



Subject:	Belfast Economic and Social Policy
Date:	21 April 2017
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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	<p>The Belfast Agenda sets out an ambition for growth and opportunity that includes four headline goals to focus collaborative efforts on economic and social growth of Belfast so that by 2035:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Our city is home to an additional 70,000 new residents- Our urban economy supports 50,000 more jobs- There will be a 50% reduction in the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods- Every young person leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential <p>In an increasingly competitive global environment, Belfast must emphasise its distinct</p>

<p>1.2</p> <p>1.3</p>	<p>competitive advantage if it is to continue to compete and successfully attract FDI, and tourists to the city as well as encouraging more businesses to start and support those existing businesses to grow in the city. 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 and working with city stakeholders in the development of the International Relations Framework which seeks to promote the profile of Belfast internationally as a place to visit, live and invest.</p> <p>To focus our efforts on growing a sustainable, inclusive economy a number of targets have also been set for 2021 along with key programmes of work (see draft Belfast Agenda). This report focuses primarily on the issue of city deals and economic and social progress in the context of Brexit. It needs to be noted that significant other pieces of work sit alongside this paper on job creation, skills development, liveability and neighbourhood regeneration.</p>
<p>2.0</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>2.1</p>	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) note the current programme of work underway which seeks to position Belfast as a competitive place and key attractor for people to visit, live, learn and invest; (ii) consider and agree the proposed next steps as set out at paragraph 3.3.4 below.
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main report</p>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.1.1</p> <p>3.1.2</p> <p>3.1.3</p>	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Council is increasing its ambition around positioning the city to attract international investment from developers, FDI and institutional investment and the recent success at MIPIM 2017, along with the International relations Framework 2016-2021 provide fresh impetus to consider how the City can begin to embed and sustain this collaborative and outward-focused approach to deliver on the City ambitions in the Belfast Agenda.</p> <p>Central to promoting growth and positioning the city is the Council’s role in supporting and adding value to the work of key city partners in their efforts to increase the number of international students in the city, grow tourism investment and support more Foreign Direct Investment as well as helping local businesses to become more active in international export markets.</p> <p>In the context of the Belfast Agenda, Members have already commissioned or agreed a range of work, currently underway, to drive forward growth and position the city in a time of increasing economic and political flux. Some examples include:</p>

- **International Relations Framework** – including the development of sister city relationships with Boston, Nashville and Shenyang.
- **Strengthening private sector relationships** as demonstrated by the recent success of MIPIM and the strong public/private sector approach adopted (e.g. in access of 70 private sector representatives as part of the Belfast delegation and £240,000 private finance secured).
- Refocus the **Belfast-Dublin MOU** to enhance collaboration on economic, tourism, education & investment programmes.
- Exploring the development of a mutually beneficial **city-to-city programme of co-operation and collaboration between Belfast and the City of London**, in the interests of galvanising and stimulating both cities as growth engines, particularly as the UK exits the European Union.
- Launch of the **Belfast-London Business Network** in February 2017 with over 150 delegates attending providing a platform to pitch the real estate investment opportunities available in Belfast as well as promoting the opportunities for foreign direct investment, particularly the emerging and growing specialisms such as cyber security, legal services and business and professional services.
- The Council is developing a detailed programme of support, interventions and incentives to support business start-ups, existing businesses wishing to grow and foreign owned businesses that might consider Belfast as an investment location with a view to establishing a bespoke 'City Investment Advice/Concierge Service that supports and enhances the work of key city partners.
- Belfast part of the **100 Resilient Cities Network** and is in the process of appointing a Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) whose role is to work with city stakeholders to develop a Resilience Strategy which will seek to address the inter-related issues of economic, social & environmental resilience.
- The development of a **City Growth Deal** for the Belfast City-Region is moving into a detailed feasibility study and financial modelling phase. This work will focus not only on the delivery of key city infrastructure priorities but also how the principles of inclusive growth can be integrated within a city growth deal so that communities across the city benefit. Intensive engagement will take place with both elected Members and city and regional partners to define what is possible.

3.1.4

There is no doubt that there has been a growing recognition and support for the Council's leadership role in promoting economic growth and positioning the city on a regional, national

and international basis as evidenced in the engagement and feedback received on the Belfast Agenda.

Brexit

3.1.5

Given the changing and uncertain global economic environment, there is a growing focus in other city-regions across the UK on the importance of place and ensuring that local government have the necessary financial levers and powers to support inclusive economic growth. There has been a reaffirmed commitment to devolution and introduction of growth deals covering all parts of GB but not Northern Ireland.

3.1.6

It will be important that the Council and Members continue to proactively seek to ensure that such similar freedoms, including a Growth Deal, are at the heart of any negotiations around Brexit and form part of the specific asks being developed by political parties and government. Whilst the detailed feasibility study will help to identify potential opportunities and evidence the financial and social benefits around a growth deal and further double devolution asks, it will be critical that this is supported by a strong political strategy/manifesto which gives focus and intent to the Councils engagement with relevant stakeholders and influencers.

3.1.7

Correspondence recently received from NILGA, attached at Appendix 2, outlines some the approaches being taken by other councils in relation to forward planning around Brexit including, for example, the commissioning of joint research pieces and entering into MOU type arrangements with cross-border council colleagues. NILGA is strongly advocating that an evidence-based and collegiate approach is taken to further strengthening NI council's position and in securing the best fiscal, legislative and policy outcomes associated with Brexit. Whilst it will be important that we continue to work with our local government colleagues including NILGA, it will be critical that we build upon the current momentum of growth and position Belfast to maximise the potential opportunities which may emerge around Brexit.

3.1.8

It is also important that the social implications of Brexit are understood and that plans to ensure 'inclusive growth' take account of these impacts.

3.2

Next steps – creating an integrated and strategic approach and establishing “quick wins”

3.2.1

Given the changing economic, political and social landscape, it is vital that the Council continues to show leadership in driving inclusive economic growth. As detailed in this report,

Members have led and commissioned a number of significant interventions which have successfully raised the profile of the city and started the process of effective advocacy around securing the powers and resources needed to deliver inclusive growth for the city-region.

3.2.2

There is now a need to ensure we draw these strands together to ensure that they are mutually reinforcing and underpinned by clear evidence and messaging so that Members can effectively influence on behalf of the city and that this leadership is visible to city stakeholders. Key linked strategic pieces which will have the continued leadership and oversight of the committee moving forward will be:

- City-region growth deal
- Place positioning;
- International relations framework;
- City Resilience
- An inclusive growth model

3.2.3

In terms of city marketing, it is important that we seek to build upon the momentum created at MIPIM and the successful relationships Members have built with the private sector to position and market Belfast at a time of flux when businesses are making location decisions. We must also consolidate and build upon to the relationships which Members have built with our surrounding councils and with other cities such as London and Dublin in line with our growth strategy.

3.2.4

In order to take this forward Members are asked to consider and agree the following:

- (i) Members to lead and fully engage in the next stage of **feasibility work on the city growth deal proposition** including the specific deliverables (asks) and funding model.
- (ii) Develop and implement a **political lobbying strategy** which gives focus and intent to the Council's engagement with relevant stakeholders and influencers; and seeks to inform the negotiations and forward planning around Brexit.
- (iii) Develop **a strong and strategic marketing piece**, in partnership with the private sector including developers, agents and investors, anchor institutions and the public to position Belfast in a post Brexit context as a place to live, visit and invest
- (iv) Engage and potentially **co-commission specific research** pieces with the City of London and Dublin City Council & Dublin Chamber of Trade and Commerce to identify opportunities of mutual benefit including e.g. joint marketing, trade and

