

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor; and
Councillors Black, Bower, Bunting,
Collins, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Groogan,
Kelly, Lyons, McAteer, McCabe, McKay,
R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Nelson and Ó Néill.

Also attended: Councillor McKeown.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. R. Campbell-Palmer, Culture Development Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors McDonough-Brown and I. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th June, 2026, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme' in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme. She was not required to leave the meeting for this item.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two items is 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 item as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

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Vacant to Vibrant Programme

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and which sought approval for recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the receipt and assessment of recent applications.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which would be supporting up to 87 businesses/organisations to locate or expand into long-term vacant units; and
- ii. agreed the recommended citywide grant awards as outlined within the report.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 4 2025/26

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Committee's financial position for Quarter 4 of 2025/26.

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

Correspondence

**Minister for Infrastructure Response –
York Street Pedestrianisation**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure in response to its request for consideration to be given to the pedestrianisation of spaces within the York Street area.

**Department for Communities Response –
Basic Income for Artists Scheme**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Communities in response to a motion passed by the Council at its meeting in March, 2026, which had called on the Northern Ireland Executive to introduce a basic income for artists scheme.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Communities to seek clarification on his position in respect of a basic income for artists and to ask whether, as the Minister responsible for the arts, he would promote the need for provision to be made to facilitate the introduction of a basic income for artists scheme.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

**Visit Belfast - Renewal of the Sharing
Agreement with Translink and Visit Belfast**

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the renewal of the Partnership Agreement with Translink and Visit Belfast for the operation of a ticketing area at the Belfast Welcome Centre.

During discussion, a Member highlighted the public consultation which was being undertaken by Translink on a range of proposed changes to services and fares. The Member expressed concern regarding the potential impact of those changes.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees for a report to be submitted to its next meeting which would outline a draft Council response to Translink's public consultation on potential changes to services and fares.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. approved the renewal of the Partnership Agreement with Translink and Visit Belfast for the operation of a ticketing area within the Belfast Welcome Centre at 8-9 Donegall Square North, up to 31st March 2029; and
- ii. agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting which would outline a draft response to Translink's public consultation on potential changes to services and fares.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Pedestrianisation in Belfast City Centre
(Councillor McKeown to raise)**

(Councillor McKeown attended in connection to this item.)

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor McKeown addressed the Committee in respect of pedestrianisation within the city centre.

Councillor McKeown reminded the Committee that, following the fire in the Bank Buildings in 2018, the Council had passed a motion in May, 2019, which called on the pedestrianisation of Donegall Place and Castle Place and which recognised the opportunity to redevelop the city centre and provide economic, social and cultural opportunities for traders, residents and visitors. He expressed concern at the lack of progress in relation to the potential transformation of the city centre core through pedestrianisation, street animation and other incentives which would benefit businesses, increase footfall and improve its offering to residents and visitors. He added that the success of the recent Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which was held in the city had

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demonstrated clear demand for pedestrianised spaces within the city centre core. In respect of Donegall Place and Castle Place, the Member highlighted the need for the Council to reiterate the position outlined within the motion passed in 2019 and call on the Minister to ensure that those areas are included in any pedestrianisation proposals brought forward for the city centre.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

‘That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request that, in collaboration with the Council and other relevant stakeholders, Donegall Place and Castle Place be included in a pedestrianisation programme for the city centre.’

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need for any pedestrianisation plans to be taken in consultation with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that those spaces would be as inclusive and accessible as possible.

A Member also suggested that the Committee request an update briefing from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the proposals contained within the forthcoming Eastern Transport Plan.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to:

- i. request that, in collaboration with the Council and other relevant stakeholders, Donegall Place and Castle Place be included in a pedestrianisation programme for the city centre; and
- ii. request that the Department for Infrastructure provide the Committee with an update briefing in relation to the proposals contained within the Eastern Transport Plan.

Christmas Market Expansion Plans
(Councillor Kelly to raise)

At the request of Councillor Kelly, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting which would outline the potential to expand the Christmas Market beyond the grounds of City Hall.

Chairperson