



Subject:	City Centre Regeneration: (i) City Centre Joint Regeneration Taskforce Update (ii) British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Inquiry on Revitalisation of the High Street (iii) City Recovery Update
Date:	13 February 2019
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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	To update Members in relation to work around City Centre Regeneration including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City Centre Joint Regeneration Task Force• British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Committee Inquiry on Revitalisation of the High Street• City Recovery Update

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The update on the City Centre Joint Regeneration Task Force and the proposed next steps in bringing forward an action plan and areas for focus in terms of the medium/longer regeneration and revitalisation of the city centre. • The recent visit from the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly as part of their inquiry into ‘The Revitalisation of the High Street and Local Business’. • The update on City Recovery work and to note that a short presentation will be made at Committee on the evaluation of the Phase 1 recovery work and emerging proposals for the next phase of city centre revitalisation.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>(i) City Centre Regeneration Task Force</p> <p>In November 2018 Members were advised of the proposal to establish a City Centre Regeneration Task Force jointly chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and the Council’s Chief Executive. Membership of the Task Force also includes the Permanent Secretaries of the Department for Communities; Department for Economy; Department of Finance and Department for Infrastructure; the Director of Regeneration for DfC; the Council’s Deputy Chief Executive; Strategic Director Place & Economy and the City Regeneration Lead Officer.</p>
3.2	<p>Members were also advised that Committee would receive, on a quarterly basis, an update on the work of the Task Force.</p>
3.3	<p>The Task Force is aimed at ensuring a collaborative public sector response to drive and resource the city centre recovery efforts in response to the Bank Buildings fire in the shorter term but also to provide a high level forum for the consideration of cross cutting issues and proposals for collaborative working and co-investment in the city centre in the longer term.</p>
3.4	<p>The Task Force had its first meeting on 20 November 2018, followed by a further meeting on 11 January 2019. A broad objective of the Task Force is to maximise the collective potential of our regeneration efforts to transform the city centre aligned to respective and collective priorities and identify an action plan accordingly. It was recognised that there</p>

was an immediate need to drive and resource targeted city centre recovery efforts in response to the Bank Building Primark fire but also to consider the longer term revitalisation and regeneration of the city centre from an integrated and sustainable perspective.

3.5 The immediate focus was on a recovery plan to address the issues of the Bank Buildings which included funding from central government. The first phase of City recovery was in place until the end of January 2019 but with additional programming until the end of March. Post immediate recovery the next phase moves into measures to drive city revitalisation, as well as a medium / long term action which will focus on those parts of the city most impacted by the fire, as well as reflecting the changing face of our city centre and the need to re-imagine and diversify.

3.6 In terms of a medium/long term plan for city centre regeneration there was a consensus that the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) remained a solid basis upon which to take forward a refreshed action plan and prioritisation in respect of the regeneration of the city centre. As Members will be aware the 8 key policies in BCCRIS include:

- Increase the Employment population
- Increase the Residential population
- Manage the Retail offer
- Maximise the Tourism opportunity
- Create a Regional Learning and Innovation centre
- Create Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre
- Connect to the city around
- Shared space and social impact

3.7 In addition BCCRIS highlighted a number of key projects and places which required a focused effort, as well as identified Special Action Areas where more detailed plans were recommended to help guide shorter term implementation.

3.8 It was agreed to undertake a stocktake and gap analysis of the various policies, projects and priorities in BCCRIS to ascertain what was already progressing, gaps, key stakeholders and alignment with the priorities set out in the Belfast Agenda, Programme for Government and other strategies. This could then form the basis for future prioritisation of actions and projects or interventions.

3.8	<p>Joe Berridge, who led on the development of the BCCRIS document, visited Belfast in December 2018 and some of the key observations he made in terms of changes since his 2015 visit included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the city centre of hospitality, food and drinks offerings • Increased student population – but important to drive forward other city centre living • Significant development in the Linen Quarter encouraging • Positive impact of the Ulster University Campus • Positivity around development of former Royal Exchange regeneration project – critical to drive this forward • Need to further promote the River Lagan through development and animation • Need for enhanced coherence and connectivity – both physical and city management • Vibrancy evident but continued need to drive forward office, residential, cultural and tourism product
3.9	<p>The BCCRIS review indicated that significant progress had been made over the past few years in line with certain priorities set out in BCCRIS. This included the UU Campus relocation; extension to the Waterfront Hall; delivery of BRT Phase 1; Masterplans and Strategies aligned to the Special Action Areas; development in line with maximising the tourism offering for e.g. the completion of around 1300 hotel beds; development in line with increasing the employment and residential population for e.g. over 1m sq ft of office accommodation completed and in progress and over 3000 purpose built student housing completed and in progress. However, the review also identified that there remained a number of gaps cutting across the 8 policy areas and key projects that need to be progressed in order to drive forward the revitalisation of the city centre.</p>
3.10	<p>It was agreed that an action plan or areas for focus aligned to these gaps should be developed, setting out proposed priorities aligned to the policies and projects in BCCRIS and to the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda and Programme for Government. It was felt that these could fall into 3 broad thematic priorities with assigned actions or areas of focus under each of these. Whilst the detail of the action plan is still being progressed the proposed thematic priorities and emerging actions and areas of focus include the following:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Resilience – medium to long term city centre recovery plan; city centre leadership and management; catalyst development opportunities to stimulate wider regeneration etc. • Re-imagining and Diversification of City Centre Land Uses – to include focused actions around increasing city centre living; use of public land to deliver on priorities; enhanced open spaces and family /leisure based activities; improved tourist offering and connectivity; cultural strategy etc • Infrastructure and Connectivity – public realm and connectivity schemes; Living with Water Programme; transport strategy /car parking etc
3.11	<p>Further cross departmental work is however required to look at the actions / priorities in more detail to include alignment with wider policy and priorities, affordability and the governance required to take this forward at an operational level. Alongside the work of the Task Force and the operational tier that sits below this there is also ongoing liaison with businesses, their representative bodies and other stakeholders in order to ensure that there is a joined up and strategic approach to city recovery. This includes retailers and city centre umbrella organisations and the input of these groups and agencies will be critical going forward. It was agreed that there was a need to establish a reference or advisory group in order to inform this longer term revitalisation of the city centre.</p>
3.12	<p>(ii) Visit to Belfast from the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)</p> <p>On 1 February 2019 Committee C of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) visited Belfast as part of their inquiry into ‘The Revitalisation of the High Street and Local Business’. As part of their inquiry they are visiting towns and cities across the UK and Ireland. They visited Dublin and Newcastle Co. Down as part of this trip with recent visits also including Stockton-On-Tees and Newcastle Upon Tyne.</p>
3.13	<p>The focus of their inquiry is to gather evidence on policy tools used by local councils, central government and BID groups to effect positive change for the high street and local businesses. They use the evidence gathered during visits to make reports containing recommendations for Government and their research and report findings will be shared with Belfast as the inquiry completes.</p>
3.14	<p>The visit included a short tour of the city centre and a roundtable discussion on issues affecting the city centre primarily around retail and the challenges, opportunities and potential solutions. Discussion also included the impact of the Bank Buildings fire and the</p>

	<p>subsequent city recovery work and the proposals for a longer term city centre revitalisation plan. The BID managers and the DfC Director Regeneration also attended alongside BCC. The BIPA visit was at relatively short notice and hence it wasn't in time to bring to the January City Growth Committee. However, further comments or observations from Members can be fed back to BIPA as appropriate.</p>
3.15	<p>The key issues discussed included the need for additional city centre uses to animate and reinvigorate including city centre living, family based facilities, enhanced tourist and 'experiential' offering; the value of families in the revitalisation of the high street; the level of rates and consideration of policy changes; the need for public realm improvements particularly on Royal Avenue; car parking; pedestrianisation and cycling; the need for a co-ordinated drive of all stakeholders including landlords and commercial agents in sustaining and attracting new occupiers on the high street.</p>
3.16	<p>(iii) City Centre Recovery Update</p> <p>As Members are aware the immediate city recovery programme was intended to run to the end of January 2019 although there are various enhancements and programming in place that run beyond this period, including an amplified programme of animation to run until the end of March. The next phase of a city revitalisation programme is being developed and following a meeting with retailers and the umbrella city centre organisations they are to feed back as to their proposed priorities, marketing and programming plans from their own business areas. They have also been asked to advise as to any data sets they use to measure performance e.g trading figures, geographic and demographic information etc. This data and their feedback on priorities is intended to inform a more joined up and targeted approach going forward. Details of emerging proposals will be presented to Committee.</p>
3.17	<p>At this meeting they were also updated on the emerging work of the Joint City Centre Regeneration Taskforce and the proposed medium /longer term plan with areas of focus relating to city resilience, re-imagining and diversification of land uses and connectivity and infrastructure. It is important that there is an integrated approach to the next phase of city revitalisation and the medium/long term regeneration plan. As referred to above it is intended to formalise a city centre advisory structure which includes representatives from the key city centre stakeholders.</p>

<p>3.18</p> <p>3.19</p>	<p>An evaluation exercise is currently being completed in respect of the Phase 1 recovery work and details of this will also be presented at Committee.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Further detail will be brought forward on the financial implications associated with the next phase of the city recovery work as this work plan develops and is agreed by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.</p> <p>With the Joint Task Force it is intended that this will provide a collaborative public sector approach in terms of how we collectively maximise our investment and efforts to revitalise the city centre and further detail will be brought forward as this work progresses.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report. The Council's Equality & Diversity Officers will be consulted on any future changes to strategies or plans that are currently in place.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents attached</p>
	<p>None</p>