



<b>Subject:</b>	City Centre Living – Residential Analysis
<b>Date:</b>	9 May 2018
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nuala Gallagher, Director City Centre Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Callie Persic, Regeneration Project Officer

<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>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To update Members on two of the City Centre Living workstreams, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding the city centre residential market</li><li>• Living Over the Shops (LOTS)</li></ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree procurement of residential market analysis</li><li>• Agree to a workshop on the Living City Initiative that operates in Dublin and across ROI</li></ul>

3.0	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The City Centre Regeneration &amp; Investment Strategy (CCRIS) recognises that a residential population is an important element for a successful and vibrant city centre. Belfast's city centre residential market is currently under-developed and the Belfast Agenda and Local Development Plan set out the target to grow the population by 66,000 by 2035, with a proportion of this growth to be accommodated within the city centre.</p>
3.2	<p><u>City Centre Living today</u></p> <p>The current city centre residential population is in the region of 9,000-10,000. There is also an increasing student population in the city centre, with the relocation of Ulster University as a major catalyst. Approximately 6300 student bed spaces have been consented, with circa 3500 under construction and approximately 600 now completed. The experience of other cities is that the student population brings greater vibrancy and footfall to the city centre, albeit over the long-term the growth of student accommodation must be matched by other housing tenures if the city centre is to be balanced and inclusive.</p>
3.3	<p>Members have participated in two events to help scope out the 'City Centre Living' workstream and discuss the issues around delivering housing in the city centre, i.e. the City Centre Living (CCL) Study visit to London, and the City Centre Living workshop. From the workshop, officers noted five potential workstreams that were agreed by Committee in January 2018. The focus of this report is to provide an update on and seek endorsement for the approach in relation to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding the city centre residential market</li> <li>2. Living Over the Shops</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Progress and next steps</b></p> <p><b>Understanding the city centre residential market</b></p>
3.4	<p>Officers are seeking approval to co-commission with DfC a residential housing market analysis for Belfast City Centre which will provide a market overview of the residential sector including rental, private for sale and PRS.</p>
3.5	<p>The resi commission will detail the most effective way to develop the city centre residential market for Belfast, including the barriers to investment, options for delivery and potential funding models. The research will provide a robust evidence base and options as to how council can shape and input into city centre housing. This is a similar approach as was taken</p>

in advance of the City Centre Investment Fund, which produced an analysis of the Grade A market to guide and inform the Fund. The resi commission will be taken forward along with the Department for Communities as a shared piece of work. A piece of work is also being undertaken to set out the existing funding options and criteria around social and affordable housing in NI.

### **Living Over the Shops**

3.6 At the City Centre Living workshop with Members it was suggested that a considerable amount of empty or underutilised space exists above retail units in the city centre, and that there are regulatory and viability to barriers to these spaces being converted into residential accommodation as is common in many other cities.

3.7 DfC had previously undertaken a LOTS programme across Northern Ireland from 2002 onwards, whereby grants were provided to landlords for the creation of residential units above shops. However, having assessed the 2016 report on the LOTS programme prepared for DfC by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC) it is not clear that such a programme of grants would deliver a significant number of units in Belfast city centre. Whilst LOTS is part of the wider toolkit to help deliver housing, the time and resources available might be better applied to the bringing forward of public sector land for development.

3.8 Officers have continued to explore how to address vacant units in the city centre and met with officers from Dublin City Council who operate the Living City Initiative (LCI), a programme similar to 'Living Over the Shops' that was rolled out across ROI. To assist Members explore issues around developing this type of accommodation it is proposed to hold a workshop in order to help shape how council could support a similar approach. As part of this workshop, officers from Dublin City Council who are working on the LCI will be invited to outline their approaches, challenges and experiences. Other relevant stakeholders such as DfC (both regeneration and the Historic Environment Division), Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Planning Service and Building Control will also be invited to input.

### 3.9 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are no Equality and Good Relations issues at this time.

### 3.10 Resource Implications

The cost is within the existing City Centre budget and is estimated to be up to £30K.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None