



Subject:	UK Future Cities Commission
Date:	20 th October 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
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Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	To update members on the key recommendations emanating from the UK Future Cities Commission report and outline the Council's current position in relation to the proposed recommendations.	
2.0	Recommendation	
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the UK Future Cities Commission report. 	
3.0	Main Report	
3.1	The UK Urban Futures Commission is an ambitious enquiry established to unlock the potential of the UK's cities. The Commission is led by the Royal Society of Arts in partnership with Core Cities UK and Lloyds Banking Group and aims to work with cities and citizens to develop a transformative national plan for their future.	
3.2	The Commission has recently published a report 'Unleashing the potential of the UK's cities' (see appendix 1) which was guided by three core questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What are cities and what role do they play in our social, economic and environmental systems? What are the biggest challenges and opportunities – both now and in the coming decades? In light of those challenges, what do we want and need them to be? How do we reach our vision for cities? What steps can we take now to get there? 	
3.3	The report produced a series of recommendations and actions for consideration of cities and national government, each of which are summarised in the tables below, alongside a brief summary of Council's current position against those specifically related to cities.	
3.4	Recommendations for cities to consider	
	Recommendation 1: Cities need a plan to replenish and grow their natural, social and economic assets.	
	<i>Actions</i>	<i>BCC Position</i>
	1a) Form a City Coalition , reflecting the plurality of leaders in a city, with actors from local government, business, anchor institutions, and the community.	The refreshed Belfast Agenda and the supporting city governance arrangements is the mechanism for achieving this coalition in Belfast. A review of the governance arrangements is currently taking place to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Likewise, the Belfast Region City Deal is a further established leadership space for the city driving game

		changing programmes of work for the city.
	1b) Develop a Local Prosperity Plan. Cities should have a single long term strategic plan for delivering ‘prosperity’ – defined in social, economic and ecological terms - for their citizens and beyond, co-developed by the City Coalition	This description resonates with elements of the refreshed Belfast Agenda with themes focused on our People & Communities, Our Economy, Our Place, Our Planet and a Compassionate City.
	1c) Strengthen data and modelling capabilities, with a view to better measurement of economic, social and natural value, and modelling of the interconnected effects of interventions across the three systems.	Lack of data is an ongoing issue for Belfast and NI (evidenced in the Future Cities report where a lot of the comparative tables do not cover Belfast due to a lack of available data). BCC would welcome the opportunity to explore the data and modelling capabilities with other Core Cities members. There have been recent discussions with NISRA to explore opportunities to jointly improve data modelling for Belfast and work continues with Queens University on GIS mapping. A Council data maturity assessment has been undertaken with a view of assessing how we can better use data.
	1d) Increase citizen participation through residents’ councils and juries. Ensuring the voices of different interests are heard is important for the legitimacy and durability of decision-making.	The Belfast Agenda refresh commits to enhanced citizen engagement. Work is currently being undertaken to develop a co-design framework for the Belfast Agenda that will be brought to SP&R Committee at a future date.
Recommendation 2: Cities need the powers and tools to execute the plan.		
	<i>Actions</i>	<i>BCC Position</i>
	2a) Develop urban leadership schemes, to build and retain the skills needed to transform our cities.	To be further explored as part of the People Strategy. Work is ongoing regarding managing in a political environment.

<p>2b) Co-fund the establishment of a Cities Investment Hub, a central spine of specialist expertise available to all cities, delivering economies of scale to help develop Local Prosperity Plans and associated investment propositions.</p>	<p>Officers will consider further how this would work in a devolved environment.</p>
<p>2c) Consider establishing an Urban Wealth Fund to manage and increase local revenues from public sector assets.</p>	<p>Officers will consider further how this would work in a devolved environment. Ongoing work on Strategic Site Assessments will ensure that public assets are being utilised strategically.</p>
<p>2e) Grant local authorities and mayoral combined authorities in England more streamlined, long-term and flexible funding, putting an end to all current competitive economic development funding pots, and rolling those that are delivered at a local authority level into an integrated revenue and capital allocation for 'prosperity' in the Local Government Finance Settlement, on a multi-year basis.</p>	<p>Whilst this specifically references England, it is recommended the Council strategically supports this recommendation as an alternative to the levelling up fund approach.</p> <p>Council has commissioned an analysis of regeneration funds that are currently available to local authorities in GB.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Cities need to secure investment to finance the plan.</p>	
<p><i>Actions</i></p>	<p><i>BCC Position</i></p>
<p>3a) Catalyse private investment through joint ventures and special purpose vehicles, for projects linked to the Local Prosperity Plan.</p>	<p>Council is currently exploring funding models for regeneration and climate related projects.</p>
<p>3b) Set up publicly capitalised investment funds, explicitly linked to social, economic and ecological objectives in the Local Prosperity Plan.</p>	<p>Work is ongoing regarding the development of a portfolio of projects which will be used to target funding and investment opportunities.</p>
<p>3c) Join with senior representatives of financial institutions to commit to a Cities Investment Compact, with a commitment of 5% of their assets directly contributing to filling the investment gap in the Core Cities by 2030.</p>	<p>It is recommended that Council explores this recommendation further.</p>

3d) **Host investment showcases** to advertise investable, regenerative programmes to both domestic and foreign investors.

Work is ongoing regarding the development of a portfolio of projects which will be used to target funding and investment opportunities.

3.5

Recommendations for national government to consider

The Commission also provides a number of recommendations for national government that are required to support the work detailed in the report.

- **Reinstate national industrial strategy with our largest cities at its heart.**
Mirroring Local Prosperity Plans, this should take account of outcomes across economic, social, and natural systems. It must also articulate cities' contribution, both individually and collectively.
- **Introduce a new statutory purpose for city councils to generate prosperity** in their place, defined by social and ecological as well as economic health. This new statutory purpose would place generating local prosperity on an equal footing to core services, providing the City Coalition with a strong mandate for action.
- **Accelerate progress on the devolution of powers to local government in England**, moving to the default presumption of powers and assets being devolved unless the UK Government can provide a strong rationale not to do so.
- **Revise the remits of UK's major investment agencies** to allow them to better support cities.
- **Support responsible local borrowing for regenerative projects**, deploying the Office for Local Government to offer better oversight and regulation and promoting investment in social and environmental capital through discounted interest rates.
- **Enhance fiscal devolution** through a target for HM Treasury to bring the share of taxes controlled locally to the OECD average by the end of the next parliament.
- **Rewire the UK's macroeconomic and fiscal framework**, shifting our fiscal rules from a focus on net debt to net wealth, broadening the definition of capital to include social and natural dimensions and correcting for limitations in the Green Book.

3.6

Following the launch of this report, Council will consider the Commission's recommendations further and work with Core Cities and other associated partners to review how they can be applied. These recommendations will also be taken forward internally through discussions during the corporate planning process over the coming months.

3.7

Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report at this stage.

3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment associated with this report at this stage.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – ‘Unleashing the potential of the UK’s cities’ report of the UK Urban Futures Commission