



Subject:	Critical City Infrastructure - Update
Date:	9 November 2016
Reporting Officer	Nuala Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects
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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	To update Members on the ongoing work and engagement with Central Government on the development of an Infrastructure Plan for the City
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) The Infrastructure Minister, Chris Hassard MLA has confirmed his willingness to work with Council and other partners to develop an Infrastructure Plan for the Belfast City-Region and Eastern Corridor including examining forms of financing such a plan.(ii) The Department for Infrastructure has indicated it would work with the Council to explore the potential to commission a feasibility study in relation to a high speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin as raised in a recent Notice of Motion to Council.(iii) The Executive's Committee for Infrastructure has requested to meet with the Lord Mayor and Council delegation on the 7 December (am) in City Hall, to explore some of the key infrastructure challenges and priorities facing the city and how the Council may work more effectively with the Committee.(iv) A further report will be brought back to January committee on the proposed Infrastructure Plan

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>If the Belfast City-Region and connecting corridors (e.g. Eastern Corridor) is to fulfil its potential there is a need for sustained investment in critical city infrastructure. Infrastructure planning and investment is necessary to enable and support economic growth and investment and ensure that the city is capable of accommodating future development and plans for growth. It will also be important in terms of supporting the emerging Local Development Plan.</p>
3.2	<p>Members will be aware that a cross-party delegation from Council has been meeting NI Executive Ministers to discuss the emerging Programme for Government, new Investment Strategy and Economic Strategy as well as exploring the key challenges, opportunities & priorities for the city.</p> <p>On the 20 October, Members met the Infrastructure Minister, Chris Hazzard, MLA. A key focus of discussion was the recent announcement by the Minister and Department for Infrastructure to extend the procurement bidding process for the York Street Interchange project with no definite date set for commencement of the scheme. This decision has received significant pushback and concern from the general public/commuters as well as industry.</p>
3.3	<p>The scheme has been in planning from 2009, with an Executive announcement to progress the infrastructure scheme made in 2015. The £165m scheme is critical to the city and would address the traffic gridlock which occurs daily at the busy junction, a key gateway into the city and the port. As Northern Ireland's busiest junction, it carries 100,000 vehicles each day, mostly commuters to and from Belfast as well as the haulage industry linkage to the port. This is not only an important scheme to increase the economic competitiveness of Belfast but also Northern Ireland Plc.</p>
3.4	<p>The Minister indicated that the decision to delay the scheme was due to current uncertainty around funding availability given a proportion of the scheme was to be funded through Europe and the current uncertainties around Brexit as well as the pressures on the NI Executive infrastructure budget. The Minister indicated that the Department is working towards a likely 2018 timescale to submit a bid for funding for York Street Interchange under the 'Connecting Europe Facility Fund'.</p>
3.5	<p>Whilst the Fresh Start Agreement provided for an additional £350m borrowing for infrastructure projects over the next four years, the Minister stated that the NI Executive have prioritised four flagship projects including the Belfast Rapid Transit, Belfast Transport Hub and the A5 and A6,</p>

therefore existing resources will be needed in the short-medium-term to take these projects forward.

3.6 During discussions Members highlighted the desire of Council to work alongside the Department to explore what innovative financial mechanisms and funding models could be developed to deliver important city infrastructure schemes such as the York Street Interchange. The Council would specifically wish to examine the potential options around a potential public and private sector co-financing model for specific schemes such as the mixed-use regeneration scheme around the Transport Hub. The financial model which could be developed to bring this scheme forward could potentially be structured in such a way that it could release capital for other infrastructure schemes that are likely to be put on hold, such as York Street Interchange.

3.7 **Infrastructure Plan for Belfast City-Region and Eastern Corridor**

The Council strongly believes that if Belfast and Northern Ireland is to make a further step change and compete on a global scale there is a need for targeted investment in the physical, economic and social infrastructure of the city. Having modern infrastructure in place will further enhance Belfast (and wider region) proposition as an attractive place to live, work and invest.

3.8 Understanding Northern Ireland's priority infrastructure needs, and planning to address these on an affordable and properly sequenced basis, should be at the heart of the Investment Strategy. The Council would highlight the potential for central government, local government and the private sector to collaborate more closely in planning and delivering future infrastructure investment.

3.9 In this context, the Infrastructure Minister indicated at our recent meeting that he would be keen to work with Council and other Ministerial Colleagues to bring forward an Infrastructure Plan for Belfast City-Region and Eastern Corridor and to explore how such a plan may be resourced. This proposal was also discussed at the recent meetings with the Finance Minister, and First and Deputy First Ministers, all of which recognised the importance of this work for the city-region.

3.10 As agreed previously by Committee, officers have been carrying out initial scoping work on the development of an Infrastructure Plan to align with proposed growth figure within the Belfast Agenda and would now intend to engage with departmental officials to further refine this work. A report will be brought back to the January meeting of the Committee.

Members will note that the Executive's Committee for Infrastructure has requested to meet with

<p>3.11</p> <p>3.12</p> <p>3.13</p> <p>3.14</p>	<p>the Lord Mayor and Council delegation on the morning of 7 December (am) in City Hall, to explore some of the key infrastructure challenges and priorities facing the city and how the Council could work more effectively with the Committee.</p> <p>High-Speed Rail Infrastructure</p> <p>Members will note that the Infrastructure Minister confirmed that departmental officials would explore with the Council the potential to commission a feasibility study in relation to a potential high speed rail connection between Belfast and Dublin which had been proposed in a recent Notice of Motion submitted to Council. Again, a report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee on this proposal.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or Human Resource implications contained within this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>None</p>