

All Party Working Group on the City Centre

Friday, 7th October, 2022

ALL PARTY WORKING GROUP ON THE CITY CENTRE MINUTES HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Aldermen Copeland;
Councillors de Faoite, Long, McCann, McCullough, and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager
Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
Ms. N. Doak, Portfolio and Programme Co-ordinator
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business and Research Development
Manager
Mrs. D. Smith, Neighbourhood Service Integration Manager
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Mrs. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer;
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

It was proposed by Councillor de Faoite and seconded by Councillor Copeland that Councillor O'Hara be appointed as the Chairperson to the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre from October, 2022 until the Local Government Elections, scheduled to be held in May 2023.

(Councillor O'Hara in chair.)

Apologies

Apologies for an inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Hutchinson and Councillor Beattie. Councillor McCann attended in Councillor Beattie's absence.

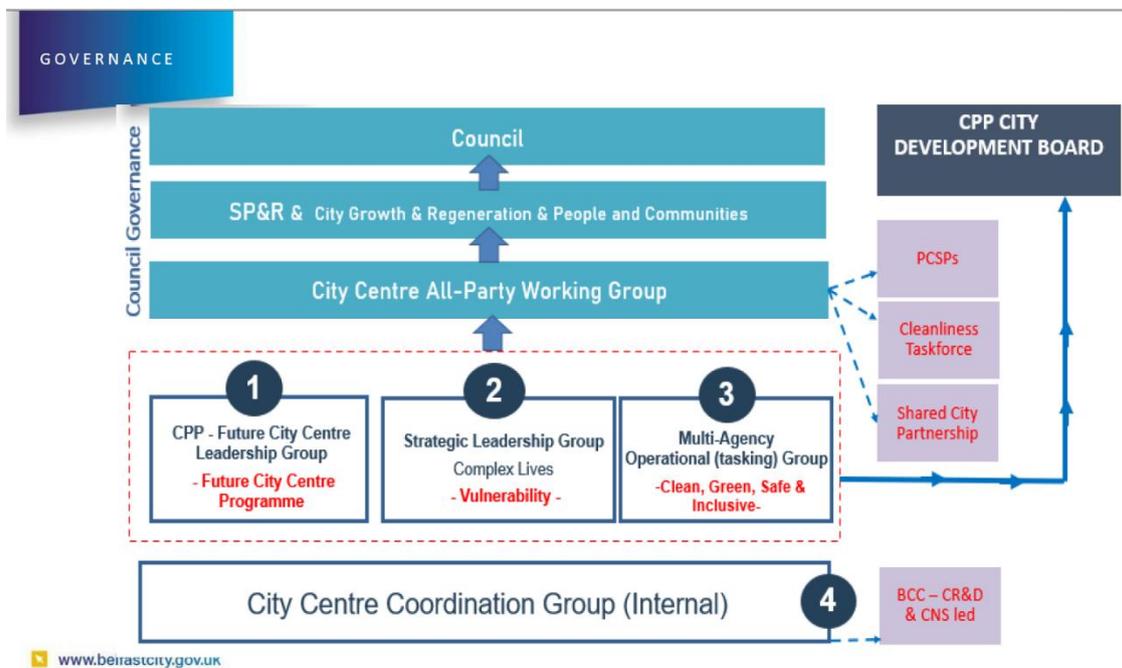
Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Governance

The Chief Executive welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the working group. He referred the Members of the group to the Terms of Reference document that had been circulated in advance and advised that the ToR had been agreed at August 2022 meeting of

the Strategic Policy and Resources committee. The Members agreed that the Group should meet monthly in the short term, rather than quarterly as set out in the ToR. The Chair requested that Build Heritage be added as a key focus to the ToR. He drew their attention to the overarching role of the City Centre All-Party Members Working Group, to identify and prioritise issues and opportunities to address specific needs with the aim of regenerating and improving the vibrancy of the city centre. He continued that these would be linked to the Council's growth aspirations and the Community Planning Partnership – City Development Board including the Future City Centre Leadership Group.



The Chief Executive and the Director of City Regeneration and Development presented the governance structure for the working group (see diagram above).

The Members of the working group emphasised the urgency to address the various issues within the city centre and expressed the need to have a joined-up approach with other agencies throughout the city. Members asked about the Complex Lives programme and what statutory agencies had committed funding so far. Officers confirmed the agencies that had agreed to co fund and that they were still waiting for confirmation from one agency. The Chief Executive advised of the priority work to secure funds and that Officers would welcome any support from Members to drive this forward. The Chief Executive agreed that the relevant Chief and Senior Officers would bring updates of the work of each of the strategic leadership groups to the meetings of the City Centre Working Group. During the discussion a member raised concerns about lack of progress around the night-time economy within the city centre. The Director of Economic Development assured members that he would bring an update on the night-time economy work to the next meeting of the Future City Centre Leadership group. He agreed to check the list of partner agencies listed in the original notice of motion and would come back with suggestions on other groups who could be included. Members asked officers to consider a standardised reporting mechanism for other groups to report into the City Centre All Party Working Group. The Chief Executive agreed to take on board members suggestions and to make amendments to reflect the discussion held at the meeting.

City Centre short-, medium- and long-term priorities

Members of the working group raised their concerns in relation to a number of ongoing issues within the city centre, specifically the humanitarian crisis Belfast was facing due to the number of drug related deaths in the city centre and agreed that the next meeting of the Working Group be focussed on vulnerability. The Chief Executive advised the Members that the Council was meeting with statutory agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to deal with the crisis and he agreed to provide updates to the group. Other issues raised by members of the group were support for local businesses such as retail and hospitality and the need to look at the night-time economy. They said there seemed to be a lack of focus or perhaps a lack of a coordinated approach to the arts in the City Centre. Much work would be required to attract more people into the city centre and would have to include an action plan to address the cleanliness of the space but most importantly the safety of its users. The Members reiterated the request that officers bring regular updates to this group. Officers agreed to take Members' suggestions on board and work them into the workplans and then bring them back to the next meeting of the group.

Noted.

Future Focus

The Director of City Regeneration and Development outlined the various programmes that would help shape the future work of the group. These included the 'A Bolder Vision for Belfast' but most importantly working in partnership with statutory agencies and other partners to help shape the discussions and focus.

After discussion, it was agreed that officers bring more details back to the next meeting of the working group.

Chairperson