



Subject:	'Urban Living Partnership' competition: Connecting neighbourhoods to growth opportunities
Date:	22 January 2016
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Deborah Colville, Portfolio manager Mark McCann, Business Research and Development manager Stevie Lavery, Programme manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Queen's University are applying to Innovate UK's Urban Living Partnership competition which is providing up to £400,000 to five cities to help them understand and better address complex urban and neighbourhood challenges. The competition aims to break down barriers between universities, local authorities and other partners in order to use innovative research to clearly understand the root causes of urban challenges that are difficult to address and co-produce sustainable change in urban living to benefit cities and their communities.
1.2	Partners have identified the issue of marginalised inner city neighbourhoods and the challenge of connecting communities into future growth opportunities through employability, skills and entrepreneurship as the theme of the Belfast bid.
1.3	The deadline for city applications was 21 January. Queen's University have requested support for their bid from Belfast City Council. In the event of a successful application, they have asked the Council to work with them in designing and delivering a Belfast programme (which would begin in May 2016). In advance of the deadline a letter of support has been sent from the Chief Executive providing support for the Queen's

	application.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the purpose of the Urban Living Partnership competition and the aims of the proposed Belfast bid; and • In the event of a successful bid, to agree to the Council's participation in the design and delivery of a Belfast programme.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Innovate UK and the UK Research Councils want to work with up to five cities to support them in understanding and addressing key urban challenges. The aim is to break down barriers between universities and local government in order to use research, data, and national expertise, to clearly define the root causes of major challenges. As such the competition links well with the Council's ambition to develop a 'smart city' approach in addressing the Belfast Agenda's priorities.</p>
3.2	<p>Each partnership must be led by a local university and bring together a consortium of the local authority, service providers and other stakeholders. Full details of the competition can be found at the link below¹. Up to £400,000 is available to each city for an eighteen-month 'diagnostic' phase to investigate a complex, inter-connected challenge(s) and then to set out delivery options. This first phase would include funding for a Council officer to work with the programme and bring together local authorities with the foremost experts in urban research and innovation to diagnose an integrated challenge(s) facing their city and work with local communities and stakeholders to develop pathways to future solutions</p>
3.3	<p>Following on from this first (diagnostic) phase a second stage would then support a city delivery partnership and test practical solutions to the challenges. Government funding for this stage has yet to be confirmed but there are indications that substantial funding will be available to assist cities in tackling the challenges identified in the diagnostic phase.</p>

¹ <http://urbanliving.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/>

3.4	<p><u>The Belfast application</u></p> <p>The Belfast bid is being led by Greg Keeffe, Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at Queen's University, who has a substantial record of success in similar competitions. In early December Professor Keeffe hosted a bid workshop (facilitated by Neil McInroy of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies) which involved researchers from a range of disciplines; officers from Council; and representatives from a number of other organisations including NI Housing Executive and the Strategic Investment Board's Urban Villages team. The School of the Built Environment at the Ulster University have also agreed to be part of a joint Belfast programme.</p>
3.5	<p>The workshop identified likely priorities within the Belfast Agenda around which the project could help 'diagnose' and then develop specific practical programmes of work. Specifically, participants identified the issue of marginalised neighbourhoods and the challenge of connecting such communities into future city growth opportunities with a focus on skills, employability and entrepreneurship. There was agreement that the city needs to better understand the barriers (spatial, perceptual, social) associated with achieving better connectivity with these neighbourhoods. As such, the work has the potential to contribute to the social aims of the Belfast Agenda and the City Centre Regeneration framework.</p>
3.6	<p>In the diagnostic phase, researchers would seek to identify the relationship between a wide range of factors that contribute to the disconnection of such neighbourhoods – and their impact on such things as employability, skills, and entrepreneurship. The work would look at the range of physical, social and perceptual barriers and draw on substantial government data and analytics currently not available to city policy makers.</p>
3.7	<p>Innovate UK have stressed that successful bids must demonstrate practical out-workings that will have a concrete impact on the lives of residents. The Belfast programme, if successful will seek to use this diagnostic phase to align with any relevant emerging investments already planned for the city (e.g.) projects related to the city centre regeneration framework.</p> <p>Successful cities will be expected to engage and co-design with communities, policy makers and other stakeholders to understand the challenges.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>A successful bid would include 100% funding for a Council officer to work on the eighteen-</p>

3.9	<p>month diagnostic phases. In addition, other relevant council officer time would be required to participate in workshops, evidence gathering, supporting consultation and engagement with residents, members and partners etc.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Equality and good relations implications, in relation to this policy, are still under consideration. Further updates will be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer in due course.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None