

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th August, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nic Bhranair (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Bunting, Canavan, S. Douglas,
Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Lyons,
Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe, McCormick,
McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
McMullan, Murray and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Ms. L. Toland: Senior Manager – Economy;
Mr. A. Cairns, Zoo Manager;
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor McDowell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 14th and 28th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd July.

The Committee also noted that the decision under Belfast 2024 of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 26th June, had been amended by the Council at its meeting on 3rd July which impacted the City Growth and Regeneration Committee decision of 14th June.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to item 6.c) Major Events Update, Councillor McCabe declared an interest, in that she was employed by Féile an Phobail.

The Chairperson declared an interest regarding item 6.c) Major Events Update, in that she was a Board Member of An tOireachtas and left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Presentation

Renewed Ambition Partnership

The Director of City Regeneration and Development introduced the following report for Members consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on the Renewed Ambition Public - Private Partnership 2022 / 2023 programme; and proposed 2023 / 2024 programme of work aimed at attracting inclusive investment for the delivery of regeneration, infrastructure and a modern built environment for Belfast and wider City Region.
- Seek approval to extend the Council’s involvement in the Partnership Programme for 2023 / 2024 and contribution as part of a wider public-private approach.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1

- i. Note the presentation from representatives from the Renewed Ambition Partnership Taskforce, a public private sector partnership, aimed at attracting inclusive investment for the delivery of regeneration, infrastructure and a modern built environment for Belfast and wider City Region. The presentation provides an update on the 22 / 23 programme of work and the proposed approach to the 23 / 24 Programme.
- ii. Approve that Officers continue to support the 23 / 24 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council’s procurement processes.
- iii. Approve the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership contribution towards the delivery of the 23 / 24 Programme.
- iv. Approve attendance of Senior Officers at the proposed New York Real Estate Investment Showcase as part of the 23 / 24 programme, subject to event plans being sufficiently progressed and support from wider city partners, noting that it will be funded from the wider public private Renewed Ambition Partnership budget.

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- v. Approve attendance by the Chairperson of the Committee, or their nominee, along with Senior Officers as appropriate at MIPIM 2024, noting that it will be funded from the wider public private Renewed Ambition Partnership budget.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Members will recall that the Committee agreed in June 2023 to receive a presentation from the Renewed Ambition Partnership (RAP) Taskforce to update Members on the 2022 / 2023 programme; and proposed 2023 / 2024 programme of work, including priority issues and objectives for the Partnership moving forward.
- 3.2 The Renewed Ambition Partnership (RAP) is a joint public-private initiative that is delivering a programme of work aimed at ensuring Belfast is positioned to continue to attract investment to underpin regeneration, development and infrastructure activities in the city required to deliver our inclusive growth ambitions.
- 3.3 The Renewed Ambition Partnership is supported by public, private and key anchor institution partners. Partners comprise of Belfast City Council, all BRCD partner Councils, Invest NI, Belfast Harbour, Translink, Housing Association representation, the local development community and representatives from key city infrastructure, regeneration and development projects.
- 3.4 In terms of context setting, it is relevant to highlight to Members that the Council have been supporting a public private sector approach to ensuring Belfast is positioned to attract inclusive investment and delivering sustainable and inclusive growth for the last eight years.
- 3.5 The Belfast Agenda (the City's Community Plan) sets bold ambitions and economic development priorities for the city. Delivering inclusive growth and ensuring that no one is left behind is central to this vision. It aims to develop a competitive city region economy by creating 46,000 additional jobs and attracting 66,000 new residents into the city. Positively through the Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress, which is published every two years, significant progress has been made in achieving key short term targets including attracting £1 billion in private sector investment and securing a Belfast Region City Deal. The joint public private sector approach and shared focus created through RAP has been key to achieving this. It is an important platform and lever

within our wider 'Position the City to Compete' proposition which seeks to build on the city's reputation as a unique destination for investment, tourism, development and supporting inclusive economic growth.

- 3.6** Members will be aware that whilst the city has experienced a positive trajectory in terms of regeneration and investment, there is still more work to be done to achieve the ambitious targets as set out within the Belfast Agenda, and importantly unlocking the wider inclusive benefits of such investment and, ensuring these reach every part of the city. This will require significant private and public sector investment. To give members a sense of investment required, the Belfast Agenda indicates the need for a total investment in the region of £7.5 billion by 2035. This includes the requirement to deliver 31,600 new homes for and development of 550,000 sq m of employment floor space to support the additional jobs.
- 3.7** The priorities within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) together with the Future City Programme and city-wide regeneration and investment priorities remain critical to delivering physical and inclusive development in the city. From a Community Planning and city leadership perspective, the cross sectoral City Development Board has identified housing-led regeneration; improving connectivity active and sustainable travel; supporting city-wide development and regeneration and delivering the Future City Centre programme as key priorities for the city's future growth. It is important to note that a number of Renewed Ambition partners are also represented on the City Development Board, underpinning the importance of a collaborative approach to city development.
- 3.8** Through our Inclusive Growth Framework, we are committed to working with our partners including the private sector, anchor institutions, community and voluntary sector and our wider public sector partners to create an inclusive city. The physical and built environment is part of an overall enabling framework to deliver on this.
- 3.9** Members will also be aware of the 'Reset for Growth' report that the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission produced in 2021. This report set out a number of strategic priorities for action which would help support inclusive economic growth in Belfast. these included delivering a house building programme at scale, creating a sustainable, connected, and animated city centre, focusing on making Belfast a globally significant innovation hub in key sectors and building strong global co-operation frameworks.

Specifically, the Commission highlighted the need for collaborative working with partners, building strategic networks and relationships and developing viable investment propositions to bring to market as being critical to positioning the city globally as an attractive investment location.

4.0 Main Report

4.1 Renewed Ambition Programme 2022 / 2023 Update

As outlined in the accompanying presentation, the RAP 2022/ 2023 programme ran from 1st April 2022 to the 31st May 2023 and delivered a structured programme of work focussed on the five key pillars of Research; Events; Advocacy and Engagement; Communications and Repository aligned to securing investment and regeneration for the Belfast region.

4.2 Benefits achieved through the 2022/2023 Programme

As highlighted previously, to Council, RAP is one lever within the wider 'Position the City to Compete' proposition and forms a key element within the Corporate Plan. It aligns and complements other city partnerships including Innovation City Belfast, Belfast Region City Deal and alongside council-led activities to accelerate city centre living, Smart Belfast, Resilience / Net Zero and our Economic Development activities. It is a key tool in attracting external capital investment required to deliver key regeneration projects across the city.

4.3 Council's participation in the 22/23 programme has delivered a number of benefits in terms of working to achieve our corporate and city level strategic priorities. Members will be aware that in March 2023, the Council launched an Expression of Interest seeking to establish a long-term arrangement with an investor / development partner to bring forward the sustainable, residential-led regeneration of a number of Council assets within the city centre. Through the 22/23 RAP programme the Council were able to promote this opportunity with institutional investors at events such as UKREiiF and MIPIM. Attending these events provided Officers with an opportunity to hold one to one meetings with key institutional investors, banks and pension funds all with strong track records and focus on Environmental, Social and Governance. There was a significant footfall on the Belfast Stands at both events, and requests for impromptu meetings from investors and developers interested in Belfast. This interest can be evidenced in the responses received to the EOI which closed at the end of May.

4.4 The Belfast City Regeneration Tracker (Appendix A) was presented to the Committee in March 2023. This provided an overview of regeneration and development activity which took place across the city during 2022, as aligned to the Belfast Agenda and the eight policies set out in BCCRIS. There was positive progress across the range of asset classes throughout 2022, which is expected to continue through 2023 given the scale of schemes commencing or planning to commence. As previously noted by this Committee, in 2022 / 2023 there was a 2% growth in rates base (arising from additional development), which resulted in additional rates growth of £3.3m every year.

4.5 2023 / 2024 Programme

As touched on within the request to present report to Committee in June this year, Members were advised that the governance of the Renewed Ambition Partnership is via a Taskforce comprised of representatives of the public and private sector. Council plays a key role in both the strategic and operational management of RAP; including the development, management and delivery of the Programme of Activity; and supporting the governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure, and entering into associated contracts on behalf of, and with oversight from, the Taskforce. Members are asked to approve Council continuing to take on this role, with officers supporting the 23/24 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes.

4.6 The presentation accompanying this report from the Renewed Ambition Partnership Taskforce sets out the core objectives and workstreams for the 2023 / 2024 programme. It will continue to be delivered as a structured pillared programme of work (Events, Advocacy & Engagement, Communications and Research). The 2023/2024 programme will continue to align to and complement other BCC led activities within the context of 'Positioning the City to Compete' and delivering a 'Global Future' - a key action area from the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission. This includes work being undertaken by Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, International Relations, Resilience, the SMART team and partnerships including Innovation City Belfast, Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor and BRCD. In addition, the need to continue to work in collaboration with international partners,

including Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and Invest NI to promote investment opportunities in Belfast will be a critical component, notably through the upcoming Northern Ireland Investment Summit.

4.7 For the Council, the key aims and objectives of being part of the Renewed Ambition Partnership and contributing to the programme include:

- Securing investment to assist with delivery of our growth ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, and aligned to corporate priorities**
- Maximising the benefits of the Belfast Region City Deal investments**
- Identifying and potentially securing longer term institutional investment to support the implementation of agreed regeneration plans for the city, with a particular emphasis on housing led regeneration and city centre living**
- Securing investment in the built environment on a city-wide basis to maximise opportunities to create jobs, support inclusive economic growth alongside enhancing physical and social infrastructure across the city**
- Securing investment in key city infrastructure schemes including waterfront regeneration, connectivity, net-zero and innovation related projects**
- Investment to help address dereliction and support the re-use and preservation of heritage assets**
- Investment in tourism and cultural products to underpin regeneration priorities**
- Investment in clean tech, environmental and sustainability initiatives**

4.8 The Council has a lead role to play in delivering on this shared agenda. Supporting the collaborative partnership approach taken by the Renewed Ambition Programme to showcasing Belfast, locally and globally, to the real estate investment, development and occupier market is critical, as we seek to attract the right investment into the city to drive the delivery of key regeneration projects, including residential, commercial and forthcoming BRCD projects, to provide for sustainable inclusive growth in the city.

4.9 All five BRCD partner Councils have invested in RAP since 2019 and it has been an important forum to showcase the real estate investment potential for the wider Belfast City Region and forthcoming BRCD projects. BRCD, which seeks to deliver a 10-year programme to increase GVA by £470m and

creating up to 20,000 new and better jobs across the Belfast City Region is in delivery phase across 6 Council areas. Within Belfast, it will support the delivery of Belfast Stories, active travel through a new cycle & pedestrian bridge, a Smart District as well as innovative University-led centres of excellence in life & health sciences, artificial intelligence and data analytics and virtual production at Studio Ulster. BRCD is targeting a further £1bn of private sector investment in order to deliver the benefits in terms of jobs and productivity set out within the business cases.

- 4.10 The Renewed Ambition Partnership is supported and funded by public, private and key anchor institution partners, with external funding forming the majority of the overall programme delivery budget. Members are asked to note the proposed approach to the 2023 / 2024 Programme and approve the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration & Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership contribution towards the delivery of the 23 / 24 Programme.

4.11 New York 2023 Real Estate Investment Showcase

The RAP Taskforce endorsed exploring the opportunity to organise a focused Real Estate Investment Showcase in New York as part of the 23/24 programme to meet with potential investors and occupiers, to ensure the inclusion of the real estate opportunity in Belfast and the wider region to these audiences. The partnership is engaging with other partners including Invest NI to gauge support and further endorsement. From a Council perspective, officers are working across City Regeneration, Economic Development and International Relations through the wider 'Position the City to Compete' proposition to ensure alignment with the planned International Relations Programme, notably New York New Belfast and on-going engagement with US Diplomats and Consulate. Subject to event plans being sufficiently progressed and support from wider city partners, Members are asked to approve senior officer attendance at the proposed Real Estate Investment Showcase, noting that it will be funded from the wider public private Renewed Ambition Partnership budget.

4.12 MIPIM 2024

Members are reminded that in previous years the Council has participated in the 'Team Belfast' attendance at MIPIM, and more recently in 2023 as part of the Renewed Ambition Partnership. MIPIM is the world's leading built environment

conference and exhibition. The Renewed Ambition Taskforce has recently endorsed a Belfast presence at MIPIM in March 2024 and its inclusion within the Programme of activity for 2023 / 2024. The presentation to Committee from representatives from the Renewed Ambition Taskforce will provide further detail on how a Belfast Region presence at MIPIM assists on the delivery of investment that provides for sustainable inclusive growth in the city and wider city region, based on previous experience at MIPIM and looking forward.

- 4.13 MIPIM brings together nearly 27,000 public and private sector built environment representatives from across the globe, including all major UK and European cities. It provides city leaders with an opportunity to promote their city to a global audience and connect with potential partners and sources of investment required to unlock built environment regeneration and development, while supporting the built environment industry to bring forward sustainable development and help accelerate on the road to net zero.
- 4.14 From a Renewed Ambition Partnership perspective, partners feel that attending MIPIM allows Belfast and the Belfast Region to position itself to a global audience and attract the interest of institutional investors, developers, occupiers and funders in the context of bringing forward sustainable development to create a well-connected and culturally vibrant, sustainable city and region. The Partnership has therefore proposed a Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2024, in line with other UK Cities.
- 4.15 The RAP Partnership feel that in order to successfully showcase Belfast and the wider City Region, it requires the civic leadership and attendance of Belfast City Council. The Council's involvement will align to and complement other BCC led activities within the context of 'Positioning the City to Compete' and delivering a 'Global Future' - a key action area from the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission. Members are asked to approve attendance by the Chairperson of the Committee, or their nominee, along with Senior Officers as appropriate at MIPIM 2024, noting that it will be funded from the wider public private Renewed Ambition Partnership budget.
- 5.0 Financial & Resource Implications
- 5.1 2023 / 2024 Partnership and Programme Support: Council plays a key role in both the strategic and operational management of RAP; including supporting the governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure,

and entering into associated contracts on behalf of, and with oversight from, the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes. Subject to Member agreement it is proposed that the Council continues to take on this role, with officers supporting the 23/24 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes.

- 5.2 Council investment in the 2023 / 2024 Programme:**
The Renewed Ambition Partnership is delivered as a public private sector sponsorship fund and is supported by a range of public, private and key anchor institutions. The partnership comprises of all BRCD partner Councils, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, QUB, and representatives from the developer and built environment supply chain community. They contributed towards the 2022 / 2023 programme, with external and private sector funding forming the majority of the overall programme budget. It is anticipated that the majority of the 2023 / 2024 programme budget will again be funded through external funding.
- 5.3** Council has previously agreed to contribute of £80,000 towards the 2022 / 2023 Programme, and subject to Members agreement it is proposed that Council contribute £80,000 (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership investment towards the delivery of the 23 / 24 Partnership and Programme.
- 5.4** New York 2023 Real Estate Investment Showcase and MIPIM 2024: The RAP Taskforce are proposing that a Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2024 and a proposed New York Real Estate Investment Showcase as part of the 23 / 24 programme, with associated costs being funded through the 23 / 24 Partnership sponsorship budget.
- 5.5** Approval is sought for attendance by the Chairperson of the Committee, or their nominee, along with Senior Officers as appropriate at MIPIM 2024.
- 5.6** Approval is also sought for Senior Officer attendance at the proposed New York Real Estate Showcase; however this is subject to event plans being sufficiently progressed and alignment with strategic Council corporate objectives.
- 5.7** Travel costs for Council attendance at the proposed New York Real Estate Investment Showcase and MIPIM 2024 to be met

from within existing and approved departmental budgets. All other costs related to these events would be met from the 2023 / 2024 RAP Public - Private Partnership budget.

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.”

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. O’Neill and Ms. A. Conway, representing the Renewed Ambition Partnership, to the Committee.

Mr. O’Neill explained the objectives of the Partnership, namely to:

- Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region;
- Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland; and
- Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.

He provided an overview of its partnership with anchor institutions, key developers and professional agencies, together with its pillared programming of: Research; Programme and Content; Engagement and Advocacy; Media and Communication; and Repository.

The representatives highlighted that their next steps included taking forward their objectives, together with supporting the delivery of BRCD projects by attracting collaborative partners; and Belfast City Council’s key inclusive economic and investment strategies.

During discussion, the representatives explained how the best practice initiatives from Denmark, Germany and Greater London, in creating inclusive real estate investment, could be used as part of the framework for Belfast developments to follow at the start of development projects.

They answered a range of questions on community inclusion and engagement, and Planning challenges, opportunities and joint working. In response to a Member’s question in relation to social value and economic impact statistics, Mr. O’Neill advised that the main two sources of data included reports undertaken by CBRE and Useful Projects on behalf of the Partnership and further details would be provided.

In relation to the community planning process and community inclusion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development explained that the Renewed Ambition Partnership and City Development Board were aligned and there was community representation on the Board via the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectoral Advisory Panel.

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After discussion, the Chairperson thanked Mr. O'Neill and Ms. Conway for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew Members attention to the recommendations.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Walsh,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and,

Resolved - The Committee approves the recommendations outlined in the report with an amendment to point V. to remove the request of the Chairperson or their nominee, to attend MIPIM 2024.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to the following:

The Committee:

- I. Noted the presentation from representatives from the Renewed Ambition Partnership Taskforce, a public private sector partnership, aimed at attracting inclusive investment for the delivery of regeneration, infrastructure and a modern built environment for Belfast and wider City Region. The presentation provided an update on the 22 / 23 programme of work and the proposed approach to the 23 / 24 Programme, and the Committee noted that, where relevant, the representatives would provide further information on the issues raised;
- II. Approved that Officers continued to support the 23 / 24 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes;
- III. Approved the Council investment of £80,000 (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership contribution towards the delivery of the 23 / 24 Programme;
- IV. Approved attendance of Senior Officers at the proposed New York Real Estate Investment Showcase as part of the 23 / 24 programme, subject to event plans being sufficiently progressed and support from wider city partners, noting that it would be funded from the wider public private Renewed Ambition Partnership budget; and
- V. Approved the attendance of Senior Officers as appropriate at MIPIM 2024, noting that it would be funded from the wider public private Renewed Ambition Partnership budget.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following four items was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following four items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Future City Centre Programme - Vacant to Vibrant

The Committee was provided with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Grant Programme and the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel.

During discussion, one Member highlighted that a copy of the boundary map of the City Centre used for the Programme would be useful. A Member also noted the positive impact the initiative was making in terms of rates and employment.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant pilot capital grant scheme;
- Agreed to the recommended grant awards as outlined within Section 3.9 of the report; and
- Agreed to the recommended proposal that applications for Grant 3 (meanwhile/pop up) at £2,500 are approved by the Director of City Regeneration and Development under the Scheme of Delegation and reported to the Committee at a future date.

Update on Externally Funded Projects: Active Travel Enablers, Grey to Green and South West Quarter

The Committee was provided with an overview on the Council's Grey to Green, Active Travel Enablers and South-West Quarter Revitalisation delivery projects as previously approved by the Committee in October 2022.

During discussion, in relation to the additional covered cycle locations listed under 3.16 of the report, the Development Manager confirmed that the Better Gym at Connswater could also be placed on the list of back up sites, subject to assessment.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Noted the update regarding the Grey to Green City Centre Fund grant, Active Travel Enablers Project grant and DfC South West Quarter funding;
- II. Approved the recommended funding agreements contained within the report, specifically:

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- a. The Grey to Green Grants as included within item 3.7 of the report
 - b. the Grey to Green Business Improvement District (BID) led interventions as included within item 3.8 of the report
 - c. The Secure Cycle Parking grants within item 3.14 of the report and the additional covered cycle locations within item 3.16 of the report
- III. Noted the work ongoing on the South West Quarter Project and the Funding Agreement with the Linen Quarter BID to deliver the DfC funded element of the project; and
- IIII. Noted the upcoming All Party Round Table to discuss the Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel workstreams across Council, would be rescheduled to an alternative date and evening time.

Zoo Collection – Update

The Director of Economic Development outlined the proposal which sought approval to re-locate the two elephants currently at Belfast Zoo.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Approved the transfer of the elephants to Burgers Zoo. In tandem with this, work would continue on a long-term development plan for the zoo which would consider not only the physical development of the zoo but also its collection. Regular reports would be brought to the Committee to seek a direction as this work progressed.; and
- Agreed that a Zoo audit would be undertaken in relation to standards management of its collection and submitted to a future Committee for consideration.

Year-End Finance Report 2022-23

The Committee considered the Quarter 4 financial position for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee including a forecast of the year end outturn.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

**Department for Communities Covid Recovery
Revitalisation Programme Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To update Committee on the ongoing DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme including an Extension of Time to the Programme and the budget position.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- I. Note the current status of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, including the findings of the Final Programme Evaluation Report.
- II. Note that an Extension of Time has been sought for the 'Castle Place Kiosk'.
- III. Note the budget position across the project lines.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The CG&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 & 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 & 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.

3.2 Main Report

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.

- 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
- 90% of participating businesses reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the improvements to their businesses.
- 79% survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that improvements undertaken through the programme

would encourage people to live, work and invest in this area

- **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.**

3.3 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:

- **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.

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- **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:

- **Castle Place Kiosk**: 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.
- **Entries Phase 2**: 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 & Waring St.

3.6 Budget Position

As previously agreed the Director of City Regeneration & 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.

4.0 Finance & Resource Implications

4.1 All costs associated with this paper will be met from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Capital Programme.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening is complete on the overall programme with mitigating actions agreed and implemented.”

Noted.

**Department for Infrastructure response to
Committee Correspondence**

The Committee was provided with an overview of the correspondence which had been received from the Department for Infrastructure in response to the following issues which the Committee had raised:

- Follow-Up Correspondence in relation to the Eastern Division Autumn Statement Nov 2022 (copy available [here](#)); and
- Correspondence in relation to the York Street Interchange Place Making and Active Travel Review (copy available [here](#)).

During discussion, in response to Members concerns in relation to the lack of delivery of the Belfast Cycle Network, the Director of City Regeneration and Development explained further the ongoing engagement with the Department for Infrastructure and suggested that all of the issues could be discussed at the forthcoming All Party Round Table on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel.

The Committee:

- i. Noted the correspondence between the Committee and the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the Eastern Division Autumn Report 2022;
- ii. Noted the correspondence between the Committee and the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the York Street Interchange Place Making and Active Travel Review; and
- iii. Noted that the issues raised in relation to the delivery of the Cycle Network would be discussed further at the All Party Round Table on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel.

Growing Business and the Economy

Enterprise Support Service Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the new Enterprise Support Service – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that would be led by the Council on behalf of the 11 councils.

The Committee was reminded that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in February, it had been agreed that Belfast City Council should lead on the submission of an application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the 11-council Enterprise Support Service model. It had also been agreed that, subject to additional due diligence and risk management work being undertaken, Belfast City Council should lead on the future development and delivery of the service on behalf of the 11 councils.

It was reported that, since that time, a significant amount of work had been taking place to finalise the detail of the programme content, start the commissioning process of the new service and set in place the delivery structures so that it could become operational from Autumn 2023.

The Committee was reminded that the service represented the councils' collective response to its statutory responsibility – set out as part of Local Government Reform in 2015 – for business start-up, social enterprise and entrepreneurship for specific target groups such as women and young people. Previously, the majority of the targets associated with the statutory responsibility were delivered through the Go for It programme. However, over time, the funding available for Go for It had been reduced significantly to the extent that it provided limited support for new start businesses and those target groups. Councils recognised the need for a more ambitious response so they had commissioned research from the Enterprise Research Centre at Aston Business School which identified a new model and associated targets that could create a much more dynamic business base across the region.

The Committee was advised that the enhanced support service would provide a continuum of support from early-stage enterprise awareness through to starting, growing and scaling a business. The concept was that the service would help people get the right support at the right time – and would also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.

In order to fund the scaled-up intervention, officers had identified the opportunity presented through the new Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This was the UK Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) fund that was established as a replacement for EU funding (ERDF and ESF). One strand of funding focused on "Supporting Local Business". The Investment Plan for UKSPF in Northern Ireland was launched in December 2022. At that time, the Plan proposed that a central component of the Supporting Local Business strand would be the 11 council Enterprise Support Service. An indicative financial allocation of £17million - £12 million programme delivery and £5million for small grants – was set aside for the service. It was reported that UKSPF funding was available until March 2025 so the initial programme period would run from Autumn 2023 to March 2025.

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Commissioning of Service Delivery

Taking account of the marketplace, the procurement approach for delivery of the business support services (that is 121 mentoring support; masterclasses; peer support networks) had been broken down into two main areas, namely:

- Engage and Foundation; and
- Growth and Scaling.

In addition to the delivery elements, there were a number of support elements that were being commissioned or developed in parallel. These included:

- ***Marketing and communications:*** this work was being led by Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC). They had completed a procurement exercise for a marketing and communications agency to support with a range of activities including advertising, promotional and brand development. While DCSDC would lead on these elements of work, they would work directly with the overall Programme Lead and the wider team based in Belfast City Council, ensuring that there was a singular approach to delivery;
- ***Call handling:*** the Go for it programme benefitted from a freephone number through which business and entrepreneurs could be directed to the relevant delivery agent. That support would continue under the new service; however, it would be extended to cover the full scope of the NIESS servicing enquiries from entrepreneurs and new and existing businesses;
- ***CRM:*** in order to track all business engagement with the service and also support the development of relevant reports for funders and individual councils, a customer relationship management (CRM) system was being developed. Belfast City Council's Digital Services team was taking the lead on this and they would be supported by other council services such as the Information Governance Unit (IGU) and Legal Services in order to ensure compliance with all relevant obligations. The CRM would also be guided by the council's finance and grants management teams, ensuring that it could provide adequate assurances and information required, as set out in the funding agreement.

The Committee noted the update on the new Enterprise Support Service, including the planned go-live date for the new intervention.

Belfast Business Promise Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress to develop and deliver the Belfast Business Promise, as a key commitment in the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy and**

undertaken in partnership with Economic Development and Strategy, Policy and Partnership.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the progress in relation to the development of the Belfast Business Promise**
- ii. Note the ongoing development work to support a successful implementation process including:**
 - Organisations who are operating as Partners to support implementation**
 - Organisations who have signed up to become member**
 - Approach to accreditation**
 - Internal support to deliver**
 - BCC approach to gaining membership as an organisation**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

A key commitment in the Council's Inclusive Growth strategy to create a more inclusive city is the co-creation of the Belfast Business Promise which is our inclusive growth city charter. Members will be aware that a cross council team, led by the Strategy, Policy and Partnership in partnership with Economic Development, has been progressing the development of the Belfast Business Promise, alongside an external business working group and the council's Social Policy Working Group (SPWG). In addition, strong relationships have been built with the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and Scottish Business Pledge Charter teams, providing a wealth of best practice information and learning.

- 3.2 The extensive engagement with organisations, services and businesses carried out to date has shown that there is a strong appetite for such an initiative, and its role in encouraging organisations to maintain and/or adopt high standards in relation to more inclusive business practices which bring about added value to society by proactively driving forward inclusive growth in a meaningful way. The commitment to bringing forward the Belfast Business Promise is reinforced within the refreshed Belfast Agenda, the draft BCC Economic Strategy, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the work being taken forward by the Renewed Ambition Taskforce and Bolder Vision Strategy.**

3.3 Belfast Business Promise is aligned to and complements other strands of work underway within council including the Anchor Network on Commissioning and Procurement; BCC Social Value Policy and Framework; Social Enterprise Action Plan and BCC Employment Academies.

3.4 There is a real opportunity through the implementation of the Belfast Business Promise to achieve our aim of creating a stronger, more resilient, and fairer city economy and society for Belfast with inclusive economic participation. The Belfast Business Promise membership and network offers a real opportunity to promote the city's aspirations and engage more widely with local businesses and organisations, working in collaboration towards becoming a more inclusive city.

3.5 Progress to date

Pledges

The Belfast Business Promise is a business commitment to support the city's inclusive growth mission by signing up to a number of underpinning pledges around business practices. Organisations are able to use the process to benchmark against eight pledges and gain support from the Belfast Business Promise community and network to continually improve their inclusive practice and performance.

As agreed at SP&R Committee, the Belfast Business Promise has been designed as a free, voluntary membership and accreditation scheme which is open to all employers across Belfast – irrespective of size or sector – to consider and sign-up. It also provides businesses with recognition for demonstrating how they are having a positive social impact through their core business activities.

3.6 The Belfast Business Promise has eight pledges (as set out below in figure 1), which organisations will use to assess business practices and provide evidence of the approaches applied. It is proposed that larger businesses (i.e. currently classified as those with over 250 employees) to commit to doing more in each of the pledge areas.

Figure 1



An underpinning accreditation process has been developed which provides further details on the scope and expectations around level of commitment across each of the pledges.

3.7 Membership structure

It is proposed that the membership to the Belfast Business Promise is tiered as outlined below:

1st Level - Supporter – organisations who commit to evaluating their current business practices and developing an action plan to work towards meeting the pledges. All organisations start their journey as a Supporter, working towards improved performance and making use of the Belfast Business Promise resources and network.

2nd Level - Member – organisations who have made the Supporter commitment and can then demonstrate three core pledges with an additional three pledges chosen from the remaining five, that best fit with their organisational priorities. The initial engagement identified that the following pledges as

high priority and could be considered in agreeing the three core designated pledges.

Pledge 1	Provide fair wages and contracts
Pledge 3	Support the local and social economy
Pledge 8	Protect our environment

3rd Level - Ambassador - to achieve the Ambassador level of accreditation businesses must meet all 8 pledges.

3.8 Membership package

It is important that organisations and businesses in Belfast are aware of the potential benefits, support and added value created through the Business Promise. The key elements of the package, include:

- Promotion of their business via a Belfast Business Promise website and through the 'Mark', creating a unique selling point for the business and appeal to customers and employers in terms of showcasing the positive social impact of their core business practices.
- Access to an interactive members' network of like-minded and experienced individuals keen to solve common city issues and to improve business to business collaboration and support.
- Access to a members' support programme to help businesses to meet the pledges and improve their business practices (e.g. learning days around how to incorporate social value into procurement).
- Potential future opportunity to use the Belfast Business Promise accreditation to access BCC employment academies and procurement opportunities.
- Ability to capture and demonstrate the social value contributed through core business activities through an underpinning monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Signposting to best practice information, advice and support through the on-line website and members' programme of activity.
- Improved links through the Promise team and other members to communities and target groups of citizens.
- Access to a list of Belfast Business Promise members and their business profile to identify opportunities to enhance business-to-business working and trade as well as direct linkages to the labour relations agency network and other best practice organisations.

3.9 Pilot Phase: April - November 2023

A pilot phase was agreed to refine and further develop the Belfast Business Promise model in order to continue the collaborative approach to the design of the charter and to support sustainable and effective delivery. This phase has the following ambitions:

- Development of accreditation criteria and the supporting processes.
- Establish expert panel to provide assurance and accredit organisations against the criteria.
- Secure commitment from 20 organisations to sign up to the Belfast Business Promise to test the criteria and shape future delivery and the offer.
- Implement Promise Learning Days and provide practical supports to organisations to meet their selected pledges.

3.10 Progress achieved to date includes:

- Development of accreditation criteria for all pledges.
- Expert panels established to provide accreditation with the first members expected to be accredited by January 2024.
- Established a network of BBP Partners who can provide direct support to in achieving membership status and develop their business practices. These include...
- In the first eight weeks following the go-live date of 24th April 2023, 35 organisations have been engaged and of this, 21 organisations are now signed up to the Belfast Business Promise and going through the process of accreditation. These include:

Private Sector	Public Sector	Third Sector
Exploristics Change Over Technologies BT People 1st MSC Group Honeycomb Jobs Babcock	Queen's University Belfast Labour Relations Agency Belfast City Council Ulster University Translink	East Belfast Enterprise Diversity Mark Lighthouse Orchardville NOW Group Social Enterprise NI Footprints Women's Centre GEMS NI

Further engagement is ongoing to secure partner organisations and special support across pledge areas. Partner organisations include those opposite:

- 3.12 Officers have also hosted two Promise Learning Days where organisations have availed of specialist support across the following pledge areas:

Pledge 1 - Provide fair wages and contracts: facilitated by Labour Relations Agency

Pledge 2 - Provide opportunities into work: facilitated by Belfast City Council – Employability & Skills Team

Pledge 3 - Recruit Inclusively: facilitated by Labour Relations Agency and Diversity Mark

Pledge 4 - Support the local and social economy: facilitated by Juno Planning and Social Enterprise NI

Pledge 7 - Work in partnership with our communities: facilitated by Now Group

Pledge 8 - Protect our environment: facilitated by Climate Essentials

- 3.13 **BCC Accreditation**

As an organisation, the Council has also signed-up to the Belfast Business Promise demonstrating leadership and commitment to working with employers to deliver on the ambition of creating an inclusive city. Detailed internal discussions have been ongoing with key officers and professions to assess the Council's position in relation to meeting the pledges and the subsequent action planning to ensure continuous improvement.

It is important to recognise the significant progress which has already been made in key areas including Social Value Procurement Policy, the work of the Employability and Skills team and community engagement teams, HR, Legal, Finance etc. and as an organisation we have made strides towards achieving the Belfast Business Promise accreditation ourselves, in particular, providing fair wages and contracts (pledge 1) with the Council achieving accreditation from the Real Living Wage Foundation for paying the Real Living Wage in February 2023 and the progress being made in terms of Protecting our Environment (pledge 8).

- 3.14 **Financial & Resource Implications**

None at present. A temporary BBP core team has been established consisting of 3 officers until the end of the pilot phase in November 2023 and supported through the delivery

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of ongoing activity and programmes of work across Council, from Climate Commission through to HR, Economic Development etc.

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

As agreed within the initial Inclusive Growth Commitments equality screening, a separate screening is being undertaken as part of the Belfast Business Promise pilot phase. The findings from the initial screening are already being utilised to inform the development and content.”

The Committee:

- i. Noted the progress in relation to the development of the Belfast Business Promise; and
- ii. Noted the ongoing development work to support a successful implementation process including:
 - Organisations who were operating as Partners to support implementation;
 - Organisations who have signed up to become member.
 - Approach to accreditation; and
 - Internal support to deliver BCC approach to gaining membership as an organisation.

Eurocities Update

The Committee was reminded that Belfast had been a member of the Eurocities network for almost 30 years. Eurocities was a network of more than 200 major European cities, across 38 countries, made up of the elected local and municipal governments of the major cities. The activity of the network was structured through a number of thematic working areas, including Cultural Development, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Placemaking and Sustainability. Belfast had participated in a number of the groups, based on particular areas of need or interest to the council and the city at that time, and had also shared learning on a range of topics and had availed of the network to engage with the key EU institutions in order to influence policy.

The Director of Economic Development advised that, whilst the city had limited access to the transnational funds due to its withdrawal from the EU, this network was still nevertheless important in positioning the city and building strong networks to support shared learning and collaboration.

Within Belfast City Council, there were a number of areas in which officers had been engaged and which remained priority areas of focus. These included:

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- Developing an innovative city – link to the Smart Belfast agenda and the work on the Innovation District;
- Transitioning to a net zero and greener economy – link to the work on resilience and climate change, with a focus on developing collaborative activity and accessing new research and insights;
- Internationalising Belfast’s cultural proposition – learning from FDI and city positioning work, particularly in post-Covid world; and
- Cultural development and city animation – exploring the role of culture as a driver for city development – including both capital infrastructure and innovative programming.

The Director of Economic Development pointed out that, in 2024, Belfast was due to hold the annual meeting of the Eurocities Culture Forum in September. The Council’s bid to hold the event recognised the value of Belfast as a cultural capital and would present another opportunity to position and promote the city during this year of cultural celebration. He explained that Belfast had last hosted the Eurocities Culture Forum meeting in March 2014. During that event, more than 70 representatives from 58 cities attended to find out more about Belfast’s work in this space. It presented a great opportunity to shine a light on the city itself but also on the rich cultural and artistic talent.

He suggested that, taking into account the planned event in 2024 and the wider learning and opportunities presented by our engagement in the Eurocities network, it was proposed that the Council renewed its annual membership of the network for this year.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the potential economic benefits of remaining a Member of the Programme.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Approved the renewal of Belfast City Council’s membership of the Eurocities network, at a cost of €16,300 for one year; and
- Agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee in relation to the future benefits of Eurocities Membership.

Positioning the City to Compete

Festive Lighting Scheme and Future Christmas Programming

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 At this committee in June 2023 members were presented with options relating to the Belfast Christmas light switch on and potential follow-on activity across the city. During discussion at that meeting members directed officers to submit a report to a future meeting regarding the potential for Christmas events and lighting on arterial routes across the city.**

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This report provides information in relation to that request from elected members.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Members note the following,

- The provision of festive lighting and animation on arterial routes would require additional investment and lead time, and therefore it is not possible to provide this additional programme for Christmas 2023
- Future Christmas event programming on arterial routes could be supported via an existing Council funding scheme such as the Community Festivals Fund, or Vibrant Business Destinations may be the most suitable.
- The increase in costs outlined at 3.2 coupled with council's static budget is likely to mean that the current city centre festive lighting scheme will need to be scaled back for 2023.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At March Committee, Members were advised that Christmas Lighting Scheme in 2022 was year 3 of the existing Christmas Lighting Scheme. Feedback on the scheme was positive, however, there were additional requests to consider an extension of the scheme to include arterial routes. Further discussion took place at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee held on 14th June 2023. Officers were asked to consider further the feasibility of such an extension.

3.2 The installation, storage and maintenance of our festive lighting scheme is managed through a third party that was appointed via a public procurement process. This contract is currently due for renewal and the supplier has indicated that they have seen significant cost increases relating to insurance, energy costs and labour costs. The budget for the Christmas Festive Lighting Scheme has remained unchanged in the last five years and the Economic Development division have no additional budget available to fund the expansion of the lighting scheme. In addition, we have previously had access to an additional non-recurrent budget, given council's financial pressures this has not been allocated this financial year.

- 3.3** In previous years additional funding was allocated via council non-recurrent budget that allowed additional features to be added to our lighting scheme. We also previously received funding from DfC revitalisation funding that allowed us to distribute monies via a funding programme to business clusters on arterial routes for them to produce some Christmas related activity.
- 3.4** Given councils current financial pressures and reduced levels of budget within Executive Department budgets it is not currently possible for officers to secure the additional budget that would be required for any additional activity on arterial routes.
- 3.5** The aforementioned increase in costs coupled with council's static budget is likely to mean that the current city centre scheme will need to be scaled back by as much as half. This will involve a concentration of lights within the central business district.
- 3.6** Logistical/Operational/Financial Constraints – Lighting on Arterial Routes
- To have impact along the arterial routes, it is anticipated the level of additional investment for lighting would be significant. To install lighting schemes suitable mounting infrastructure and power must be secured from building owners, agents, or managers via a wayleave agreement. The cost and the lead time required to secure the wayleave agreements, and install the mounting infrastructure is significant, and it would not be possible for council or individual business clusters/associations to have the agreements and infrastructure in place for Christmas 2023.
- 3.7** Lights are typically purchased or leased, Belfast City Council leases its lights which allows the lighting scheme to be updated with new features, deploy more energy efficient lights, and avoid the costs relating to ownership that are,
- Purchase
 - Storage
 - Maintenance
 - Depreciation (typically festive lighting schemes have a useful life of 3-5 years)
- 3.8** It is very unlikely that constituted associations in arterial routes would have the capacity or resources to manage a 'local' festive lighting scheme – there is evidence of this from

the Vibrant Business Destination fund and it is a busy period for retailers - therefore any extension of this nature would almost certainly be implemented as part of the council's contractor remit. In addition, in respect of the Revitalisation Scheme, it was reported to be challenging to secure contractors for lighting installations.

- 3.9** In considering the information contained above members should note that given the logistical and financial challenges, and significant lead time to negotiate and secure wayleaves, access agreements and purchase or lease lighting infrastructure any expansion would not be possible until at least 2024. It should also be noted that if council were to be responsible for developing, implementing, and managing Christmas lights and animations along arterial routes additional finance and human resources would be required to recognise the significant work this would involve from several council services.

4.0 **Animation on Arterial Routes**

At CG&R in June, Members agreed on the approach/format to Christmas 2023 - namely a combination of a Switch-on event and city-centre wide programme of animation and entertainment as per 2021 & 2022 with an allocation for subsequent weekends. Members are asked to note that planning for this event has started, with expenditure incurred.

However, it was also requested that a future report be submitted regarding the potential for Christmas events on arterial routes across the city.

- 4.1** Members should note that the budget allocation for Christmas 2023 is £123,000 as presented at the June CG&R Committee. Within this budget, there was no allocation for Christmas event programming along arterial routes. Officers have considered the implications of resourcing programming and have concluded that significant additional resource would be required – or alternatively the current allocation for the city centre programming be used for arterial programming in future years. Based on knowledge and experience, officers have estimated that up to £10,000-£15,000 (per location) would be required for an impactful Christmas event programme; to cover elements such as staging, a parade, PA stewarding, event management and traffic management. This is on the assumption that the content is local performance.

4.2 Existing Funding Mechanisms

Members should note there is a pre-existing mechanism for groups to secure funding to programme activity during the festive period. The 'Community Festivals Fund' is administered via Culture and the Central Grants Unit. This funding scheme is accessible by community groups but not council. Those groups can apply for funding between £2,500 - £10,000, and this is for arts and heritage activities and/or other cultural events that contribute to the cultural identity of an area or group and celebrates the uniqueness of that area or group. The current scheme is closed. Any festival must take place between November and March. Council receives applications from a range of community groups and arts organisations.

4.3 At this committee in October 2021 members agreed the Vibrant Business Destination programme which provided over £500,000 including £475,000 of funding from the department for Communities to increase the footfall and vibrancy of business destinations across the city. The funding provided allowed group to form constituted associations and develop and deliver actions plans for their specific areas. The programme aims to fund 10 action plans along the arterial routes. Christmas events and lighting are eligible investments within the programme conditions.

4.4 Summary

Members are asked to note the following salient points:

- The provision of festive lighting and animation on arterial routes would require additional investment and lead time, and therefore it is not possible to provide this additional programme for Christmas 2023
- The Council's Christmas Events Programme based on members agreement in June 2023 to have a Combination of a Switch-on event and city-centre wide programme of animation and entertainment as per 2021 & 2022 (as per March Committee report), with an allocation for activity during subsequent weekends is well underway. Members will receive a report detailing those plans at Octobers Committee.
- Future Christmas event programming on arterial routes could be supported via an existing Council funding scheme and the Community Festivals Fund is the most suitable.

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- If members direct officers to develop a programme of lighting and animation for arterial routes for 2024 this would need to be considered through the estimates process recognising the need for additional investment.
- The increase in costs outlined at 3.2 coupled with council's static budget is likely to mean that the current city centre festive lighting scheme will need to be scaled back for 2023.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.1 The current budget for Christmas lighting and animation was agreed by Committee in March 2023. There are no additional financial implications contained within this report.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the budget and timing constraints. In response to a Member's question regarding the locations of the Festive Lighting Scheme for 2023, he advised that locations were currently being explored.

The Committee noted:

- The provision of festive lighting and animation on arterial routes would require additional investment and lead time, and therefore it was not possible to provide this additional programme for Christmas 2023;
- Future Christmas event programming on arterial routes could be supported via an existing Council funding scheme such as the Community Festivals Fund, or Vibrant Business Destinations might be the most suitable; and
- The increase in costs outlined at 3.2 coupled with council's static budget was likely to mean that the current city centre festive lighting scheme would need to be scaled back for 2023.

The Committee also agreed that a report on the item be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in August to allow officers to consider the locations of the proposed reduced festive lighting scheme.

Artist Studios Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the dedicated programme of work and funding scheme to support artist-led organisations in the city.

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The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in February 2022, it had been agreed to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support for this sector. In April 2023, it had been agreed to continue this support for the second consecutive year and £100,000 had been allocated to support Artist Studios and Makers Spaces in 2023/24.

The Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism advised that the “*Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2023/24*” programme was opened on 9th June and closed on 27th June. She highlighted that the purpose of this strand of work was to provide financial and developmental support to organisations similar to the support offered under cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG).

She explained that the Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2023/24 scheme was advertised widely. The information and application details were emailed directly to a GDPR compliant mailing list representing over 370 organisations from across the cultural and creative sectors alongside associated social media marketing. An online information session was held in advance of the deadline, as well as organisations availing of one-to-one support sessions with the Culture Development team.

In relation to the Criteria for Decision making, the Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism summarised the criteria and guidance for Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2023/24, together with the assessments of the applications. She highlighted that the unit had received 12 applications, one of which was ineligible, for Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants, requesting a total of £197,886. The percentage of funding allocated was based on scoring percentage. She advised that the recommendation was to fund 10 organisations, with support of £100,000.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to the recommendations for artist studio grants, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Major Events Update

(Councillor Duffy in the Chair)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Major Events programme, including:

- **Belfast Maritime Festival**
- **St Patrick’s Day 2024-2026 Tender**
- **One Young World**
- **an update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil na h’Eireann**
- **an update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028**

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- **Antrim Coast & Belfast - Northern Ireland Official Bid - World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026**
- **Approve officers working with DfC to understand the requirements of a future bid for the Oireachtas na Samhna festival in 2025/26. With future reports coming back to this committee prior to any binding bid being submitted.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- **Note the update on the Belfast Maritime Festival.**
- **Note the contents of the update on St Patrick's Day including the procurement approach for 2024-2026**
- **Note the update on One Young World**
- **Note and approve support for One Young World Delegates under the 2024 programme development strand.**
- **Note the update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil,**
- **Note the update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028**
- **Note the request for support for the World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026 and the proposal for officers to provide a non-binding letter indicating a road closure application will be submitted if the bid is successful**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast Maritime Festival

This year's 'Belfast Maritime Festival' will be held on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2023, 11am – 6pm, in the Titanic Quarter with a programme that stretches from Queens Quay to HMS Caroline/Titanic Distillers. The aim is to create an inclusive event that appeals to all demographics celebrating all that is good and creative about Belfast, at an accessible location in the city highlighting our current tourism, heritage, culture, and maritime offering and showcasing our existing landmarks.

The event is coordinated and implemented under a governance structure with key working groups reporting to the Programme Board, which consists of senior representatives from Council, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Maritime Belfast Trust.

3.1.1 The draft programme includes:

- An interactive kid's zone at the front of the SSE, adjacent to Queens Quay which will host several visiting vessels including Granuaile, the Grace O'Malley, and both the Royal Navy and Irish Navy
- Street Theatre in the Arc, with further visiting vessels within Abercorn Marina
- The area around Hamilton Dock (the Nomadic) will host traditional shipbuilding displays and a large-scale community co-design photography project, delivered in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust.
- The Titanic Slipways will be a hive of activity, hosting the Belfast Bazaar - food and craft markets – and the unique 'Science Street' curated for the festival by NI Science Festival
- Music is a core element of the festival, and the Slipways will be the location for the main stage, hosting a full day of artists. This will be supplemented by other stages at Hamilton Dock and the Soundyard
- Due to major infrastructure programmes, the event footprint on the Co. Antrim side of the river is unfortunately limited, but Sailortown have been engaged to programme activity including within St Joseph's.
- Waterfront Neighbourhood Groups in and around the Lagan will be engaged to participate in the Photography Co-design Project via Maritime Belfast Trust.

3.1.2 Visit Belfast and BCC Corporate Communications have developed a regional and out of state campaign in as per the terms and conditions of TNI's Letter of Offer. The festival press launched on 24 July 2023 with all paid activity commencing 31 July until the 10th of September 2023. The Campaign will consist of outdoor, digital, radio, social media across NI and ROI.

3.2 St Patrick's Day 2024-2026 Tender

The purpose of this part of the report is to provide Members with a brief update on the recent tender exercise. At the April Committee, the Tourism and Events Workplan was presented, and members approved the allocation of £300,000 to St Patricks Day 2024. Furthermore, in June, members were provided with information on the tender exercise required for engaging the creative sector to deliver elements of future St. Patrick's Celebrations. This tender has now been posted,

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with submissions expected at the end of August. The tender will be for a period of three years (1 + 1+ 1) to allow for product development. However, projects will be evaluated on an annual basis. Successful organisations would be expected to co-ordinate activity in support of each other.

3.3 One Young World

3.3.1 Members will be aware that Belfast is hosting the One Young World Global Summit in Belfast from 2-5 October 2023. A global summit with a mission to create a world where leaders are empowered to build a fair, sustainable future for all through identifying, promoting, and connecting the world’s most impactful young leaders. Previous host cities include Manchester, Dublin, London, Bogota, Ottawa, and Munich, with Belfast handing on the baton to Montreal for 2024. The Summit provides a global forum for young leaders to experience four days of speeches, panels, networking, and workshops, partnering with 190+ global businesses and educational institutions. It traditionally attracts delegates from 190+ countries, which sees some 2,000 + young delegates visit the host city for four nights, generating an estimated economic impact of £3.4m. As well as the young delegates, the summit attracts some 40+ global leaders, 100+ international journalists and 100’s of leading global companies. One Young World will give Belfast global exposure as a young, vibrant, welcoming city as well as providing a legacy for the city on top of an economic return.

3.3.2 The Summit programme for the four days is summarised below:

Monday 2nd October 2023	
Arrival & Registration, Exhibition & Side Stage Open	ICC Belfast
Opening Ceremony	SSE Arena
Delegate Dinner	St George’s Market/ICC Belfast
Tuesday 3rd October 2023	
Summit Sessions	ICC Belfast
Cathedral Quarter Takeover	Cathedral Quarter
Counsellor Dinner	City Hall
Wednesday 4th October 2023	
Summit Sessions	ICC Belfast
Community Dine-Around	Various venues. The Mac, Queens University, and 2 Royal Avenue
Thursday 4th October 2023	

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Summit Sessions	ICC Belfast
Closing Ceremony	ICC Belfast
Delegate Dinner & After Party	Titanic Belfast / Titanic Quarter

- 3.3.3 Attendance opportunities for Council officials and members across the week are currently being considered, with invites and briefings being issued in coming weeks.**

BCC is currently seeking budget approval that corresponds to sponsorship opportunities for 20 delegates to attend the event, with a total value of £63,000. This budget is intended to be sourced from existing departmental funds and will be synchronized with the programme development of Belfast 2024. The intent is to ensure that the leadership qualities, knowledge, and ambassadorial roles of the delegates would be incorporated into the development and outreach aspects of the year's programming.

Additionally, the budget includes an initiative to establish a Youth Panel/Forum. This new platform would serve for engagement and culture alongside the advocacy board. The board would also offer a means for other sponsored delegates, supported by organisations such as the Education Authority, SEUPB, HLF, and Deloitte, to maintain an ongoing relationship with the city.

3.4 All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil Na h'Eireann

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with further information on the status of Belfast's bid to host the Fleadh Cheoil Na h'Eireann.

- 3.4.1 At CG&R in June, Members were briefed on the Lessons Learned from Belfast's bid. The Belfast bid received very positive feedback from all sources. In June, members agreed to commit to supporting the Ards Branch in attendance at several crucial events. In addition, members were furnished with financial information on the bid, including costs associated with Council staff attending Mullingar.**
- 3.4.2 A Belfast delegation will be attending the Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar from Wednesday 9 - Saturday 12 August 2023, which includes representatives from Belfast City Council and Ards CCÉ. Representation from Belfast is expected at this event to show commitment to the bidding process and to garner votes. The Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of Economic Development will attend the Ard Ollamh Gala Awards dinner on 9 August along with members of Ards CCÉ. The Chief Executive and 2 senior Council officers will also attend the**

Oversea's Reception on 10 August with Ards CCÉ. Three Council officers will also attend the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra event on the 11 August with Ards CCÉ, one of the main Comhaltas events of the week and a key opportunity for networking and lobbying. Lastly, Belfast City Council's contracted Health & Safety advisor for the Events Team will also attend the event on 10 August for a one-day operational site visit.

3.5 Bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028

Officers are working closely with key bid stakeholders (Tourism NI, IFA, Central Bid Team, and UK Sport) in the interim period before the official bid announcement in the Autumn. It was anticipated that preliminary feedback from UEFA on the UK and Ireland bid would require some additional clarifications, but this was managed by the Central Bid Team

A Host City briefing from the Central Bid Team will take place early August. Members will be furnished with regular updates on the bid as and when further information is available.

3.6 Antrim Coast & Belfast - Northern Ireland Official Bid - World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026

Belfast City Council are being asked to support a bid by the organisers of the Antrim Half Marathon to host the World Road Running Championships in 2025/26. The event consists of several road races,

- A mass participation ½ marathon to take place outside of Belfast
- A 5km elite to take place in Belfast City Centre
- A 1-mile elite race in Belfast City Centre

3.7 It is expected that the event would cost circa £1.5m to host. At this juncture the organisers have not received a commitment of support from Tourism Northern Ireland or another agency in support of the bid.

3.8 The specific support sought from Council at this stage is a course guarantee which in essence,

- Irrevocably undertakes, guarantee, and shall ensure that: The competition course will be made available to the MF to organise and stage the WAS event and shall give access to the MF and its guests in order to conduct visits.

- There is no restriction in respect to **WORLD ATHLETICS** and / or **DENTSU** on installing commercial advertising in the Competition Course.

3.9 Officers have reviewed the course guarantee and believe that given Councils power for road closures it would not have the relevant statutory powers to provide such a guarantee. Any event road closure is subject to consultation and cannot therefore not be guaranteed.

4.0 Instead, and in consultation with the bidding party, officers are suggesting providing a non-binding letter stating that if the bid is successful Belfast City Council will apply for the required road closures. But that application is subject to the standard process, including consultation, and cannot be guaranteed, and nor can any other form of support form Belfast City Council at this juncture.

4.1 Officers have been approached by officials from the Department of Communities to begin exploring a potential bid to host Oireachtas na Samhna festival in 2025/26. This is the longest running Arts festival in Ireland and is a celebration of the original Oireachtas – or congregation of authorities – which was first established in the 7th century. This Irish speaking event welcomes people of all ages and descriptions from singers, dancers, poets, writers, storytellers, actors, impersonators, and musical composers.

4.2 The event which typically takes place during the first week of November would be expected to take place in several cultural venues across the city and bring as many as 50,000 visitors to the city.

4.3 At this juncture the resource requirements, or precise role for Belfast City Council is yet to be established, and when this is understood it will be brought back to this committee for consideration. At this stage officers are seeking permission to continue working with DfC to understand the requirements of any future bid and will revert to committee to seek approval from members prior to any bid being submitted that might commit Council to a role or resources.

4.0 **Financial & Resource Implications**

All expenditure agreed in respect of the the Belfast Maritime Festival, St Patrick's Celebrations, and respective Fleadh and UEFA bids are within existing departmental budgets and approvals.

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There is a request for approval of £63,000 to sponsor the attendance of delegates at OYW through existing departmental funds of programme development for Belfast 2024

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

During discussion, one Member raised concerns in relation to families from deprived areas accessing the events outlined in the programme.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the Belfast Maritime Festival;
- Noted the contents of the update on St Patrick’s Day, including the procurement approach for 2024-2026;
- Noted the update on One Young World;
- Noted and approved the support for One Young World Delegates under the 2024 programme development strand;
- Noted the update on the bid for the Fleadh Cheoil;
- Noted the update regarding the UK and Ireland bid to host the European Football Championships in 2028;
- Noted the request for support for the World Road Running Championships 2025 – 2026 and the proposal for officers to provide a non-binding letter indicating a road closure application will be submitted if the bid is successful; and
- Agreed that a report be submitted to a future Committee looking at the range of events and animation taking place in the city.

(Councillor Nic Bhranair in the Chair)

Music Strategy Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report and associated appendix:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’ including its corresponding priorities. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the allocation of funding to a number of important strands of the music strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the contents of this report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’**

- Agree the actions for remainder of 2023/24 as set out in the report and in Appendix 1 including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the final ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’. Mirroring A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are a number of actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector.

3.2 UNESCO Music delivery is funded from existing recurring and non-recurring departmental funds. At the meeting of the Special Policy and Resources Committee in April 2021, members agreed an allocation of resources to the delivery of the music strategy. £900k has been allocated towards City of Music and the Music Strategy for delivery on key developmental activities across 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively.

3.3 In April 2023, members approved a range of initiatives to progress elements of the music strategy. In June 2023, members received an update on current initiatives and approved additional actions. Within both papers, there are a range of pre-existing commitments for the remaining financial year which are now progressing at pace. These include;

- The Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues
- The creation of a digital music support service and marketing channels
- The Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24
- Continuation of Gradam Ceoil bursaries
- Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase
- The City of Music Industry Sessions
- Support for international exchanges with other UNESCO Cities of Music, namely Hannover, Germany and London, Ontario Canada
- A micro-grant programme, available to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their art form

- 3.4** In June 2023, members also received an update on the recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board comprising of 25 members, to bring to life the UNESCO City of Music designation. The board has been meeting monthly since April 2023 to map further initiatives to roll out in this financial year and beyond.
- 3.5** The Belfast Region Music Board met in June and July 2023 to agree a detailed and profiled delivery plan, containing initiatives to address a range of areas, most necessary to fulfil during the remainder of the financial year. These initiatives and associated budgets are detailed in Appendix 1.

3.6 **UNESCO Music Business Ambassador**

Theme two of the strategy has a focus on exploring and developing professional development opportunities to educate and equip music organisations and businesses to build sustainable career pathways within the sector. In particular, action 6.5 aims to pilot the creation of a UNESCO Music Business Ambassador (MBA) – a recurring two-year role to guide City Council in identifying the needs of workers in music and the opportunities for personal development and growth. It is proposed to allocate £30,000 annually to the Music Business Ambassador role to support the following priorities:

- **5.3 : Identify, select and allocate funding for a three-year period to support the development, delivery and promotion of a set of core music business flagship events**
- **6.3 : Create more opportunities for cultural leaders and business owners to learn from and share best practice with international counterparts**
- **7.1 : Develop a music business accelerator programme to grow micro-businesses into small businesses and beyond**
- **7.4 : Develop a Sponsorship Toolkit to help music organisations attract private funding and educate leaders on pitching best practice. Create opportunities for third sector and private sector matching and meet-ups**
- **7.6 : Develop an export strategy to support the promotion of music businesses alongside the promotion of musical talent**

3.7 As this role is developed and recruited, officials will engage with colleagues in Enterprise and Business Growth and other teams across Council to ensure alignment with other support packages provided across Council and explore opportunities to add further value to these initiatives.

3.8 **Health and wellbeing**

Theme one of the Music Strategy focuses on placing artists at the heart, a portion of which is built upon the aspiration within the Belfast Agenda that Belfast will be a city *'where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing'*.

3.9 Two priorities within Theme One are particularly relevant to this ambition:

- 1.8 : Alongside any financial assistance granted to creators, provide recipients with the opportunity to undertake a health and well-being one-to-one session with trained medical experts
- 2.8 : Co-design with sectoral stakeholders and fund a programme of practical well-being events and initiatives to ensure the physical and mental health of music creators is safeguarded and protected throughout the year. This should include a mechanism for reporting and dealing with inappropriate behaviour

3.10 The outcome of fulfilling these priorities is that Belfast will have a more inclusive, healthy and safe music community. It is proposed that to complete these priorities, Council should seek to work with music organisations that have a strong focus on health and wellbeing, such as Help Musicians NI and Mental Health England, that could then expand or increase their activity and reach within Belfast through a partnership with the Council. Through these partnerships, which will include a range of events and advice sessions, officials will ensure that these initiatives are also open to non-professional musicians.

3.11 **Music Apprenticeships and Internships**

Theme two of the Music Strategy focuses on nurturing the sector, with Priority 8 focused on working with stakeholders to drive forward the creation of funded opportunities to engage and support the future generation of creative freelancers, cultural leaders and music business entrepreneurs. This priority includes an action to *'allocate*

funding to increase the number of paid internships and apprenticeships in music businesses'

3.12 To achieve this aim, it is proposed to develop a pilot programme with Creative and Culture Skills NI aimed at supporting the next generation of music professionals and enable the growth of the sector by directly addressing skills gaps and shortages. Based on the principles a previously successful internship scheme, namely the NI Creative Employment Programme (NICEP), this programme will include work with employers to establish brand new internships in order to give people new opportunities in the music sector. The programme will provide part funding to cover wage costs for employers who create the new roles.

3.13 Accessibility

A key Priority within Theme one of the Music Strategy recommends that Council consult the live sector *'to encourage the implementation of Access Riders to ensure the needs of disabled musicians and performers are understood and met'* to ensure greater tangible support for artists with disabilities across the city's venues.

3.14 Members of the Culture team have recently met with the Musicians' Union to discuss their access rider and their work to encourage its widespread use, supported by its inclusion in all of their live contracts. It is proposed to support this priority through a partnership with the Musicians' Union and the University of Atypical to support awareness raising and normalisation of access rider usage and ensure best practice in engaging the sector.

3.15 Sustainability

Priority 11 of the Music Strategy focuses on sustainability in the music sector, specifically to lead the charge in greening the live music sector, embedding sustainability at the heart of its approach to business operations. Sustainability, including a conference on this area in 2025, was also a key focus of the application to UNESCO to receive City of Music status.

3.16 In order to align with these UNESCO ambitions, it is proposed to partner with experts in this area, such as Music Declares Emergency, Julie's Bicycle and Native Events, to provide a practical 'Go Green' toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation. This will be delivered by building on similar toolkits in other areas whilst promoting the use through a series of events and information sessions.

3.17 International collaborations

As part of Belfast’s application and status as a City of Music, member cities are committed to ‘*work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.*’

In July 2023, the first stage of our UNESCO City of Music partnership with fellow UCoM city London, Ontario, took place. Belfast artists Ciara O’Neill and Niall McDowell, selected by London Music Office and festival lead Darin Addison, travelled to Canada for a week of experiences that will have a lasting impact upon their career and has cemented a strong relationship between our cities. Highlights of the exchange included:

- **Headline sets at Home County Music & Arts Festival which has a typical footfall of around 50,000 over the course of a weekend. This was the first time non-Canadian artists have taken part in the festival in fifteen years.**
- **A two day song-writing camp including representatives from UNESCO City of Music Ghent, Belgium.**
- **Extensive media coverage across platforms such as BBC NI and CBC London**

3.18 In October 2023, two artists and talent agents from Ontario will arrive in Belfast to appear at the Belfast International Arts Festival and take part in a wraparound programme of similar activity.

3.19 As well as collaboration between cities, UNESCO Member cities are also expected to take part in official UNESCO events, including the annual UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) conference which will be taking place in Istanbul, Turkey in September 2023. The main objectives of this event are to:

- **Exchange on updated, practical information on policies and activities carried out by cities to further implement the objectives of the Network both at the local and international level and stimulate inter-city collaborations.**
- **Offer a key platform of discussion between UNESCO and Creative Cities on the Organization’s priorities of action in the field of culture and development as well as other issues of mutual interests; and**
- **Showcase and broaden the impact and outreach of the Network and its member cities by nurturing dialogue**

with other relevant stakeholders, notably those from the local levels.

Officials from the Culture Development team will be in attendance at this important event to highlight the work that Belfast is undertaking as part of the UNESCO City of Music designation.

3.20 Night-Time Economy

Priority 10 of the Music Strategy focuses on enhancing Belfast’s night-time economy, culture and governance to ensure the city is fulfilling its economic and cultural potential after dark.

As members will be aware, officials from Belfast City Council are engaged and represented on the Purple Flag Steering Committee which is looking at a number of actions aligned to continued status as a Purple Flag for the city in partnership with the BIDs. This work includes a review of footfall movement across areas of the city, supporting Translink in making the case for late night services, provision of visitor services, lighting strategies, a night safety charter in partnership with Hospitality Ulster and discussions on role of night Tzar.

3.21 Financial and Resource Implications

UNESCO Music delivery is funded from existing recurring and non-recurring departmental funds. Costs outlined in Appendix 1 are to be met from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development.

3.22 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

This music strategy is part of the overarching cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA. An equality screening has been completed and mitigating actions will be considered as part of any initiatives.”

The Committee:

- **Noted the contents of the report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast”; and**
- **Agreed the actions for the remainder of 2023/24, as set out in the report and in Appendix 1, including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets.**

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Strategic and Operational Issues

**Response to Government Departments
EQIA consultations**

The Committee considered the draft Council responses to the Department for the Economy (DfE) and Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) consultation on their 2023-24 budget.

It was reported that, to meet the early deadline for the DfI consultation, Council officers had submitted a draft response for the DfI consultation on 12th June (as attached at Appendix 2) stating that the submission was subject to approval by the Committee and ratification by the Council. DfI was informed that, should any changes be made at the Committee or Council meeting, it would be provided with an updated submission. This draft was also circulated to Party Group Leaders in June via email, with no requests for changes being received.

The DfE consultation response had not yet been submitted. It would be submitted following feedback and approval of the Committee, again with the proviso of full approval or further changes following the Council meeting on 4th September.

DfI state that their budget would be reduced by 0.4% when compared to their 2022-23 budget. However, they stated that, in real terms, the reductions represented a 14% cut in its resource budget, which would require £167m of savings.

The draft response in [Appendix 2](#), comments on these specific proposals and also answers the general areas where DfI requested feedback.

In contrast, DfE have only provided an overview of their proposed budget reductions. The draft response ([Appendix 1](#)) therefore focused on the general areas where DfE had requested feedback.

The Committee approved the draft responses for formal submission as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2.

Chairperson