



Subject:	Belfast: City for Investment Service
Date:	7 March 2018
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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	The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed direction of travel for a Council-led City for Investment support service for indigenous businesses and new investors, focusing on actions to be delivered in the 2018/2019 financial year. An accessible user-friendly business service titled "Belfast: City for Business" will consolidate the Councils business support offer. This report concentrates on one strand of this support titled "investment" (refer to Appendix 1). This report was originally tabled to Committee on 7 February 2018 and deferred to Party Group Briefings for discussion.
1.2	This report sets out the thematic work under 'Belfast: City for Investment' which aligns to the NI Programme for Government, the draft Industrial Strategy for NI, the Belfast Agenda and

	<p>the developing City Deal. The work programme significantly contributes to the Council's priorities of Growing the Economy, Working and Learning, City Development and Living Here. This report seeks Committee's approval for a phased approach to developing an Investment Service over time. An initial service will be developed to co-ordinate investor enquiries in April 2018 in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland and other key business partners and stakeholders across the city.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the proposed strategic direction for the development of a Belfast City Council Investment Service. – Note that the phased approach may require additional finance or staff resource in future which will be tabled back to relevant Committee's for consideration. – Note that any requests for subvention from the Investment Service will be dealt with under existing Council Standing Orders. Any exception to this will be tabled to SP&R Committee.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Officers have been prioritising programmes and activity for the 2018/2019 financial year to deliver against key performance indicators identified in the Programme for Government (PfG), the draft Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Belfast Agenda. Primarily these indicators relate to business Start-Up, Jobs, Business Productivity and Foreign Direct Investment. Members will be aware that the Belfast Agenda four-year stretch goals to 2021 aim to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 15,000 new jobs • Attract £1 billion private sector Foreign Direct Investment • Support 4,000 small business start-ups; • Double the economic value of out of state tourism; and • Welcome 1.5 million overnight tourist stays per year.
3.2	<p>The Council currently delivers a range of business support activities focused on Investing in Belfast, Starting a Business and Growing a Business. These initiatives are supported by Employability and Skills programmes and initiatives targeted towards businesses and</p>

individuals. The approach detailed in this report aims to consolidate the Council's business services and make it easy to do business in Belfast. This is one of the key principles listed within 'Growing the Economy' theme of the Belfast Agenda. Over the last two years, Belfast has been ranked as the number one business friendly city of its size. In an increasingly competitive global environment, it is important to retain focus on improving service delivery and ensure that we are aligning our services to meet business needs.

3.3 Developmental Stage – Investment Service

In order to shape a future Council led Investment Service, the Council commissioned a research piece to identify the optimal approach and structure. OCO/ Webb Advisory completed their report and officers have been working cross-departmentally to scope out an implementation plan to consider the viability and phased timing of their recommendations.

3.4 The OCO/Webb Advisory commission included analysis and benchmarking of other UK and ROI cities and consultations with stakeholders across the city including business and public sector organisations. Key learning points were identified from the benchmarking exercise which fed into the development of options and one clear recommendation specific for Belfast City Council.

3.5 The recommended option was to develop a dedicated single point of contact for indigenous and inward investors in relation to all business strands such as enterprise, investment, employability and skills, start-ups, growth, and innovation. Located on the Belfast City Council website it is suggested the landing platform be called; '**Belfast: City for Business**'. Appendix 1 summarises the categories of support available from Council under this promotional banner, the key messages under each and a summary of the support available to businesses and individuals. '**Belfast: City for Investment**' is just one service area under the suite of support promoted as 'Belfast: City for Business'.

3.6 The recommended option is for a '**flexible responsive service**' – responding to various types of enquiries relating to start-up, growth and investment in Belfast. It is envisaged that this service will evolve depending on the level of demand and the type of support service requested by businesses. For specific investment opportunities, the Council will retain the ability to commission support to secure investment. This may include international prospecting, commissioning research to meet investor needs or considering sub-letting incentives for the provision of test trading and/or soft landing space across the city. Officers will obviously work closely with Invest NI and other business support organisations as part

of this work.

3.7

There are three elements of the proposed Investment Service in development: These are;

- Relocation / Soft landing support – helping new businesses and their employees make professional and personal connections to quickly embed and grow in the city.
- Investment Attraction – City Centre Development investment portal and international positioning.
- Belfast Proposition for FDI and indigenous investors – Key initiatives acting as attractors being developed for future consideration.

External Stakeholder engagement

3.8

The OCO/Webb Advisory report recognised the significant value that the Council provides to Investors, in particular the Civic Leadership, and the importance of the Council in terms of Strategy Development, aligned to its new statutory functions (Economic Development, Planning & Community Planning).

3.9

It is important that the Council's Investment Service complements the Invest Northern Ireland proposition, adds value and minimises duplication of effort. Council Officers presented our draft ambition to the Director of International Investment and Regional Director at Invest Northern Ireland on 6 December 2017. The feedback received was positive and included some of the following points;

- Recognised the value in a Relocation and Soft Landing Service that Belfast City Council could bring to a pre-investment and investment enquiry.
- Offered the opportunity to collaborate and pilot this approach with a number of pre-investment clients.
- Sought confidence that confidentiality requirements would be met in line with GDPR regulations which will be in force from May 2018.
- Offered the opportunity to agree a protocol for inward collaborative visits or how we could engage with their pre-investment clients and ensure client expectations are understood and met.
- Opportunity to ensure harmony of data and presentation of statistics and sectoral intelligence across both organisations consistently.

Further meetings with Invest NI have led to the development of a draft protocol being prepared. Invest NI has given a commitment to provide a sample of pre-investment clients for the first phase of the Investment Service Relocation and Soft Landing Service.

3.10	<p><u>Implementation Stage</u></p> <p>It is anticipated that a Phased approach will be adopted to ensure the successful implementation of Belfast: City for Investment in order to minimise reputational risk, and gather an evidence base of enquiries and client types which will inform the future direction</p>
3.11	<p>of the service.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Phase I – Relocation and Soft Landing Service</u></p> <p>The 'Relocation & Soft landing Service' will include a Welcome Service, Access to networks, PR, relocation support, advice with housing and education, market intelligence, access to local customers, and ongoing one to one client support from the start-up to the aftercare stage. This service will be resourced via the existing Economic Development Unit and resource requirements kept under continuous review. The initial service will also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal client-managed approach by Economic Development Officers. • Help to build the business case for expansion or relocation, providing up to date statistics and market information in relation to customers, suppliers, labour, recruitment, infrastructure, and property. • Property and site prospecting – with access to a comprehensive database of available property and sites helping to find the right place to do business, including hot- desking and accommodation offers at a choice of locations to assist with the set up and transition to a permanent accommodation. • Help with planning and pre-application discussions and information and practical advice and guidance to support the client through any relevant planning and regulatory processes. • Tailored skills academies or recruitment support services for significant investments. • Support to families and dependants who move with the company, arrangement of pre-move visits to the area to show the quality of life on offer and provide help with the first steps of relocation. • PR and support for a launch of the business in the local area including introductions to the key networking and business membership organisations in the city. <p>Enquires will be logged and followed up with a client managed diagnostic approach to tailor our support to the client needs. Client interventions will be evaluated and client feedback shall be sought to inform the future direction of the service. We are working with colleagues</p>
3.13	

in City Centre Development to ensure the Council's investment attraction website (www.investinbelfast.com) promotes the relocation and soft landing support available. We are populating the website with consistent sectoral data and tailored support and initiatives by sector. The outward investment promotion by the EU & International Relations Teams and the City Centre Development Team as well as Invest NI will be key elements of Council's relocation and soft landing service. Performance of this service will be reported to the cross departmental operational governance structure noted below. Marketing to promote the availability of the service will be measured throughout 18/19 to ensure existing resources can meet demand during this pilot phase.

Phase II – Defining and Promoting Belfast's specific proposition

3.14 In parallel to Phase I, Officers are scaling an enhanced Belfast proposition, which will be a defined menu of tailored support to investors. This is being developed cross-departmentally and an internal implementation plan and governance structure is being put in place for the future delivery. Key services across the Council contributing to this including;

- Smart Cities
- City Centre Development
- EU and International Relations
- Planning & Policy
- Property & Projects
- Employability & Skills
- City Deal & Resilient Cities

3.15 Initially, a Project Board will be put in place to oversee the Project and regular operational team meetings will take place in order to develop or broaden Belfast City Council offering and proposition to investors. For example, an enhanced proposition may include Fast Track Planning, Simplified Planning Zones (subject to Committee approval), access to Vu City and Growth Mapper systems, Energy Support, alternative Clean Tech solutions for sites, benefits of locating in UK, R&D tax credits, access to networks and contacts in Universities and Centres of Excellence dependant on the sector. Each of these need considered further internally and will be reviewed by the Council operational team before being tabled to Committee.

3.16 It is envisaged this developmental work will continue to October 2019 and will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis internally in relation to work processes, financial and human resources and impact of the service. Evaluation will take the form of follow up one to

3.17	<p>one's and evaluation surveys with businesses who have availed of the service. This will inform the future roll-out.</p> <p>Members will also be aware of a wider programme of work across the Council to improve customer service standards and to enhance our customer focus. The Council's "Blueprint for Customer Focus" themes of service quality, customer contact, focus on the customer, accountability and consistency across Council and Business Areas will be adopted for the Belfast; City for Investment Service.</p>
3.18	<p>Input from Party Group Briefings regarding the Service was very beneficial and informative. There is support for the proposed approach as a learning pilot with Members keen to be kept informed on progress and on the outcome of any initial evaluation planned for Sept / Oct 18. There was the suggestion at Briefings about forming a Belfast Investment Development Agency. It is anticipated that the proposed immediate approach will further test the level of demand and type of service required moving forward before such a resource investment is made. Members also echoed the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive growth across the City; • Party Group Leaders to actively support delegations to communicate political stability at Local Government and support for ongoing investment; • Maintaining a balance between Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and indigenous investment; • Ensuring a separation of decision making between the Investment Service and Council's Planning Function; • Consideration to be given to retail investment subventions so to avoid displacement but actively encourage a strong and diverse retail offer; • Working positively with partners; • Independent evaluation of the service to gauge customer opinion and value.
3.19	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The service shall be open to both indigenous and new investors to the city. We have undertaken research to inform levels of under-represented groups in entrepreneurship and business start activity across Belfast. Marketing activity and support will be targeted to encourage participation from under-represented groups. Tailored support will be adopted where possible including interpretive services, translation services and specific support for persons with disability as necessary.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>

3.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial Relocation & Soft Landing Service launching in Spring 18 will be resourced from Economic Development and Employability and Skills existing staff portfolio and 2018/19 budgets. This element of the service will be reviewed September 2018 to initially consider strategic direction, financial and resource implications for 2019/20. • Investment Attraction will continue to be financed and resourced via the City Centre Development Team and EU & International Relations budgets and resources. • As the specific Belfast Proposition is developed further, reports concerning work process, staff and financial resources will be tabled back to the relevant Council Committee for consideration.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Overview of Belfast: City for Business Service