



Subject:	Growing the Belfast Economy – Committee Planning Workshop Proposal
Date:	14 th September 2016
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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
1.1	The purpose of the report is to propose a Committee Planning Workshop to allow Members to shape the upcoming work and agenda of the Committee, the new corporate plan and the budget setting process for 2017/18.
1.2	The workshop will reflect on how the Committee can lead and shape implementation of the priorities within the Belfast Agenda, consider how the Committee can build on the work that it has undertaken to date to grow the local economy and how the regenerative impact of the work of the Council and its partners can be maximised.
1.3	The report also contains an update on projects and programmes that have emerged from the work of the Committee to date. The proposed workshop will provide an opportunity for the Committee to test and shape emerging thinking on these issues.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree that a Committee Planning Workshop is held in October/November to consolidate the strategic direction of the Committee and shape the new Corporate Plan and budgets for 2017/18.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the update on emerging work-streams related to “Growing the Belfast Economy” which will be discussed at the proposed workshop.
3.0	Key issues
3.1	<p>The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards regeneration and growth of the city in the context of outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy decisions. Oversight of the exercise of Council functions in relation to economic development, urban development, tourism, culture & arts, European and international relations, car parks, city markets, city events, Belfast Castle, Malone House and Belfast Zoo.
3.2	<p>The Committee is currently working to an ambitious Committee Plan, aligned to the Council’s Corporate Plan and Belfast Agenda. The current plan was created after discussion with Members about the role of the Committee and its priorities for the City. The following priorities were agreed by Members in November 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy; The Employability & Skills Framework (& Year 1 Action Plan); Place positioning and maximising the opportunities for investment, tourism and regeneration; Integrated Tourism Strategy; Investigate the feasibility of a City Deal for Belfast; Develop a car parking strategy; Ensure the above strategies give consideration to connecting neighbourhoods to the city centre, ensuring that the whole city enjoys the benefits.
3.3	<p>The Council is now entering a key phase of the strategic planning calendar when plans are reviewed and refreshed in order to inform priorities and decisions about resource allocation in the year ahead. It is therefore proposed that the Committee dedicates a workshop to take stock, review the progress to date and consider the priorities for the next year.</p>
3.4	<p><i>Growing the Belfast Economy</i></p> <p>Members have played a leading role in shaping the Belfast Agenda, the community plan for Belfast. The Belfast Agenda has at its core a commitment to inclusive growth. The</p>

Committee has played a key role in ensuring that the narrative of the agenda balances the need for economic growth with the purpose of this growth – to connect people to opportunity and reduce inequality.

3.5 The “plan on a page” summary of the Belfast Agenda (Appendix 1) – to which the Committee Plan is aligned - demonstrates the centrality of growing the local economy to improving quality of life in Belfast. The pillars summarising the city priorities (below), demonstrate the importance of the role that the Committee will play in ensuring that the Council’s contribution to implementing the agenda is maximised.



3.6 An update on emerging proposals to develop projects and programmes to support this implementation is set out below. These projects and proposals will be considered further at the Committee workshop.

Attracting Investment and Positioning the City to be Competitive

3.7 In an increasingly competitive global environment, Belfast must develop its distinct competitive advantage if it is to compete and successfully attract FDI, tourists, and business to the city as well as grow its own indigenous businesses.

3.8 Members have emphasised the importance of continuing to attract and support FDI to Belfast and the Council has been delivering on the Tourism Strategy Action Plan, developing a ‘Go to Market’ plan to attract investment and working with city stakeholders in the development of the International Relations Framework to ensure that this is focused on attracting investment and positive profile for Belfast. An update on the International Relations Framework is included as a specific item on the Committee agenda. To support some of this work, plans are in place to prepare for Belfast to attend MIPIM in 2017 and

proposals are being developed to create a city investor “landing service”. This is at an early stage and is based on discussions with city stakeholders and following a review of similar service provision in other UK and ROI cities. This service will provide a welcome and network of professional and other services for those businesses, investors and developers new to the city but also those indigenous businesses who are already committed and willing to grow and develop their business/investment in the city. An important element of the landing service will be a city ‘Concierge Service’ which would be welcomed by FDI clients given their lack of knowledge of the city and its quality of life - geographically, educationally, culturally and socially. This would be additional to support provided by Invest NI which focuses on attracting them to invest in Northern Ireland and would focus on helping them get to know the city. Closely linked to this service is a strong city message and proposition to attract businesses, investors and developers to select Belfast as their preferred location to locate, and grow, their business in.

- 3.9 Several cities including, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol, Liverpool and Dublin have set up and successfully operate such services. Taking forward such a proposal will build on the city’s distinctive qualities and requires a strong collaborative approach, on a city and city-region basis, with key stakeholders such as Invest NI, to maximise the added value and impact.

Fostering Business Growth and Strengthening Business Relationships

- 3.10 Equally important is growing our own small business sectoral and clusters economy. Members will be aware that, on 1 April 2015, Councils assumed statutory responsibility for a range of business start-up and growth functions. There is a range of business support available through the Council, from pre-enterprise (thinking about starting a business) through to support for start-up and support once operational, depending on growth needs (export development, marketing support etc.) The majority of the direct support to businesses is provided through the Development Department but the Council also interacts with and supports businesses across a range of operational areas including waste, food health, licensing, building control and planning.

- 3.11 Committee received a detailed report on the Council’s support for businesses at their meeting in August 2016 and work is underway to further consider the four proposals raised through the recent Notice of Motion to support businesses as considered by Committee. Progress on this work will be brought back through the Party Briefing process in the next month for further consideration. There are challenges for enterprise across the city linked to

Employability and Skills in regard to promoting a culture of innovation and enterprise via early interventions within schools and colleges.

3.12 ***Employability and Skills***

This will be a key focus for the Committee and Members have agreed to the development of a Belfast Employability Programme (Belfast Works) within a wider Employability and Skills framework. The SP&R Committee in May 2016 approved the development of a Council-led employability model for the city. Work has started, putting in place resources to design a pathway, focusing on one or two employment partners to test the approach in the first instance. This is core to realising Members ambition to inclusive growth.

3.13 There are a number of significant policy changes which will have an impact on skills and employment demands in the next few years. The changes to Welfare Reform from 2020 will mean that many of those who were previously economically inactive (around 70,000 in Belfast at present) will have to seek employment. At the other end of the employment and skills spectrum, the potential reduction of Corporation Tax from 2018 had been predicted to create an additional 30,000 new jobs across Northern Ireland – with many likely to be located in Belfast. These jobs are likely to be in higher-end professional and financial services roles and will require higher level skills. At this point, there are significant funding pressures within universities and colleges and there are concerns that these budgetary pressures could impact negatively on the supply chain of talent to meet the demands of any new investment.

3.14 The Employability and Skills Framework highlights that this is a complex and multi-faceted issue. It is not just about education, training and employment. Rather it is impacted by a wide range of issues such as family cultures, health problems, mobility, access to childcare and welfare benefits. Equally, the deep-rooted nature of the economic inactivity challenge – and the fact that figures have improved only slightly even during periods of growth – suggest that making an impact will require a long-term strategic approach across a range of organisations. The Belfast Agenda and commitment of partners to work towards the vision for the city in 2030 provides a real opportunity to redesign how we do things in this area.

Potential Neighbourhood Opportunities for Growth and Regeneration

3.15 Members have instigated the delivery of a major programme of capital investment and physical improvement across our neighbourhoods. In total this represents some £300 million of investment, including unprecedented investment in leisure estate, some of which is in the

heart of our most challenged communities. Council officers have been working with partners to secure synergies with other major capital schemes, e.g. the stadia. People and Communities Committee have been looking at how these assets can improve the achievement of outcomes for local people in terms of reduced health inequalities and improvements to quality of life. Equally the opportunity exists to optimise the achievement of economic opportunities, including employability opportunities and the creation of better local tourism product.

3.16 There is room for the Council to build on the effective work undertaken as a result of the Investment programme which saw 503 permanent and 365 publicly advertised jobs; approx 200 work placements provided; pre-recruitment programmes and Social Investment Fund placements (SIF).

3.17 In addition to owning around 12% of the City's land, the Council also delivers its own capital investment programme which includes Leisure and the Belfast Investment Fund etc and also levers additional investment into the city. It is therefore in a strong position to place shape and maximise the use of assets to deliver outcomes. In particular the council's position as the planning authority gives much greater opportunity for the forward planning of effective and integrated interventions around employability.

3.18 At the proposed workshop Members will have a chance to consider how these opportunities can be maximised, building on work that has already been done. By way of example opportunities include:

- Andersonstown area approximately £150m is targeted for investment in a new leisure centre, Casement Park stadium and in the Belfast Rapid Transport schemes between 2017 and 2019, all of course subject to planning;
- The North Foreshore will be creating additional business over the coming years;
- Boucher Road which already is an economic driver will be enhanced with the Olympia and new Stadium Sports Village complex.
- The Gasworks has some further development to go and will have a future churn in terms of lettings as the NI Civil Service consolidates its office estate.
- The new Innovation Factory once operational and linked to other similar ventures such as Argyle, Ortus, Science Park etc. is another driver.
- There are a number of job opportunities being created at Maysfield via Allstate and

Concentrix.

- The Connswater Community Greenway is coming to completion and the East Belfast Partnership have already built a new tourism facility (with the assistance of Local Investment Fund monies) to attract and keep footfall in the area.
- Due to various Council investments there are quite a few new or due tourism type products being developed across the city to add to the existing attractions.

(Note this list is far from exhaustive)

As we move towards finalising plans and budgets for 2017/18, it is important that we consider what further actions we need to take to catalyse the economic potential of these projects and others across the city and their regenerative impact.

City Centre Regeneration

A core part of the Committee's work will continue to be maximising the impact of the City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy. The Committee is regularly updated on the key city centre projects which Members will continue to be engaged with as they develop. However similar opportunities will arise for employability programmes as these projects come to fruition.

Maximising the Impact of the City Region

Members will continue to lead work to ensure that benefits of city-region growth are maximised. Many of the city's economic challenges such as economic inactivity, skills and employability levels and low levels of business start up persist beyond the Council's geographic boundaries and will require a whole systems approach if they are to be addressed. Additionally, as the capital city and gateway to the region many of the key growth issues, such as the need for the effective infrastructure that supports growth also need to be considered and feature strongly in the Committee's agenda.

The Committee has also been at the forefront of influencing economic strategy at regional level through its discussion of the role of the city in regional growth and should note the intention of the NI Executive to consult on the draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy in the autumn. The support provided by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) in terms of regular economic briefings and as a 'critical friend' in the development of the Belfast Agenda and other strategies enhances the evidence base to enable Committee to fulfil its role. This support is in place for a two year period and renewal will be

	<p>subject to review and Committee decision by February 2017.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.23 The Committee Planning Workshop is being arranged to help shape the budget setting process for 2017/18 and the effective alignment of resources to priorities.</p> <p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>3.24 There are no direct implications at this stage; however, programmes and actions will be developed in conjunction with the Equality & Diversity Officer.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1: Belfast Agenda ‘plan on a page’