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| <b>Subject:</b>           | Blackstaff Square – proposed progression of public realm project under Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead programme |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 10 <sup>th</sup> January 2018   |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Nuala Gallagher   |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Alice McGlone (Ext 3415)  |

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

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

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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>   |
| <b>1.1</b> | The purpose of this report to seek agreement from Members to progress the Blackstaff Square public realm project under Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) programme.   |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>   |
| <b>2.1</b> | Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Agree that the Blackstaff Square Public realm project be taken forward under Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead programme, led by Department for Communities</li></ul> |

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|                   | <p>(DfC);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note DfC's intention to procure an Integrated Design Team for a BSA Phase 5 project;</li> <li>- Note that the Council will work with DfC to ensure that project is designed and developed in such a manner that elements of the scheme can continue as a standalone project outside the wider remit of the Streets Ahead 5 project, should full funding not be available;</li> <li>- Note that this approach would mean that Phase 5 would be prioritised over Phase 2 (the area around City Hall) and Phase 4 (the area around Royal Exchange in the North East Quarter);</li> <li>- Note DfC's intention to maintain a priority focus on the delivery of Streets Ahead 3 as the priority public realm project pending confirmation of funding arrangements.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>3.0</b></p> | <p><b>Main report</b></p>   |
|                   | <p><b>Background</b></p> <p>3.1 The Council's Linen Quarter (LQ) Vision and Guidance approved on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016 included proposals to enhance the arrival experience between the proposed Transport Hub and the city centre across Great Victoria Street and create a new, improved high quality public realm in Blackstaff Square, to serve as a positive gateway from the Transport Hub to the Central Business District and Linen Quarter.</p> <p>3.2 In February 2017, Council agreed that as part of the promotion and development of the Linen Quarter that the City Centre Development Team should develop a Phase 1 public realm design scheme and project cost to RIBA Stage 3. The original proposed delivery model was a two-stage approach with the Council appointing a design team to develop the project to RIBA Stage 3 (including planning) and the scheme passing to DfC for the procurement of an Integrated Supply Team to deliver the construction phase. DfC subsequently sought advice from the Central Procurement Directorate on the proposed delivery model and was advised that having the one Integrated Design Team in place from start to end provides the best value for money in line with NI Public Procurement Policy (NIPPP).</p> <p>3.3 Over the past months, teams in the Council and DfC have been exploring how best to take this forward in terms of procurement and also in light of other development activities in the vicinity, such as the proposed Transport Hub and new Belfast Grand Central Hotel. The boundary of the</p> |

Blackstaff Square project initially proposed is shown in Appendix 1. However, with Translink developing the Weavers Cross Transport Hub at their Great Victoria Street/Glengall Street site, there is the potential that this could impact on the scope of the Blackstaff Square project. The Grand Central Hotel on Bedford Street at its junction with Franklin Street, which is also in close proximity to Blackstaff Square is scheduled for completion in 2018, as is the Maldron Hotel which has a frontage on the Square and student housing on McClintock Street. It is therefore timely to review the scope of the Blackstaff Square project and the most effective approach to procuring a design team and securing capital funding.

3.4

In DfC's Public Realm Masterplan, Blackstaff Square was identified as a catalyst project, whilst the surrounding area (including Great Victoria Street, Bedford Street and Dublin Road) are integral parts of Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) programme (See Appendix 2), which has the overall aim of improving connections with the principal railway and bus station.

3.5

Following discussion at a recent meeting of the BSA Public Realm Project Board which comprises of senior members from the Department of Infrastructure, DfC and BCC, the consensus was that, given the wider context, the Blackstaff Square improvements should be progressed under Phase 5 of the BSA programme. The Board considered that this option presents an opportunity for a more comprehensive/strategic approach to regenerating the public realm, taking account of the wider developments in the area. They also emphasised the importance of a joined-up approach to public realm improvements and connectivity around the Transport Hub and Blackstaff Square. This view is shared by Translink. There is clear justification for reviewing Blackstaff Square in terms of the timing of public realm improvements and DfC has indicated its willingness to re-prioritise the phasing of the SA programme to bring forward proposals.

3.6

The Council will work with DfC to ensure that proposals for Blackstaff Square are designed and developed in a way which would allow elements of the scheme to continue as a standalone project outside the wider remit of BSA 5, in the event that full funding does not become available. To this end we would commit to engage collaboratively with the Department to ensure successful delivery of the project objectives.

3.7

This approach would mean that Phase 5 would be prioritised over Phase 2 (the area around City Hall) and Phase 4 (the area around Royal Exchange in the North East Quarter). However, given the significant investment in this area, there would appear to be a convincing argument for

accelerating Phase 5. In the past, such decisions have been made by the relevant Minister. In the current absence of a Minister, DfC will have to consider whether it is able to reach a decision. The Council's view of this matter, as one of the main stakeholders, and as the locally elected body, is an important factor to be considered.

3.8

BSA Phase 3, in the vicinity of Ulster University, is DfC's current priority, but cannot progress at present, due to the current funding position. However, the delivery of the construction phase of the BSA Phase 3 project remains the next priority for the Department and consideration will be given to taking forward a new procurement exercise in the future, once sufficient funding to deliver the project has been confirmed

#### **Timescale and Implementation**

3.9

Subject to Council approval, DfC would move towards issuing tender documents for the appointment of an Integrated Design Team (IDT) by end February 2018. It is estimated that the earliest date by which the IDT could be appointed is August/September 2018.

Timescales from appointment of the IDT to submission of planning application (including design, surveys and 12 week consultation period and reporting to Committee) is estimated as 12/14 months (i.e. by autumn 2019). Planning permission would be timetabled by spring 2020 with the contractor to undertake the works appointed and commencement on site expected in spring 2021. This would align with the construction programme for the Transport Hub. This is an indicative timeline of key milestones for BSA 5 which will be refined when the extent of the proposed project is established:

#### **Capital Costs and Governance**

3.10

It is intended that BSA 5 will be funded primarily by DfC subject to the necessary government approvals being obtained. The Council is currently preparing a Developer Contributions Framework that will set out the Council's approach to the negotiation of developer contributions as a means to mitigate and manage the impacts of new development on the City's infrastructure. The draft Framework is currently being finalised and following Party Briefings it is expected that the draft Framework, following Committee approvals will be published for a 12 week public consultation period from April 2018 as outlined in the report to Planning Committee in December 2017.

The BSA Public Realm Project Board, upon which the Council is represented, will be the

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| 3.11       | governance model for project delivery.  |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>   |
| 4.1        | Equality and good relations screening will be conducted as required, in parallel with any future proposed consultation process.   |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>Resource Implications</b>  |
| 5.1        | Work will continue with the Planning Service on the contribution and utilisation of the existing Developer Contributions agreed with those schemes currently in the ground to the overall public realm in the area.   |
| <b>6.0</b> | <b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b><br>Appendix 1: Blackstaff Square – indicative area previously identified for development of public realm proposal (boundaries to be finalised).<br>Appendix 2: Extent of BSA5. |