



<b>Subject:</b>	Eastern Economic Corridor – update
<b>Date:</b>	13 February 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cathy Keenan, Assistant Economic Development Manager (Local Economic Development)

<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>Sometime 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	The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on progress to date on work to support the development of the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor and the C8 Conference which was expected to take place on the 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2019, but is now to be postponed – date to be confirmed.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note the requirement to postpone the conference to a later date at the request of a number of the C8 Councils</li><li>• Note the emerging research outcomes and plans to complete the research paper</li><li>• Agree to receive a presentation from UUEPC the research outcomes at a future meeting of this Committee.</li></ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>Members will recall the update provided on the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 05 December 2018. This report provided an update on the work currently being undertaken by the Economic Development team to increase collaborations with Dublin, and opportunities to support economic cooperation and engagement between the cities and towns along the Belfast-Dublin corridor.</p>
3.2	<p>The report outlined plans for a proposed conference which intended to highlight cooperation opportunities along the corridor. Belfast City Council has been working with the other seven Councils along the corridor to develop this concept further. The eight councils are Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Belfast City Council; Dublin City Council; Fingal County Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Louth County Council; Meath County Council; and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.</p>
3.3	<p>In order to shape the conference and ensure that all partners are content with the approach, a steering group of senior council officials has been established. The steering group has commissioned the local universities (a collaboration between Ulster University and Dublin City University) to carry out further research to articulate the economic opportunities along the corridor.</p>
3.4	<p>At a steering group meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019, Dublin, Fingal, Meath and Louth Councils raised concern that the original planned date for the event (28 February) would not be feasible. A number of reasons were cited including concerns over the uncertainty of UK exit from the EU, perceived difficulty in engaging local stakeholders at this time, concerns that the conference is competing with other events in February and March and a need to secure buy-in of central government before organising a conference. All Councils remain fully committed to the partnership and have agreed to discuss a future conference date following completion of the research.</p>
3.5	<p>The research piece will be completed by 28 February. To date the work carried out by UUEPC and DCU has identified a number of initial findings which include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population along the Corridor has been growing faster than the rest of the island – but slowest annual growth in its two urban cores</li> <li>• Almost 800,000 residents of the Corridor at work in 2016</li> <li>• Rising population dependency rates but these increasing more slowly than elsewhere on the island</li> </ul>

- Higher % of population Non-Irish/NI nationals than elsewhere
- % of population with 3rd level attainment higher than in other parts of the island
- Jobs requiring graduates concentrated in the Corridor, attracting people to live there and/or commute there
- Dublin and Belfast account for over half (59%) of all workplace jobs on the Corridor (965,000 jobs). Therefore the location of jobs (ie: workplace numbers – residents = jobs filled by commuters) means strong commuting numbers along (and into) the Corridor to both ends
- Employment rates of residents on the Corridor above the island average but several urban areas stand out for lower rates (Belfast, Dundalk etc)
- Stock of more than 125,000 businesses (40% of the island's firms)Enterprise birth and survival rates are higher than in other parts of the island
- Strongest entrepreneurial rates exists outside the two cities – but scaling up better in the cities

3.6

A number themes have emerged from the research to date to support local government-led collaboration. These include:

- Infrastructure and connectivity
- Enterprise support
- Innovation
- Development of sector specialisms e.g. tourism, agri-food, FinTech,
- Environmental management.

3.7

It is proposed that UUEPC will present the findings of the research paper and the opportunities for collaboration with the other Councils along the corridor upon completion of the research.

3.8

One of the aspirations of the collaboration is to deliver a Statement of Intent (SOI) between the eight local authorities. This SOI will commit the partners to explore future opportunities for collaboration on infrastructure, attracting investment and jobs. The SOI will be based around the research outcomes and will be brought before the Committee for information and endorsement when further developed.

3.9

Members have been informed about the postponement of the conference through internal communications and will be advised in due course of the revised timetable.

3.10	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2018/19 Economic Development budget previously agreed by this Committee.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure that consideration is given to equality and good relations impacts throughout the development and delivery of this project. Both urban and rural areas are involved in this work.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None.