

All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

Friday, 7th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE ALL-PARTY WORKING GROUP ON THE CITY CENTRE

Members present: Councillor Long (Chairperson);
Aldermen Rodgers and McCullough; and
Councillors Long and Maskey.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of External Affairs,
Communication and Marketing;
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager;
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business Research and Development
Manager;
Ms. L.A. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey, and

Resolved – “That Councillor Long be elected to serve as Chairperson for the All Party Working Group on the City Centre until the date of the Annual Council Meeting in 2025.”

Frequency of Meetings

At the request of Councillor Maskey, the Working Group agreed that the meetings of the Working Group would be scheduled on a quarterly basis going forward.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor Groogan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd May, 2024 were agreed.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentations

Future City Centre Programme

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. B. Kidd from Frazer Kidd to the meeting.

Mr. Kidd delivered a presentation to the Working Group and outlined the following key issues for consideration:

- Why Belfast?;
- City centre vacancies;
- New retailer entrants and locations;
- The Keep;
- Opportunities; and
- City barriers.

He stated that the new University of Ulster campus and city centre living was changing the city centre, however, issues such as streetscape, cleanliness, homelessness and complex licensing and planning systems were issues affecting businesses and the investment within the city centre.

The Members discussed the presentation and highlighted concerns with regard to the hours of bin collections in the city centre that required businesses to place unsightly industrial bins on the pavements, during core visiting hours, for collection.

Mr. Kidd said that first impressions were crucial for Belfast and from a marketing perspective, some areas of the city centre were difficult to promote when contending with other comparable cities.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Kidd for his presentation, and he retired from the meeting.

The Working Group noted the presentation.

City Development Updates

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy updated the Working Group on key developments in the city which had been approved at Planning Committee, that included affordable housing, iReach development on the Lisburn Road and Kainos 14 storey Grade A office building on the Dublin Road.

The Programme Manager provided an overview of city centre footfall during the period of January to April, 2024 in comparison to 2023 and 2022 which illustrated that footfall in the primary retail core had seen a year-on-year increase.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy summarised the media and communications update in relation to the following key areas:

- Business and investment;
- Animation and distinctive offering;
- Regeneration and connectivity; and
- Clean, green, including and safe.

The Working Group noted the presentation.

(At this point in the meeting, the Working Group was no longer quorate and the Director of City Regeneration and Development suspended the meeting and stated that she would arrange for the information associated with the following item to be forwarded to the Members of the Working Group via email.)

**Party Group Leaders Study Visit
to Manchester and Leeds**

Chairperson