

All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

Friday, 5th December, 2025

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

Members present: Councillor de Faoite (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Groogan and Long.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration;
Development;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of External Affairs,
Communications and Marketing;
Ms. D. Kelly, Programme Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – that Councillor de Faoite be elected Chairperson until the Council's Annual General Meeting in 2026.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March were agreed.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentations

Under the Bridges and Sailortown

(Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager, attended in connection with this item).

The Working Group noted the contents of a presentation regarding Council-led projects which were being progressed under the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework. These projects sought to improve connectivity and links between the city centre, City Quays/Sailortown and the Waterfront itself; and sought also to provide enhanced recreation spaces in areas in the vicinity of the M3 bridge.

Local Policies Plan

(Mr. D. O’Kane (Acting Planning Manager), Mr. M. Smithson (Senior Planning Officer), Ms. J. Doherty (Senior Planning Officer) and Mr. M. Whittaker (Senior Planning Officer) attended in connection with this item).

The Acting Planning Manager presented an overview of the housing and environmental planning proposals for central Belfast, focusing on the need for strategic zoning, site utilisation, and policy adjustments to meet with housing demands, support economic activities and preserve environmental assets. He pointed out that the proposals aimed to create a balanced and sustainable urban environment which addressed the needs of residents and businesses alike while protecting the area’s natural and built heritage.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Governance Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an update on the progress which had been made with external partners through the City Centre Leadership Coordination Group. He reported that the engagement process had included a workshop which examined opportunities and challenges with a view to identifying and agreeing on short, medium and longer-term interventions which the group could collectively support and drive forward.

The Working Group was advised that that a forthcoming meeting would be held to review the output report and to seek agreement across partners on the recommendations. It was anticipated that an update report in this regard would be submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, or the Working Group itself, in the new year.

Noted.

Communications Update

The Director of External Affairs, Communications and Marketing updated the Working Group on the recent activity which the corporate communications department had undertaken in promoting events and developments within the city centre. He stated that the department would continue to promote the city centre with a consistent and positive message and he outlined highlights from 2025, together with forthcoming events in 2026.

The Working Group noted the update.

Future Meetings

Discussion ensued on the items which had been included on the agenda and a Member suggested that the role and remit of the working group needed to be reassessed and should be considered as part of the governance review. The Member indicated that the work of the group needed to be Member-led and meetings should seek to consider, in detail, each of the themes identified previously as priorities.

As such, he added that the relevant Committees receive updates and suggested that proactive site visits should form part of agendas and further steps taken to enhance cross-party attendance at future meetings.

Noted.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Group agreed to defer consideration of this item.

Chairperson