 83% and approximately 12% were LGVs and HGVs. It is worth noting that NI households typically spend less on buying a car, but much more in running them, when compared with their GB counterparts. Future transport changes may impact household discretionary income, and therefore consumer affordability measures may need to take into account these changes.

At 30 June 2019 there were 2,794 registered ULEVs in NI. These are supported by charging infrastructure grant aided by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles and a network of 337 publically available charge points owned, operated and maintained by the ESB through the 'ecarni' programme. The UK Road to Zero strategy also aims to deliver cleaner road transport across the UK alongside taking forward major road schemes which have provided traffic flow solutions allowing vehicular transport to move more efficiently to reduce fuel consumption.

As well as this, road transport generates substantial amounts of air pollutants; as in many other cities in the UK and across the EU, the Air Quality Directive annual limit value for nitrogen dioxide has been exceeded. This is primarily due to pollution from road traffic, with diesel engines being particularly to blame in this respect. However, the proliferation of diesel vehicles has lowered carbon emissions from road transport.

Primary responsibility for transport lies with DfI which, in collaboration with key partners, works to deliver a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life.

To help achieve this, the Regional Development Strategy 2035[72] provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. It does not redefine other departments' strategies but complements them with a spatial perspective.

In its approach to regional transportation, DfI has designed policies and implemented a range of schemes and projects to reduce GHG emissions, reduce noise and air pollution and use more energy efficient ways to move people and goods now and in the future. For example, measures which encourage the uptake of walking, cycling and greenway schemes providing immediate net zero carbon reductions, have been put in place.

In addition, better transport planning, demonstrated by the "Belfast on the Move" project and the development of modern digitally connected conurbations provide opportunities for decentralisation and help to reduce congestion and emissions.

Where use of vehicles cannot be substituted by active travel or digital solutions, major projects such as the introduction of the "Glider" Rapid Transport system in Belfast have succeeded in getting people out of their cars and onto cleaner hybrid public transport.

Translink has continued to develop Ultra Low Emission fleet replacement policies and has been pursuing funding for infrastructure to allow the introduction of hydrogen-fuelled zero emission vehicles in the Belfast Metro Fleet.

Key issues for consideration

The UK Government's "The Road to Zero – Next Steps towards Cleaner Road Transport & Delivering our Industrial Strategy" 2018[73] is designed to put in place measures across the UK to deliver cleaner transport in the future. At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to work in partnership with industry, businesses, academia, environmental groups, devolved administrations, local government, consumers and international partners.

The strategy is technology neutral and therefore, in considering future energy need, key transport issues include:

Future of Mobility

This will include how people choose to travel in the future (which may reduce energy demand) and the commercial introduction of ULEVs. These could both impact on the demand for electricity and in the future provide energy storage solutions through vehicle to grid technology.

72 http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/rds2035.pdf
73 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-emissions-from-road-transport-road-to-zero-strategy

Alternative Fuels in Transport

Electricity in cars and vans, liquefied natural gas (LNG), compressed natural gas (CNG), hydrogen, biofuels in the freight and bus sectors, are all in various stages of development. The cost and availability of battery electric vehicles and lack of a second hand market are barriers to mass introduction. At present the impact on the energy market is low with growth of around 100 vehicles per quarter. Scenario planning within the energy sector will need to play a role in estimating future demand on supply.

Infrastructure

Alternative transport will require provision of appropriate infrastructure which meets the needs of consumers and the market in NI. New infrastructure to support the introduction of alternative fuels such as hydrogen, CNG and LNG will be required alongside public and home charging solutions for electric vehicles.

Technology and Innovation

There is potential to optimise smart technology and innovation in the transport and energy sectors to ensure energy security and maximise the use of renewable energy sources.

The UK government recently clarified that its 2050 net zero target must cover the whole economy, including international aviation and shipping emissions, which are reserved matters**.** Different fuel options can play a role across different modes although their use (and timing) will be dependent on a range of technology and cost factors.

Questions

Q30. What would be an appropriate pathway to decarbonised energy for transport to 2050?

Q31. What role should active travel have in the decarbonisation of the transport sector and what should government do to support this?

Q32. What energy infrastructure is needed to facilitate the uptake of electric vehicles in line with UK Government's 'Road to Zero' targets?

Q33. How will transport integrate with other energy uses (e.g. homes with solar generation, battery storage, EV charging) and what can government do to optimise the opportunities represented by this integration?

Q34. To what extent can alternative low carbon transport fuels contribute to decarbonisation of the transport sector?

Q35. Do you have any data/research to help inform and reduce the carbon intensity of our transport energy in order to achieve net zero carbon by 2050?

9.

Other issues for consideration

9. Other issues for consideration

Security of Supply

The fundamental requirement of the energy system is that it is reliable, robust and secure. Higher levels of renewable electricity generation increase security of supply by reducing our reliance on imports, whilst the development of interconnectors in our power system allows us to take advantage of electricity generated elsewhere when needed and cost effective. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of our current power, heat and transport energy needs are still provided from imported fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas, as well as imported biomass for renewable heat and power.

Our electricity system currently handles high levels of variable renewables generation but increased reliance on these resources will require consideration of better system integration with transport and heat, changes to demand and supply management, improved storage capabilities, and potentially the use of electricity to make hydrogen through electrolysis.

The following key issues should be considered in relation to security of supply:

- **Reliability:** that our physical energy infrastructure (e.g. electricity and gas grids), upon which the energy system is built around, works as intended;
- **Resilience:** that our energy infrastructure can stand up to the greater frequency of extreme weather events[74], and where issues do occur, that these can be quickly responded to and fixed; and
- **Flexibility:** that we can accommodate more intermittent renewables into our energy mix (particularly electricity) without compromising the security of supply upon which consumers rely.

In facilitating the energy transition to zero carbon fuels, opportunities may arise to improve or redefine these three key issues. For example, local smart grids can reduce power outages and make the energy system more resilient. Smart, data-driven tools can be used for design planning, involving consumers and identifying better supply and demand management approaches. We would therefore welcome input to identify new and emerging security of energy supply risks and opportunities arising from a changing energy mix.

74 https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/understanding-climate/uk-extreme-events-_heavy-rainfall-and-floods

Security of supply is monitored through close engagement and planning between DfE, the Utility Regulator and a wide range of industry stakeholders. The PfG also includes a formal measure of electricity security of supply[75] from the All-Island Generation Capacity Statement which outlines forecast capacity against demand scenarios. This measure does not cover natural gas or oil products and does not take into account the dynamic nature of demand and supply.

Q36. What specific risks to security of energy supply are likely to emerge as a result of our changing energy mix, and what actions can be taken to mitigate these?

Q37. What measures or indicators could be adopted or developed to monitor energy security of supply?

The role of data

The energy transition to zero carbon is not the only transition that society is experiencing. Technology developments such as smart metering are already facilitating the digitalisation of the electricity system and providing a growing range and quantity of data. Through advanced data analytics, energy systems are likely to become more connected and operators will have a better understanding of both energy supply and demand in real-time. This provides opportunities to increase efficiencies and reduce investment requirements.

A modern, digitalised energy system would be hindered by poor quality, inaccurate, or missing data. Further, some of the data that exists often has restricted access or indeed is hard to find. We need to understand the value of data and the changes required to be able to make best use of it in ways which are beneficial to both consumers and the energy system.

Smart Meters and Consumer Data

Whilst some useful data is already available to consumers, energy suppliers and energy system operators, the technologies in our homes and buildings will need to change to facilitate a truly data driven energy system. For example, NI does not have a smart meter programme, such as that being rolled out in GB and Ireland. Smart meters, or indeed other smart technologies which can utilise the internet that already exists in most of our homes and buildings, are potential ways that such data can be gathered and utilised.

Consumers should have the ability to have easier access to their energy data to give them information about their own energy use. This would also allow them to have more control over their own consumption, technologies and self-generation (or third parties to do so on their behalf if they agree), and enable delivery of consumer benefits.

75 https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/pfg-consulation-document.PDF

We understand that consumer data will also continue to have value for energy suppliers. Supplier innovation is likely, therefore, to go hand in hand with technology innovation.

Energy System Data

Energy system data has significant potential to provide major benefits to system operation and infrastructure, facilitating operational flexibility, innovation and new technologies and delivering benefits to consumers. Maximising access to energy data essentially delivers the ability to ensure that our energy systems and infrastructure are operating efficiently and optimally.

To address some of these issues the Energy Data Taskforce[76] was established to provide the UK Government, Ofgem and the energy industry with a set of recommendations on how data can assist with unlocking the opportunities provided by a modern, decarbonised and decentralised energy system at best value to consumers. The five key recommendations of the taskforce are provided in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16: Energy Data Taskforce recommendations

Energy Data Taskforce Report - 5 Key Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1: Digitalisation of the Energy System** – Government and Ofgem should use existing legislative and regulatory measures to direct the sector to adopt the principle of Digitalisation of the Energy System in the consumers' interest.
- **Recommendation 2: Maximising the Value of Data** – Government and Ofgem should direct the sector to adopt the principle that Energy System Data should be Presumed Open, supported by requirements that data is 'Discoverable, Searchable, Understandable', with common 'Structures, Interfaces and Standards' and is 'Secure and Resilient'.
- **Recommendation 3: Visibility of Data** – A Data Catalogue should be established to provide visibility through standardised metadata of Energy System Datasets across Government, the regulator and industry.
- **Recommendation 4: Coordination of Asset Registration** – An Asset Registration Strategy should be established in order to increase registration compliance, improve the reliability of data and improve the efficiency of data collection.
- **Recommendation 5: Visibility of Infrastructure and Assets** – A unified Digital System Map of the Energy System should be established to increase visibility of the Energy System infrastructure and assets, enable optimisation of investment and inform the creation of new markets.

76 https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/energy-data-taskforce

Data Issues, Security and Privacy

There are a number of important issues relating to energy data. There is a lack of openness and access to data; a lack of awareness of data sources; and a general lack of understanding of the potential benefits of data sharing. If not addressed such issues would become barriers to innovation; impact negatively on our energy research and evidence base; impact negatively on our ability to have an integrated whole energy system; and lead to poorer outcomes for consumers and society at large.

The key issues in addressing the problems identified above are data privacy, protection and security – at both an individual and system level.

Q38. What is the most cost-effective method of capturing consumer energy usage data in electricity and natural gas (where meters are in place)? In heating oil (where there is no metering obligation)?

Q39. What concerns need to be addressed regarding data privacy, security and/or ownership?

Q40. What are your views on applying the key recommendations of the Energy Data Taskforce for NI?

Q41. What organisations or businesses do you see as having a key role in optimising the value of data? How will they do this?

Carbon Capture, Use and Storage

A future with net zero emissions will still involve some activities which have the potential to generate CO_2. CCUS is a technology to gather CO_2 emissions (either pre or post combustion) and transport it to somewhere where it can be stored and prevented from being released into the atmosphere. The CCC deems CCUS as being essential in reaching the net zero carbon target[77]. The opportunities for CCUS exist across a range of sectors, not just in energy generation.

77 https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Net-Zero-The-UKs-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming.pdf

Figure 17: Opportunities to Deploy CCUS

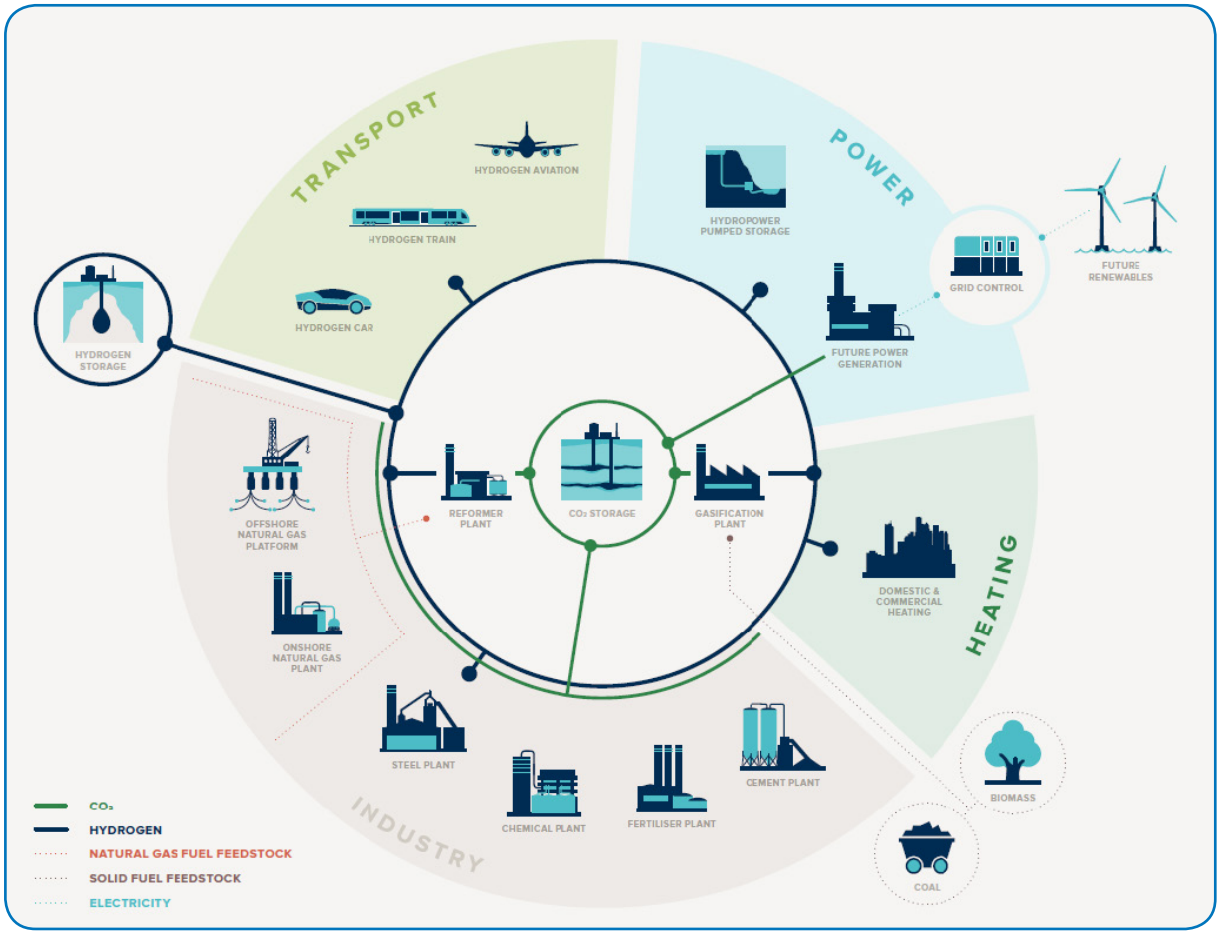


Image Credit: Global CCS Institute (2018)

The UK Government has developed an action plan to deliver the first CCUS project in the UK by the mid-2020s, with the option to deploy at scale from the 2030s[78]. Engagement with industry is taking place on the critical challenges of delivering CCUS in the UK, in particular the cost structures, risk sharing arrangements and market mechanisms.

Q42. What steps, if any, should NI policy-makers consider with regard to the development or implementation of CCUS in NI?

Energy and the Economy

Energy costs can be a significant element of overall costs and therefore need to be competitive. In the transition to a zero carbon energy sector, it is important that this competitive position is protected as much as possible. As noted in section 4, price comparisons for all but the largest industrial and commercial users are competitive within an EU context.

78 HM Government, Clean Growth: The UK Carbon Capture Usage and Storage Deployment Pathway

However, energy is not just an enabler of economic activity, but an economic driver in its own right. The electricity and gas sectors accounted for 1,770 jobs in June 2019 and £2.0bn of turnover in 2017[79].

The transition towards zero carbon energy will present many economic opportunities beyond today's traditional utilities. It is estimated that there were a further 5,900 jobs and £1.2bn of turnover in the 'lower carbon' sectors[80], including energy services, in NI in 2017[81]. The energy services sector will support many of the drivers of economic competitiveness that feature in economic strategies, including:

- More **entrepreneurship and start-ups** will come from new emerging markets, not just for businesses but also for consumers who will be able to sell the energy that they generate;
- It could deliver **regionally-balanced growth**, attracting investment and providing business opportunities in mainly rural areas. This can be seen with the majority of renewable electricity investment to date having occurred in the west and northwest NI where wind resources and land availability are best suited for renewables;
- Significant **innovation and R&D** will occur through developing and adopting new technologies and services. NI already has a strong research base, including the Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy (CASE)[82] and the Centre for Sustainable Technologies (CST)[83] to build on. Collaborative innovation projects with industry are already progressing, including GENNCOM[84], Belfast Power to X and SPIRE2[85];
- With the decarbonisation of energy happening right across the world, there are many **export opportunities** for local firms to exploit, particularly given our strong engineering base. In addition, renewable electricity being generated is and will continue to be exported to Great Britain and, when the Celtic Interconnector is completed, to mainland Europe; and
- Our energy sector attracts significant **inward investment**, not only in traditional power stations and electricity and gas infrastructure, but through deploying renewable technologies. As more renewable energy is required, this will continue to attract investment from outside NI.

79 NISRA Quarterly Employment Survey, SIC D (also includes steam and air conditioning supply)
80 The lower carbon sectors are: offshore wind, onshore wind, solar photovoltaic, hydropower, other renewable energy, bioenergy, alternative fuels, renewable heat, renewable combined heat and power, energy efficient lighting, energy efficient products, energy monitoring, saving or control systems, low carbon financial and advisory services, low emission vehicles and infrastructure, carbon capture and storage, nuclear power, fuel cells and energy storage systems.
81 ONS Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy 2017
82 https://www.case-research.net/
83 https://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/topic/built-environment/sustainable-technologies
84 https://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/gencomm-generating-energy-secure-communities/
85 https://www.ulster.ac.uk/spire2/the-project

In addition to developing the energy strategy, DfE will also be seeking to develop a future skills strategy and economic / industrial strategy. Given the contribution that energy can make to the economy, evidence is sought on what specific economic opportunities will arise from decarbonisation. It is recognised that these opportunities will only be realised if the appropriate skills base is available in NI.

Q43. What specific economic opportunities will arise from the decarbonisation of energy?

Q44. What skills are needed to realise the potential economic benefits of energy in the future?

Economic Growth and Energy Demand

Energy demand and economic growth have historically been linked: as economies grow, energy demand increases; if energy is constrained, growth reduces. However, this historic pattern is changing and it is possible to see a decoupling of economic growth and energy demand growth. This is a factor of a decline in the energy intensity of GDP (i.e. the continuing shift from industrial to service economies), an increase in energy efficiency, higher levels of electrification and the growing use of renewables (which can flatten primary energy demand).

Indeed, a 2016 report[86] by the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy shows that energy consumption in the UK is, on average, no higher now than it was in the 1970s. At a European level, it is estimated that gross energy consumption could shrink by 13% between 2015 and 2050 despite a 68% increase in GDP, meaning that the energy intensity of the EU economy nearly halves over this period.[87]

However, both at a UK and European level, there are projected rises in electricity consumption, driven by the potential for significant electrification of heat and transport and potentially industrial processes, which could lead to an increase in electricity demand by 27.5% by 2050 compared to 2015[88]. This could be offset by increased efficiency in the industrial sector, moves towards more service-orientated industries and increased efficiency in the domestic and non-domestic heating sector.

According to SONI, demand for electricity in NI is forecast to remain largely unchanged to 2027[89], while demand is forecast to rise in Ireland as increasing numbers of large energy users, primarily data centres, connect to the grid.

86 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820843/Energy_Consumption_in_the_UK__ECUK__MASTER_COPY.pdf
87 https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/potencia-central-scenario-eu-energy-outlook-2050
88 https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/potencia-central-scenario-eu-energy-outlook-2050
89 http://test.soni.ltd.uk/media/documents/Generation_Capacity_Statement_2018.pdf

However, there are no predictions for overall energy demand in NI to 2050, and we would be keen to hear your views on the expected changes to energy demand.

Q45. What are your views on the future of overall energy demand in NI and how can we ensure that any potential demand growth aligns with our net zero carbon target?

Delivery framework for an energy strategy

Governance and Delivery

DfE is the NI government's lead department in energy, responsible for providing the strategic vision for the future of energy in NI, as well as key aspects of the energy legislation, including the licensing and regulatory framework and a range of consumer protection issues.

To support the ongoing development of the energy strategy, DfE has established a Government Stakeholder Group to inform and take forward our strategy. It includes representatives from all government departments, local government and Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies - Invest NI and the CCNI - as well as the independent NIAUR.

A Project Board has also been established, chaired by the DfE Permanent Secretary with representatives from the NIAUR and CCNI.

It is worth noting that other parts of the UK and Ireland have alternative approaches to energy responsibilities. For example, Ireland has established a dedicated Department for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment which incorporates energy within its remit. At a UK level the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy brings together the business and science policy portfolios of the former Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and the full policy portfolio of the former Department for Energy and Climate Change.

As there are more limited devolved responsibilities for energy in both Scotland and Wales, these also have distinct approaches. The government in Scotland is structured into more than 30 directorates, one of which is Energy and Climate Change, and in Wales energy powers are primarily reserved, with limited responsibilities at the National Assembly and local government. Local authorities in Scotland also have a significant role, for example through developing Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies[90]. Similarly, the increased powers of local government in NI since 2015 could similarly enable a variety of locally-driven solutions.

90 https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-heat-energy-efficiency-strategies-phase-1-pilots-technical-evaluation-report/pages/3/

It is also worth noting that some local councils have declared a Climate Change Emergency. Belfast, for example, has established a Resilience and Sustainability Board as part of its formal Community Planning Structures. The city's draft Resilience Strategy links decarbonisation with the city's growth strategy, emphasising the economic opportunities associated with energy transition.

The development of a new energy strategy will lead to a range of policies which will require new and improved support schemes and interventions, as well as providing information and advice. At present, there is no single organisation with a clear mission that would naturally deliver these. As a result, the current approach of many different organisations delivering a wide variety of interventions is likely to continue. An alternative may be to consider establishing a dedicated sustainable energy authority with a focused mission to deliver existing and new energy interventions to 2050.

Case Study: Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

SEAI is Ireland's national sustainable energy authority. It works with householders, businesses, communities and government to create a cleaner energy future. Its activities include:

- **Home energy:** home energy grants to improve energy efficiency; raising awareness and ensuring compliance with EU energy labelling and eco-design of products; information on Building Energy Ratings (BERs) and energy saving tips.
- **Community energy:** supporting sustainable energy communities through capital funding, partnerships and technical support; engaging with schools and teachers to educate about saving energy in home and at school.
- **Grants:** home grants; electric vehicle grants; business grants and support; housing association and local authority energy efficiency; research funding; community grants; help with finding a registered professional and support for contractors.
- **Business & public sector:** public sector energy programme; large industry energy network; energy auditing; SME supports; business grants; EVs for business; renewable biomass heating for business; training and support for energy management and standards.
- **Technologies:** electric vehicles; ocean energy; solar energy; bioenergy; wind energy; mapping of technologies and BERs.
- **Data & insights:** energy statistics; research; research funding; behavioural insights.

Source: https://www.seai.ie/

In summary, it may be appropriate to consider whether existing governance, delivery and departmental responsibilities are sufficient to deliver the net zero carbon target effectively. Input and evidence, particularly drawing from successful approaches in other jurisdictions, is therefore sought.

Legislation and Regulation

The legislative and regulatory framework for energy in NI has evolved in response to NI, UK and EU energy policy. It includes legislation that is the responsibility of other government departments, not only DfE.

DfE is responsible for a body of primary energy legislation, supplemented by a range of subordinate legislation which includes:

- The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992;
- The Gas (Northern Ireland) Order 1996;
- The Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;
- The Electricity (Single Wholesale Market) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007; and
- Energy (NI) Act 2011.

This legislation is fundamental to future policy direction as it sets and prioritises the statutory duties of both DfE and the Utility Regulator, and the associated policy and regulatory priorities and vires.

EU legislation has had a significant impact on the development of the current framework. NI's energy legislation has been updated through the implementation of EU legislative programmes such as the Third Internal Energy Package[91], Energy Efficiency Directive[92] and Renewable Electricity Directive[93].

The outcome of EU Exit negotiations will have a major impact on the energy framework, particularly within the context of the ongoing functioning of the SEM, implementation of the CEP, and the UK Government's commitment to seeking to maintain the SEM in any scenario including a No Deal exit.

There are dozens of other pieces of legislation impacting on energy in NI, including, for example, regulations for functional or performance requirements of buildings[94] (DoF), enforcement of the requirements of building regulations (local government) and the 2011 Planning Act (DfI). As part of this strategy we will consider what legislative changes may be required.

91 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/markets-and-consumers/market-legislation/third-energy-package
92 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-directive/overview
93 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-efficiency/targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-directive
94 Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

Whilst acknowledging that the legislative and regulatory frameworks are influenced to a large extent by wider policy and legislative considerations it would still be useful to gain an understanding of stakeholder views. Any proposed changes will, of course, be subject to fuller consideration, consultation and scrutiny in line with current departmental responsibilities and requirements.

Questions

Q46. Do the existing division of responsibilities and powers across government enable the most effective approach to the overall aim of decarbonising energy? If not, what are your suggestions for improvement?

Q47. What are the opportunities for local government to contribute to the delivery of the net zero carbon target?

Q48. What are your views on how statutory duties and accompanying legislation and regulatory frameworks would need to change to facilitate the transition to net zero carbon by 2050?

Q49. Is there a need for a dedicated organisation to champion, lead and deliver sustainable energy interventions? If so, what should this look like?

10.

The Way Forward

10. The Way Forward

Energy presents a unique range of challenges for policymakers and strategists. The SEF 2010 led a significant change to the generation of electricity from renewable sources. Since then the recognition of the importance of addressing the challenges of climate change, providing greater choice to consumers and ensuring greater stability and consistency for the wider economy have increased the scale and breadth of the challenge.

Agreeing a new energy strategy will be a key priority for any incoming devolved administration. This Call for Evidence is the initial stage in gathering the evidence and identifying the key issues that need to be addressed within that strategy. We are eager to ensure that there is transparency throughout the development of proposals for an incoming Minister.

Changes to how departments develop their approach through co-production and focusing on outcomes have been encouraged notwithstanding the absence of a functioning Executive. This strategy development exercise offers an opportunity to highlight the benefits of such an approach.

Contact details for the energy strategy team are set out at the start of this document. We will deliver a range of targeted stakeholder engagement events on an ongoing basis until a Minister has determined the future strategy. Details of these events will be notified on the Department's website (https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/) and via its Twitter feed (https://twitter.com/economy_ni). We would welcome as many as possible to attend these events and to discuss the issues that need to be addressed and the evidence which needs to be considered.

During this initial phase, we are also keen to respond to invitations to meet key stakeholders. Please let us know if you wish to engage with the energy strategy team.

Q50. Is there anything else you would like to add in response to this Call for Evidence?

Summary of Questions

Q1. What lessons can we learn from elsewhere in addressing energy within an overarching climate action framework?

Q2. What are the key considerations for decarbonising Northern Ireland's energy sector given existing linkages to other jurisdictions?

Q3. To what extent should Northern Ireland implement the key energy-related recommendations from the CCC 'Reducing Emissions in Northern Ireland' report?

Q4. Do you agree with the 30-year timeframe? If not, please state your preferred approach and reasons.

Q5. What are the unique characteristics of Northern Ireland that need to be considered in a net zero carbon energy transition?

Q6. Is your organisation undertaking or planning to undertake projects to support the energy transition? If so, please provide further details.

Q7. How should we ensure that energy remains affordable for domestic consumers? What approach should be taken to eradicate fuel poverty?

Q8. What steps could be taken to improve the relative cost competitiveness of larger non-domestic consumers?

Q9. Is a strategic position of "enable and protect" the correct policy stance?
a) What policies or schemes are needed to enable active consumers?
b) What policies or schemes are needed to protect vulnerable consumers?

Q10. What types of advice and information are required by all consumers and what are the best mechanisms for facilitating this?

Q11. Are there examples of successful citizen energy projects in Northern Ireland and elsewhere that have delivered improved energy efficiency and/or clean energy to local communities?

Q12. What opportunities are there in both urban and rural areas for citizen energy communities in Northern Ireland? What role could government have in facilitating these?

Q13. What evidence can you provide that identifies the challenges and opportunities for NI energy consumers in decarbonising energy?

Q14. What, if any, energy efficiency target or targets should be set for Northern Ireland?

Q15. How should we define, measure and monitor energy efficiency to optimise its potential in our homes, business, economy and environment?

Q16. What are the most important policy levers for government to ensure zero carbon in:
a) New domestic and commercial buildings by 2050?;
b) Existing domestic and commercial buildings by 2050?

Q17. What should the future of energy efficiency support look like and who should be the key delivery bodies?

Q18. What is the appropriate pathway and timeline for the decarbonisation of heat between now and 2030, and subsequently to 2050?

Q19. What are the appropriate ways to measure the progress of decarbonising heat?

Q20. What are the most cost-effective and sustainable steps that government might take to accelerate the reduction of the carbon intensity of heating fuels?

Q21. Is decarbonisation of the gas grid a viable option and what evidence can be provided on both the speed and affordability of decarbonising the gas grid?

Q22. What evidence can you provide on the opportunities for district heating schemes in Northern Ireland and where should responsibility lie for facilitating these?

Q23. Can you provide any evidence or information on the opportunities for geothermal heat supply?

Q24. What is the appropriate pathway for the decarbonisation of power from now to 2030, and subsequently to 2050?

Q25. What target for electricity consumption generated from renewable sources by 2030 is ambitious, achievable and affordable?

Q26. How can the new infrastructure necessary to meet a new renewable electricity target be delivered in a timely, affordable and acceptable way for consumers and society?

Q27. What innovations and solutions could contribute to meeting a new renewable electricity target?

Q28. What market incentives and support are necessary for investors to deliver the investment in renewable generation assets at a scale that will achieve a new renewable electricity target?

Q29. What steps need to be taken by Government to facilitate investment in offshore and marine renewables for NI?

Q30. What would be an appropriate pathway to decarbonised energy for transport to 2050?

Q31. What role should active travel have in the decarbonisation of the transport sector and what should government do to support this?

Q32. What energy infrastructure is needed to facilitate the uptake of electric vehicles in line with UK Government's 'Road to Zero' targets?

Q33. How will transport integrate with other energy uses (e.g. homes with solar generation, battery storage, EV charging) and what can government do to optimise the opportunities represented by this integration?

Q34. To what extent can alternative low carbon transport fuels contribute to decarbonisation of the transport sector?

Q35. Do you have any data/research to help inform and reduce the carbon intensity of our transport energy in order to achieve net zero carbon by 2050?

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Q42. What steps, if any, should NI policy-makers consider with regard to the development or implementation of CCUS in NI?

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Q44. What skills are needed to realise the potential economic benefits of energy in the future?

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Q50. Is there anything else you would like to add in response to this Call for Evidence?

Further Information:
www.economy-ni.gov.uk
Email: energystrategy@economy-ni.gov.uk

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Proposed approach to enable the strategic consideration of Notices of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance by Members
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance & Compliance Manager; Christine Robinson, Strategic Policy & Partnership Manager;

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☑

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☑ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is: • to seek approval for a proposed approach to monitoring and tracking of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance by Members
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	It is recommended that Members: • Approve the proposed approach to enable the strategic consideration of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance by Members within the Council's corporate planning and policy frameworks.

	• Consider whether they would like to amend Standing Order 13 so that that Notices of Motion which fall within the remit of a Committee are automatically referred to the relevant committee for consideration without appearing on the Council agenda
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Background Members will be aware that under Standing Order 13(l) (set out in full in Appendix 1) no Notice of Motion seeking to commit the Council to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process will be considered but shall instead stand referred to the appropriate Committee for consideration and report.
3.2	Since 2016, the Council has agreed over 250 Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance by Members, of which around 95 are yet to be considered in terms of their resource implications, with an average of 12 being agreed at Council each month.
3.3	The Council has a four-year Corporate Plan with agreed Committee Plans and budgets set during the Revenue Estimates process in the February before the new financial year. . A process is needed to ensure that issues being raised by Members can be fully considered in order to incorporate them into the Council's corporate planning and policy process and subsequently lead to implementation and realisation of the members / committee ambition.
3.4	This report proposes a process, in line with the Standing Orders, to ensure that the motion / issues raised in advance are considered in full by the appropriate Committee and advice is provided to Members by officers on the timing, options and costs associated with implementation.
3.5	This approach is recommended in respect of meeting our legal and financial responsibilities in ensuring a balanced budget. A corporate planning process is fundamental to achieving a balanced budget and achieving those objectives which the Council has corporately and democratically endorsed as priorities for the district and the organisation.
3.6	**Incorporating Notice of Motions into the corporate planning process** At present, any notices of motion that are agreed in year and have resource implications can only be implemented where an identified underspend exists or at a direct opportunity cost to staff-time allocated against an existing corporate workstream. This also impacts on staff who may be diverted from other planned work being undertaken.

	Members will be aware that a six monthly progress update of the corporate plan will be brought to SP&R committee – and once a year this will result in the development of a one-year update of the corporate plan. Alongside this, both the CG&R and P&C Committees complete committee planning workshops. This in turn enables resources to be realigned and highlight the potential areas for growth in the revenue estimating process. Recognising the strategic importance of a range of issues raised through notices of motion, it is proposed that notices of motions will be considered as part of this annual corporate and committee planning process. Officers from the Strategic Hub and across the policy network will work to ensure that key themes or issues are 'pulled through' into this discussion; considered fully in terms of resource requirements; and subsequently reflected in the council's planning and delivery processes.
3.7	**Process of Managing Motions / Issues** It is proposed that a three-stage process (see Appendix 2) is introduced for the consideration of notices/issues: • **Stage 1:** Report taken to refer Notice of Motion to Committee or the issue is raised by member in advance at Committee as per the usual process (Notices of Motion will have a revised cover report outlining that the motion will follow this new process (and indicating if it will commit Council to additional expenditure (as outlined in paragraph 3.1 above). If the committee rejects the motion or issue, then no further action will be taken. If the Committee request a further report, the notice of motion or issue will be assigned to a lead department. • **Stage 2: Initial Scoping Report** will subsequently be brought to relevant committee, ideally within three months, which will detail the range of options for initial consideration of the motion, for example it could reference (depending on the nature of the motion / issue): o Immediate implementation o Set out initial policy or best practice considerations o Add into an existing programme of work as already agreed in the Corporate Plan and Committee Plans

	○ Request approval and funding to carry out a scoping exercise to determine the potential strategic, financial, legal or resource implications of the issue ○ Recommendations on the timing of Stage 3 Report to committee • **Stage 3: Options Report** depending on the outcome of Stage 2, this stage would involve the development of more detailed policy considerations - where the motion / issue would be considered in terms of its priority, options for implementation, legal and resource implications, strategic fit, monetary and non-monetary benefits, sources of funding, longer term financial planning etc. The recommendation of this stage would be presented to the relevant committee. If the above approach is adopted, guidance will be issued to officers to ensure that the process is consistently applied and that reports are to a high standard. This will also provide members with the assurance that all motions/issues are fully considered.
3.8	**Existing Notices / Issues** It is proposed that the current notices/issues database is fully reviewed in light in the above. Officers are currently working on this and a progress update on Notices of Motion will be brought to Committee in March or April.
3.9	**Reporting to Members** Following the review of current notices of motion/issues a quarterly progress report on notices/issues will be brought to each Committee. SP&R will receive an update on all Notices of Motion.
3.10	**Feedback from Party Group Briefings** Members should be assured that this process will not prevent flexibility in the Council being able to deal with urgent matters. The Standing Orders have provision for dealing with matters of urgency.
3.11	**Standing Orders** Members may wish to consider if they would like to amend Standing Order 13: Notices of Motion so that Notices of Motion which fall within the remit of a Committee are automatically referred to the relevant committee for consideration without appearing on the Council agenda. At present around half of the notices of motion are referred to committee.

3.12	Financial & Resource Implications There are potentially significant resource implications for departments assigned to carry out the scoping of potential strategic, financial or resources implications of individual notices/issues.
3.13	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment The equality, good relations and rural needs implications of each notice/issue would need to be assessed.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Standing Order 13 (l) Appendix 2 – Overview of proposed process

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Appendix 1 – Standing Order 13(l)

No notice of motion seeking to commit the Council to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process will be considered but shall instead stand referred to the appropriate Committee for consideration and report. This standing order will not apply with the Lord Mayor, in consultation with the Chief Executive, rules that the matter is one of emergency or is otherwise of such urgency that it would be impracticable or prejudicial to the Council's interests to require compliance. In this case, a report outlining specific details of the purpose of such expenditure and the budget from which the expenditure would be drawn from shall be put before Members.

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Stage 1

erring motion to Committee

Usually f

Member

atic Services adds to database / quarterly progress report brought to cor

ediately actioned
atic Services eg
e a letter

2. Motion or issue needs to be considered strategi
potential strategic, policy or resource impl

Strategic Hub/Policy Network
(lead Department identified)

Stage 2
Initial Scoping Report to include:

- whether the motion/issue can be incorporated i
programme of work as already agreed in the Cor
Committee Plans
- requesting approval and funding for the motion/iss
Stage 3 ie carrying out a detailed scoping exercise t
potential strategic, financial, legal or resource implic
and an indication of how long this scoping exerc

Stage 3
Options Report
Options report brought to committee to consider for
committee plan (during new six-monthly review p
prioritisation/options for financing

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	20th March, 2020
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Michelle Bagnall, Programme Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The Council's Capital programme is a rolling programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council facilities. This report provides an update on requested movements on the Capital Programme.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is requested to –

	• *Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East* **–** agree to add as a Stage 1 Emerging project on to the Capital Programme to options to be developed with the Education Authority.
3.0	**Main report** **Proposed Movements – Capital Programme**
3.1	Members have previously agreed that **all** capital projects must go through a **3 Stage process** where decisions on which projects progress are taken by SP&R. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. **Members are asked to agree to the following movement on the Capital Programme**

Project	Overview	Stage
Shared Youth & Community facility	Proposed development of a new shared youth and community facility in Inner East in partnership with the Education Authority.	Add as an Emerging Stage 1 project

3.2	Members are asked to note that the Education Authority (EA) is currently exploring the potential to develop a new youth facility in inner East and are developing up a business case with a number of options in terms of potential sites. One of the options that is being explored is the site of the current Connswater Community Centre which is emerging as the preferred option given its location and size of site. The existing community centre is independently managed but is a Council asset and is an ageing building which is not in great condition. The EA are therefore keen to explore the potential for a shared youth and community facility in partnership with the Council and community stakeholders. Members are therefore asked to agree that this is added as a Stage 1- Emerging project onto the Capital Programme in order to allow officers to work jointly with the EA to develop options. Members are asked to note that this does not constitute an investment decision and that further detail will be brought back to Committee in due course in line with the agreed three stage approvals process.
3.3	**<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>** *Financial –-* Resources – Officer time as required.
3.4	**<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u>** All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**i)** Beechvale Farm – Options **ii)** Fullerton Park Pavilion – Licence Agreement to Dunmurry Community Association **iii)** Half Moon Lake – Acquisition of land from Northern Ireland Housing Executive at Gweedore Crescent, Suffolk Court **iv)** Gloucester Street offices - Licence Agreement
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison & Celine Dunlop, Estates Team Leaders

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to asset related disposal, acquisition and Estates matters.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Members are asked to - **i. Beechvale Farm – Options**

	– Agree Option 2 (Progress disposal of the c110acres which is considered as prime agricultural land and the c3acres of the previous farmhouse dwelling and surrounding land and retain the remaining c24acres) in relation to Beechvale Farm as this provides the best opportunity to maximise use of the land **ii. Fullerton Park Pavilion – Licence Agreement to Dunmurry Community Association** - approve the renewal of the existing Licence Agreement for a period of 3 years from 31st September 2018 **iii. Half Moon Lake – Acquisition of land from Northern Ireland Housing Executive -** approve the acquisition of 0.168 acres of land from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at Gweedore Crescent adjacent to the Council owned Half Moon Lake site. **iv. Gloucester Street office - Licence Agreement -** approve a Licence Agreement to Heron Bros to occupy the car park at Gloucester Street for a period of one year from 1st April 2020 to allow them to use the site as a compound for the construction of new office accommodation nearby on behalf of a private developer.
3.0	**Main report**
	Beechvale Farm – Options
3.1	**<u>Key Issues</u>** On 21 June 2019 the SP&R Committee agreed to dispose of Beechvale Farm and to appoint agents to market the site. (A Site Map showing the site boundaries outlined in red is attached in Appendix 1). On 21 February 2020 the SP&R Committee agreed to defer the actioning or implementing the decision of 21 June 2019 to enable a further report to be submitted on other future options for the site taking into consideration the motion agreed earlier in the meeting on Market Gardens and Urban Farming.
3.2	Beechvale Farm is a substantial 137acre site on the outskirts of Belfast and outside of the Council boundary. The majority of the site is agricultural land along with a former farmhouse and associated outbuildings, former nursey land and greenhouses and a site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI).
3.3	Following the Committee decision of June 2019 and a competitive tender process, O'Connor Kennedy Turtle (OKT) were appointed as selling agents on 30 October 2019. Whilst OKT has compiled initial information, the marketing of the property has not commenced. A Planning Appraisal Report was also carried out on behalf of the Council in December 2019. This report identified that there are a range of potential development options (subject to satisfying the relevant planning policy requirements) at the site in addition to the agricultural use of fields. The Council's intention was that the Beechvale Farm site would be sold in a number of lots

rather than as an overall lot to in order to maximise interest from the market encompassing the areas as laid out below -

Agricultural land (c110acres - marked blue on the map at Appendix 1) – the selling agent and the planning consultant consider this to be prime agricultural land suitable for a variety of agricultural use (primarily arable farming to include the growing of Comber potatoes and winter wheat). It is expected that there would be a good level of market interest in the agricultural land. This is likely to be offered in a number of lots.

- *Former farmhouse, outbuildings and surrounding land (c3acres - marked pink on the map at Appendix 1)* - The selling agent and the planning consultant consider that there is a good opportunity to refurbish or redevelop the disused farmhouse and surrounding outbuildings including a disused bungalow and disused mill building to allow for a small number of replacement dwellings. It is expected that there would be a good level of market interest in this.
- *Former nursery land including glasshouses and nursery offices/stores (c13acres - marked yellow on the map at Appendix 1)* - The Planning Appraisal report has identified that there the potential uses in this area could include horticulture, tourism, renewable energy and outdoor recreation uses. These buildings have been vacant for c20 years and it is not known if it is physically or financially feasible to bring the these back into use given their current condition and given this it is considered that there will be less market interest in this land.
- *Gransha Fen (c11acres - marked green on the map at Appendix 1)* – Gransha Fern is designated as a Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI). It comprises fen scrubland and mature broad woodland and adjoins the former nursery lands above. The Planning Appraisal report advises that the area could potentially be used for uses compatible with the SLNCI such as horticulture, leisure and outdoor recreation uses. Given the SLNCI designation, there is likely to be very limited market interest in this area of land.

3.4 Given the different current and potential future uses for the site there a number of options that Members may wish to consider –

OPTION	SUMMARY
Option 1 - Progress with the disposal of the entire site	**+ will secure a capital receipt for the Council and removes the ongoing management and maintenance implications** **- limits the opportunity for the Council to use the site to help deliver on its wider environmental ambitions**
Option 2 – Progress disposal of the c110acres which is considered as	**+ will secure a capital receipt for the Council**

prime agricultural land and the c3acres of the previous farmhouse dwelling and surrounding land and retain the remaining c24acres	**+ allows an opportunity for the Council to use the remaining sites for uses which will help deliver on its wider environmental buildings** **- will require some ongoing management and maintenance implications however these will be minimised as it is only part of the site**
Option 3 – Retain all 137acres	**- limits the opportunity for the Council to use the site to help deliver on its wider environmental ambitions** **- does not secure a capital receipt and will require ongoing management and maintenance by the Council**

3.5 Officers would consider that Option 2 provides the best opportunity for the Council and would recommend that this option is agreed by Members. This will allow for the disposal of the agricultural lands and the former farmhouse buildings which will realise a capital receipt for the Council. The combined remaining acreage of c24acres will allow the opportunity to look at a range of options which will help the Council deliver on its environmental ambitions, subject to any planning approvals required with further details on this to be brought back to Committee in due course. If this is agreed then the Council will look at what innovative uses could be available for this land (e.g. renewable energy etc.)

3.6 If Option 2 is agreed the Estates Unit will continue to progress the marketing with the appointed selling agents. Following marketing and receipt of offers, a report brought back to the Committee for approval of any proposed disposals. Terms of the proposed sales are to be agreed by the Estates Unit and Legal Services.

3.7 **Financial and Resources Implications**

If Option 2 is agreed by Members the sale of the c110acres of agricultural land and c3acres of the former farmhouse and outbuildings at Beechvale Farm would provide a capital receipt. The retention of the remaining acres of land would provide a potential site for other uses to help deliver on the Council's environmental ambitions.

Equality and Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

ii. Half Moon Lake – Acquisition of land from Northern Ireland Housing Executive at Gweedore Crescent, Suffolk Court

3.8 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) recently declared 0.168 acres of land surplus to requirements at Gweedore Crescent, Belfast. NIHE subsequently instructed LPS to undertake a D1 trawl of public sector organisations and seek initial expressions of interest in acquiring the site. The site is outlined red on the map attached at Appendix 2 along with the existing Council owned Half Moon Lake site shaded green. The site consists of mature woodland and on the ground appears to be a continuation of the Half Moon Lake site with no boundary features separating the two lands. The remainder of the boundary has a secure

palisade fence which ties in with the Half Moon Lake boundary fencing. As the land is contiguous with the Half Moon Lake site the C&NS Department has expressed an interest in acquiring the land to ensure the maximum amount of open green space is made available to the local community. The Department would plan to utilise the land as part of their ongoing education and outreach programme delivering workshops and events on the land focusing on biodiversity, environmental and health outcomes for the local community.

3.9 The Estates Management Unit responded on behalf of the City and Neighbourhood Services (CN&S) Department and expressed an interest in acquiring the site subject to the approval of SP&R. NIHE have now offered to dispose of the site to the Council, subject to their own approval process, on the basis of a 999 year lease at a nominal rent to include a covenant restricting the use to public amenity space only.

Fullerton Park Pavilion – Licence Agreement to Dunmurry Community Association

3.10 **Key Issues**

Fullerton Park transferred to the Council in April 2015 under Local Government Reform. Dunmurry Community Association currently have a Licence Agreement with the Council in respect of a portion of the Pavilion located within the Park (location map at Appendix 3). Officers have now agreed that the existing Licence Agreement should be renewed for a period of 3 years from 30th September 2018 and Members are asked to approve the renewal of the licence agreement.

3.11 **Financial and Resources Implications**

Staff resources from the Estates Unit and Legal Services will finalise the conveyance. No capital amount is being sought for the lease, with the intention that a nominal rent (if requested) will be reserved to reflect a restriction in use to public amenity space only.

Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

Gloucester Street office - Licence Agreement

3.12 At its meeting on 25th October 2019 SP&R were asked to note the update on the disposal and marketing process in respect of a site comprising former Council offices at Gloucester Street, with further updates to be brought back to Committee as appropriate in relation to the future development or disposal of the site. The Gloucester Street Offices have since been included in the Strategic Sites Assessment (SSA) which is currently assessing some Council owned assets and adjacent public sector land to consider locations which would maximise the contribution to the Council's strategic objectives set out in the Belfast Agenda and other strategic documents. The offices and car park at Gloucester Street remain vacant at this time.

	The Council has been approached by Heron Bros who are the main Contractors of new office accommodation adjacent to our site which is on behalf of a private developer. Heron Bros have requested to use the car parking at Gloucester Street as their main compound for the period of construction of this new office accommodation. The car park is shaded blue on the map in Appendix 1.
3.13	Heron Bros have initially sought a Licence Agreement for a period of one year and then on a month to month basis thereafter. Heron Bros have been made aware that the site may be released for development by Council within this time frame and are happy to take on a licence agreement on the understanding that the Council can terminate at any time should we require possession. Detailed terms of the Agreement to be agreed by the Estates Manager and Legal Services.
3.14	**Financial and Resources Implications** Heron Bros to pay the Council a Licence fee to be agreed by the Estates Manager and cover all reasonable Legal Fees associated with the Agreement.
3.15	**Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** None associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Map of Beechvale Farm **Appendix 2** – Map showing site at Gweedore Crescent outlined red and Council owned Half Moon Lake shaded green. **Appendix 3** – Map showing the Fullerton Park Pavilion outlined in red. **Appendix 4** - Map showing Gloucester Street Offices outlined in red

Appendix '1'

N

GRANSHA

= Site Boundary
= Former Plant Nursery
= Site of Local Nature Conservation Interest
= Former Farmhouse and Outbuildings
= Agricultural Land

Scale 1:4000

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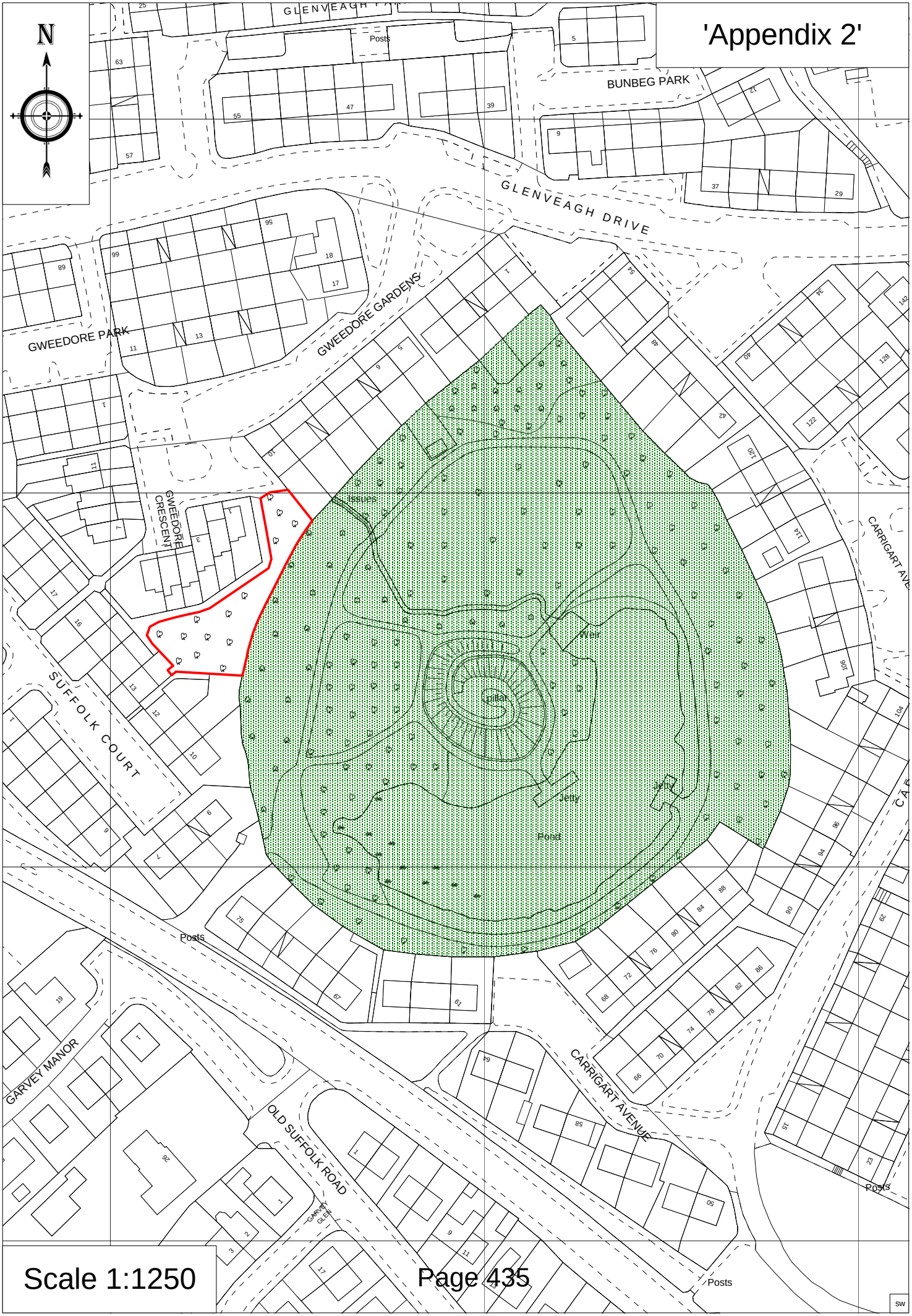
'Appendix 2'
N
GLENVEAGH
BUNBEG PARK
GLENVEAGH DRIVE
GWEEDORE PARK
GWEEDORE GARDENS
GWEEDORE CRESCENT
SUFFOLK COURT
CARRIGART AVENUE
GARVEY MANOR
OLD SUFFOLK ROAD
Posts
Scale 1:1250
Page 435

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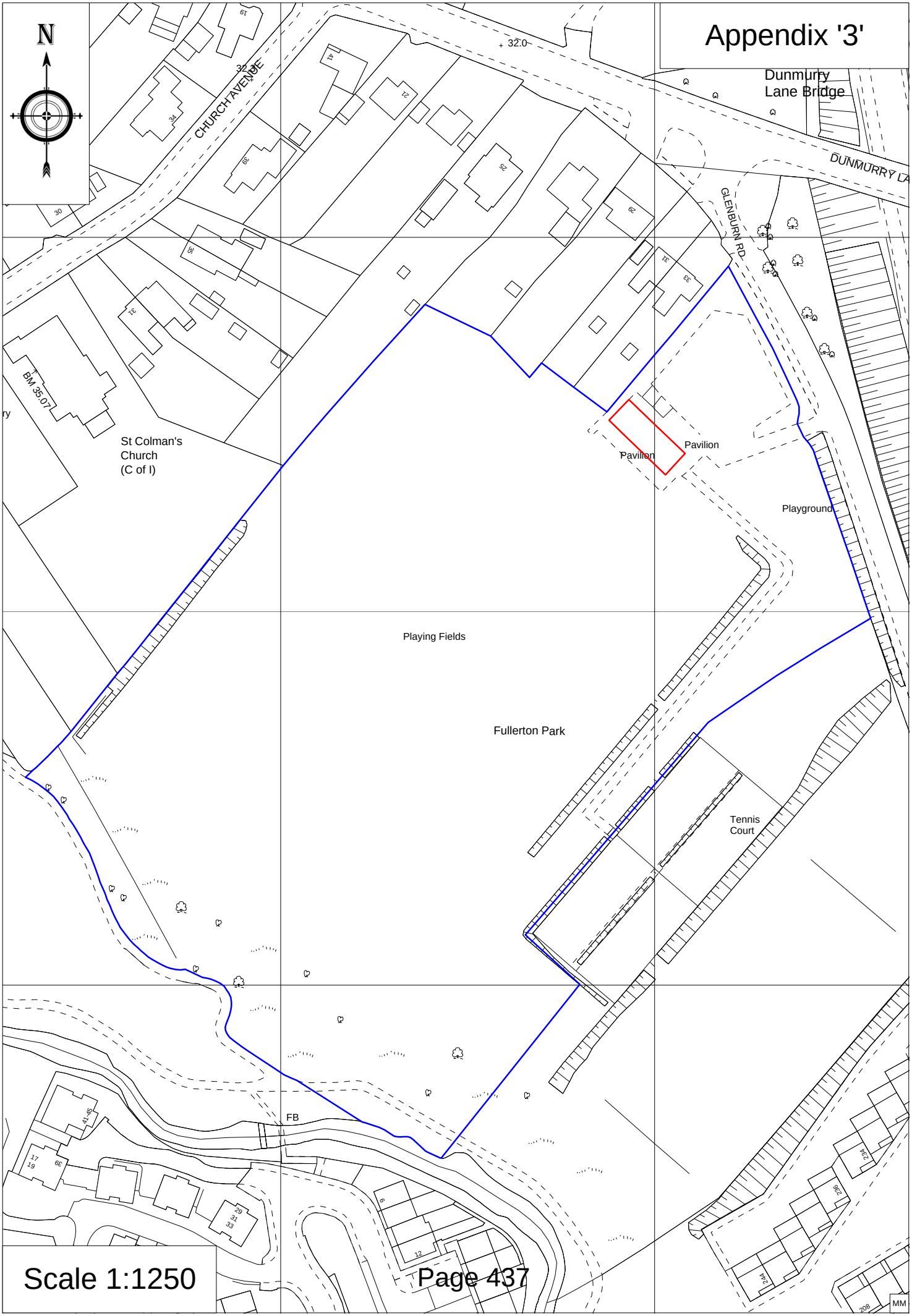
Appendix '3'
N
CHURCH AVENUE
32.0
Dunmurry
Lane Bridge
DUNMURRY LA
GLENBURN RD
BM 35.07
St Colman's
Church
(C of I)
Pavilion
Pavilion
Playground
Playing Fields
Fullerton Park
Tennis
Court
FB
Scale 1:1250

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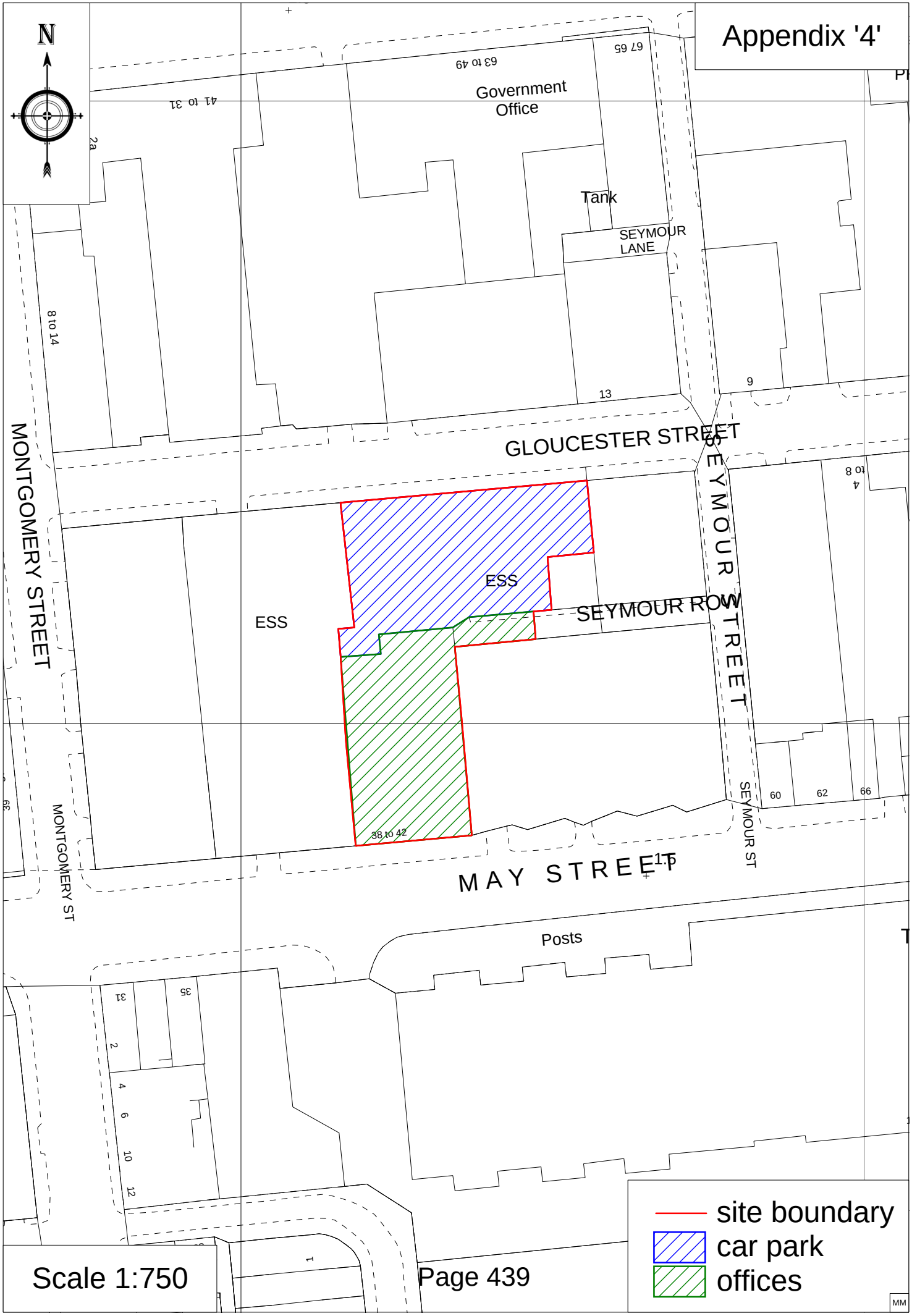
Appendix '4'
N
Government Office
Tank
SEYMOUR LANE
GLOUCESTER STREET
MONTGOMERY STREET
SEYMOUR STREET
SEYMOUR ROW
MAY STREET
MONTGOMERY ST
SEYMOUR ST
ESS
ESS
38 to 42
Posts
site boundary
car park
offices
Scale 1:750
Page 439
MM

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Sometime in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: • seek approval from members for tenders and STAs over £30,000
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 **(Table 1)**. • Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 **(Table 2).** • Approve the switch to purchase of green electricity under the new electricity contract.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Publically Advertised Tenders Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit

	of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council. Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
3.2	<u>Single Tender Actions (STAs)</u> Clear Channel are the sole provider of bus stop advertising in Northern Ireland. Global Protect are the sole provider of adverting on Metro Bus's in Northern Ireland. The advertising is part of the communication plan to provide information to Belfast and Northern Ireland citizens on council initiatives
3.3	<u>Green Electricity</u> The new electricity contract will commence on 31st March 2020 and the council has explored the option to switch to purchasing green electricity under the contract. This will help the council support its commitments to tackling climate change and achieving its environmental sustainability aims with the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan. The additional cost of switching to green electricity is circa £20k per annum (1.3% of £1.5m spend p.a) but can be subject to change (up or down) depending on market prices and site usage.
3.4	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 Table 1 Publically Advertised Tenders Table 2 Single Tender Actions (STA)

Table 1 – Publically Advertised Tenders

Title of Tender	Senior Responsible Officer	Proposed Contract Duration
T2032 Peace IV Residentials	Nigel Grimshaw	Until June 2022

Table 2 - Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Action)

Title of tender	Supplier	Total Value
Advertising at Bus Stops	Clear Channel	£120,000
Advertising on Metro Bus	Global Protect	£140,000

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Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 2020/21
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Head of Finance

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the supporting Prudential and Treasury Codes produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), require the council to consider the affordability and sustainability of capital expenditure decisions through the reporting of prudential and treasury management indicators.
1.2	The Prudential Code requires the Council to produce a Capital Strategy for 2020/21. This report provides information for Members on the Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators for Belfast City Council for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23, and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21.

2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • note the contents of this report and the prudential and treasury management indicators included within the appendices to the report. And agree: • The Authorised Borrowing Limit for the Council of £167m for 2020/21 • The Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21, which has been included as Appendix B to this report.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 requires the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. In doing so, the Council is required to agree a minimum revenue provision policy annually and set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which are to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
3.2	At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 9 December 2011, Members approved the Council's Treasury Management Policy which is based on the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Treasury Management Policy requires that a Treasury Management Strategy be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on an annual basis and that it is supported by a mid-year and year end treasury management reports.
3.3	The Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators, is included as Appendix A, while the treasury management strategy and treasury management indicators have been included as Appendix B.
3.4	The comparison of "Gross Borrowing" to "Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is the main indicator of prudence when considering the proposed capital investment plans of the Council. Estimated gross borrowing should not exceed the CFR for the current year plus two years. The Council's estimated gross borrowing position, illustrated in Table 6, Appendix A, is comfortably within the CFR in the medium term. The Director of Finance and Resources therefore considers the estimated levels of gross borrowing as being prudent.

3.5	Table 9 (Appendix A) shows the estimated financing costs for capital expenditure as a percentage of the estimated net revenue stream for the Council, based on the medium financial plan. These illustrate that in the medium term, capital financing costs will represent 10.88% of the Council's net running costs. On this basis the Director of Finance and Resources is satisfied that the level of capital expenditure is affordable.
3.6	The Finance Act requires the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, relating to gross debt. The Prudential Code defines the affordable limit as the "Authorised Borrowing Limit" and gross borrowing must not exceed this limit. Table 7 (Appendix A) sets out the recommended "Authorised Borrowing Limit" for the Council as being £167m for 2020/21.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.7	As detailed in the report
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural</u>
3.8	None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	• Appendix A – Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 • Appendix B – Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

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Capital Strategy Report 2020/21

1. Introduction

This capital strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

2. Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, which will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets. The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, for example assets costing below £25k are not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year.

In 2020/21, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £47m as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £thousands

	2019/20 forecast	**2020/21 budget**	**2021/22 budget**	**2022/23 budget**
General Fund services	40,244	46,788	30,772	16,591

The main General Fund capital projects include Andersonstown Leisure Centre £11.4m, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre £8.2m, Brook Leisure Centre £7.9m.

Governance – The Council's Capital Programme is agreed on a yearly basis by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in its role as the Council's investment decision maker. All capital projects must go through a 3-stage approval process and decisions on which projects are added to the Capital Programme and which projects progress are also taken by SP&R Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and allows Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving capital projects. The Physical Programmes Department and Financial Services calculate the financing cost of all proposals, including emerging proposals. As part of the final investment decision it must be confirmed that any project is within the affordability limits of the Council.

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing and leasing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing in £thousands

	2019/20 forecast	2020/21 budget	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget
External sources	0	0	0	0
Own resources	8,213	9,709	7,616	6,185
Debt	32,030	37,079	23,157	10,406
TOTAL	**40,243**	**46,788**	**30,773**	**16,591**

Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP and use of capital receipts are as follows:

Table 3: Repayment of debt finance in £thousands (MRP)

	2019/20 forecast	2020/21 budget	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget
Own resources	7,547	9,479	11,183	11,844

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to repay debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £27.6m during 2020/21. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £thousands

	31.3.2020 forecast	31.3.2021 budget	31.3.2022 budget	31.3.2023 budget
General Fund services	139,484	167,084	179,058	177,621

Asset Management – The Council is committed to ensuring that all Capital projects contribute to the strategic direction of the city and continue to be of long term use. The Council is currently in the process of looking at its Asset Management Strategy as well as procuring a new Asset Management System to support the strategic objectives of better financial management, information management, planning and performance and asset management

Asset disposals: When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. The Council plans to receive £0.8m of capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts in £thousands

	2019/20 forecast	2020/21 budget	2021/22 budget	2022/23 budget
Asset sales	£822	£7,830	£7,275	£4,300
Loans repaid	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**£822**	**£7,830**	**£7,275**	**£4,300**

3. Treasury Management

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

The Council currently has £72.7m borrowing and due to legacy loans taken at higher rates in the past and transfers of debt under Local Government, the average interest rate of these loans is 6.7%. By March 2022 the majority of the higher rate legacy loans will have been repaid. The council also has £19m treasury investments at an average rate of 0.68%.

Borrowing strategy: The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 1.1%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently 2.4 to 3.04%).

Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, leases and transfers from local government reorganisation are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £thousands

	31.3.2020 forecast	31.3.2021 budget	31.3.2022 budget	31.3.2023 budget
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	123,484	151,084	163,058	161,621
Capital Financing Requirement	139,484	167,084	179,058	177,621

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from table 6, the Council

Affordable borrowing limit: The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower "operational boundary" is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 7: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £thousands

	2020/21 limit	**2021/22 limit**	**2022/23 limit**
Authorised limit – borrowing	167,084	179,058	177,621
Authorised limit – PFI and leases	0	0	0
Authorised limit – total external debt	167,084	179,058	177,621
Operational boundary – borrowing	151,084	163,058	161,621
Operational boundary – PFI and leases	0	0	0
Operational boundary – total external debt	151,084	163,058	161,621

Investment strategy: Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Table 8: Treasury management investments in £thousands

	31.3.2020 forecast	**31.3.2021 budget**	**31.3.2022 budget**	**31.3.2023 budget**
Near-term investments	17,500	16,000	16,000	16,000
Longer-term investments	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**17,500**	**16,000**	**16,000**	**16,000**

Governance: Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Director of Finance and staff, who

must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Tri-annual reports on treasury management activity are presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The SP&R committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

4. Liabilities

In addition to debt of £72.7m detailed above, the Council is making payments to cover its pension fund liability. It has also set aside £4.7m to cover risks of insurance claims and Landfill Closure. The Council is also at risk of having to pay for its share of the ARC 21 Joint Committee contingent liability but has not put aside any money.

Governance: Decisions on incurring new discretional liabilities are taken by departmental Chief Officers in consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources. The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored by central finance and reported quarterly to the Director of Finance and Resources. New liabilities exceeding £1m are reported to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval/notification as appropriate.

5. Revenue Budget Implications

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from the District Rate and general government grants.

Table 9: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	2019/20 forecast	**2020/21 budget**	**2021/22 budget**	**2022/23 budget**
Financing costs (£'000)	16,968	18,395	18,005	17,759
Proportion of net revenue stream	10.4%	11.27%	11.03%	10.88%

Sustainability: Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years may extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Director of Finance and Resources is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable due to the processes in place to scrutinise any plans coming forward and are designed to highlight not only the ongoing financing costs but also the recurring running costs to ensure they remain within the affordability limits identified and agreed by the Council.

6. Knowledge and Skills

The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment

decisions. For example, the Director of Finance and Resources is a qualified accountant with over 30 years' experience. The Council pays for junior staff to study towards relevant professional qualifications including CIPFA, ACT (treasury), ACCA, etc.

Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

1. Introduction

Belfast City Council's Treasury Management Policy is based on the Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice. The policy requires the Director of Finance and Resources to submit an annual Treasury management Strategy to the Council.

This strategy covers the following issues in respect of 2020/21:

- Outlook for interest rates
- Capital Financing Plans
- Establishing the Borrowing Requirement
- Borrowing strategy
- Debt rescheduling
- Investments
- Treasury Management Indicators

2. Outlook for Interest Rates

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) retained the Bank Rate at 0.75% for the majority of 2019/20. However, with the uncertainty arising from the economic impact of coronavirus, which has rapidly become the major source of economic uncertainty arising from disrupted global supply, falling demand and the effects of containment measures by governments and households, the MPC have delivered an emergency interest rate cut to reduce the Bank Rate to 0.25%.

3. Capital Financing Plans

It is essential that the level of borrowing is considered within the context of the Council's capital expenditure and plans, as is required by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

Table 1 below shows how the reduced capital expenditure and financing plans will impact on the net cash requirement of the Council. It should also be noted that movement to and from reserves will impact on the cash requirement (i.e. if there are net transfers from reserves, this will create an additional need for cash).

Table 1
Net Cash Requirement

	2020/21 £'000	**2021/22 £'000**	**2022/23 £'000**
Capital Expenditure	46,788	30,772	16,591
Financed from "other" sources (e.g. grants, contributions, revenue, capital receipts etc)	9,709	7,616	6,185
Remainder to be "borrowed"	37,079	23,156	10,406
Notional Repayment of Principal (MRP)	9,479	11,183	11,844
Increase / (decrease) in CFR	**27,600**	**11,973**	**(1,438)**
Transfers (to) / from reserves	3,793	3,793	3,270

Net Cash Requirement	**31,393**	**15,766**	**1,832**

The way in which this total funding requirement of £94m for 2020/21-2022/23 is met, is a key consideration of the treasury management strategy. This requirement will increase the net borrowing position of the Council and consideration needs to be given to whether this is met by increasing borrowing, or reducing investment balances.

4. Establishing the Borrowing Requirement

The starting point for ascertaining the appropriate level of borrowing is the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is derived from the Balance Sheet and represents the Council's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose, as it takes account of all capital expenditure incurred which is resourced from borrowing.

However, in addition to the debt position created by historic capital expenditure met from borrowing, the Council also has significant values of reserves, provisions and balances supported by cash, which reduce the net indebtedness of the Council. These positive cash flows allow the Council to consider utilising this cash to support capital expenditure in lieu of external borrowing.

If external borrowing is higher than the CFR, this indicates borrowing in advance of immediate need (permitted within the Prudential Code) and borrowing below CFR would indicate internal borrowing (i.e. the level of cash used in lieu of external borrowing)

The relatively high levels of reserves and balances on the Council's balance sheet have therefore enabled the Council to benefit from not having to borrow externally to the full extent of the underlying need. However, it cannot be assumed that this position can continue into perpetuity and needs to be given active consideration.

In order to create a framework around the extent to which the council's reserves and balances can continue to be used, the Director of Finance and Resources is recommending an internal limit to be placed on the level of internal borrowing, based on CIPFA Treasury management Code of Practice that can be used before having to borrow externally. This is known as the Allowable Internal Borrowing limit. This limit has regard to the components of reserves and balances and the estimated longevity of these balances. The Director of Finance and Resources has assessed that of the £59m that existed on the balance sheet at 31st March 2019, at least £16m will remain for the foreseeable future and that this amount may therefore be used in lieu of external borrowing. From the internal borrowing, the proposed amount of external borrowing to be held, known as the Liability Benchmark can be determined.

Table 2
External Borrowing Requirement

	2020/21 £'000	**2021/22 £'000**	**2022/23 £'000**
Projected closing CFR	167,084	179,058	177,621
Internal Borrowing	16,000	16,000	16,000
Liability Benchmark	151,084	163,058	161,621
Projected closing borrowing	113,120	143,410	158,291
Borrowing maturing in year	(10,363)	(7,673)	(4,767)
Additional Borrowing Required	**37,964**	**19,648**	**3,330**

(Increase) / Decrease in Investment Balances	3,792	3,792	3,269

It should be noted that, in the event of slippage within the capital programme, the CFR may not increase as much as has been forecast and therefore if the external borrowing had been undertaken as planned, internal borrowing would be lower than the limit specified.

5. Borrowing Strategy

In terms of meeting the external borrowing requirement identified above, one of the most important considerations is the timing, in terms of the potential to save significant interest costs and it is key that this position is proactively managed using all information available to inform decisions. It is essential therefore that the considerations of timing of borrowing form a key element of the borrowing strategy.

It is of course not possible for all borrowing to be undertaken at the lowest rates of interest available, as unforeseen events can significantly alter the path of rates. It is therefore essential that the risks to adverse movements are fully understood and actively managed.

One of the key borrowing objectives is to achieve certainty around interest costs, and there is therefore little appetite to undertake variable rate borrowing. It is unlikely that long term interest rates will fall over the medium term and therefore to reduce the risk of rising interest rates, officers will seek to carry out the external borrowing in the financial year to which the expenditure relates.

It is recognised that whilst the capital expenditure and financing plans will be a driver of borrowing costs, the management of risk is the prime objective of the borrowing strategy and reduction of interest rate risk and refinancing risk within the portfolio is essential.

Therefore, the Council remains prepared to undertake the potential borrowing ahead of immediate need (up to three years in advance), if it results in a reduction of interest rate risk within the portfolio. The Council recognises that this may temporarily increase investment balances, and increase net interest costs in the short term, and that these factors will form part of the decision making process when the strategy is executed. It would be necessary to demonstrate value for money when making a decision in respect of borrowing in advance of need, therefore it will only be undertaken if there is a strong view that rates may rise.

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Government Loans Fund but the government increased its rates by 1% in October 2019. The Council may look to borrow any long-term loans from other sources such as banks, pensions and local authorities and may utilise money market brokers to facilitate borrowing from other local authorities for short to medium term borrowing.

6. Debt Rescheduling

The prime objective of any restructuring is to reduce risk in the portfolio, whether that be interest rate or refinancing risk. Any savings that may be created as a result will be considered in the context of the overall risk profile.

Debt restructuring opportunities will be kept under constant review, however the penalties of premature redemption of loans at higher rates that prevailing interest

rates mean that there may be significant costs associated with this, which will reduce the attractiveness of opportunities.

7. Investments

Annual Investment Strategy

The Council has regard to the Guidance for Local Government Investments for District Councils in Northern Ireland (the Guidance) as cited under Section 25(1) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act) when setting the Investment Strategy. The Department recommends that each local authority produce and publish an Annual Investment Strategy, approved by the Council and revised in year as required. This sets out the Council's policies for managing investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. This investment strategy states which instruments the Council may use for investment purposes, making a distinction between specified and non-specified investments. This strategy also determines limits in respect of their overall levels.

The prime objective of the Council's investment strategy is to ensure prudent investment of surplus funds. The Council's investment priorities are the security of capital, liquidity of investments and, within those objectives, to secure optimum performance.

All investments will be made in accordance with the Council's investment policies and prevailing legislation and regulations.

7.1 Specified Investments

An investment is a ***specified investment*** if:

- The investment is denominated in Sterling and all payments or repayments are payable only in Sterling,
- The investment is not a long term investment (i.e. due to be repaid within 12 months of the date in which it was made or one which the Council may require to be repaid within that period),
- The making of the investment is not defined as capital expenditure by virtue of regulation 12 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2011; and
- The investment is made with a body which has been awarded a high credit rating, or is made with one of the following:

  a) The United Kingdom Government;
  b) A District Council; or
  c) A Local Authority in England and Wales, or a similar body in Scotland;

The following categories of investments may be used under the definition of specified investments:

- Short term cash deposits
- Call accounts
- Certificates of Deposit (with maturity dates < 1 year)
- UK Government Gilts
- Treasury Bills
- Money Market Funds

The Council considers a high credit rating for money market funds to be those with a long term Fitch Rating of AAA (or the equivalent highest rating from Standard and Poors or Moodys).

The Council will have regard to all 3 rating agencies and considers a high credit rating for other investments to be as follows:

Fitch Credit Rating	**Minimum level**
Short Term Rating	F1
Long Term Rating	A

Fitch defines these ratings as follows:

A: High credit quality.
'A' ratings denote expectations of low default risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to adverse business or economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.

F1: Highest short-term credit quality.
Indicates the strongest intrinsic capacity for timely payment of financial commitments

7.2 Non-specified Investments

In respect of ***non-specified investments***. The following instruments have been identified by the Council.

Category of Non-specified investment
Sterling denominated Foreign Government Securities
Sterling medium term Deposits or Certificates of Deposit
Floating rate Certificates of Deposit
Highly rated Corporate Bonds (including investments in a Corporate Bond Fund)
Sterling Reserve Funds
Index-linked structured deposits
Collateralised deposits
Foreign Currency denominated investments
Deposits with non-rated Building Societies

The Council do not intend on making any investments in the 2020/21 year which meet the definition of non-specified investments and therefore there is no limit set on this within the Investment Strategy.

The CIPFA Code of Practice recommends that the Investment Strategy sets out the maximum period over which investments will be made.

The Director of Finance and Resources recommends that a maximum duration of 2 years should be set, although it is only expected that investments over 12 months will be made in exceptional circumstances.

Regulation 12(1) (d) of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that some categories of investment are defined as Capital Expenditure. This relates to the acquisition of share or loan capital

in any body corporate. However, in the event that this expenditure is made as an investment for the prudent management of the Council's financial affairs, it shall not be treated as capital expenditure.

The impact of investing in instruments of this nature are such that, unlike other investment instruments, either capital or revenue resources would have to be applied to this expenditure, and once the investment was sold or matured, the income would be a capital receipt.

The Council do not intend on making any investments which meet the definition of capital expenditure and therefore there is no limit set on this within the Investment Strategy.

7.3 Investment Risk

The prime consideration of risk within investments is the loss of capital invested. Therefore investments will only be made with bodies with a high credit rating defined above. Credit ratings will form the primary driver for assessing credit quality, although it is recognised that this is not the only means of assessing credit quality.

Caution will be exercised in determining the creditworthiness of investment counterparties, even if they meet the minimum criteria above.

In the event that any institutions are at the minimum criteria and are on negative rating watch, monies will not be placed with that organisation until such time that the negative outlook is revised.

Geographical limits will be considered to ensure an appropriate spread of risk. Sovereign ratings will be taken account of when placing funds with institutions outside of the UK.

Credit ratings for existing investment counterparties will be monitored on a monthly basis, as well as immediately before new deposits are placed.

Market intelligence will also be considered before entering into any investments with proposed counterparties meeting the minimum criteria.

7.4 Treasury Management Advisers

The Council currently utilise the services of external advisers, Arlingclose, when determining the credit quality of its investment counterparties. The Council recognise that responsibility for the decision to invest with a counterparty rests with the Council as the principle undertaking the transaction.

Credit ratings will be obtained directly from the rating agencies' websites, and officers will regularly read the financial press for information relevant to the credit-worthiness of counterparties.

7.5 Investment Training

The Council recognises that investments, as well as wider treasury management issues require a high level of specialist knowledge. Officers undertaking the decisions are all qualified accountants with many years of experience. However, the Council recognises the need for officers to be kept up to date with developments and through the annual appraisal system will identify any training needs to further enhance the current skills base.

In the event of new Officers joining the function, they will be provided with significant on the job training as well as being provided with the opportunity to attend relevant external training courses.

The Council recognises that although there may be costs involved with sending officers to training courses, when these costs are considered in the context of the size of the portfolios being managed, and the amount of the Council's money at risk, investment in training is a worthwhile area of expenditure.

In addition to the training of officers, in order for elected members to provide effective scrutiny of the strategy and to have the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding the strategy, it is also important that training is provided to Members of the Council.

7.6 Other Investment Considerations

The level of investment balances is not specifically targeted in the strategy; it will be a consequence of the net spending plans of the Council, and the level of external borrowing to be undertaken. To date, balances have remained relatively stable over recent years. However, the introduction of the Prudential Code, and the self regulation of borrowing limits and capital financing strategies, may result in higher or lower levels of balances going forwards as the level of external borrowing is given active consideration.

It should also be noted that the investments are largely as a result of the level of reserves and provisions that the Council has at any one point in time. In addition, there is an amount of working capital (excess of creditors over debtors) as well as being a factor of the extent to which investment balances have been used in lieu of external borrowing.

Section 4 of this report explained the concept of setting a limit on the level of balances and reserves that can be used to support capital expenditure, and as a result, investment balances are expected to decrease as further investment balances are used in lieu of external borrowing.

The remaining cash balances that will not be used in lieu of external borrowing will primarily exist to manage cash flow volatility within the Council. It is therefore not expected that investments of a long term strategic nature will be made. Instead the duration of new investments will remain relatively short in order to meet liquidity demands.

The Council recognises that a consequence of short dated investments is that it exposes the portfolio to interest rate risk, which would otherwise be reduced if investments were made of a long term nature. The current historical low short term rates will limit the risk of further falls in investment rates. The budget for investment income takes a prudent approach to expected returns from investments.

8. Treasury Management Indicators

The CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice requires various indicators to be set within the strategy. This section of the report sets these out in the format required by the Code. Whilst they are required to provide boundaries within which the treasury management operations will be managed, it is also important that there is sufficient flexibility to enable officers to react to unforeseen favourable movements in the financial markets which may present beneficial opportunities to the Council.

8.21 Interest Rate Exposures

The Council is required to set upper limits for both fixed and variable exposures for the forthcoming years. The purpose of this indicator is to contain the Council's exposure to unfavourable movements in interest rates. The indicators are expressed as Fixed Rate Borrowing less Fixed Rate Investments and Variable Rate Borrowing less Variable Rate Investments. The Council defines variable rate investments as including those instruments maturing within each year, as the replacement of those instruments will be subject to prevailing rates of interest. The following table shows the upper limit of fixed rate exposure and the upper limit of variable rate exposure for the forthcoming four years.

	Estimate 2020/21 £'000	Estimate 2021/22 £'000	Estimate 2022/23 £'000
Upper limit of fixed rate exposure	151,084	163,058	161,621
Upper limit of variable rate exposure	7,593	3,930	666

8.2 Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

The Council is required to set upper and lower limits of fixed rate borrowing maturing within certain periods, in order to contain the exposure to re-financing risk which may arise if significant proportions of borrowing were maturing within a short period of time. The Council has set the following limits for the forthcoming financial year.

	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Under 12 months	0.00%	15.00%
12 months – 24 months	0.00%	10.00%
24 months – 5 years	0.00%	10.00%
5 years – 10 years	0.00%	10.00%
10 years and above	0.00%	75.00%

8.3 Total Principal Sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is to contain exposure to the possibility of loss that may arise as a result of the Council having to seek early repayment of sums invested.

The Council would not, through its normal course of investment activities, expect to make investments beyond 12 months. However, there may be exceptional circumstances which may results in investments being made up to 2 years in duration, as is referred to within the Annual Investment Strategy.

	Estimate 2020/21	Estimate 2021/22	Estimate 2022/23
Total principal sums invested for longer than 364 days	£2m	£2m	£2m

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Dual Language Street Signs Policy
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Aidan Thatcher, Director of Planning & Building Control

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is for Members to consider the Notice of Motion in relation to the Dual Language Street Signs Policy.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Consider the Notice of Motion in relation to the Dual Language Street Signs Policy. • Consider a minimum response threshold in respect of the survey requirement. If Members are minded to change the policy, a revised policy will be drafted in accordance with your decision and presented for adoption with an equality screening carried out at your next meeting. Committee to note that other revisions could be made to the current policy to address issues which have arisen since it was first adopted, for example new streets or streets which have no occupiers, and

	accordingly these revisions could be incorporated within any new policy should you choose to adopt one.
3.0	**Main report**
	Background
3.1	The Council adopted a Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Policy in February 2009 which incorporates a Dual Language Street Signs Policy. At Council on 3 February 2020, Councillor Walsh proposed the following Notice of Motion: "This Council has one of the most restrictive policies of any council in the North in regards to Irish Language Street Signage Policy. Currently, the policy is that you need a 1/3rd of the eligible electorate in a street to sign a petition which starts the process. Once the process has been initiated, a letter is sent to everyone in that street who is on the electoral register asking if they consent to have bilingual signage installed. The resident has three options, namely, Yes, No and Don't Care. For the process to come to a successful conclusion, 2/3rds of the total electorate in the street need to consent to yes. If a letter is not returned, it is considered by the Council as saying that they don't consent for the bilingual signage. Furthermore, where residents send the survey back saying 'Don't Care, this is also considered to be a negative response. If we, as Elected Members were held to the same standard as this policy in the Local Government elections, not one Member would have been returned to serve on this Council, as we would not have met those restrictive parameters. The Council's Language Strategy refers to increasing the visibility of the Irish Language in our City. However, it is essential not to impose the Irish language on residents if the majority of them in a street do not consent to it. Therefore, this Council will amend its Irish language street signage policy to the following: i. continue with the 1/3rd of the eligible electorate in the street to initiate the process; ii. change the policy to reflect that it will be the majority of respondents to the survey that will decide if the process has been successful. Therefore, it will be 50% +1 of respondents that will determine if the petition to erect bilingual signage has been successful. Non-respondents will not be considered as a negative response; and

	i. those respondents who respond as 'Don't Care' are not considered to be a negative response and will be treated as a void vote."
3.2	The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin. In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.3	The motion sets out a proposal to move from the current arrangements (⅓ expressing an interest by petition and ⅔ indicating a preference in a subsequent survey to erect a dual language street sign) to a simple majority of respondents. The proposal would mean that non-respondents are not considered in the context of any final decision on dual street naming. The proposal retains the current trigger through a petition to initiate the process. Given that no minimum response threshold is established Members may wish to consider that if you support the motion to change the current policy, whether a minimum threshold of those on the electoral register responding should be met through the survey before the matter is referred to committees for consideration. For example that the respondents to the survey would equate to a minimum of ⅓ (or such other figure as you may agree) to those on the electoral register in that street.
3.4	Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995 requires the Council to take into account the views of the occupiers in a street.
3.5	The current Council policy was subject to a legal challenge which was successfully defended. A copy of the judgement is attached for information. This does not affect the ability of the Council to adopt a different policy should it choose to do so.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.6	Any change to the policy to the extent suggested is likely to result in a greater number of applications and a greater number of signs to be erected.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.7	This change of policy will need to be equality screened.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Policy which incorporates a Dual Language Street Signs Policy

	Appendix 2 - Judgement

Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Policy

Building Control Service

Approved by Council: February 2009

Current policy

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10 Policy Guidelines

Appendix A – Dual Language Street Signs Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 It is the policy of Belfast City Council (the Council), as implemented through the Building Control Service (the Service), to provide the City of Belfast with adequate street naming and numbering of buildings to help way-finding by the inhabitants, visitors and people who work in the City and to assist the easy identification of premises by emergency services, postal services and utility providers.

1.2 Signage and street naming provision will be delivered in an equitable and fair manner.

This policy is prepared in line with Council's Good Relations Strategy and Equality Scheme in order that the Council fulfils its statutory duty and responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.3 Through the provision of new street names, numbering of buildings and continual updating of the corporate gazetteer and Pointer NI database, we will ensure that each property in the Council area will be correctly addressed and have a unique property reference number (UPRN).

1.4 In undertaking these functions the primary consideration for the Council is public safety, ensuring that street names are not duplicated and that streets and properties are named and numbered to facilitate easy identification in the event of an emergency.

2.0 Service Delivery

2.1 An ability to readily identify properties and being confident that buildings are properly numbered and streets are properly named plays a key role in the efficient and effective value for money services provided by the Council.

2.2 A properly administered system for addressing in Belfast also is crucial in enabling the delivery of an equitable property taxation system such as the current system for rating.

2.3 The allocation of statutory addresses has an important role in relation to the Government's commitment to improved service delivery through the linking of various organisations' datasets with a common infrastructure based on a definitive list of national addresses. Many service providers require address details before customers can access products.

3.0 Legislation

3.1 The statutory basis for this function is contained within Article 11 of the *Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.* This Order repealed all earlier statutes related to the provision of street names and the numbering of buildings in Northern Ireland.

3.2 Article 11 of this Order provides for the naming of streets, numbering of buildings and the council's responsibility to provide street signs.

3.3 This provision also gives the Council powers to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in a language other than English. In exercising these powers the Council is required to have regard to the views expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street.

3.4 The legislation governing this policy also provides the Council with enforcement powers. In discharging any enforcement powers the Service will have regard to the principles of the Enforcement Concordat and the Building Control Service enforcement policy.

4.0 Policy Implementation

4.1 When Building Regulations applications are commenced, the Service will advise applicants or their agents if the application creates the need for a new street name. The Service will refer to the Planning Approval list to ascertain new developments in Belfast. If these new developments have been approved by the Planning Service, the Service will send out a street naming and building numbering information pack to the responsible person.

4.2 This is particularly relevant on large developments where sales promotion literature often includes names that have not been approved by the Council and may be unacceptable.

4.3 Builders / Developers / Estate Agents will be asked to provide a number (usually 2 as a minimum) of alternative names which should not duplicate or sound like existing names in the locality yet be linked to the characteristics of the area (social, historical or geographical).

4.4 Building Control will check its own records and will also consult with Royal Mail Address Management to check for duplication of names within the Postcode areas, which may not follow City boundaries.

The Service will also consult with the emergency services to obtain their views if the application may involve duplication of an existing street name; these exercises provide a third party check on the registration of names within the City.

4.5 For new street names, changes of street names, major re-numbering, and erection of dual-language street name plates the matter will be considered by the Council's Health and Environmental Services Committee whose decision will be subject to approval at a subsequent council meeting. If an application is not approved it will be referred back to the applicant for alternative suggestions.

4.6 Following ratification by Council a notification will be issued to all stakeholders within 7 working days of Council approval being given.

4.7 A numbering schedule will then be developed. When possible this information will be included in the initial notification letter and sent to all stakeholders for the numbering of new developments, or communicated in due course.

4.8 All Council Members who do not sit on the committee which determines these applications will be notified of any applications made for their electoral areas relating to new street names and renumbering which are reported to committee.

When non-committee Members are notified of applications, they may send comments to the Service within 7 days of receipt of notification. Members will be notified of Council determinations made in respect of applications within their electoral area.

5.0 Building Numbering

5.1 There are occasions where the existing naming or numbering of buildings in a street may be unsatisfactory to either property owners/occupants or the Service.

5.2 If it is decided that re-numbering is necessary the Service will deal with the application if the re-numbering changes are relating to less than 5 properties.

If the re-numbering affects properties of 5 or more a report will then be brought before Committee for approval and subsequent ratification by full Council. The Royal Mail and other relevant agencies will be informed and advised of any changes in terms of postal numbering.

5.3 The Council will endeavour to number sites and premises as soon as it is aware that it is required. On receipt of a written request from the developer or agent a site visit will be made to help determine a suitable numbering scheme for the particular location in question. The Service will then notify the applicant of the correct postal-numbering.

6.0 Renaming a Street

6.1 The ability to rename streets is one which is allowed for in legislation governing the naming of streets and persons can make applications as such. The Council will carefully consider any application for renaming within its boundaries, as it is conscious that renaming of streets has profound implications on address management for the city, emergency services and the general public.

6.2 Therefore any application received by the Service for the renaming of a street which has the requisite support shall be presented to Council seeking it express approval before proceeding with the application. If approved by Council, the Service officers will then undertake surveys as set out below to progress the application.

6.3 The application/request for re-naming of a street should be accompanied by an initial petition of not less than one third of residents of the street showing a positive interest in changing the street name. A request from an individual without support of survey or signed petition will not be considered and the individual will be informed accordingly.

6.4 The opinions of all persons affected by a renaming proposal may then be sought. This shall be through survey of all residents listed under the electoral register for that street. All persons over 18 years of age shown as dwelling in a property on the electoral register will be written to requesting an indication of their support for or opposition to the proposed name change.

6.5 Only where the support of at least two thirds of occupiers aged over 18 and identified on the electoral register has been demonstrated in any street, will the Council consider a request for renaming. Royal Mail will always be consulted and if the renaming involves a duplicate street name then relevant emergency services will also be consulted as to their views on the proposed street name.

6.6 If the result of the survey shows that at least two thirds of the residents are in agreement with the proposed name change then a recommendation will be placed before the Health & Environmental Services Committee for agreement of the change of name.

6.7 If approval is granted a notification of the change of street name will be sent to the applicant and other stakeholders for information. The applicant will also be notified if the application for a change of street name is not approved.

6.8 Another request or re-application to change a street name which has been refused will not be accepted until a minimum period of 2 years has elapsed from the previous application date for change of the street name.

7.0 Dual Language Street Signs

7.1 Please refer to the policy of the Council in respect of dual language street signs which is attached as Appendix A to this document.

8.0 Enforcement

8.1 On occasion it is necessary to consider enforcement action to ensure the display of official street names and postal numbers. In line with our enforcement policy informal action will in all cases be pursued in an attempt to resolve the matter. If however, persuasion fails to achieve results action will normally be taken under Article 11 of the *Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995*.

(Article 11, paragraph 5) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 provides that:-

"Any person, who obscures, pulls down, defaces any official nameplate or erects in any street a nameplate showing as the name of the street a name different from the official street name or erects in any street any nameplate purporting to show the name of the street, without authorisation of the Council, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale."

8.2 In addition the said Order provides that:-

Where the occupier of a house or building fails to ensure that it is marked with the number approved by the council – the Council may serve on him a notice requiring him to comply with the notice within 7 days from the date on which the notice is served.

If that person fails to comply with the notice they shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

The Council may do anything which he has failed to do and in addition may recover from that person summarily as a civil debt any expenses thereby reasonably incurred.

9.0 Finance

9.1 As the erection of street signs and registration of postal numbering are statutory functions the Council will not levy a charge in administering these functions. Where an application for written confirmation of Postal Numbering is made, a Numbering Certificate will be issued by the Council.

9.2 The existence and condition of street nameplates will be monitored by officers on a regular basis and repair or replacement carried out. Where signage has been subject to vandalism, repairs will be made or replacement signage erected.

10 Street Naming and Buildings Numbering Guidelines

10.1 The following guidelines will be used to support the operation of this policy.

Naming Streets and Buildings

(i) New street names shall not duplicate any name already in use in the City or in areas of neighbouring Boroughs close to the Belfast City boundary.

A variation in the terminal word, i.e. 'street', 'road', 'avenue', etc, may not be accepted as sufficient reason to duplicate a name, other than where streets are adjacent or within one development.

(ii) Subsidiary names (e.g. a row of buildings within an already named road being called '…….Terrace') should not be used.

(iii) All new street names should end with a suffix such as:-

Street	for any road
Road	for major roads
Way	for major roads
Road	for residential roads
Avenue	for residential roads
Drive	for residential roads
Grove	for residential roads
Lane	for residential roads
Gardens	(subject to no confusion with any local open space)
Mews	for houses around an open yard or along a laneway
Place	for a square with houses
Link	for a road linking two roads
Crescent	for a crescent shaped road
Close	for a cul-de-sac only
Square	for a square only
Hill	for a hillside road only
Circus	for a large roundabout
Terrace	for a terrace of houses (provided is not a subsidiary name)
Court	for apartments or houses around an open yard

The above list is not exhaustive and all decisions on names remain within the authority of the Council.

(iv) Names which could be viewed as detrimental to the surrounding area such as Abattoir Road, Tip Lane, or names capable of deliberate misinterpretation should not be used.

(v) The use of North, East, South or West (as in Alfred Road North and Alfred Road South) (or East, West) is only acceptable where the road is continuous and passes over a major junction.

(vi) Phonetically similar names within a postal area within the City, e.g. Euston Road, Houston Road should not be used.

(a) **The Numbering of Buildings**

(i) A new street should be numbered with even numbers on one side (left) and odd numbers on the other (right).

(ii) Small cul de sacs should be numbered consecutively and larger cul de sacs are split for numbering purposes.

(iii) Private garages and similar buildings used only for housing vehicles, etc. should not be numbered.

(iv) The number 13 is discretionary in its use. It is commonly included in developments unless requested otherwise.

(v) Buildings (including those on corner sites) are numbered according to the street in which the main entrance is to be found and the manipulation of numbering in order to secure a 'prestige' address or to avoid an address which is thought to have undesired associations will not be sanctioned.

(vi) If a building has entrances in more than one street, but is a multi-occupied building and each entrance leads to a separate occupier, then each entrance should be numbered in the appropriate road. Exceptions may be made, depending on the circumstances, for a house divided into flats.

(vii) A named building is not under the control of the Legislation and will be numbered onto the existing street.

(vii) Postcodes are the responsibility of Royal Mail Address Management.

(viii) In residential buildings (e.g. blocks of flats) it is usual to give a street number to each communal entrance.

The numbering of flats within a named or numbered building is outside the scope of these powers, but developers are requested to supply a layout plan and unit or apartment numbers to facilitate Council records.

On each floor the numbering should be in a clockwise direction where this is possible and they should be numbered not lettered e.g. Flat 2, 21 Smith Street, not, Flat A, 21 Smith Street.

(ix) When one large house in a road is demolished and replaced by (say) four smaller houses or in rural situations, where all available numbers are taken up, it may be necessary to include alpha-numeric references. E.g. 34A, 34B, 34C, 34D.

Appendix A

Dual Language Street Signs Policy

1.0 Legislation

The statutory basis for this function is contained within *Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995*. This Order commenced on 15 March 1995, it provides for street naming, street numbering and the provision of street signs. It also gives Councils the discretionary power to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in a language other than English.

2.0 Introduction

The legislation requires the Council, in deciding whether and how to exercise its discretion to erect a street name in a language other than English, to take account of the views of the occupiers of premises in the street.

For the purposes of this policy occupiers shall be taken to be any person whose name appears in the current Electoral Register plus the owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, but not employees in such premises.

These policy proposals were developed in close consultation with the Director of Legal Services and are designed to promote consistent and reasonable responses. However, the policy should not be applied in such a way as to prevent due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of each application. Having regard to the significant resource consequences of administering the implications of the policy, the policy should be reactive in nature.

3.0 Procedure

The procedures for seeking and assessing the views of occupiers and the criteria to be applied in deciding whether to erect a street sign in a language other than English are as follows:

(i) Only applications supported by a petition representing not less than one third of the people appearing on the Electoral Register of the street for which the application is made will be progressed.

(ii) Where the foregoing requirements have been met the Council will canvass by post all people appearing on the Electoral Register of that street and seek their views on the request to erect a street sign in a second specified language. This letter is designed so as to make the expression of views as simple as possible. Reply will be by way of a pre-paid envelope and should be returned within one month of receipt.

(iii) Where two thirds or more of the occupiers appearing on the Electoral Register have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign will be erected. People not returning a reply will be deemed not to be in favour of the application.

(iv) Consideration will to be given to "long streets" where majority opinion on whether to have a second language street sign may differ between readily identifiable, substantial lengths of the street. In these circumstances consideration will be given to the erection of dual language nameplates in those substantial portions of the street where the required majority of occupiers have expressed a wish for such a nameplate.

(v) When a decision has been taken to erect a street sign in a second language the translation from English to that second language will be carried out by an independent, competent Body such as the appropriate Language Department at Queen's University.

(vi) With regard to the design and placing of the street signs the second language sign shall be located immediately below the English sign and the size of lettering shall be smaller than the English version to avoid any risk of confusion to the emergency services.

4.0 Adoption by Council

This policy was adopted by the Council on 1 September 1998.

Neutral Citation No. [2014] NIQB 129 | *Ref:* **HOR9455**

Judgment: approved by the Court for handing down | *Delivered:* **04/12/2014**

*(subject to editorial corrections)**

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION (JUDICIAL REVIEW)

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION BY EILEEN REID FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW

IN THE MATTER OF A DECISION OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

HORNER J

		Paragraph
A.	**Introduction**	**1**
B.	**Background to the policy on dual language street names**	**2-13**
C.	**Background to the application**	**14-20**
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A. Introduction

[1] This is a challenge by Eileen Reid ("the Applicant") who lives at 13 Ballymurphy Drive, Belfast, to the decision of Belfast City Council ("the Council") to refuse to erect an additional street name plate in Irish at Ballymurphy Drive, Belfast. The application for such a street name plate had the support of 52 out of the 92 members living in the street who were eligible to vote. She claims that the decision to refuse to erect a street name plate is unlawful, as is the policy underlying it. As this is a judicial review, it is important to emphasise that the court is not concerned with the merits of whether there should be a dual street name plate at Ballymurphy Drive but rather on whether the process that ultimately determined that no additional street name should be erected, was lawful.

B. Background to the policy on dual language street names

[2] Article 11(1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 states:

> "A council may erect at or near each end, corner or entrance of any street in its district a name plate showing the name of the street; and a name plate erected under this paragraph –
>
> (a) shall express the name of the street in English; and
>
> (b) may express the name in any other language."

[3] Street names and dual name plates have been a source of discord in Northern Ireland over the years leading to community tensions. They have also been a contentious issue at local government as the minutes of the meetings of the council and its various committees testify. On 12 June 1995 the attention of the Health and Environmental Services Committee ("HES") of the council was drawn to Article 11 of the 1995 Order which had just come in to effect. At that meeting on 12 June the HES requested a draft policy be produced to deal with the erection of street name plates in a language other than English and that this should be presented to the HES after consultation with all the other party groups of the council. By 11 December 1995 a policy had been agreed but there were issues as to the resources required to make it work. It was estimated that the basic cost of providing second language street signs over a 5 year period would be in the region of £200,000. To that sum had to be added the cost of providing additional staff and the resources to establish administrative systems and procedures. It was considered that this would require expenditure of approximately £30,000 per year over a 5 year period. Implementation of the policy was deferred pending consultation on the funding issues with the Department of the Environment. The views of the Director of Legal Services were sought by the Director of Health and Environmental Services with regard to the feasibility of the council charging for the erection of dual language street signs.

[4] On 10 August 1998 HES reached a decision that the council should implement the draft policy for the erection of dual language street signs. At the full meeting of the council on 1 September 1998 the council ratified HES's decision and the policy came into effect. This was an open policy and one in respect of which councillors would have been aware. Any ratepayer on inquiry could have found out about it.

[5] The policy noted that Article 11 of the 1995 Order gave councils the discretionary power to erect dual language street signs or secondary name street plates in languages other than English. It records at paragraph 2:

> "These policy proposals were developed in close consultation with the Director of Legal Services and are

> designed to promote consistent and reasonable responses. However, the policy should not be applied in such a way as to prevent due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of each application. Having regard to the significant resource consequences of administering the implications of the policy, the policy should be reactive in nature."

[6] The process can be summarised thus:

(i) Only applications supported by a petition representing not less than one third of the people appearing on the electoral register of the street will be progressed.

(ii) Where that requirement has been met the council will canvass those persons appearing on the Electoral Register of that street and seek their views on their request to erect a street sign in a second specified language. They will be each given a pre-paid envelope to be returned within one month of receipt.

(iii) Where two-thirds or more of the occupiers appearing on the Electoral Register have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign will be erected. People not returning a reply will be deemed not to be in favour of the application.

(iv) The council retains an overriding discretion to take the particular circumstances of each application into account in deciding whether there should be a street name plate erected regardless of the numbers voting in favour of the application.

[7] On 2 March 2000 the UK Government signed the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority languages and ratified it in March 2001. The Charter was to come into force on 2 July 2001. The Policy and Resources Committee ("PRC") of the council considered the Charter and asked for a detailed report. This was prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive. At a meeting of 13 December 2002 various recommendations for compliance with the Charter were put forward. It is specifically recorded at paragraph 27 in respect of place names in Irish:

> "This issue is not expected to provide any difficulty for the Council, since it already has a policy of providing dual language street names in Belfast, if requested by two-thirds of the residents of the street."

This was then ratified by the full council on 6 January 2003. On 21 February 2003 the PRC considered the report of the Director of Legal Services which recorded that it had the force of international law but that "there is no specific domestic national legislation to compel District Councils to abide by the guidance coming from

Government". On 3 March 2003 the PRC minutes were ratified at the meeting of the council.

[8] The policy was then reviewed following a request by the PRC. It was reaffirmed by the HES Committee on 16 June 2007 and at a meeting of the full council on 1 May 2007 it was agreed that it should be taken back to the HES for further consideration.

[9] On 11 June 2007, after further consideration by the HES of the policy, a one year pilot scheme was introduced whereby applications for additional street name plates no longer required petitions with one-third support before progressing to a full survey. There was also discussion of the two-thirds approach. On 2 June 2007 the council approved the decision instituting the pilot scheme. On 3 September 2008 HES reviewed the policy again and agreed to end the pilot scheme. On 1 October 2008 the full council sent the policy back for further consideration. On 8 October 2008 HES reaffirmed the decision of 3 September 2008 requiring submission of a petition. On 3 November 2008 this decision was approved by the full council.

[10] On 5 December 2011 HES was asked to consider whether the policy should be amended so as to require two-thirds only of those who had returned a survey form. On 8 February 2012 HES considered the range of options, discussed the matters and reaffirmed the policy after a number of votes. On 1 March 2012 the full council ratified the HES minutes following a contested vote.

[11] The Policy has thus been the subject of considerable democratic scrutiny by the council and its committees over an extended period of time. It is clear that it has been the subject of considerable debate and dispute. But ultimately the policy in general, and the two-thirds majority of issued surveys rule in particular, has prevailed.

[12] The policy seems to have worked well. From 1998 until the end of 2013, 180 applications have been made to the council to erect a street name plate in a second language. 144 of those applications have been approved. 34 applications were not progressed as there were insufficient responses to the council's surveys. From 2009 until the end of 2013, all the applications which were submitted have been approved, save for two applications, both of which had an insufficient response to the council's survey. In the two years preceding the present application, that is 2011 and 2012, there was a 100% success rate in respect of applications received.

[13] Of the 25 councils in Northern Ireland, 14 councils have a dual language policy. For the 14 who have a dual language policy, three use a straight majority of surveys returned, four use a two-thirds majority of surveys returned, two use a two-thirds of issued surveys rule and the other five are not known. The other two councils with the two-thirds of issued surveys rule are Castlereagh and Strabane councils.

C. Background to the Application

[14] On 23 May 2013 an application was received for dual language street signs for Ballymurphy Drive, Belfast, from Glór na Móna, 195 Whiterock Road, Belfast. This is an Irish language group, one of whose aims is to promote the Irish language. The application included a petition that met the one-third requirement. Accordingly, under its policy the council had to carry out its own survey. A survey was sent to all those people who appeared on the Electoral Register for Ballymurphy Drive. Ninety-two surveys in total were issued with a deadline of 13 July 2013 for the return of the surveys. The letter accompanying the survey stated that following the questionnaire, based on the returns, Mr Martin, Head of Service, may make a recommendation to the council. It also indicated that as there were 92 people eligible to complete the survey the appropriate minimum for recommending approval was not less than 62 replies. Enclosed with the letter was a pre-paid envelope. The questionnaire contained 3 statements in respect of which the party surveyed was asked to tick their preferred answer. They were as follows:

(a) I wish to have a second street name plate erected at Ballymurphy Drive, the second one being an Irish translation.

(b) I do not wish to have a second street name plate erected at Ballymurphy Drive, the second one being an Irish translation.

(c) I have no preference either way. (As the policy states two-thirds of those surveyed must approve the request before recommendation is made, this answer is taken that you are happy with the current position regarding the sign.)

[15] The deadline was extended because it included a public holiday during the response period to the end of August 2013. There were 52 "Yes" responses received in total. There were 21 responses received on 17 June 2013, 25 responses on 4 July 2013, 11 responses on 10 July 2013. The remaining "yes" responses were received as follows, one response on 19 June 2013 and two responses on 20 June 2013. There seems to have been some organised campaign to obtain responses given that the vast majority of responses were received in three batches on three particular dates. These surveys are not confidential.

[16] On 5 November 2013 Mr Flanigan, Solicitor, wrote on behalf of the applicant asking the council to confirm that the application in respect of Ballymurphy Drive had been granted. The response from the Health and Environmental Services Department was from Mr Martin, Head of Service. He said:

> "I would confirm that the application in respect of Ballymurphy Drive has not been granted due to insufficient responses being returned to the Council …

> In the case of Ballymurphy Drive 92 people were eligible for completing (sic) the survey and the appropriate minimum recommending approval is not less than 62 replies in favour of the dual language street sign. To date Building Control have received 52 replies in favour of the dual language street sign."

[17] In response to requests as to how many were against the dual language street sign the council replied on 19 November 2013 that one person had responded on the basis that he was not in favour.

[18] There followed a letter of 26 November 2013 from Michael Flannigan, Solicitor, complaining that the policy was Wednesbury unreasonable and ultra vires, as it was not consistent with the relevant statutory duty, it was not consistent with the council's position that it would act in accordance with its obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages and that it was an unlawful fetter on the council's discretion.

[19] On 15 January 2014 Mr John Walsh, Town Solicitor for the council replied dealing with the complaints that have been made and concluding as follows:

> "The policy requirement for two-thirds of residents to respond favourably is not unreasonable and properly falls within the exercise of the council's discretion as to the circumstances in which it will erect a second name plate."

[20] He denied the policy was unlawful and said that the council had taken legal advice. The solicitors responded by issuing proceedings on behalf of the applicant and seeking leave to apply for judicial review.

D. <u>The Grounds of Challenge</u>

[21] There were five grounds of challenge put forward at the hearing. They were:

(a) The refusal of the council to consider the proposal to erect an Irish language street name plate at Ballymurphy Drive was ultra vires, unlawful and of no effect because the respondent fettered its discretion in applying the policy in such a way as to prevent due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of this application. ("Ground 1")

(b) The council's dual language street sign policy is ultra vires, unlawful and of no effect because it requires two-thirds or more of the occupiers appearing on the Electoral Register to indicate that they are in favour of the proposal to erect a second language street sign before the respondent will consider the proposal and/or because it deems those who do not reply to the proposal as not being in favour of it because it is Wednesbury unreasonable to:

(i) deem those that do not respond to the proposal as being opposed to it, and/or

(ii) set the level of expressions of approval at the same threshold as that formally required to change the street name. ("Ground 2")

(c) The impugned terms of the policy are inconsistent with the terms of Article 11 of the 1995 Order, insofar as Article 11 requires the respondent to have regard to the views **expressed by the occupiers**, whereas the impugned terms of the policy allow those who do not respond to the proposal to be considered to have expressed opposition to it. ("Ground 3")

(d) The impugned terms of the policy are inconsistent with the council's commitment to act in accordance with its obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and in particular the Charter obligation under 10(2)(g) to the **use of adoption of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages**, which Charter should be used to interpret the statutory discretion available to the respondent under Article 11 of the 1995 Order. ("Ground 4")

(e) The policy is treated by the respondent as if it were of legislative force and expressed in mandatory terms, and as such amounts to an improper attempt by the respondent to exercise legislative powers where none exist. In particular, the impugned terms of the policy are ultra vires as an attempt to re-enact the substantive terms of (the repealed) Section 21 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1907, where no such legislative power exists. ("Ground 5")

As can be seen there is an overlap with some of these different arguments.

[22] At this stage I should record my thanks to both counsel who presented their respective cases both clearly and comprehensively. I have taken into account all the points which they have made in their detailed and nuanced skeleton arguments and oral submissions. The interests of brevity forbid me from rehearsing all of the arguments in full.

E. Statutory Background

[23] The relevant provision is Article 11(4) of the 1995 Order. It describes the discretionary power the council has to erect a second name plate:

> "In deciding whether and, if so, how to exercise its powers under paragraph (1)(b) or (2) in relation to any street, a council should have regard to any views in the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street …"

[24] It is noteworthy that the requirement under the relevant provision is that the council "shall have regard to any views on the matter expressed by the occupier of premises …".

[25] Article 11(1) clearly gives the council a discretion whether or not to erect a second name plate. How that discretion is to be exercised is set out in 11(4). The words used and their context do not suggest that the council is only to have exclusive regard to the views expressed by the occupiers. In Sandford Ltd v New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council Inc [2008] NZCA 160 (this decision was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court) the Court of Appeal found that a requirement to "have regard to" a matter requires the decision-maker "to give the matter genuine attention and thought but it remains open to the decision-maker to conclude that the matter is not of sufficient significance to outweigh other contrary considerations". The expression "to have regard to" is weaker than "to have particular regard to" and it is certainly much less constraining than "take into account" and "give effect to". So under this provision the council has a discretion. It must give genuine attention and thought to the expressed views of the occupiers, but it is still entitled to take into account other lawful considerations affecting its decision. I consider that this is the lawful way for the council to approach the discretion vested in it pursuant to Article 11(1).

F. Discussion

Ground 1

[26] The applicant says that the council fettered its discretion by requiring two-thirds of the Electoral Register at Ballymurphy Drive to approve the addition of a second street name in Irish. The council responds by stating that its discretion is not fettered. It could take into account other matters, but the applicant, for whatever reason, chose not to bring these matters to the attention of the council.

[27] There can be no doubt that the applicant and/or her solicitor and/or the local councillor for the area did not offer any reasons to try and persuade the Head of Service, HES or the council, despite not achieving 62 votes in favour of the proposal that there should be a second street sign in Irish erected at Ballymurphy Drive. However, subsequently the applicant has offered reasons which include:

(i) The proportion of the people in the lower Falls area with an interest in Irish is approximately 20%.

(ii) This street is within the Gaeltacht Quarter which is built on the traditional strengths of the Irish language and culture.

[28] The policy expressly states at Section 2 as follows:

> "These policy proposals were developed in close consultation with the Director of Legal Services and are designed to promote consistent and reasonable responses. However, the policy should not be applied in such a way as to prevent due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of each application. Having regard to the significant resource consequences of administering the implications of the policy, the policy should be reactive in nature."

The policy then goes on to state at (iii) of Section 3:

> "Where two-thirds or more of the occupiers appearing on the Electoral Register have indicated they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign will be erected. People not returning a reply will be deemed not to be in favour of the application."

[29] The following points are of significance:

(i) The applicant complains that the application was not considered by the HES (or the full council) but was in fact dealt with by a council officer(s) and he operated as if he was in a self-imposed straitjacket.

(ii) The policy in relation to dual street signs was public, well-known and has been in operation for a number of years. It has been taken advantage of successfully by the occupiers of many streets in the Belfast area.

(iii) Mr Martin, Head of Services, "found no circumstances which warranted" it being put before the committee. Mr Martin, on the evidence adduced before this court, was legally entitled to reach such a conclusion.

(iv) The committee could decide that despite not reaching the two-thirds threshold that it wished to consider the matter in response to prompting by local residents and/or their solicitor and/or their local councillor or other councillors.

(v) The solicitor for the applicant was free to write in and make any submissions he wanted on the applicant's behalf. He chose not to do so. No satisfactory explanation has been given for this omission. Councillors have the right to sit in on any committee meeting. A councillor is able to write and make representations to any officer or member of any committee. The local councillor for Ballymurphy Drive could have made submissions on behalf of the application for a dual language street sign but chose not to do so. No explanation has been given as to why the council was not asked to exercise its residual discretion and permit a second street sign in Irish to be erected.

[30] An attack was also made on such a decision being taken by Mr Martin. However, Section 47A(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 states:

> "The council may arrange for the discharge of any of its functions, except the power of making a rate, or of borrowing money or of acquiring, holding or disposing of land by an officer with the council and any transferred provision regulating the exercise of a function by a council shall also apply to regulate the exercise of that function by an officer of the council."

In the circumstances and in the light of the evidence there is nothing objectionable in the role which was carried out by Mr Martin.

[31] The court concludes that there is no force whatsoever in the complaint that the council unlawfully fettered its discretion. The court does find that there is considerable force in the submission that the applicant and her advisors by their actions, or more properly, their inaction, precluded the council from exercising its discretion. They failed to put before it any of the grounds which might have persuaded the council to grant a second street name being erected at Ballymurphy Drive despite the failure to achieve the number required under the policy of 62 returned surveys.

Ground 2

[32] The policy of a two-thirds majority of those eligible is not Wednesbury unreasonable for a number of different reasons.

(i) The policy of providing an additional street name in another language can be socially and politically divisive. The level of discord can be gauged from the debates within the council. Unfortunately, in Northern Ireland's deeply divided society many on each side of the political and cultural divide, rightly or wrongly, see the other's language, whether it be Irish or Ulster Scots, as associating that community with a particular political view point. In those circumstances it cannot be unreasonable to require clear and convincing evidence on the part of those who occupy the street that they want an additional street name plate in another language, apart from English.

(ii) The amount of effort required to return a stamped addressed envelope, especially against a background where there does appear to have been a campaign to obtain the necessary approvals provides a good gauge to judge the groundswell of enthusiasm in favour of a second name plate.

(iii) The present rule allows the council to avoid a situation where the residents' preferred option could alter from time to time depending on movement of people within the street. There are obvious costs implications in providing or removing street furniture. The OFMDFM document ("A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland" (March 2005)) emphasises a need for authorities to take positive action to ensure that shared and neutral spaces remain shared and used by all sections of the community. As the council points out this supports a policy which requires a high level of demonstrated community desire for a dual name plate which, realistically, "might well be viewed as identifying a street clearly with one community and be construed as exclusive of other communities". This is especially so given that the surveys are not confidential. Those not wanting a dual street name need not nail their colours to the mast.

(iv) Finally, this is a view shared by two other councils who have adopted the same policy. They will have considered the issue and adopted the same policy of a two-thirds majority of those appearing on the electoral register. There is no suggestion that the councillors of Castlereagh and Strabane councils acted perversely.

In the circumstances the applicant has not begun to meet the high threshold necessary to prove "Wednesbury unreasonableness" on the part of the council.

Ground 3

[33] The applicant claims that the council is required to have regard to the views "expressed by the occupiers". Those who did not return the survey did not express a view and therefore should not have been taken into account. However, this argument is fundamentally flawed. No one who received the survey could fail to misunderstand the position and the consequences of not voting. It was crystal clear to everyone that in order for there to be a dual street sign, a two-thirds majority of those written to in Ballymurphy Drive must reply in favour of the proposal. Those who did not return their surveys can have been in no doubt as to the consequences of their inaction.

[34] In any event, as the court has already made clear in its interpretation of Article 11, the council is only required to "have regard to" views expressed and it retains an overall discretion. For the reasons set out elsewhere in the judgment, such a policy is not unlawful. The council is not bound to follow the majority of the views expressed by those who returned the survey or by a majority of those to whom the survey was sent.

Ground 4

[35] The applicant complains that the council has publicly committed itself to act in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ("The

Charter") and in particular Article 10 of the Charter. The central and key provision upon which it relies is Article 10(2)(g) which states:

> "In respect of the local and regional authorities on whose territory the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages is as such to justify the measures specified below, the Parties undertake to allow and/or encourage:
>
> (g) the use or adoption, if necessary, in conjunction with the name in the official language(s) of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages."

[36] The applicant makes the case that the levels of Irish language use and interest in the locality are high. Further, that the two-thirds issued surveys rule in favour of a dual street name in Irish is inimical to the council's obligation under the treaty.

As a general proposition international treaties or agreements which, as here, have not been incorporated into the national laws are not enforceable: see R v Secretary of State for the Home Department ex parte Brind [1991] 1 AC 696 at 761-2.

[37] In Re MacGiolla Cathain's Application for Judicial Review [2009] NIQB 66 Treacy J said at paragraphs [31]-[33] of his judgment:

> "[31] In respect of the first ground of challenge grounded in the alleged breach of Article 7(2) of the Charter the respondent submitted that its provisions operate only on the plane of international law and create no rights or obligations in domestic law.
>
> [32] The distinction between international law and domestic law has long been accepted by the courts in the United Kingdom. Where it is intended to give domestic legal effect to obligations arising from international treaties the method of achieving this is by incorporating the relevant treaty into domestic law as for example was done by the Human Rights Act 1998 in relation to the principal provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. This has not however been done in relation to the Charter.
>
> [33] This well established legal position reflects the constitutional principle that in the UK the Executive does not have law making powers unless these are conferred upon it by Parliament. The ratification of an international

> treaty such as the Charter is an Executive action effected under prerogative power and involves no delegation of legislative power by the legislature. Moreover, unlike legislation, such an exercise does not require the assent of Parliament. The Crown cannot change unambiguous law by the exercise of prerogative powers. In this respect see the case of Proclamations (1611) 12 Co Rep 74 where at 75 it is stated that:
>
> > "The King by his proclamation or other ways cannot change any part of the common law, statute law, or customs of the realm."
>
> If the ratification of an international treaty had the effect of altering domestic law then the Executive would be able to supplant the legislature by making legislation without any form of Parliamentary consent or approval by the backdoor. This would clearly emasculate the constitutional principle that in the UK the Executive does not enjoy law making powers unless these are bestowed upon it by Parliament. See the House of Lords decisions in Rayner v DTI [1990] 2 AC 4 118 at 499-50, Brind [1991] 1 AC 696 at 747-748 and 762B-D and R v Lyons [2003] 1 AC 976 at [13] and [27]."

[38] Treacy J also rejected further arguments about the applicability of the Charter based on:

(a) The legitimate expectation it was claimed was created by the Executive action of ratifying the Charter. He rejected this as an impermissible attempt to bypass the constitutional principle referred to above.

(b) The Treaty should be used as an aid to statutory interpretation. However, in that case (as here) the wording was clear and unambiguous and its use was otiose.

[39] A public authority such as the respondent cannot be obliged to treat itself as bound to act in compliance with international obligation. Even where it does so it is clear from the authorities that the courts will adopt a very light touch review which will not extend to ruling on the meaning or effect of the International Treaty. This was considered by Weatherup J in McCallion's Application (No: 4) 2009 NIQB 45 at paragraphs [20]-[21] where he said:

> "[20] A domestic decision maker may purport to make his decision in accordance the terms of an unincorporated international treaty. Or he may merely take into account

> the terms of the treaty in making his decision. Or he may declare that, having taken account of the terms of the treaty, the decision that he has made is in accordance with the treaty. Or he may declare that he will make his decision without regard to the terms of the treaty. In the present case the decision maker concluded that a decision adverse to the applicant would not involve a breach of the Convention. Further, in the present case, the decision maker did not purport to exercise his discretion in accordance with the Convention provision but rather, in reaching his decision, he took into account the Convention and his conclusion that a finding adverse to the applicant would not involve a breach of the Convention.
>
> [21] The effect of Charter House Research is that in general the Court will not seek to interpret the terms of an unincorporated treaty nor will the Court adjudicate upon the correctness in law of a decision maker's conclusion on the meaning of the treaty. The Court may do so where there is no issue about the interpretation of the Convention and the Court is considering whether the interpretation is compatible with the terms of the treaty. The Court may do so where there is settled Convention jurisprudence which provides a particular interpretation. The Court will hesitate to do so where the treaty provides a forum for the resolution of a dispute as to interpretation."

In the present circumstances the court does not consider that the Charter adds anything valuable to the construction to be given to Article 11.

[40] Further, there is no evidence before the court that the number of users of Irish is such as to justify the measures sought. Of course there is evidence of interest. Certainly in the last census approximately 1 in 5 claimed to have "some knowledge of Irish". It is a fairly anodyne expression. Many people who could claim to have some knowledge of Irish could not be described as users.

[41] More importantly Baile Uí Mhurchú is the traditional name for the Ballymurphy Townland. However, Ballymurphy Drive never had an original Irish name. The street since its original creation has always been known as Ballymurphy Drive.

For all these reasons the application grounded on an alleged breach of council's obligations under the Charter, whether self-imposed or not, fails.

Ground 5

[42] The complaint here is that the policy for the erection of an additional street name in another language is the same as existed under Section 21 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1907 (now repealed) for the change of a street name. However, this argument carries no weight.

(i) There is no evidence of the provision of the 1907 Act playing any part in the deliberations of the council: see the affidavit of Mr Martin, and in particular paragraph 38.

(ii) If it was taken into account, there is nothing unlawful about the council looking at other related legislation in making a decision in this controversial area, especially if there was evidence that the operation of such provision had worked well in the past.

(iii) In any event, and conclusively, once it is accepted that the council retains discretion to erect a dual name plate without the two-thirds response generally required by the policy, the grounds for such a complaint disappear.

G. <u>Conclusion</u>

[43] For the reasons which are set out in this judgment, the applicant's claim for judicial review fails on all the grounds that have been advanced. I will hear the parties on the issue of costs.

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STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Equality and Diversity: Quarter 3 Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report
Date:	20th March 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Lisa McKee, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To provide members with a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for Quarter 3 October to December 2019.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to • Note the contents of the report.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> One of the main requirements of the Council's Equality Scheme is to carry out the screening of new and revised policies. This allows any impacts related to equality of opportunity and/or good relations to be identified and addressed.

3.2	The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland also recommends that, once a policy has been screened and it has a major potential to impact on equality of opportunity and good relations, then it should be subjected to an EQIA. An EQIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal and, irrespective of the scope of that policy or the size of the public authority. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any differential impact of a policy upon the section 75 categories and to determine if the differential impact is adverse. An EQIA can assist in decision-making and improve policy making by adding to the evidence base available.
3.3	In addition, the Council has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions and is required to ensure that annual reporting returns are submitted to DAERA.
3.4	An equality screening and rural needs impact assessment template is completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality and Diversity Unit. On a regular basis, the Unit collates all completed templates into a screening outcome report and publishes onto the Council's website along with the relevant completed templates. The current screening outcome report for October to December is attached at Appendix 1. <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.5	None
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.6	The actions outlined contribute to our legal compliance regarding the promotion of equality, good relations and rural needs.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Quarter 3 Screening Outcome and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report

Belfast City Council

Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

October to December 2019

Introduction

Legislation – An Overview

Section 75 Statutory Equality Duties

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely:

• between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
• between men and women generally;
• between persons with a disability and persons without; and
• between persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the council must also have regards to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Council's Revised Equality Scheme was formally approved by the Equality Commission in March 2015. The revised Scheme outlines how we propose to fulfil our statutory duties under Section 75. Within the Scheme, the council gave a commitment to apply the screening methodology below to all new and revised policies and where necessary and appropriate to subject new policies to further equality impact assessment.

• What is the likely impact of equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy/proposal, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

• Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within Section 75 equality categories?

• To what extent is the policy/proposal likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

• Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

In keeping with the Council's commitments in its Equality Scheme, the Council has applied the above screening criteria to new policies and proposals. Screening identifies policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Screening identifies the impact of the policy/proposal as major, minor or none.

- If major – an Equality Impact Assessment may be carried out.
- If minor – consider mitigation or alternative policy and screen out.
- If none – screen out and give reasons.
- Ongoing screening – for strategies/policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages – screen at various stages during implementation.

The council also committed within its Revised Equality Scheme to prepare and publish for information regular reports on its screening exercises. This is screening report providing details on all screenings undertaken from the period October to December 2019

Rural Needs Impact Assessments

The Council also has a statutory duty under the Rural Needs (Northern Ireland) Act 2016 to consider rural needs in the development of new policies, plans or strategies or in any service design/delivery decisions. The Council must therefore engage with rural stakeholders in relation to policy development when it is relevant and appropriate. The Equality and Diversity Unit is responsible for reporting to the Strategic, Policy and Resources Committee and for ensuring that annual reporting returns are submitted to DAERA.

To further promote openness and transparency, there is a link to each completed screening and rural needs impact assessment template on the Council's website. www.belfastcity.gov.uk

The templates detail all policies screened over this period and includes decisions reached.

Consultation

The development of new policies and proposals will be supported by effective engagement processes to ensure that staff, service users and all interested parties are fully involved.

Planning for, and delivering safe and cost effective services requires close collaboration at many levels.

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in other languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

Lisa McKee
Equality and Diversity Unit
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS
Direct Line 02890 270555
or 028 90 320202 ext 6310
email: equality@belfascity.gov.uk or McKeeL@belfastcity.gov.uk

Screening Outcome

The screening outcomes are outlined in the table below. Three possible outcomes are recorded:

If **Major** – an Equality Impact Assessment may be carried out. **EQIA** - subject to further scrutiny under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 to determine the impact upon

those directly affected, which in turn will require informal and formal consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

If **Minor** – consider mitigation or alternative policy and screen out.

If **None** – screen out and give reasons.

Screening Outcome Options

Major= In

Minor= Out with mitigation

None= Out without mitigation

Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)

We have also added for notation purposes details of those EQIAs which are currently being undertaken by the Council.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Options

Does the policy, plan, strategy or service design/delivery impact on the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

Belfast City Council Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment

This report includes published screenings and Rural Needs Impact Assessments for the period October to December 2019. Copies can be found at: http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/council/equality/eqia.aspx

Description of Policy/Proposal	**Rural Needs Impact Assessment**	**ECNI Screening Decision and Contact**
Corporate Plan 2020/2024	This plan will have no impact on residents living in rural areas	Screened Out – No EQIA necessary Contact: Geoff Dickson ext 6211
Customer Focus Programme 'Putting You First, Transforming	This programme will impact positively on residents living in rural areas	Screened Out –Mitigating Actions (minor impacts) Contact: Louise Scott ext 6212

Description of Policy/Proposal	Rural Needs Impact Assessment	ECNI Screening Decision and Contact
Customer Experience'		
Boodles Dam	This project will have no impact on people living in rural areas	Screened Out – No EQIA necessary Contact: Briege Coyle ext 3671
Open Spaces Streetscene Service	It is not envisaged that there will be any difference. However, should future qualitative analysis identify any impacts for people living in rural areas that have been overlooked, the service design model will be adjusted to accommodate the required changes	Screened Out –Mitigating Actions (minor impacts) Contact: Edel Mullan ext 3459

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Request for approval for a permanent plaque to commemorate WW1 Nurses to be installed in City Hall
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To consider a request for the installation of a permanent plaque in City Hall main marble to commemorate the role of Nurses in WW1, in line with the Council's Memorabilia Refresh Policy agreed in 2017.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is recommended: • To consider a request for the installation of a permanent plaque in City Hall main marble to commemorate the role of Nurses in WW1
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Background In October 2019 Strategic Policy & Resources Committee considered a request from the Royal College of Nursing's History of Nursing Network Northern Ireland, a society who have

	been documenting local history in relation to the nursing profession, to install a permanent plaque in the City Hall to commemorate the role of nurses in the first World War.
3.2	The decision was referred to Party Leaders' Consultative Forum who, following the Memorabilia Refresh Policy agreed by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in November 2017 (see **Appendix 1**), referred the consideration of the equality and good relations implications to the Shared City Partnership.
3.3	The Memorabilia Refresh Policy sets out that any proposed changes to the memorabilia in the City Hall is referred to the City Solicitor who will commission an assessment of the equality and good relations impact. The proposal and the equality screening will then be brought to the Shared City Partnership for comment before being brought to Strategic Policy & Resources.
3.4	A draft equality screening report for the proposed plaque is set out in **Appendix 2.** The draft screening has identified minor positive impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief, political opinion, racial ground and gender. In addition, minor positive impacts on good relations have also been identified. The proposal has been screened out ie there are no equality implications and an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.
3.5	The plaque proposal is one of a number of initiatives being undertaken by the History of Nursing Network Northern Ireland commemorating the work of local nurses including a one-week temporary exhibition in the City Hall in May to coincide with International Nurses' Day 2020 on 12 May.
3.6	The text of the plaque, the proposed location and example design are set out in **Appendix 3**.
3.7	At its meeting on the 9 March 2020, the Shared City Partnership was content with the equality and good relations implications.
3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> • Plaque - The HON have raised funds to purchase a small A3 sized plaque, however members may prefer to procure of the plaque similar to others in City Hall so the costs of this plaque would be £400. This would be covered from existing budgets. • Exhibition - If the Committee is minded to approve the hosting of the temporary exhibition, then there would be no charge applied for the use of the space due to the Not for Profit nature of the HON.

3.9	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications A draft equality screening is appended to this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Memorabilia Refresh Policy 2017 Appendix 2 – Equality Screening Report Appendix 3– The text of the plaque, the proposed location and example design

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MEMORABILIA REFRESH POLICY

The parties agree to the following principles on the display of memorabilia in the dedicated exhibition space and further agree that any decision on revising or amending the content of any display or narratives associated with the exhibition for the future will respect the principles so agreed-

1. The display will reflect a fair balance of the traditions and history of the two predominant communities in N Ireland. This is without prejudice to any proposals to include material that might not have such an association or is otherwise uncontroversial.

2. The display of material will have an association with the Citizens, City or district of Belfast.

3. Material removed from any part of the exhibition with an association with a community must be replaced with material having the same community association, unless otherwise agreed between the parties.

4. Narratives will be neutral reflecting a factual position and will not seek to promote or criticise any political party, view or tradition.

5. Material relocated from elsewhere in the City Hall for display in the exhibition space is defined as part of the permanent exhibition.

Without prejudice to the above principles, the parties agree to the following default arrangement with regard to decisions on revision and future content of the exhibition-

A. Any proposals will be referred to the City Solicitor who will commission an assessment of the impact of such proposals in terms of equality and good relations impact.

B. The proposals and report dealing with the impacts will be referred to the Shared City Partnership for comment.

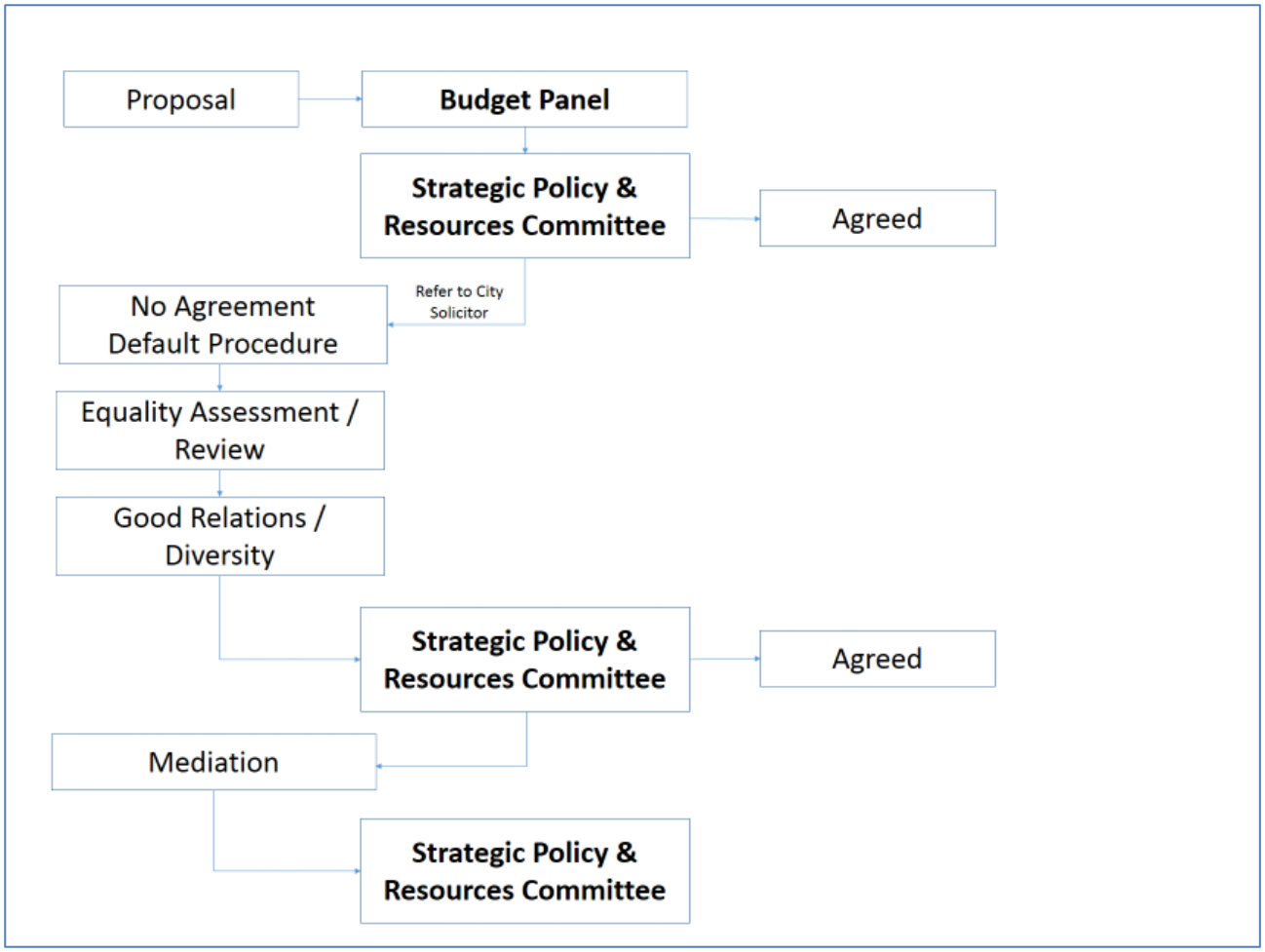
C. The matter will then be reported to SP&R. The parties agree to address issues within the spirit of this agreement and to work toward reformulating such proposals, if required, to take account of any identified impacts and the views expressed by the Shared City Partnership.

D. In default of agreement the parties agree that the proposals will be subject to mediation.

Mediation will take place facilitated by an independent senior legally qualified member of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Service. Mediation will take no longer than 4 weeks. In the event that mediation has not been successful in formulating a proposal with which the parties agree, the proposal will be referred back to SP&R for consideration and decision.

The parties concur that this agreement creates a legitimate expectation that each will respect the principles upon which it is based and that they will work to resolve issues generally and in the manner set out. The parties accept that a failure to work and produce outcomes within the spirit and principles of this agreement may form the basis of a call-in in the context of Section 41 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 and that this agreement will be material to consideration of such issues and/or in relation to any complaint made to the Equality Commission alleging breach of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (NI) 1998.

Summary of Memorabilia Refresh Process



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Equality Screening Template

The Council has a statutory duty to screen. This includes our strategies, plans, policies, legislative developments; and new ways of working such as the introduction, change or end of an existing service, grant funding arrangement or facility. This screening template is designed to help departments consider the likely equality impacts of their proposed decisions on different groups of customers, service users, staff and visitors.

Before carrying out an equality screening exercise it is important that you have received the necessary training first. To find out about the training needed or any other queries on screening, contact the Equality and Diversity Officers (job-share) Stella Gilmartin or Lorraine Dennis on extension 6026/6027or by email equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

The accompanying **Screening Guidance** note provides straightforward advice on how to carry out equality screening exercises. Detailed information about the Section 75 equality duties and what they mean in practice is available on the Equality Commission's website[1].

The screening template has 4 sections to complete. These are:

Section A - provides details about the policy / decision that is being screened

Section B – gives information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts on all equality groups.

Section C - has 4 key questions in relation to obligations under the Disability Discrimination Order

Section D - is the formal record of the screening decision.

[1] http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf

Section A

Details about the policy / decision to be screened

1. Title of policy / decision to be screened:-

Request for a Permanent Plaque to Commemorate World War I Nurses

2. Brief description of policy / decision to be screened:-

(Explain - Is this a new, revised or existing policy? Are there financial / legislative / procurement implications?)

The Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 25th October, 2019 agreed to defer a request, which had been received from The Royal College of Nursing History of Nursing Network, to install a permanent plaque in the City Hall to commemorate the role of nurses during World War I, to the Party Group Leaders' Forum.

The Party Group Leaders' Forum at its meeting on 13th February, agreed that the matter should be considered, in line with the agreed Memorabilia Refresh Policy, by the Shared City Partnership.

3. Aims and objectives of the policy / decision to be screened:-

(What is the policy trying to achieve?)

The Royal College of Nursing History of Nursing Network (HON) is made up of retired nurses who enjoy discovering and documenting local history in relation to the nursing profession.

The Network have been involved in a number of key projects and events, which have received wide spread interest and praise from the public and media, in conjunction with the WW I centenary events committee. Members have also gathered information on local nurses who had served during the Great War and produced a booklet entitled "Nurses Voices from WW I – The Northern Ireland Connection". An exhibition was also developed.

The Network have approached the Council to seek permission to erect a permanent plaque in the City Hall to recognize the role of those nurses who dedicated their lives to caring for casualties of WW I. The organisation has raised funds for the plaque and, if approved, the plaque will be made in similar design, size, format, font and text to other plaques in the City Hall to ensure continuity. The Network have also suggested that the following text be displayed:

Presented to Belfast City Council by the Royal College of Nursing History of Nursing Network Northern Ireland

In tribute to the Nurses who dedicated their lives to caring for the casualties of WW I and to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice

Tradimus Lampada (translation "We carry the Torch")

Unveiled on ---------- By ----------

4. On whom will the policy / decision impact?

Consider the internal and external impacts (both actual or potential) and explain:-

Staff	**YES**/NO
Service users	**YES**/NO
Other public sector organizations	**YES**/NO
Voluntary / community groups / trade unions	**YES**/NO
Others, please specify Visitors to the City Hall	**YES**/NO

5. Are there linkages to other Agencies/ Departments?

The Council's Property Maintenance section have confirmed that there is a requirement to consult with/seek approval from Heritage and Planning.

Section B

Information on the consultation process, supporting evidence gathered and has 4 key questions outlining the likely impacts for equality and good relations

6. Outline consultation process planned or achieved

At its meeting on 24th November, 2017, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved a City Hall Exhibition Refresh Policy, which reflects the principles shared between parties in reaching agreement on establishing the City Hall Exhibition. Those principles are also extended to any proposals for future changes and arrangements for mediation in respect of anything which may be politically contentious are included. As part of the process any proposals and reports dealing with any equality or good relations impacts are to be referred to the Shared City Partnership for consideration and which will be guided by the agreed principles within the Refresh Policy

In addition, in order to inform the assessment on paying due regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity and regard to the promotion of Good Relations, information from previous consultations, such as promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment and the Gender Action Plan 2018-21 were also utilised.

7. Available evidence

What evidence / information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Set out all evidence below to help inform your screening assessment.

It is important to record information gathered from a variety of sources such as: monitoring information; complaints; research surveys; consultation exercises from other public authorities.

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information and engagement
Religious belief	In terms of religion or religion brought up in, the 2011 Census indicates that 48.8% of Belfast residents are from a Catholic community background and 42.3% from a Protestant background. Christianity remains the main religion, with religious diversity reflected through Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish. In the context of Northern Ireland there are correlations between political, religious and racial background.
Political opinion	In the context of Northern Ireland there are correlations between political, religious and racial background.
Racial group	According to the Census 2011, 96.7% of Belfast's population is white. Just over 3% of the population are from an ethnic background. In the context of NI there are correlations between political, religious and racial background.
Age	None – not relevant.
Marital status	None – not relevant.
Sexual orientation	None – not relevant.

Men and women generally	The most recent population estimate from NINIS, reveals that the population of the Belfast Local Government District at 30th June 2017 was 340,220, of which 165,120 (48.5%) were male and 175,100 (51.5%) were female.
Disability	None – not relevant.
Dependants	None – not relevant.

8. What is the likely impact (indicate if the policy impact is positive or negative) on <u>equality of opportunity</u> for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? What is the level of impact?

Section 75 category	**Likely impact?**	**Level of impact? Minor/Major/None**
Religious belief	The information gathered, both demonstrates the complexity of some of the issues relating to characteristics listed under Section 75, however the information gathered demonstrates minor positive impact in relation to religious belief, political opinion, racial group and gender.	Minor/ positive
Political opinion		Minor/ positive
Racial group		Minor/ positive
Age		
Marital status		
Sexual orientation		
Men and women generally		Minor/ positive
Disability		
Dependants		

9. Are there opportunities to better promote <u>equality of opportunity</u> for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	The information gathered demonstrates and inter relationship between the protected characteristics listed under Section 75. In particular an action contained within the Gender Action Plan 2018-21 aims to consider the use of the new exhibition space to further promote/ tell stories of female role models and this proposal would achieve that aim. In addition, although no definitive information is available, it is acknowledged that approximately 210,000 men from the island of Ireland fought in the Great War and 49,000 of these men were killed and nurses from all sections of the community dedicated their lives to the care of WW I soldiers and veterans	
Political opinion		
Racial group		
Age		
Marital status		
Sexual orientation		
Men and women generally		
Disability		
Dependants		

10. To what extent is the policy likely to impact (positive or negatively) on <u>good relations</u> between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? What is the level of impact?

Good relations category	Likely impact?	Level of impact? Minor/Major/None
Religious belief	Good relations issues are conventionally understood to be between the two main communities in Belfast. Political representatives have not indicated that this decision to be relevant to good relations. However, it is acknowledged that men from both communities fought in the Great War. In addition, nurses from all backgrounds cared for those injured and sick soldiers and veterans regardless of religion, political opinion and race.	Minor/ positive

Political opinion	"	Minor/ positive
Racial group	"	Minor/ positive

11. Are there opportunities to better promote <u>good relations</u> between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	**If Yes, provide details**	**If No, provide reasons**
Religious belief	The organisers have requested that an event be held for the unveiling of the plaque and, raising awareness of the Council's approach to an inclusive and diverse society may counter any perceived negative impact.	

Section C

Belfast City Council also has legislative obligations to meet under the **<u>Disability Discrimination Order</u>** and Questions 12-13 relate to these two areas.

Consideration of Disability Duties

12. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity for the Council to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Explain your assessment in full

There are no opportunities within this decision to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life.

13. Does this proposed policy / decision provide an opportunity to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life?

Explain your assessment in full

There are no opportunities within this decision to actively increase the participation by disabled people in public life.

14. Multiple Identities

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy with multiple identities

Not applicable.

15. Monitoring Arrangements

Section 75 places a requirement the Council to have equality monitoring arrangements in place in order to assess the impact of policies and services etc; and to help identify barriers to fair participation and to better promote equality of opportunity.

Outline what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties.

Equality	**Good Relations**	**Disability Duties**
Comments or complaints	Comments or complaints	Not applicable

Section D

Formal Record of Screening Decision

Title of Proposed Policy / Decision being screened
Request for Permanent Plaque to Commemorate World War I Nurses.

I can confirm that the proposed policy / decision has been screened for –

x	equality of opportunity and good relations
x	disabilities duties

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is – *(place an X in the appropriate box below)*

	*__**Screened In**__ – Necessary to conduct a full EQIA

x	*__**Screened Out**__ – No EQIA necessary (no impacts) The decision will have no negative impact on any Section 75 group.

	* **Screened Out -** Mitigating Actions (minor impacts) • Provide a brief note here to explain how this decision was reached: • Explain what mitigating actions and / or policy changes will now be introduced:

Formal Record of Screening Decision *(cont)*

Screening assessment completed by (Officer level) -

Name: Lisa McKee Date: 3 March 2020
Department : Legal and Civic Services Department

Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature below

Screening decision approved by -

Name: Sarah Williams Date: 3 March 2020

Department: Legal and Civic Services Department

Signature: please insert a scanned image of your signature below

Please save the final version of the completed screening form and forward to the Equality and Diversity Officer – equality@belfastcity.gov.uk. The screening form will be placed on the BCC website and a link provided to the Council's Section 75 consultees.

For more information about equality screening contact –

Stella Gilmartin / Lorraine Dennis
Equality & Diversity Officer *(job-share)*
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS
Telephone: 028 9027 0511
equality@belfastcity.gov.uk

Appendix 3

Proposed wording

Presented by the

Royal College of Nursing

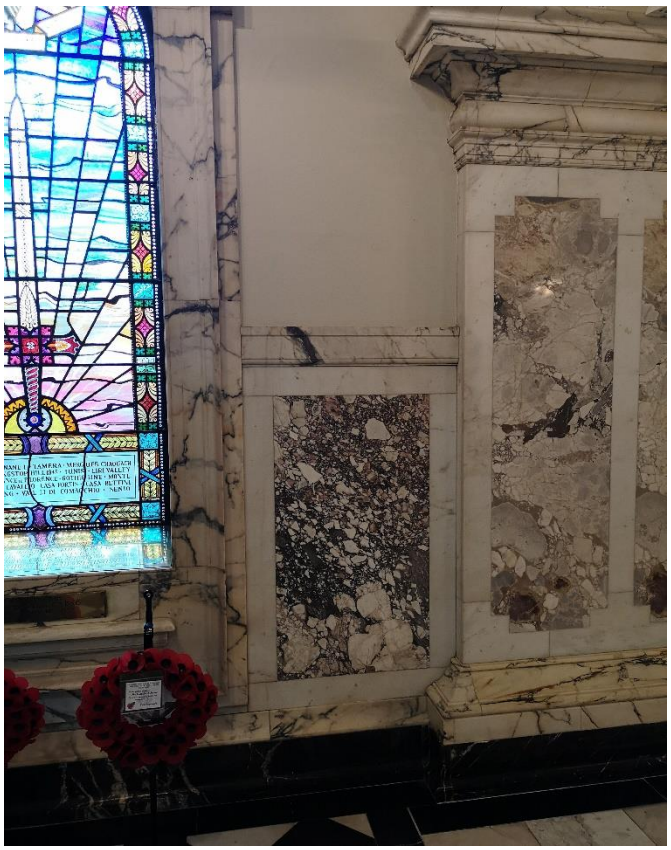
History of Nursing Network

Northern Ireland

In tribute to the nurses who dedicated their lives to caring for the casualties of WW1 and to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice

Tradimus Lampada

Plaque location at main marble



Plaque design similar to existing plaques.

Belfast City Council

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 9th March 2020
Date:	March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	✓
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	✓	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 9th March 2020.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and the recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 9th March 2020 including: **PEACE IV CYP1** Tech Connects - Accepting participation level of 80% of SEUPB's required 26 hours to enable closure of existing contract **PEACE IV CYP 4** – Young Advocates, to deliver additional campaigns and cohort in order to deliver the full outputs/ participants **PEACE IV BPR4 -** Belfast and the World – reschedule the EU study visit to Ypres, Belgium planned for 27 March 2020 to a later date

	Bonfire & Cultural Expression Programme - to approve the SCP's proposed model for the 2020 Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme and to retain the current independent panel member for the next 12 months **Inclusive Cities** - To approve the attendance of the Strategic & Operational leads or their nominees at Inclusive Cities conferences as required, including the learning exchanges to cities in Europe throughout the life of the project, subject to travel and accommodation costs being covered by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity. **Request for Nurses Plaque in City Hall** - The Partnership agreed that the request be granted, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. **TREK Initiative** - that small scale hospitality is provided at City Hall for the children participating in the tour of City Hall at a maximum cost of £1000;
3.0	**Main report**
3.1 3.2	Key Issues The Shared City Partnership (formerly known as the Good Relations Partnership) is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis. The key issues on the agenda at the March 2020 meeting were: • Presentation on City Centre Connectivity Study • Presentation on Belfast Mobility Project • Update on PEACE IV Secretariat • Update on PEACE IV CYP Theme • Update on PEACE IV SSS Theme • Update on PEACE IV BPR Theme • Shared City Partnership Response to draft Resilience Strategy for Belfast • Update on Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme 2020 • Update on Inclusive Cities • Request for Support for Trek Initiative More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the minutes of the meeting attached as an appendix.
3.3	Financial & Resource Implications All financial implications are covered through existing budgets pending confirmation of the allocation of funding from The Executive Office.
3.4	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.
4.0	**Appendices**
4.1	**Appendix 1** Copy of the minutes of the Shared City Partnership of 9th March 2020

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY 9th MARCH, 2020

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors M. Kelly. Magennis and Smyth.

External Members: Mr. S. Dallas, Education Authority;
Miss. G. Duggan, Belfast City Centre Management;
Mr. S. Hamilton, Chief Executive, of the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce;
Dr. Y. Hanore, NI Inter-Faith Forum;
Mr. M. O'Donnell, Department for Communities; and
Ms. Ann Marie White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Ms. D. McKinney, Programme Manager;
Ms. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. S. Conlon, Area Cleansing Manager;
Ms. M. Higgins, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Ms. B. Arthurs, Mrs. O. Barron, Ms. H. McClay, Mr A Cole and Mr. I. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th February were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the amendment that Ms. H. McClay had been in attendance at the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation – City Centre Connectivity Study

Ms C. Persic, Regeneration Project Officer attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson. The Partnership was provided with an overview on the links between a 'Bolder Vision for Belfast' and the priorities and objectives contained within the Belfast Agenda. In that regard, she referred to the provision of improved access for walkers and cyclists and the promotion of urban regeneration in a sustainable way. The Regeneration Project Officer provided an outline of the various stages of the vision including the data collection exercise and stakeholder participation, culminating in the publication of a draft vision for the city.

The Partnership was provided with an overview of the need for behavioural and policy change required, highlighting issues such as the climate emergency, traffic congestion and

accessibility. She provided an overview of the themes incorporated within the societal change required including, amongst other things, embracing the city's rivers, community focussed regeneration and a reduction on a reliance on cars as a means of transportation. The members of the Partnership were provided with a range of transformation ideas which included a fully pedestrianised city centre, free public transport and green shared spaces, The Partnership was provided also with an implementation timeline involving a move to phases two and three of the project, culminating in the commencement of intervention measures, as part of the vision, by 2023.

The Partnership stressed the importance of working closely with the Department for Communities and Infrastructure and for the requirement to secure ministerial approval to progress the scheme, culminating in a public consultation exercise. The Partnership recognised the aspirations contained within the scheme and of the need to improve connectivity within the city and identified the public health benefits associated with a successful intervention programme.

The Partnership thanked the Project Regeneration Officer for her informative presentation and she departed from the meeting.

Presentation – Belfast Mobility Project

Dr. B. Sturgeon and Professor D. Bryan attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson

The Partnership Members were provided with an update on the Belfast Mobility Project and of the methodology used to collect that data including GPS Tracking, Questionnaires and Walking Interviews. Dr. Sturgeon stated that the research undertaken had focussed on North Belfast and the city centre and had focussed on two distinct themes namely; a divided landscape and a shared landscape, The Partnership was provided with statistical analysis on the behavioural patterns of both communities in terms of their divided pathways and activity spaces and the time spent moving within or through different types of spaces.

The data presented highlighted that both communities spent the highest percentage of time in mixed spaces visiting large retail outlets including the city centre. The data showed also that the least amount of time shared in the north of the city was in parks, with a figure of 3.3%. Dr. Sturgeon presented the Members with variance between perceptions and the empirical data on where communities felt safe and their actual behavioural patterns. In regard to the city centre, the research suggested that individuals who had concerns about threats of violence or perceived threats about their community identity, were less likely to view the city centre as a shared or inclusive space. The data presented indicated also that, factors such as age, gender, community identity and socioeconomic status appeared to have little or no impact on perceptions of the city centre.

Professor Bryan stated that the data collected had been researched over a period of twelve months and indicated that shared events appeared to have a positive impact on how safe communities felt in mixed space areas. He stated that a baseline profile had now been completed, as a starting point, to address many of the mobility issues and mobility restrictions indicated by the research.

The Partnership requested that it wished to receive the final report in the matter, after the research programme had been completed and thanked both Dr. Sturgeon and Professor Bryan for their detailed and informative presentation and they departed from the meeting.

Update on PEACE IV

Update on Peace IV Secretariat

The PEACE IV Programme Manager provided the Members with an update on the Peace IV Local Action Plan. In regard to underspend proposals, it was reported that points of clarification had been submitted to SEUPB in relation to both the SSS and BPR proposals. In his regard the SEUP had indicated that the SSS proposal was being progressed for a decision by the Director whilst the BPR proposal in respect of St Comgalls was being considered by the Financial Control unit prior to approval. The Partnership was advised also that the SEUPB had stated that proposals to reallocate funding across themes would now be considered and that project spending and underspends were monitored on a quarterly basis.

In regard to the delivery timeframe, the Partnership was informed that discussions in respect of an extension request was being progressed with SEUPB and that the advice given was that, a formal request for extension should be delayed until such times as all projects were fully mobilised and that the members would be kept updated on the position in regard to any extension request. The Partnership was informed that SEUPB was undertaking a verification exercise in regard to outputs in respect of the CYP theme and that information in that regard had been submitted to that body

The Members were informed that a new Programme Support Assistant had been recruited within the Peace IV team and that all Peace IV costs were recoverable subject to eligibility criteria The Partnership were informed also that the Period 20 claim was being verified currently and that the claim in respect of Period 21, totalling £310,073, was being prepared for submission on 6th March, 2020.

Noted.

Update on Peace IV – Children and Young People

The Partnership was provided with an update on the progress to date in respect of the CYP theme, under the Peace IV Local Action Plan . The Members were advised that under CYP1- Tech connects, the secretariat was completing a verification of outputs and was awaiting a final report from the delivery partner, with the final proposal being submitted in March 2020 and contract award scheduled for April 2020.

To close the existing contract, members were requested and agreed to accept achievement of contact hours for the current provider as 80% of SEUPB's requirement of 26 hours contact, as opposed to the contracted level of engagement based on the difficulties with the projrect.

In respect of CYP 2- Playing our Part in the City, the Members were advised that the project was progressing and was actively recruiting participants. In regard to the CYP3 – on the Right Track- Sports element, the members were informed that a procurement exercise, in respect of residential activities, had been advertised with a potential contract award date of 30th April, 2020.

Under CYP 3 - On the right track- Personal Change element, the Partnership was informed that Extern was delivering Cohort 2 and that verification of Cohort 1 was being undertaken. With respect to CYP4- Young advocates, the Members were informed that due to timing restrictions, Cohort 2 of the project, which had run from January to June 2019, had been unsuccessful in the completion of their campaign and that the delivery partners had

experienced problems associated with the re-engagement of young people. To address this shortfall, it was reported that the delivery partner had proposed to deliver an additional cohort, comprising an intensive 2 week training programme, involving 20 young people, on a good relations and campaign programme, with no additional costs being incurred. Members agreed to this approach

The Members were advised that under CYP 5-NIHE Local Area network partner delivery, the full staffing compliment with NIHE would be in place from March 2020 and that the NIHE was re-engaging with previous groups, that had signed up to the project, during the periods 2018 and 2019.

Noted and Agreed.

Update on Peace IV - Shared Spaces and Services

The Programme Manager provided an update on the progress made to date in respect of the SSS theme, within the Peace IV Local Action Plan. She referred to a number of capital projects which were being undertaken as part of that initiative including, Springfield Dam, where the contactor had commenced development of the site. In regard to programming, the Partnership was informed that a sub-group had been established, with officers from Council departments engaged, to identify strategic alignment with other Council strategies. She referred to other projects undertaken including, Space and Streets resilience and outreach work undertaken as part of a pilot Youth Civic Engagement programme. Linkages with other groups and organisation were referred to including, the James Connolly Centre and the Glencairn Community Partnership. The Partnership were provided with a breakdown of the costs associated with the projects and were informed that the Peace IV costs were recoverable, subject to eligibility from SEUPB.

Noted.

Update on Peace IV - Building Positive Relations

The Partnership Members were provided with an update on the progress to date in respect of the Building Positive Relations (BPR) under the theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. She referred specifically to a number of projects including

- BPR1-Cross Community Area networks
- BPR2- Creative Communities project
- BPR3- Transform for Change Project
- BPR4- Belfast and the World (BATW) and
- BPR5- Supporting Connected Communities

As part of BPR1, the Programme Manager stated that an implementation meeting had been held to confirm deliverables and that a NIHE Partner Delivery workshop had been arranged, in order to provide an overview of contractual obligations to the newly appointed NIHE PEACE IV team,

Under BPR2, it was reported that an external commissioning exercise for the Artist/heritage in residence would commence in the near future and that three cluster areas including Woodvale/Ardoyne/Colin/Broadway Village would require further project facilitated sessions, while the remaining two clusters East/South would be established on a thematic basis.

Under BPR3, it was reported that it was anticipated that 9 courses would be delivered between January – May 2020. The Good Relations Manager stated that the interface clusters had received the greatest uptake and that securing Council staff, including the statutory and political sectors, remained a key priority.

Under the Belfast and the World project, the Members were informed that both year 2 and Year 3 participant groups had commenced and that 37 participants had been selected to take part in the EU trip to Belgium, in March 2020.

As part of the Supporting Connected communities, it was reported that a recently recruited project Co-ordinator was now in post and that meetings had been held with the BPR Thematic Manager in regard to deliverables, timeframes. The Programme Manager stated that under that project, an under spend had been identified and that the inclusion of childcare, incorporated into the project, would be considered at the next meeting of the Thematic Steering group.

Under the BPR5, Traveller and Roma elements of the project, the members were informed that following public information sessions, held in January, both programmes had been scoped and had been submitted for approval by both Belfast City Council and SEUPB.

Members were informed that the planned EU study visit to Ypres, Belgium on 27 March 2020 be postponed due to the emerging Coronavirus issue and agreed it is rescheduled at a later date

Noted and Agreed.

Shared City Partnership Response To Resilience Strategy Consultation

The Good Relations Manager submitted the undernoted report in respect of to the draft Belfast Resilience Strategy.

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

Further to the presentation by the Commissioner of Resilience to the Partnership in December, the draft Resilience Strategy is currently out for consultation. Officers have prepared a draft response for consideration and approval by members.

2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to consider the response from the Shared City Partnership to the document Futureproofed: draft Belfast Resilience Strategy and to advise Officers of any further comments that should be included in the response.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 80 cities in the Resilient Cities Network have now published Resilient Strategies –documents aimed at future proofing cities from major strategic risks.

3.2 **In developing its strategy, Belfast has followed an established methodology which involves:**

- **Workshops, focus groups and one-to-one conversations with over 1000 people**
- **Data analysis – including primary and secondary sources.**
- **Mapping of existing strategies within Belfast City Council and its partners- to understand work ongoing or planned in the near future**

3.3 **The strategy comprises:**

(1) an independent assessment of acute and chronic risks to the city -shocks and stresses- by the Commissioner for Resilience
(2) Identification of areas of focus to act as 'levers', to mitigate, manage or resolve several of these risks at once. These are climate resilience, children and young people and connectedness.
(3) Recommendations for programmes of work to take action This will ultimately lead to the achievement of the strategy's goal, *'To transition to a low carbon, climate resilient city in a generation'.*

Governance

3.4 **The strategy is a key document to ensure delivery of Belfast Agenda, by managing and mitigating city risks. Responsibility for the monitoring achievement of the strategy's goal and objectives will rest with the Community Planning Partnership Board, through its Resilience and Sustainability Board. The commitments made by Belfast City Council in the final document, will be delivered through the Council's normal governance framework. City partners will take responsibility for key aspects of the strategy, through their own governance structures.**

Consultation

3.5 **The public consultation opened on 10th January 2020 and will close on 10th April 2020. The associated documents can be accessed at https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/chief-executives/rmclbelfast-resilience-strategy/ and this includes an executive summary.**

Financial & Resource Implications

None for consideration by the Shared City Partnership

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

A core objective of urban resilience is to draw considerations of equality of opportunity into the policy making process, and to deliver outcomes that drive equity and inclusion. A draft equality-

screening document and rural impact assessment will be issued for public consultation alongside the draft Resilience Strategy. The result of any feedback will be used, if applicable, to update the screening and a view taken as to the best screening outcome decision. At this point, no significant adverse implications for specific equality categories have been identified, because of the high-level nature of the objectives being proposed."

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and the fact that it had taken into consideration the fact that Belfast was a divided city. The Partnership sought assurances that issues pertaining to young people and infrastructure were addressed within the strategy, with particular reference to the impact of segregation on young people. In addition, the Members asked if it might be possible to build in costs associated with the implementation of the strategy.

The Partnership agreed the draft response, subject to the above amendments.

Noted and Agreed

Bonfire and Cultural Expression 2020

The Senior Good Relations Officer submitted the undernoted report in respect of the Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme 2020.

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide detail on the proposed delivery of a 2020 Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme and seek approval for some minor amendments to the administration of the application process.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) committee that they approve the SCP's proposed model for a 2020 Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 2020 Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme

Council approved a draft District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) Action Plan in February 2020. This included a Cultural Expression Programme under which engagement on the issue of bonfires could be delivered.

3.2 Officers are seeking feedback on the terms of delivery for the 2020 Bonfire & Cultural Expression programme. The following model, which is in line with the 2019 model agreed by council, is proposed:

3.3 Council will deliver a Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme which seeks to promote positive cultural expression through better bonfire management and cultural celebrations.

Constituted groups can access funding for community events and activities that promote engagement on issues of cultural expression and diversity. The programme will be open to groups generally. Groups who do not have traditional bonfires or beacons will be eligible to be part of the 2020 programme, where their event replaces a bonfire.

Those who are awarded funding will agree to take practical steps to ensure that sites which are linked to funded events will be managed in accordance with the following criteria:

1. **No collection of materials before 1 June 2020.**
2. **Tyres or other hazardous materials should not be collected or burnt on the bonfire**
3. **Groups should not display paramilitary trappings flags or symbols on bonfires or at any funded activities.**
4. **Bonfires should be sited in a clear unenclosed space at a safe distance from buildings and overhead cables and should conform to a 1:5 ratio. Safety risks should be assessed and managed, and appropriate advice and guidance sought from the NIFRS and other relevant agencies.**
5. **Groups should not burn or display any items such as flags, emblems or election posters which are likely to cause offense or could be considered a hate crime.**
6. **Groups must comply with council health and safety and events management guidance, as well as meeting relevant licensing and insurance requirements.**

Council will provide the following resource through the programme:

- **Up to 16 bonfire beacons which will be allocated on agreed criteria**
- **Up to £1,750 for community events and activities that promote engagement on issues of cultural expression and diversity (£500 will be ringfenced for engagement activity following July events)**

3.4 **Those applications which score highest in relation to the agreed criteria will be awarded funding. This is in line with the approach in other grant programmes. Members may wish to note the change in criteria 3 which has been changed from 'supporting increased appreciation of diversity' to 'supporting increased involvement from individuals and groups from different backgrounds who would not traditionally take part in these events'. This is based on learning from 2018 and 19.**

An incentivized approach for delivery of the programme should be adopted in line with the previous three years. This means that groups can access an initial £1,250 with a second award of £500 available following July activities for those groups who met the

framework outlined above. This additional £500 will be available for activities that promote engagement on issues of cultural expression and diversity.

3.5 In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of constituted groups who are making applications for a number of sites, in order to support smaller non constituted groups. Officers recommend that rather than having to complete an application for each individual site, groups can make applications and complete monitoring returns for multiple sites. If applications are being made for multiple sites, groups will be asked to explain the rationale for this.

3.6 As in previous years, the future participation of groups who do not meet the aims of the programme, will be considered by a review panel. It is proposed that the panel composition remains the same as in previous years; that is the Chair and Vice Chair of the Shared City Partnership, an independent member of the Shared City Partnership (in previous years NIHE) and an independent member. This panel will consider the information provided and will make recommendations to the Shared City Partnership on whether each group:

- **Should receive the final 30% of the first stage payment for activity already undertaken subject to receipt of all relevant documentation.**
- **Should be eligible to receive the additional £500 for activities that develop community engagement and awareness on issues of positive cultural expression**
- **Should be eligible to take part in a 2021 programme**

3.7 At the August 2019 meeting, members agreed that *'Consideration be given to adopting a protocol in relation to the appointment of the individual assessor on the review panel'.*

The Shared City Partnership is asked to consider and agree that the role of the independent assessor should be to:

- **Provide a challenge function and independent advice to the review panel in relation to the issues that groups face in trying to meet the aims of the programme**
- **Make observations on the decision making process to ensure that it is robust and takes a consistent, fair approach to all sites**
- **Not be involved in making a final decision on the recommendation for SCP**

In previous years an independent panel member external to the membership of the Shared City Partnership was identified following consultation with participating groups on the programme. The same independent panel member has been involved for the last 3 years.

Members are asked whether they wish to consider the same member or whether they wish to seek a new member. Options for selecting a new independent member include:

1. **Retain existing independent member if they are free to continue their participation**
2. **Seek a nomination from participating groups on the 2020 Bonfire & Cultural Expression (this would be for an individual who does not work for an organization in receipt of funding from the programme).**
3. **Seek nominations from relevant individuals from the Shared City Partnership (this would be for individuals who do not sit on the SCP as all other Review panel members sit on SCP).**

3.8 The following dates for the timely administration of the programme are proposed:

Opening date	**Monday 6 April**
Information sessions	**w/c 6 April**
Closing date	**Friday 24 April**
Assessment	**29 April – 1 May**
Letters of Offer issued	**by Friday 22 May 2020**

Members should note that the closing date will be strictly applied and the programme will operate as other grant aid programmes.

3.9 Members are asked to recommend that the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services be granted delegated authority to approve funding awards. The Director has approved awards to the programme through delegated authority in the previous three years. A full list of successful applicants will be brought to the June meeting of the Shared City Partnership.

3.10 Members may wish to note that 70% (£875) of the £1,250 award will be paid initially to groups. This will be followed by the subsequent payment based on provision of appropriate receipts and delivering activity in line with the framework.

3.11 Members should note that there are challenges in monitoring how participants have complied with the guidelines. For health and safety reasons, monitoring cannot be carried out during the lighting of the bonfires themselves. Members are asked to approve that, as in previous years, Council should seek to appoint an independent contractor to review sites. In 2018, officers sought to ensure that 2 staff from the appointed company carry out this work but the company advised that only one staff member was available. As members will appreciate this is very sensitive work and there are a limited number of companies willing to carry it out.

3.12 In 2019 35 different events were held as part of the programme and 16 bonfire beacons were provided. The table below shows figures for the last 5 years.

	Number of July groups	Number of beacons
2015	44	6
2016	32	10
2017	32	9
2018	28	11
2019	35	16

The independent evaluation report for the Programme reported that;

- **the majority of sites on the programme were well maintained and met the aims of the framework**
- **the majority of sites on the programme were not fully constructed by 10 July**
- **prior to 8.30pm on 11 July no sites on the programme had any paramilitary displays**
- **prior to 8.30pm on 11 July no sites had tyres on the bonfire**

3.13 Finance and Resource Implications

£50,000 has been included in the draft Good Relations Action plan for this programme, we are awaiting confirmation from TEO on this funding allocation. In previous years NIHE has contributed £35,000 towards delivery of the programme, officers will contact NIHE to seek confirmation of this. Officers will liaise with a range of partners to secure finances for this programme, in previous years Council has provided and additional funding to cover costs incurred, particularly in relation to the provision of beacons.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The Bonfire Programme aims to promote the positive celebration of culture which will have a positive impact on good relations. The programme is delivered through the 20/21 District Council Good Relations Programme which is developed in line with the 2019 Good Relations Strategy which was Equality and Rural Needs screened."

The Senior Good Relations Officer confirmed that the scheme had been operational for a number of years and that the same model, in terms of grant funding, was being used. She confirmed that there was an onus on groups to self-regulate in terms of compliance measures and, in general, this had been successful. The members were provided with an update on the operation of the beacon scheme and the criteria used as a means to assess if a site was suitable to be awarded a beacon. She confirmed that only constituted groups were permitted to apply for funding and that the operation of the process was overseen by a Bonfire Review panel, with the expertise of an independent assessor being used.

The Partnership agreed the recommendation to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) committee that they approve the SCP's proposed model for a 2020 Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme**.**

In response to a request for the position of independent assessor going forward, the Partnership also agreed that it wished the current assessor to continue in the post, for a further

12 months, and thanked the senior Good Relations Officer for her work in ensuring the successful operation of the scheme.

Update on Inclusive Cities

The Good Relations Manager submitted the undernoted report in respect of the Inclusive Cities Project.

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide an update on the Council's involvement in the Inclusive Cities project and to seek nominations from the Shared City Partnership of members that will sit on a task group to oversee the project and to develop actions for the City.2.0

Recommendations

To provide nominations from the Shared City Partnership who will sit on a task group to oversee the project and to develop actions for the City.

3.1 Members are asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they approve the attendance of the Strategic & Operational leads or their nominees at the Inclusive Cities conferences as required including the learning exchanges to cities in Europe throughout the life of the project, subject to travel and accommodation costs being covered by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will recall that Council approved in November 2019 that Belfast agrees, in principle, to participate in the Oxford University 'Inclusive Cities' project.

3.2 The Inclusive Cities project is a knowledge exchange initiative supporting UK cities and their local partners to achieve a change in their approach towards the inclusion of newcomers in the city.

3.3 The programme aims to create a change in local authority practice and throughout the city. It does this through the:

- **Development of a City wide action plan which will have delivered a new approach to newcomers and their relationships with other city residents including a range of mainstreamed and project based activities.**

- **Development of a strong inclusive narrative on migrants in the city, reflecting its unique history and the contributions migrants have and continue to make, which will be voiced by elected representatives and staff across the city administration and their external partners.**

- **A shared commitment across the public, private and voluntary sectors, reflected in the development of a task group to deliver the new approach.**

3.4 **The project will allow for peer learning and support between the participating cities. Support will also be provided to participating cities from the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity which is the knowledge exchange arm of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford.**

<u>There are three specific requirements to participate</u>:

- **That the city nominates two people who will engage in the project on behalf of the city: a senior official or elected representative that will head up the city's taskforce.**

- **An operational lead who has capacity to develop and deliver the action plan and manage the taskforce and is able to drive forward progress day-to-day.**

- **That the council convene a taskforce of local stakeholders who can advise and endorse the action plan, and drive forward delivery in their sectors.**

- **A formal written commitment to the three year lifespan of the project.**

3.5 **It was agreed that the Chair of the Shared City Partnership would be the strategic lead for the project and would chair a task group to oversee a Council action plan. It is anticipated that the task group would be made up of representatives from the Shared City Partnership and the Migrant forum. The strategic lead will be supported by an officer from the Good Relations Unit.**

3.6 **For the next stage of the project the Strategic and Operational lead have been invited to a two day conference in Peterborough where already participating cities will share their involvement in the Inclusive Cities project. Members are asked to approve their attendance at further conferences as required throughout the life of the project subject to travel and accommodation costs being covered.**

3.7 **The partnership are now being asked to nominate Members to sit on a task group to oversee the three year project and to support the development of an action plan for Belfast.**

<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>

No direct costs at present apart from staff time.

Travel and accommodation costs for the two city representatives for each meeting and the learning exchange to cities in Europe is covered by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity.

Some of the potential actions arising from the taskforce could be accommodated within the District Council's Good Relations Action Plan.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

Participation in this project is included in the Council's 2020 Good Relations action plan and all work will support the implantation of the Good Relations Strategy which has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs. All activity will add value to the work of the Good Relations Unit."

The Members noted the information which had been provided and agreed that it wished to participate in the 'inclusive Cities' project.

The Good Relations Manager stated that a task group to oversee the project would be set up between the Shared City Partnership and the Migrant Forum. It was agreed that she would contact Members of the Partnership, seeking nominees, to participate on the aforementioned task group.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they approve the attendance of the Strategic & Operational leads or their nominees at Inclusive Cities conferences as required, including the learning exchanges to cities in Europe throughout the life of the project, subject to travel and accommodation costs being covered by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity.

Request for Plaque for Nurses in City Hall

The Members considered a report which had been prepared by the City Solicitor and Director of Legal Services in regard to the installation of a permanent plaque in City Hall main marble, to commemorate the role of the Nurses in WW1. She stated that the installation of the plaque was in line with the Council's Refresh Policy, which had been agreed in 2017. The Partnership was advised that a Quality Impact Assessment had been undertaken and the members were provided with a copy of the documentation in that regard.

The Partnership agreed that the request be granted, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Request to Support TREK Initiative

The Good Relations Manager submitted the undernoted report in respect of a request to support of the TREK initiative,

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with information regarding the TREK programme which involves 25 schools in North Belfast and to ask for approval to provide small scale hospitality for their celebration event in April/May in City Hall.

2.0 Recommendations

- **The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources committee that small scale hospitality is provided at City Hall for the children participating in the tour of City Hall at a maximum cost of £1000;**
- **That the Partnership contacts the Department of Education and the Education Authority to ascertain if support could be provided for the project to enable it to be extended across other areas in Belfast and beyond;**
- **That the Partnership contacts The Executive Office to consider if the project could be highlighted at an appropriate forum to allow other Council areas to be made aware of the project.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 The 'Celebrating Difference Together TREK' initiative has involved 25 schools in North Belfast with their communities (over the past 7 years) through an educational programme to explore in a fun and engaging way how all families are different. Children have been encouraged to see difference as a good thing and embrace the share values of Truth, Respect, Empathy and Kindness.

3.2 Parents and community representatives are invited into school over the duration of the programme and material is used in a fun and engaging way to explore the issue of personal, family and community identity. The programme culminates in an event when all participating Primary 7 children (approximately 600) join together for a celebration. In past years these events have taken place in a number of locations such as Stormont Long Gallery, and the Boys' and Girls' Model Schools in Belfast.

3.3 The 3 fold proposed aim of the programme is to:

- **Through a programme of early intervention educate children to value and respect difference, and actively celebrate diversity.**
- **Promote and develop a positive understanding of identity within young children (4 – 11) in relation to 'themselves', 'their families' and 'their communities'.**
- **Actively and visibly demonstrate our resolve to unite as communities of difference under a banner of shared values**

3.4 The TREK programme seeks to build resilience in children in regard to self, family and community, a concept which many academic commentators have postulated is crucial to ensuring children develop a secure identity and become emotionally literate.

3.5 Tony Newman and Sarah Blackburn (Barnardo's Policy, Research and Influencing Unit) concluded in relation to children's resilience and their capacity to cope with adversities that these

fundamentally operate in 3 dimensions: the individual, the family and the external environment. The TREK initiative brings these 3 dimensions together PDMU(Personal Development and Mutual Understanding) programme which encourages children to feel affirmed and secure in regards to their own identity, understand and celebrate difference while also explore the values that unite rather than divide(TREK VALUES).

3.6 The culmination of the programme at the celebration event involves primary 7 children in participating schools joining together wearing TREK T-shirts as a powerful image of the shared (TREK) values that unite us. This event in North Belfast has become a visible and unifying 'rite of passage' for our children and has given positive affirmation and hope to a new shared future.

3.7 They have asked that this year if the Council could provide a tour of the City Hall for the participating children over a period in April/May which is being discussed with City Hall Facilities Management. In the case, that such visits are feasible, members are asked to approve that small-scale hospitality is provided for the children at a maximum cost of £1,000.

3.8 It should be noted that this is an initiative which is organised through the schools which has been devised by the Principal of Lowwood Primary School who manages the overall logistics of the programme.

3.9 Past funders have been Housing Executive, DENI and Community Relations Council and we have been grateful for their support in raising awareness of the need to display tolerance and embrace shared values in our schools and wider community.

3.10 Mr Patterson, the Principal of Lowwood Primary School would be keen that the model be replicated in other parts of Belfast but also in other Council areas. Therefore, Members may wish to recommend that the project be considered strategically by the Department of Education and Education Authority which have the remit for programmes in schools and by The Executive Office which would have the reach into other Council areas through the DCGRP. They may wish to consider the project as one which could be highlighted at an appropriate forum.

<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

The tours will be provided through City Hall staff. The only cost will be that towards hospitality which can be covered through existing budgets.

<u>Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Assessment Implications</u>

The project is about promoting good relations and equality and by extending the programme, this will have a positive impact on the participants and their communities."

The Partnership considered the aforementioned report and agreed to the recommendations contained therein, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Message of Support

The Partnership agreed that its best wishes for a speedy recovery be conveyed to its fellow Partnership member, Mr. Ian McLaughlin.

Chairperson

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STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	This paper, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function rooms received up to 6 March 2020 which appear to the Function Management Unit to comply with the criteria previously established by the Committee and are recommended for approval.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • approve the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 6 March 2020 as set out in the attached appendix subject to measures that may need to be taken in the current circumstances.
3.0	**Main report**

3.1	Background Information
3.1.1	Members will be aware that the Committee, at its meeting of 6th January 2017, agreed to modify the criteria governing access to the City Hall function rooms for external organisations.
3.1.2	The Committee also agreed to the implementation of room-hire charges for some categories of function, and also revised the approach to the provision of civic hospitality for functions on foot of the agreed efficiency programme. Some further modifications to this approach were agreed at the Committee's meetings of 24th March 2017, 23rd June 2017, 23rd June 2019 and 25th October 2019.
3.2	Key Issues
3.2.1	The existing revised criteria and scale of charges have been applied to the various requests received and the recommendations herein are offered to the Committee on this basis for approval.
3.2.2	The schedule attached at Appendix 1 covers a number of applications for functions, which are scheduled for 2020 and 2021 and are included in order to permit the organisers to commence their event planning and communications activity as early as possible.
3.3	Financial & Resource Implications The implementation of charging for external functions has commenced, in line with the Committee's decisions in the matter.
3.4	Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of Function requests received up to 6 March 2020.

MARCH 2020 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2020 EVENTS						
Women's Tec	3 June 2020	**Launch of Connect4Women Programme** – Launch of a new programme ran by Womens Tec aimed to aid women in the community to return to employment. Numbers attending – 60	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception
Now Group	17 June 2020	**Now Group Graduation –** Celebration event to mark completion of training programs ran by Now Group for individuals with learning difficulties, disabilities and Autism. Numbers attending – 300	C & D	No (Charity)	No hospitality	Approve No charge, No hospitality
St Malachy's OB Youth Football Club	20 June 2020	**5th Anniversary Dinner –** celebration dinner to mark 5th anniversary of Youth Football Club. Numbers attending – 140	C & D	Yes - £300	Yes, Wine Reception *(Celebrating anniversary)*	Approve Room charge Wine Reception
Abbeyfield Belfast	July 2020	**60th Anniversary Celebration –** afternoon tea to celebrate 60th anniversary of the charity. Numbers attending – 120	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception
Intercultural Education Service	14 September 2020	**Schools of Sanctuary Celebration Awards –** celebration event to award schools for promoting intercultural environment within the school. Numbers attending -200	C	Yes - £115 *(Public Body)*	No hospitality *(Public Body)*	Approve Room charge No hospitality
Lupus Support Group NI	24 October 2020	**Celebration of introduction of Lupus Support Nurse in Belfast –** event to mark introduction of first Lupus Specialist Nurse in Belfast Trust. Numbers attending – 50/60	C	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception

MARCH 2020 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

Health and Social Care Board	19 October 2020	**Launch of Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Prevalence Study –** event to launch first ever prevalence study in NI of children's mental health. Numbers attending – 350	C	Yes - £300 *(Public Body)*	No hospitality *(Public Body)*	Approve Room charge No hospitality
2021 EVENTS						
Blackie River Community Group	27 February 2021	**Celebration event for the Fresh Starts Program –** celebration event to mark completion of Fresh Start Programme aimed at tackling deprivation, improving health, creating employment and educating young people. Numbers attending – 400 max	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea Coffee and Biscuits	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception
British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies	9 September 2021	**Welcome Reception for 51st Annual Conference –** welcome reception linked to 3 day international conference taking place in ICC Belfast. Numbers attending – 500	A & B	No *£300 waived due to links with Visit Belfast*	No Hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality
Belfast Samaritans	3 December 2021	**60th Anniversary Celebration –** dinner to celebrate 60th anniversary of work of charity in Belfast providing emotional support to those in need. Numbers attending - 100	C & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Wine Reception *(Celebrating anniversary)*	Approve No charge Wine Reception

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 10 March 2020
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS),

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its March 2020 meeting and present minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to • Note the key issues arising at the meeting and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 10 March 2020 at appendix 1.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**Key Issues** <u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u>
3.1.1	Following the completion of their audit of the financial statements, the Panel considered the **NIAO Annual Audit Letter**, where the Local Government Auditor (LGA) reported

	positively on the 2019-20 financial statements with an **unqualified audit opinion**. This letter will be published on our website. Our financial accounts are a fundamental part of the council's overall corporate governance framework and the unqualified NIAO audit opinion provides valuable assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
3.1.2	The NIAO went on to report that the **Report to those Charged with Governance for 2019/20**, which outlines the system / control issues arising from their audit, contains **5 recommendations for management action, none of which are priority one (i.e. significant or material in nature)**.
3.1.3	In addition, the Panel also considered the **NIAO Improvement Audit and Assessment Report**, which examined the council's performance improvement and reporting duties, including an assessment of our performance for 2018/19 and our 2019/20 improvement plans. The NIAO have issued **an unqualified audit opinion**, have made no statutory recommendations and have made 3 proposals for improvement.
	<u>Audit and Risk Panel</u>
3.1.4	The Audit and Risk Panel was well attended and engaging and this is reflective of the pivotal role the Panel has in assisting the council in continually improving the governance arrangements of the Council. The annual update of the **Audit and Risk Panel's terms of reference and programme of business for 2020** were agreed, with the planned meeting dates for the remainder of the year to be re-examined.
	<u>Internal Audit and Corporate Risk Management</u>
3.1.5	The Panel noted the **audit plan for 2020/21** indicating that they were content that it provided them, and therefore Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, with the necessary assurances over the councils risk, control and governance arrangements.
3.1.6	**The Panel noted the progress being made against the annual audit plan**, with 4 audits finalised in the period December 2019 – February 2020, with the audit of IT asset management receiving an assurance opinion of major improvement required and that management had put in place an action plan to further strengthen controls on this area to protect the council against the evolving risk of cyber attack. The Panel received an update on the **AGRS review of organisational culture**, recognising that was the first time this area had been reviewed, that CMT planned to take forward the areas for

	consideration and that this was a welcome piece of work. Following discussion, the Panel agreed to defer the audit of PEACE IV and Houses of Multiple Occupation to the 2020/21 plan.
3.1.7	The Panel considered the **new corporate risk dashboard** which provided them with information on; compliance with the quarterly risk review process; the number of risks within our agreed risk appetite and; key issues arising from the quarterly review; and indicated that the content and format of the dashboard met their information needs.
3.1.8	The Panel enquired about services that had not yet completed their **annual business continuity exercise** by the end of March 2020 and the Head of AGRS reported that currently all critical services are actively involved in ensuring readiness to respond to potential interruption to service delivery due to the coronavirus.
3.1.9	The Panel received an update on the recent exercise to examine the **recommendations that related to pre 2017 audits and that had not yet been implemented by management** and asked that AGRS ensure that these actions are followed up to ensure that they are being progressed in line with the revised implementation dates provided by management. <u>Corporate Health and Safety, Absence Management and Performance Improvement</u>
3.1.10	The Panel received quarter 3 reports on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. The Panel welcomed the additional information on work related violence and received assurance that these matters were referred to the PSNI where appropriate. The Head of Human Resources provided the Panel with an update on how HR policies would be applied to staffing situations that could arise as a result of the **coronavirus risk**. The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Finance and Resources further updated the Panel on the work that was being done on the councils response to the coronavirus risk and that the Chief Executive would be convening a meeting with other organisations regarding city impact.
3.2	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None
3.3	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None known at this time.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**

	Appendix 1 - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 10 March 2020

Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 10th February, 2020

MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (in the Chair);
Councillors Carson, Hussey, O'Hara, Michael Collins;
and Ms S. Hetherington.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Strategic Director of Finance and Resources;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS);
Mr. T. Wallace, Head of Finance;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of Human Resources;
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager;
Mrs. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;
Ms. C. Kane, Norther Ireland Audit Office; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported from Councillor McKeown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd December were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Schedule of Meetings

The Panel agreed that further consideration be given to the dates of the meetings for the remainder of the year.

Leisure Centres Compensation Claims Report

The Panel was reminded that, at its meeting on 3rd December, it had agreed that a further breakdown of compensation claims, in relation to leisure centres, be reported to a future meeting. Accordingly, a report in this regard was submitted for the Panel's consideration.

Noted.

Absence Rates Quarter 3

The Panel considered a report providing information on the absence figures for the third quarter of 2019/2020. The Head of Human Resources reported that sickness absence per employee for that period had been 9.83 days against an agreed corporate target of 9.5 days. She advised that the number of absences which had been classified as long term (20 days or more) during the quarter had been 66.28%, which was a decrease compared to the same period last year at 69.67%.

She advised that the number of days lost per full time equivalent increased in quarter three (3.77 days), when compared to quarter two (2.99 days), and there had also been an increase of 0.22 days when compared to the same period last year (3.57 days).

In relation to Disability Related Absence, approximately 28% of absence (5781.1 days) had been recorded as disability related and 54.1% of disability related absence was being managed as long term.

In relation to the use of discretion, she reported that, in quarter three, of the 810 employees that were off due to sickness absence, discretion had been applied to 93, which accounted for 25.21% of the total absence for Quarter 2.

She informed the Panel that a number of health and wellbeing activities and initiatives continued to assist with managing attendance at work including:

- Positive Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing training;
- Stress Awareness for Managers;
- Mindfulness;
- A 'Keeping Well' event organised by the Events team; and
- Firs Aid Mental Health training.

She also highlighted that additional health and wellbeing initiatives and programmes would be developed as part of the People Strategy.

The Members welcomed the additional information on work related stress. Regarding the significant rise in absence attributed to infections, colds and flu in quarter 3 compared to quarter 2, the Head of Human Resources agreed to investigate whether this was a common issue for all organisations or particular to the council.

She also highlighted that Corporate HR and Emergency Planning were maintaining regular contact with the Public Health Agency regarding the Coronavirus, with information having been provided on Interlink, which was updated regularly. This situation would continue to be monitored and Public Health Agency advice would be followed in this regard. The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Finance and Resources also provided an update on the work that was underway corporately to prepare for the impact of the coronavirus.

Noted.

Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided the Panel with an update in relation to the Council's Health and Safety performance during the period ending 31st December, 2019. She reviewed the progress which had been achieved in relation to the key performance indicators, where the Council had fully implemented 57% of the health and safety actions and 92% of the fire actions due at the end of quarter three.

She advised that there were 52 employee accidents, with the majority being caused while lifting or carrying and 17 non-employee accidents during quarter three, with 12 of those accidents due to slip, trip or falls.

She reported that the number of employee accidents for quarter two was 52, which was 11 more than in the last quarter. She reported that the highest number of accidents had been caused by employees being injured while lifting or carrying.

The Panel was informed that the number of RIDDOR reportable accidents had by 6 from the last quarter, from 14 to 20.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager reported that there had been an increase in the number of reported Work Related Violence incidents from the last quarter, from 19 to 30, of which 11 incidents involved threatening behaviour, 9 incidents of verbal abuse and 9 incidents which involved physical violence. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager also assured members that cases were referred to the police for investigation where appropriate.

She advised that there were 52 employee accidents, with the majority being caused while lifting or carrying and 17 non-employee accidents during quarter three, with 12 of those accidents due to slip, trip or falls.

Noted.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) – Final report to those charged with governance for 2018/19

The Panel was advised that the Local Government Auditor had issued her Report to those Charged with Governance for 2018/2019.

The Auditor had not identified any significant risks as part of the audit strategy but had identified five areas where she had made prioritised and recommendations. The NIAO definition of the priority levels were:

1) significant issues for the attention of senior management which may have the potential to result in material weaknesses in internal control,
2) important issues to be addressed by management in their areas of responsibility, and
3) issues of a more minor nature which represents best practice.

In the Auditor's report there were 0 priority 1 areas, 2 priority 2 areas, and 3 priority 3 areas.

The 'Priority 2' recommendations needed to be reviewed and responded to by management and these related to:

- Non-current Assets
    - Infrastructure Assets – To develop an Asset Management Plan and review whether current depreciation policy remained appropriate;
    - Valuation of the Gasworks Site – The Council, in consultation with Land and Property Service, review its approach to calculating fair value of investment property assets; and
    - Zero Net Book Value of vehicles still in use – A review of the useful economic life and depreciation policy for vehicles was recommended.

- Future BID companies and extension to current BID companies – legal agreements to be put in place to formalise arrangements

The 3 'Priority 3' areas for response were:

- Giant's Park, North Foreshore – recommendations for best practice in relation to the process for retaining supporting documentation; and
- Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd – ensure that the company achieved a break even position at year end.

A detailed response to the management letter had been prepared, identifying timescales. Ms Hetherington commented that there was a balance to be struck between the effort in the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd achieving an exact break even position at the year-end and the benefit derived from the exercise. In accordance with the process adopted in previous years, management would monitor the progress made in implementing recommendations and would report back to the Audit and Risk Panel on the progress.

Noted.

**Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) –
Annual Audit Letter for 2018/19**

The Strategic Director of Finance and Resources updated the Panel on the Annual Audit Letter which was issued under Regulation 17 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and confirmed that the Financial Accounts had been given an unqualified audit opinion.

The Panel noted the contents of the report.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Audit Strategy

The Panel noted the NIAO Audit Strategy in respect its audit of the Council's financial statements for 2019/20.

Draft AGRS Annual Audit Strategy and Plan for 2020/21

The Panel consider a report in relation to the Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan for 2020/21.

The Pavel was informed that the plan set out the role of AGRS as an assurance provider and advisory service which directly assisted the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to internal control, risk management and good governance.

The detailed assignment plan – that is the list of areas the Service planned to review during 2020/21 - was set out in the plan appended to the report. The detailed assignment plan was based on an assessment of audit need (which took account of a number of risk factors) and the aim to audit key areas on the cyclical basis.

In addition to specific assignments, the plan provided provision for continued support to the organisation in fraud prevention / detection and investigation (including continued focus on the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment and participation in the National Fraud Initiative), whistleblowing, risk management, business continuity management and corporate governance.

The Plan has been drafted to provide a clear link between audit activity, strategic objectives (including those included in the Belfast Agenda) and corporate / key risks.

The Panel approved the Internal Audit and Risk Management Plan for 2020/21.

AGRS Progress Report March 2020

The Panel considered a report which provided an overview of the specific internal audits which had been carried out and finalised during December, 2019 and February, 2020 by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

It was highlighted that a number of audits had been completed during the period, 1 of which had received an assurance opinion of major improvement, relating to IT Asset Management; 2 audits, that is, IT Project Management and Belfast Agenda/Outcomes Framework, had an audit opinion of some improvement needed; whilst due to the nature of the review no opinion had been provided regarding the review of Organisational Culture. It was reported that action plans to address the audit issues had been agreed with management in these areas.

The Panel was informed that that the following audits were in progress:

- Payroll audit – (draft report);
- Corporate Health and Safety - Work Related Transport – (draft report);
- Pitches Strategy – (draft report);
- Property Maintenance (fieldwork);
- Resilience - (fieldwork);
- Continuous Improvement – (fieldwork);
- CNS Transition and Improvement programme – (planning);
- Performance Management – (fieldwork);
- BWUH Ltd. – (fieldwork); and
- Partnership Arrangements – (planning)

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager advised that management was requesting the deferral of the following two reviews which had been planned, until 2020/21:

- **Peace IV** – as discussions with management had indicated that there had been no substantive progress since the last report issued in May, 2019
- **Houses of Multiple Occupation –** as this function had only recently transferred to the Council from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, management had requested a deferral to allow for a 'bedding in' period.

In relation to investigations, he advised that AGRS were currently liaising with departments regarding 6 whistleblowing cases, and with the PSNI and Council departments on 2 cases which had been referred to the Police or investigation. The review of matches as part of the Council's participation in the National Fraud Initiative had been completed and report on the outcome of that exercise would be submitted to the next meeting.

The Panel noted the AGRS Progress Report for the period December, 2019 – February, 2020 and agreed that the planned audits of PEACE IV and Houses of Multiple Occupation be deferred.

Progress Update on Open Audit Actions

The Panel was reminded that actions (recommendations) agreed as part of AGRS and NIAO work, along with the names of the action owners and implementation dates were recorded on the action tracking module of an IT system known as MKinsight. Council officers had access to this system to provide updates on the progress being made to implement those actions. AGRS undertook independent monitoring and validation exercises on the progress towards implementation of those actions twice a year.

The previous validation exercise was undertaken and reported in December 2019 and the Panel had requested that AGRS undertake a further exercise focussing on recommendations that had not yet been implemented from audits undertaken in 2017 or earlier.

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services reported that the review had now been completed. At the start of the exercise, there were 89 actions that related to 2017 or earlier. These had been assessed and AGRS had discussed the continued relevance of these actions with management and determined what needed to be done to close them. In summary, 39 (43%) of these actions had been closed, and management had committed to implementing the remaining actions and had already provided or would provide new realistic implementation dates. The Panel asked that AGRS keep these under review to ensure that there no unnecessary delays in implementation.

Noted.

Corporate Risk Management QE December 2019

The Panel considered a report regarding the Corporate Risk Management for the period ending December, 2019. The Head of AGRS provided an update on the completion of the Directors quarterly assurance statements and referred to the new Corporate Risk dashboard appended to the report.

In addition, the Head of AGRS drew the Panels attention to the fact that 4 of the 15 critical services had completed and reported on their Business Continuity exercise for 2019/20, with exercises having been planned for a further 7 services, although exercise reports had not yet been submitted to confirm that they had been undertaken. A total of 4 critical services have not yet planned or undertaken their business continuity exercise.

She advised the Panel that all critical services had been reminded of the need to (1) undertake these exercises and also, bearing in mind guidance which was being provided to public authorities on the appropriate response to the coronavirus outbreak, (2) ensure that their plans were up to date, provide adequate guidance on how the Service would respond to an interruption involving higher than normal levels of staff absence, and that staff were acquainted with these plans.

After discussion, during which Members complimented the new corporate risk dashboard and the ease of which the information could be read, the Panel:

- agreed that the corporate risk dashboard met its information requirements;
- noted the position regarding compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the quarterly assurance statements completed by Chief Officers; and
- noted the update on business continuity management arrangements.

Audit & Risk Panel / Audit Assurance Board Terms of Reference & Annual Programme of Work 2020

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services reminded the Panel that, in line with good practice, the terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel and the Audit Assurance Board were reviewed on an annual basis.

She indicated that the purpose statement and terms of reference of the Panel were important because they set out the role of the Panel in the context of the Council's

governance structures. They were based on the recommended Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) model (2018 edition) for audit committees tailored, where, appropriate to Belfast City Council.

The terms of reference had last been updated in March, 2019 to reference the Panel's role in considering the assurances available on partnership arrangements and reviewing the Council's ethical framework, as per updated CIPFA guidance.

The terms of reference had been reviewed and it was consider that they did not require any further update.

She went on to summarise that the Audit Assurance Board was chaired by the Chief Executive. The principal activity of the Audit Assurance Board over the years had been to review and consider reports from internal audit, external audit and management which were to be submitted to the Audit and Risk Panel, but from a top management / Accounting Officer perspective rather than a Member perspective That process enabled the Chief Executive and the Board to be assured (or otherwise) of current risk, control and governance arrangements and consider any issues that required management priority / attention / direction.

The Audit Assurance Board terms of reference were last updated in June 2019 to also take account of the best practice updates recommended by CIPFA. These had also been reviewed the terms of reference and they require only minor update as se out in the appendix to the report.

In line with good practice the quarterly meetings of the Panel have been aligned with an indicative programme of business, designed to ensure that the Panel demonstrably addressed / discharged its roles and responsibilities as set out in its purposes statement / terms of reference. A copy of the indicative programme of business has also been appended to the report.

That the Audit and Risk Panel approved the:

- Audit and Risk Panel's purpose and terms of reference statement;
- Audit Assurance Boards constitution and terms of reference; and
- Audit and Risk Panel's indicative programme of business (noting that, as discussed earlier in the meeting, further consideration be given to the dates of the meetings for the remainder of the year.

**Mid-year report on Performance Improvement 2019/20 (Quarter 3)
(including an update on the implementation of the proposals for improvement)**

The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Finance and Resources reminded the Panel that Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act required the Council to agree improvement objectives on an annual basis and publish these in the form of an Improvement Plan. The Council's Improvement Plan 2019-20 was agreed by Council in June, 2019 and contained the Council's commitment to securing continuous improvement as well as delivery of the Improvement Objectives.

He updated the Panel on the progress which had been made against activities contributing to the six Improvement Objectives contained within the Corporate Plan 2019-20 to:

- Build the city's position as a magnet for foreign direct investment;
- Make Belfast a great place to do business by supporting entrepreneurs and business starts;
- Design and deliver programmes to address health inequalities in the city;
- Deliver city regeneration and investment projects;
- Deliver the integrated tourism strategy to increase the number of leisure and business tourists; and
- Deliver an integrated approach to employment and skills.

The Panel approved the Performance Unit's overall assessment of the status of the activities contributing to the improvement objectives at quarter 3.

NIAO Improvement Audit and Assessment 2019

The Panel considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide assurance to the Panel that BCC's arrangements to securing continuous improvement through the delivery of our Improvement Plan complied with the legislative requirements of Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 and the associated guidance.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Panel is asked to:

- **Note the Auditor's unqualified opinion, informed by an a NIAO audit and assessment carried out in Autumn 2019, that BCC has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties and has acted in accordance with the Guidance. (The NIAO letter and certificate are attached at Appendix 1 and its full report at Appendix 2)**
- **Note that there are no formal recommendations contained within the report. A number of 'proposals for improvement' have however been suggested by NIAO for consideration and actions to address these proposals are attached at Appendix 3**
- **Note the next steps for development of the 2020-2021 Improvement Plan as laid out in paragraph 3.8.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Audit and Assessment of BCC Planning and Performance Arrangements 2018-19

BCC's Improvement Plan 2018-19 was agreed by Council in July 2018. Part 12 of the Act includes a requirement for the NIAO to determine and report each year on whether:

a) The Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning; published the required improvement information and; the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance in relation to those duties (*a retrospective assessment)* and whether;
b) The Council is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its duties (*a forward looking assessment).*

3.2 The NIAO issued its conclusions following a period of audit supported by the Performance Unit. This process involved the NIAO examining the council general arrangements to improve, underpinning governance arrangements, consultation undertaken to inform the improvement objectives and performance against a range of statutory and self-imposed indicators.

3.3 Members will be aware that at the 3rd December meeting, Ms S Murphy from NIAO provided an update about the Council's Improvement Audit and Assessment Report and she advised that the Local Government Auditor had certified the improvement audit and assessment for the Council with a standard, unqualified opinion. Officers have now reviewed the report and its proposals for improvement.

3.4 As was the case in previous years BCC was considered to have complied in all respects. In particular, NIAO noted that '*the Council continues to strengthen these arrangements* [i.e. to secure continuous improvements] and…*delivered some measurable improvements to its services in 2018-19 and…demonstrated a track record of ongoing improvement.*

3.5 Following the audit the NIAO concluded in its final report, issued in November, that BCC discharged its duties in connection with (1) improvement planning and (2) publication of improvement information in accordance with Section 92 of the Act and acted in accordance with the the Department for

Communities' Guidance. The full report is included in Appendix 2.

3.6 Five proposals for improvement were included in the report of which two were resolved immediately on discovery and are not therefore included in the Appendix. The actions to implement these, alongside some of the proposals still in progress from previous years, are outlined in Appendix 3.

3.7 The 11 Councils, acting through SOLACE, continue to work together to address a number of cross-cutting issues particularly in around arrangements for the effective benchmarking of data.

3.8 <u>2019-20 and 2020-21 Improvement Plans</u>

An assessment of the 2019-20 Improvement Plan, which was approved by Council in July 2019 will be carried out in Autumn 2020.

The Strategic Hub is now working to develop the Improvement Plan for 2020-21 in line with the dates below.

CMT - Review of Improvement Objectives (CMT)	**18th Feb 2020**
SP&R Review of Improvement Objectives	**21st Feb 2020**
Improvement Objectives - 8 week consultation period opens	**24th Feb 2020**
Improvement Objectives 8 week consultation period ends	**19th Apr 2020**
CMT approve draft Council Improvement Plan	**28th April 2020**
SP&R approve Council Improvement Plan for online publication	**22nd May 2020**
Publish Improvement Plan 2020 - 21 (no later than)	**30th June 2020**

3.9 <u>Finance and Resource Implications</u>

The Council is required to cover the cost of the Audit and Assessment and the fee for the 2018-19 audit, which is calculated on the basis of time spend by NIAO on BCC's audit and on the levels and skill and responsibility involved, was £24,000. Officers made great efforts to minimise these costs by providing all required information in an accessible format at the outset.

3.10 <u>Equality/Good Relations/Rural needs Implications</u>

None."

The Panel noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum
13th February 2020

Attendance

Members:
Alderman Brian Kingston (Chair)
Councillor George Dorrian
Councillor John Kyle (for Cllr Hutchinson
Councillor Seamus De Faoite (for Cllr Lyons)
Councillor Mal O'Hara
Councillor Emmett McDonagh–Brown (for Cllr Long)
Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Fiona Ferguson
Alderman Sonia Copeland
The Lord Mayor, Councillor Daniel Baker

Apologies: Cllrs Lyons, Long and Hutchinson

Officers:
Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
John Walsh, City Solicitor
Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Alistair Reid, Director of Planning and Place
John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Lisa Caldwell, Head of Market and Corporate Communications
Eimear Henry, Senior Manager – Culture and Tourism (Item 4)
Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager (secretariat)

1. Motion – Dual Language Street Signage Policy

The City Solicitor outlined the content of the report in respect of the notion of motion on Dual Language Street Signs Policy, which would be presented to the March meeting of the SP&R committee. Queries were raised in relation to the inclusion of a recommendation relating to a minimum response threshold. Councillor Beattie agreed to circulate to party group leaders the legal opinion that he had obtained on this matter in advance of the SP&R meeting.

2. Bilingual / Multilingual Leisure Centre Signage

A report was circulated outlining various options in relation to language or languages to be used in leisure facilities with a city-wide catchment area. It was agreed that members would consider the report and provide feedback to the City Solicitor. The report would then be presented to SP&R Committee in April.

3. Inclusive Growth

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reminded members that following approval of the draft Inclusive Growth Strategy a consultation process has taken place and the results of this would be presented to the March SP&R committee. This paper would also outline the resource required to deliver the strategy and seek approval to establish a core team. Members re-iterated their support for the strategy and asked that regular updates on progress are also brought to future committee meetings.

4. Cultural Multi Annual Grants

Following queries at both City Growth and Regeneration Committee and full council, Eimear Henry clarified the position regarding the allocation of funding to Section 75 groups and a specific allocation to groups from PUL community, which would be brought to March SP&R. A full work programme for culture for the year ahead would then be taken to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in April.

5. VE day 75th Commemoration Events

This matter had been discussed at Party Leaders Forum and a report will be brought to the March SP&R Committee.

6. Planning Update

There were no significant planning related updates.

7. AOB

Bonfire Related Issue

The Director of City & Neighbourhoods services provided an update on the bonfire related meeting with councillors and community representatives and members who were in attendance agreed that it was a useful and positive meeting. Following discussion it was agreed that all East Belfast Councillors would be invited to a meeting of the Bonfire Working Group which would consider issues in relation to a proposed bonfire at Avoneil.

Quarter 3 Finance Re-allocations

The Director of Finance and Resources informed the panel that the due diligence had been carried out in relation to the funding request from Compass and the £20,000 agreed at

March Council can be allocated to them. An update on the Boxing event will provided to the SP&R committee.

The Director also updated the panel on possible financial implications of the Coronavirus which the finance team were working through. Members requested that discussions take place with DfC and DoF, through SOLACE and NILGA, on a possible financial package to local government to deal with Coronavirus.

8. Coronavirus

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided an overview of the structures and plans that are being put in place to deal with Coronavirus, both in the council and at Northern Ireland level. He particularly highlighted the need to support the elderly and vulnerable people and also continue with the message around hand washing. It was recognised that it was a rapidly changing situation and the council needs to be in a position to respond and take decisions quickly.

The Lord Mayor agreed to call a special meeting of the Council on Friday 13 March 2020 at 6.00 pm and also to call further meetings as necessary. It was also agreed that the Party Leaders Consultative Forum would reconvene on Friday at 3.00 pm in advance of the special council meeting to receive the most up to date advice and information on the virus. The Lord Mayor will also be in attendance at this meeting.

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