



Subject:	DfC Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme Update
Date:	9 <sup>th</sup> August 2023
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"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
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 budget position.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b> The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I. Note the current status of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, including the findings of the Final Programme Evaluation Report.</li><li>II. Note that an Extension of Time has been sought for the 'Castle Place Kiosk'.</li><li>III. Note the budget position across the project lines.</li></ul>

3.0	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p data-bbox="272 210 448 241"><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="272 257 1474 689">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 2022 Members were provided with the mid-term Evaluation Report &amp; the associated brochure along with an update on the remaining projects of the Castle Place Kiosk and the Entries Phase 2. It was also previously 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 data-bbox="272 766 448 797"><b><u>Main Report</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="272 813 1474 1048">The majority of the programme is now complete, with the Entries Phase 2 project to be completed by September 2023 in line with the DfC Letter of Offer Process. 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. A Summary of the draft Final Evaluation Report is included within this paper.</p> <ul data-bbox="323 1115 1474 1507" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 87% of People agreed that they were satisfied with the interventions taken by the council to respond to safety issues raised by the Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>• 90% of participating businesses reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the improvements to their businesses.</li> <li>• 79% survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that improvements undertaken through the programme would encourage people to live, work and invest in this area</li> <li>• 76% of businesses (64 of 84 respondents) reported turnover returning to at least 70% of pre-Covid 19 levels following council interventions in the area.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p data-bbox="272 1583 1474 1809">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. A summary overview of the projects delivered below:</p>

- **Grants to Businesses to purchase equipment to help them to continue to trade or trade safely**
  - Over £800k in support to 454 small business grants to help SME's to deliver hand sanitisers, signage, safety equipment & control measures to manage social distancing;
- **Grants to Business Cluster and Community Groups for physical interventions and streetscape improvements**
  - £1.1m to 51 Business Cluster & 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.
  - Funding to 35 Community Groups and 16 Business Clusters.
  - 7 projects delivered within the city centre and 44 projects delivered outside the city centre.
  - 16 Community Gardens and Facilities refreshed and redeveloped to attract greater outdoor use including facilities for supporting mental health & sensory spaces.
  - 8 outdoor hospitality locations.
  - 27 shop frontage improvement and local area environmental schemes.
  - 9 grants aligned to upgrading and expanding sports facilities including walking paths and improving outdoor facilities.
  - Given the success of this project, and as agreed through SP&R in June 2022, Council 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.
- **Physical Interventions and Streetscape Improvements (Council Led & BID Led)**

This included the delivery of a range of city centre physical interventions aimed at testing and piloting how we better use the city's streetscape aligned to the Bolder Vision. This included reallocating traditional road and parking spaces for enhanced active and sustainable travel provision, improving access for businesses to utilise city space, to encourage dwell time and improve the attractiveness of the city centre.

  - 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 – pedestrianising 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.
- 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 Entries won the CBRE Ireland Excellence in placemaking Awards 2021 and this approach will be further implemented through future phases.

- **Council Led Interventions to Encourage People Safely Back into the City**

Council directly delivered schemes to encourage people back into the city include:

- Hand sanitisers introduced at key locations across the city centre.
- Social Distance signage and management of touch points and public seating.
- An enhanced cleansing operation.
- Enhanced Christmas Animation to promote footfall and visitors through the 2020 Christmas period

- A targeted marketing campaign operated across social media, radio, TV and press channels to promote Belfast as a safe and vibrant place to visit.
- 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.

- **Council Led Sustainable & Active Travel Measures**

- Two new Active Travel Hubs delivered at Cathedral Gardens and Queens University Belfast.
- A modernised Belfast Bike Fleet.
- Additional Belfast Bike docking locations.
- An e-cargo bike pilot scheme.
- 10 covered cycle stands delivered across the Council Estate.

3.4

**Programme Learnings**

The overall findings from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme show successful implementation of the projects, enabling business and community groups to operate and recover successfully from the pandemic while delivering extensive green infrastructure and active & sustainable transport initiatives. In total the programme delivered over 535 grants to businesses and community groups, over 70 physical interventions & streetscape improvements delivering over 1200 items of street furniture & cycle infrastructure, 188 public hygiene items and over 65 marketing and animation events.

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 & 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.

3.5

**Remaining Project Delivery**

Two elements of the programme remain uncompleted, with one project at risk of over-running the September 2032 programme deadline. As such an extension of time to cover this project has been requested from DfC until March 2024. These projects and ongoing mitigating measures are outlined below:

3.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Castle Place Kiosk</u>: following issues raised through the planning process it was agreed to rescind the planning application for the Castle Place Kiosk. Officers are currently seeking an alternative location with a plan to complete in March 2024.</li> <li>• <u>Entries Phase 2</u>: The Entries Phase 2 project is scheduled to complete in September and will see the reopening of the previously closed up Sugarhouse Entry, running between High Street &amp; Waring St.</li> </ul> <p><b>Budget Position</b></p> <p>As previously agreed the Director of City Regeneration &amp; Development was delegated authority to reallocate realised project underspend within previously agreed projects within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, with reports on the budget position to be brought back to this committee at a future date. Appendix A of this report outlines the final budget positions for the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and Members are asked to note this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Resource Implications</b>
4.1	All costs associated with this paper will be meet from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Capital Programme.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b>
	Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening is complete on the overall programme with mitigating actions agreed and implemented.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	Appendix A – Budget Position Report.