



Subject:	DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme Update
Date:	10 <sup>th</sup> August 2022
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director, City Regeneration & Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b> To update Committee on the ongoing DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme including an Extension of Time to the Programme and the reallocation of underspends.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b> The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the current status of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, including the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report &amp; associated brochure. A presentation will be made to Committee providing an overview of the various projects.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note that an Extension of Time has been granted for the Castle Place Kiosk and the Entries Phase 2 projects to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.</li> <li>Note the current level of underspend within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and reallocation of funding to the Bolder Vision.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>The CG&amp;R Committee have received regular updates and provided approvals relating to the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, providing updates on the £4.039m capital programme including providing approvals on time and budget implications. In August 2021 Members were updated on the Extension of Time to the programme to September 2022, and Members agreed that any further underspends realised within the Programme are reallocated under delegated authority to the Director of City Regeneration &amp; Development to meet any additional costs incurred on previously agreed and committed projects with updates on these reallocations to be brought to this Committee at a future date.</p>
3.2	<p><b><u>Main Report</u></b></p> <p>The majority of the programme is now complete, or due to complete by the end of September 2022 with the project status overview as Appendix 1 of this report. As a condition of the Letter of Offer from DfC Evaluation Reports are required on a quarterly basis, and on the completion of the projects. To this end the draft mid-term evaluation report and associated brochure are as attached in Appendix 2 &amp; 3 of this report with summary findings as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>88% of businesses surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied that the funding enabled them to take measures to enhance public confidence in returning to the businesses.</li> <li>70% of businesses reported turnover returning to at least 70% of pre-covid 19 levels.</li> <li>67% of those surveyed agreed that they were satisfied with the interventions delivered.</li> <li>60% of those surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that the interventions delivered would encourage people to live, work and invest in the area.</li> <li>57% of businesses reported footfall levels had returned to at least 70% of pre-Covid 19 levels</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>The report also includes case studies, photos and statements from a number of the businesses and community groups supported through the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and a presentation will be provided to this Committee meeting.</p>

3.4	<p>In total through this Revitalisation Programme the Council were able to support and deliver a large range of projects, many of which were aligned to the emerging Bolder Vision work promoting better use of outdoor and public space, testing alternative uses of streetscape and providing creative approaches to environmental improvement works. To enable the quick roll out of the projects Council worked flexibly to enable Café Pavement Licenses to come forward at pace, and dedicated resource to assist groups through the statutory processes of Planning, Road Orders, Street works Licenses and utility connections. A summary overview of the projects delivered below:</p>
3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Grants to Businesses to purchase equipment to help them to continue to trade or trade safely</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Over £800k in support to 454 small business grants to help SME's to deliver hand sanitisers, signage, safety equipment &amp; control measures to manage social distancing;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Grants to Business Cluster and Community Groups for physical interventions and streetscape improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ £1.1m to 51 Business Cluster &amp; Community Grant (BCCCG) capital schemes. This included a top up of £450k Councils non-recurring reallocation in 2021 to meet the demand of the scheme.</li> <li>○ Funding to 35 Community Groups and 16 Business Clusters.</li> <li>○ 7 projects delivered within the city centre and 44 projects delivered outside the city centre.</li> <li>○ 16 Community Gardens and Facilities refreshed and redeveloped to attract greater outdoor use including facilities for supporting mental health &amp; sensory spaces.</li> <li>○ 8 outdoor hospitality locations.</li> <li>○ 27 shop frontage improvement and local area environmental schemes.</li> <li>○ 9 grants aligned to upgrading and expanding sports facilities including walking paths and improving outdoor facilities.</li> <li>○ Given the success of this project, and as agreed through SP&amp;R in June 2022, Council have committed a further £600k of funding (including 10% for Integrated Design Team Support) for a further phase of the BCCG's. Officers are currently working through the process to roll this funding out in Autumn 2022 to support a further 20-25 projects.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

3.7

- **Physical Interventions and Streetscape Improvements (Council Led & BID Led)**
  - Four major city centre streetscape projects to test and pilot how we better use the city's streetscape.
  - Castle Place - Reallocating on-street parking to facilitate a pavement extension and closing one lane to traffic to implement the first stage of the High St cycle scheme. Bringing forward an iconic city centre location and kiosk structure to attract footfall and dwell time
  - Union St – pedestrianizing Union St and building out parklets to enable businesses to utilise additional outdoor space. This approach has encouraged additional businesses to take up vacant space on the street.
  - Warehouse Lane/Exchange Place – An Entries type approach to draw attention and use to the city's entries including lighting, iconic artwork and covered outdoor space for hospitality.
  - Brunswick St – closing a section of Brunswick St to deliver an outdoor leisure and hospitality venue, bringing forward a pilot for how the designs of Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 5 can transform the area permanently.
  - Linenhall St – Reallocation of on-street parking bays to deliver parklets, facilitating dwell time, business spill out and additional green infrastructure on the street.
  - Adelaide St – due to the approach taken through this Revitalisation Programme, additional funding was secured from DfI to deliver the Adelaide St project. Working with DfI to realign the street, including removing on-street parking bays to facilitate pavement extensions, prioritising public transport and delivering innovative structures with historical references, additional green infrastructure, along with additional seating and cycling parking infrastructure.
  - The Linenhall St, Brunswick St and Adelaide St projects all form early pilot schemes aligned to A Bolder Vision and the intention to bring forward the Linen Quarter Sustainable District.
  - Church Lane – Artistic cross-street lighting scheme to reinforce the pedestrianised feel to the street. Council continues to work with DfI to ensure better implementation of this pedestrianised control zone.
  - Iconic lighting interventions within the Linen Quarter, Cathedral Quarter and BID One Business Improvement Districts.
  - The Entries Phase 2 – bringing forward the next phase of the Entries project to Sugarhouse Lane, Patterson's Place and Wine Cellar St. Phase 1 of the

3.8	<p>Entries won the CBRE Ireland Excellence in placemaking Awards 2021 and this approach will be further implemented through future phases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Council Led Interventions to Encourage People Safely Back into the City</b></li> </ul> <p>Council directly delivered schemes to encourage people back into the city include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hand sanitisers introduced at key locations across the city centre.</li> <li>○ Social Distance signage and management of touch points and public seating.</li> <li>○ An enhanced cleansing operation.</li> <li>○ Enhanced Christmas Animation to promote footfall and visitors through the 2020 Christmas period</li> <li>○ A targeted marketing campaign operated across social media, radio, TV and press channels to promote Belfast as a safe and vibrant place to visit.</li> <li>○ A Belfast Gift Card delivered in conjunction with BID One and the retailers during the Christmas period to encourage spend and footfall within this key retail period.</li> </ul>
3.9	<p><b>Council Led Sustainable &amp; Active Travel Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Two new Active Travel Hubs delivered at Cathedral Gardens and Queens University Belfast.</li> <li>○ A modernised Belfast Bike Fleet.</li> <li>○ Additional Belfast Bike docking locations.</li> <li>○ An e-cargo bike pilot scheme.</li> <li>○ 10 covered cycle stands delivered across the Council Estate.</li> <li>○ This strand of the programme has attracted additional funding through the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure fund for 21/22, delivering secure cycle stands, additional covered cycle stands and cycle repair kits as reported to this Committee in June 2022. Additional proposals for 22/23 to further expand on the Active Travel Enabler projects are also under development.</li> </ul>
3.10	<p>Some of the feedback received also reflected on the wider societal and cleansing issues that are currently being experienced within the city centre and reflected that while the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme had a positive impact within the immediate locality more work is required to be done at pace to address these wider issues. Further details on the governance approach to the city centre including vulnerability, safety and cleansing is included within the City Centre All Party Working Group paper as included within the agenda for this Committee Meeting.</p>
3.11	<p><b><u>Programme Learnings</u></b></p>

	<p>The overall findings from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme show successful implementation of the projects, targeting business and community groups to operate and recover successfully from the pandemic while delivering extensive green infrastructure and active &amp; sustainable transport initiatives. In total the programme delivered over 535 grants to businesses and community groups, over 70 physical interventions &amp; streetscape improvements delivering over 1200 items of street furniture &amp; cycle infrastructure, 188 public hygiene items and over 65 marketing and animation events.</p>
3.12	<p>In addition to this, the successful development and implementation of this £4.039m programme has led to additional funding been allocated from Council, DfI and DfC &amp; private investment through the BIDs. This programme has directly led to the attraction of a further £2.3m of support to deliver the interventions as outlined within this report, contributing to the delivery of the Councils wider objectives in the delivery of the Future City Centre Programme and A Bolder Vision.</p>
3.13	<p>The programme has also helped to inform emerging projects and programmes in the form of the Council's Supporting Viable Business Destinations Programme, and the 'Vacant to Vibrant' Programme. The delivery of this programme also helped to shape and inform our input to the MAG High Streets Taskforce Living Craft Kit as reported to this Committee in February 2022 specifically in terms in the strength of developing the capacity for delivery by partners (including community / business groups) to assist in the delivery of interventions and programmes of work, and the longer lasting benefits of local projects developed for and by local groups.</p>
3.14	<p>Rolling out this programme has involved an extensive resource across Council departments and demanded a more flexible approach to how the Council delivers support and services within a very challenging environment.</p>
3.15	<p>The Programme has been extended a number of times, and this has been the experience of all of the Councils delivering out the Programme on behalf of DfC. These extensions have been required due to the ongoing NI Executive restrictions through the various stages of the pandemic, an escalation in global material supply costs and demand placed on the contractor and supply chain restricting availability of resources.</p>
3.16	<p>The Statutory Processes have also led to a number of delays within the Programme. While flexibility was quickly implemented in the Pavement Café Licensing and Planning processes the time required to work through changes to road infrastructure led to a lot of projects over-</p>

	<p>running, bringing uncertainty in terms of delivery and supply chain costs and commitment. This, in part, has been due to the number of agencies and departments required to consent to a scheme but also the resource constrictions of regional departments requiring a considerable amount of time to mobilise to support local projects on a large-scale programme.</p> <p>3.17 These findings are reflected within the Mid-Term Evaluation Report as included within Appendix 1 of this report. The report references:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There was evidence of strong partnership working and relationships that were developed and which will be sustained. The strength of delivery partners such as the BIDs and the BCCG's applicants in delivering local solutions for local needs was highlighted.</li> <li>○ A particular strength has been in the implementation of local projects through local organisations and buy in and ownership of the projects delivered.</li> <li>○ The value of working with local organisations, knowing what the specific needs of the area are to enable a proper co-design process, and the commitment to longer-term operation of the project as well as promoting wider pride in the regeneration and upkeep of the areas. Acknowledgement that some groups will require additional support although this support will inevitably lead to capacity building within the areas.</li> <li>○ The need for a flexible approach to delivery, both in terms of support to build capacity but more so through the statutory process. This level of commitment to flexibility should be incorporated within the Terms of Reference / Letter of Offer prior to undertaking a programme of this scale. Longer term the programme brings into light the role of Local Authorities in delivering local infrastructure and regeneration decisions.</li> </ul>
3.18	<p><b><u>Extension of Time</u></b></p> <p>Two elements of the programme remain uncompleted and at risk of over-running the September 2022 programme deadline and as such DfC have granted an extension to these elements of the Programme to December 2022. These projects and ongoing mitigating measures are outlined below:</p>
3.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castle Place Kiosk: following a challenge to the initial planning approval amendments have been made to the kiosk designs and Design &amp; Accessibility Statement. It is planned that the amendments will go to the Planning Committee in September 2022.</li> </ul>

	<p>Following the initial planning approval, a contract is in place to deliver the works and materials are ready for fabrication pending the Planning Committee decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entries Phase 2; Officers continue to work with DfI Officials to finalise the last details to enable the works to continue on Sugarhouse Entry. These include a drainage survey and a roof access survey of an adjacent building. Pending successful resolution of these final items it is expected that the works could be complete within 6-8 weeks.</li> </ul>
3.20	<b>Finance &amp; Resource Implications</b>
	<p>All costs associated with this paper will be met from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Capital Programme.</p> <p><b>Reallocation of Underspend</b></p> <p>As agreed at the CG&amp;R meeting in February 2022 it was agreed that the Director of City Regeneration and Development would reallocate any underspend realised within the programme to meet any additional costs on previously agreed and committed projects. To this end an underspend of £11,781 has been reallocated to meet additional costs realised within the DfI &amp; DfC contributions to the Bolder Vision budget lines of this programme. A full update on the Bolder Vision will be presented in a separate paper to this Committee meeting.</p>
3.21	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b>
	<p>Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening is complete on the overall programme with mitigating actions agreed and implemented.</p>
4.0	<b>Appendices- Documents attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Project Status Overview</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Mid-Term Evaluation Report</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Mid-Term Evaluation Report Brochure</p>