

# Corporate Plan 2019 - 23

Draft - June 2019



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**Belfast**  
City Council

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# Foreword

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Welcome to our draft Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023

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# Our vision

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Through the Belfast Agenda, the Council, residents and stakeholders have set out a clear vision for the city:

**Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone.**

Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.



# Strategic Context

As a city we will realise the vision of the Belfast Agenda through the achievement of five key outcomes by 2035:

Belfast will be a city...



We are the only democratically elected body to represent the city. To deliver these outcomes we will use our political leadership to address city wide issues and lead Belfast towards this vision.

We will do this by working with our partners to reshape the city in to one that addresses these challenges and

achieves all aspects of this vision - through regenerating and managing the city and supporting its people.

We will improve key aspects of living in the city, strengthening the economy, resilience, business districts, facilities and neighbourhoods so that Belfast is a city of choice to live, work, learn and do business. This means we need to be good at:

- Delivering outstanding services in a way which targets these long term ambitions;
- Investing in projects that will stimulate inclusive economic growth or enhance quality of life; and
- Providing effective civic leadership, including making the case for improvements in government investment and services whilst working hand in hand with other agencies, the community and the private sector.

To do this, the Council needs to have the right capabilities, which include:

- Making sure we understand the needs of citizens, areas, neighbourhoods, businesses, investors, tourists and our partners. We need to manage our reputation, find innovative ways to deliver our services, ensure decision makers have access to the right information and expertise to allow them to make informed decisions and inspire and motivate others to work in partnership with us.

- Ensuring we have staff with the right skills, who understand their contribution to this corporate plan, are highly motivated and uphold our goals and values.
- Being clear about our priorities and aligning our resources. We cannot do everything at once and therefore we need to prioritise our resources and capabilities. For this reason we are focusing our priorities on what improves the economy, the lives of those living here, those looking to work and learn in Belfast and ensuring our city continues to develop in a sustainable, resilient manner.

It is important that we balance our ambitions for economic growth with the need to address long term inequity in the city – this is what inclusive growth means. We must connect all residents with economic growth to create vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity and aspiration to succeed. This will take specific interventions, including skills programmes and changes to our approach to procurement.

While there are many challenges facing Belfast, the City and its resources present many opportunities for success.

# Strategic Context – Opportunities and Challenges



A population of  
**340,220**

and 1,134,705 in the Belfast Region City Deal area



Young  
population

20% of people are aged  
under 15



**£703.70**

Average earning of all Belfast residents differs greatly between the highest (£846.50 per week) and lowest earners (£142.80 per week)



**65.1%**

Belfast  
employment rate



**224,098**  
jobs in the city

**7,322**



people in housing stress

**Cyber security**



1,200 new cyber  
jobs in the last  
five years,  
projected to grow  
to 5,000 by 2022

**42%**



of school leavers (entitled to Free School Meals) achieve 5 GCSEs grade A\*-C (including English and Maths) compared to 74% of those who are not



Average life expectancy in Belfast is lower than the NI average for both males (76.0 years) and females (81.1 years)



In Belfast, the average life expectancy for a man in the most deprived area is 9.4 years less than in the least deprived areas



In Belfast, the average life expectancy for a woman in the most deprived area is 6.4 years less than in the least deprived areas



**56,000**

More than 56,000 residents in Belfast live in poverty, 28% children in Belfast grow up in poverty

**40%**



of household waste is sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting

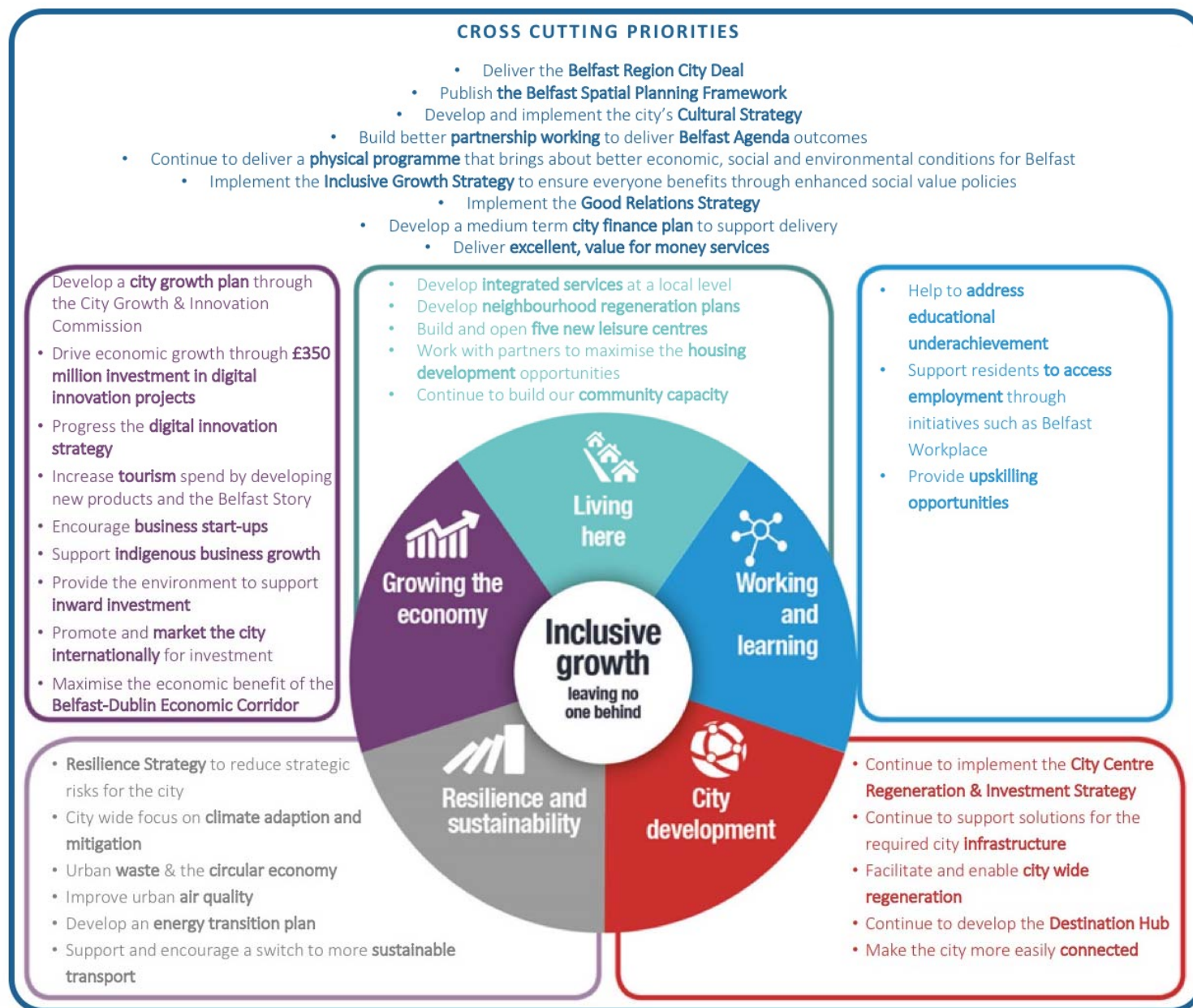


**7<sup>th</sup>**

UK Competitiveness Index ranks Belfast 7<sup>th</sup> out of 12 comparator cities.

# Our priorities for 2019 - 2023

To deliver the vision of the Belfast Agenda our priorities for the next four years can be summarised in the following diagram:





# Cross cutting priorities

*Our cross cutting priorities will have a multitude of social, economic and environmental benefits for the city. These priorities include once in a lifetime opportunities to fundamentally change the city, culturally, physically and economically.*

## **Deliver the Belfast Region City Deal**

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is an unprecedented partnership that will deliver an integrated programme of transformational investment. It will support delivery of up to 20,000 new and better jobs, fund 22 integrated projects underpinned by a programme of investment in employability and skills and increase GVA by £470 million per annum.

## **Publish the Belfast Spatial Planning Framework**

We are responsible for developing a Local Development Plan for Belfast, working with local people, to create a clear vision of how the council area should develop and what it will look like in the years to come.

## **Develop and implement the city's Cultural Strategy**

It is widely recognised that cities of culture can drive transformation. The purpose of the cultural strategy is to present a series of priorities that have the potential to contribute significantly to all five outcomes of the Belfast Agenda.

## **Build better partnership working to deliver Belfast Agenda outcomes**

The Council has an important role, working alongside city partners, to provide the leadership and strategic

direction of Belfast by shaping, developing and managing the city.

We have set ourselves a challenging agenda for the coming years but we are confident that by working successfully with our city partners and communities, we will deliver our commitments.

## **Continue to deliver a physical programme that brings about better economic, social and environmental conditions for Belfast**

Communities and people are the lifeblood of our city and we must create assets that make a real difference to people's lives and are transformational at a city-wide and local level. Our Physical Programme is one of the most visible and easily recognisable signs of the Council's civic leadership role in the city. It has an impact right across Belfast with every area of the city benefitting from the programme. The current delivery programme includes over 200 projects worth over £325 million in capital investment.

## **Implement the Inclusive Growth Strategy to ensure everyone benefits from city growth**

We have seen our city transform in recent years. We are creating new opportunities for many of our residents. But this is a tale of two cities; not everyone is part of this new story. We still have unacceptable levels of persistent deprivation and inequality. The Inclusive Growth Strategy will set out how we will use

our employment, procurement policy and investment powers to ensure Belfast is a truly inclusive city.

## **Implement the Good Relations Strategy**

Following years of conflict, the people of Belfast have made great progress towards normalisation. Despite this, there remain key legacy issues that manifest themselves in division between communities. The Good Relations Strategy will promote cultural diversity and respect for everyone's cultural identity as well as the concept of Belfast as a city for all.

## **Develop a medium term finance plan to support delivery**

To deliver on our city wide vision and ambitions we will need to work with partners to develop innovative and collaborative funding models.

As a corporate body we will ensure that priorities are properly resourced and value for money is provided to the ratepayer.

## **Deliver excellent, value for money services**

At the core of everything we do are the services that we deliver. We will continue to seek new and innovative ways to ensure our services are delivered to the high standards expected by our customers whilst always ensuring value for money.



# Growing the economy

*BCC will work to create an inclusive, resilient economy through creating good, long term jobs.*

A thriving urban economy is a key foundation to achieving many of the outcomes established by the Belfast Agenda. Not only can a successful economy generate the wealth required to grow local businesses, generate jobs and offer routes out of poverty for struggling families, it is also the main source of revenue for the city's public services, programmes and interventions.

## **Develop a city growth plan through the City Growth & Innovation Commission**

Our corporate plan contains several 'once in a generation' opportunities that could deliver transformational impacts for the city of Belfast. We will establish a Commission that will ensure that major programmes are integrated and joined up, that long term resilience is built-in so we are better able to withstand shocks and stresses and make Belfast increasingly attractive to long term investment.

## **Drive economic growth through £350 million investment in digital innovation projects and progress delivery of a digital innovation strategy**

The digital and innovation strands of the BRCD will act as a catalyst that will drive forward investment in research and development and help embed a culture of innovation to act as a driver for increased productivity.

## **Increase tourism spend by developing new products and the Belfast Story**

One of the key ways we can contribute to the growth of the local economy is by maximising the tourism appeal of both the city centre and our neighbourhoods. If we are to achieve our target of securing £500m in out-of-state tourism by 2021 we need to continue to build on the unique attractions of Belfast by promoting the city's particular character.

## **Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth**

We have worked with our city partners on an Enterprise Framework to agree who provides what support and to whom. The delivery of the

Enterprise Framework for Belfast will result in a more comprehensive and coherent system of enterprise support covering all stages of the business growth lifecycle.

## **Provide the environment to support inward investment including the positioning and marketing of the city internationally**

When asked in our resident survey, "attracting investment to Belfast" was the highest ranked priority for our citizens. It is a crucial area of our work to ensure that businesses invest and build in the city. Importantly, this in turn creates jobs and opportunities for local SMEs – inward investment provides opportunities for indigenous businesses through global value chains to integrate with the global economy.

We continue to work with partners, developers and funders to deliver a shared Belfast city promotional brand and attend major events such as MIPIM, to ensure that Belfast is visible and accessible to an international audience and can successfully attract inward investment.

## **Maximise the economic benefit of the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor**

The Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor is a term used to describe the geographical area between both cities recognising the economic wealth and future potential that is created from the concentrations of related businesses, industries, educational institutions, technology and transport infrastructure. By working with local authority colleagues and government partners we will agree a future economic vision for the corridor.



# Living Here

*Our city and neighbourhoods are vibrant, resilient and safe places where people choose to live, work and spend time being more healthy & active.*

In our recent residents survey, 86% of respondents were satisfied with Belfast as a place to live. We want everyone to be satisfied. We want to deliver a high quality of life for everyone. In doing so we must deliver and plan effective public spaces and conserve our natural environment so it can be accessed and enjoyed.

## Develop neighbourhood regeneration plans

Like most cities, Belfast functions on various geographic levels including citywide, at an area level (north, south, east and west) and at local neighbourhoods. The socio-economic conditions, needs, challenges, and aspirations, particularly across our neighbourhoods will differ, as will the interventions and actions necessary to address them and achieve the improved outcomes we want to see.

The city continues to deal with the challenge of ensuring that neighbourhoods feel connected to and benefit from the continued regeneration of the city centre. We also want to encourage movement and collaboration from neighbourhood to neighbourhood across the breadth of the city. We will focus on tailoring interventions within particular neighbourhoods where we believe there are opportunities to maximise synergies, identify and address gaps in provision.

## Develop integrated services at a local level

In order to deliver neighbourhood regeneration we will develop a local area approach to the delivery of our services to ensure better coordination and integration of resources to solve local problems and more effectively deliver local priorities. This will bring services closer to people so we can better understand the different needs

and aspirations of communities across Belfast and where local people can help shape the services they receive to meet their needs.

## Build and open five new leisure centres

The £105m Leisure Transformation Programme which is the largest programme of its kind across the UK and which sees the development of seven new leisure centres with Olympia already open and Andersontown, Brook and Lisnasharragh due to open this year. Work will then commence on the redevelopment of Avoniel and the complete refurbishment and extension of Templemore Baths which has received support from Heritage Lottery Fund and we are continuing plans for the development of a leisure facility at Girdwood.

## Work with partners to maximise housing development opportunities

The Belfast Agenda sets out an ambitious target to increase the city's population by 66,000 people. We also have ambitions to increase the supply of social and affordable housing. The draft Local Development Plan suggests 31,600 additional homes will be needed by 2035 to satisfy these requirements.

While the Council does not have direct responsibility for building new homes, it does have a range of powers

relating to housing and housing development. These cover the Local Development Plan, HMO licensing, Building Control, Planning, non-statutory regeneration activities, economic development, promoting the city to investors and providing land that it owns for household development.

More importantly, the Council, in its role as City Leader, will maximise housing opportunities in the city by convening and co-commissioning activities and interventions with our key stakeholders and those agencies who do have a statutory responsibility for housing development. Council is also able to provide support via activities such as identifying potential land for housing development, promoting city centre opportunities and encouraging good practice.

## Continue to build our community capacity

Strong and vibrant communities are essential part of the fabric of Belfast. We provide physical investment, resource support and funding to enhance community capacity. Over the life of this corporate plan we will seek to work in partnership with our communities to ensure that the support we offer meets local needs and delivers sustainable impact.

# City Development

*BCC will work to ensure the city is sustainable with robust infrastructure that protects future generations.*

Residents and stakeholders have told us they want a Belfast where the city centre thrives with a vibrant mix of retail, leisure, tourist and residential opportunities. They want a city where the development and growth of the city is aligned to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its citizens and infrastructure that meets the needs of today and the future.

## **Continue to implement the City Regeneration and Investment Strategy**

We are committed to encouraging and creating a vibrant and well connected city centre that combines a range of uses including city centre living, retail, employment and office uses, tourist, cultural and family centric facilities for people to enjoy. The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy already stands as an example of our shared ambition – jointly adopted by the Council and the Department for Communities.

## **Continue to support solutions for the required city infrastructure**

Infrastructure planning for the Belfast city region needs to be taken forward in a strategic and integrated way, not on a project by project basis. We will work with public and private sector partners to identify key infrastructure investment requirements. We will continue to engage with and lobby central government to prioritise and shape the major infrastructure investment required to ensure the city is prepared for future growth and development.

## **Facilitate and enable city wide development and regeneration**

We are committed to ensuring that the regeneration potential of the wider city is maximized in a way that benefits all citizens and results in improved outcomes for communities. We will continue to work with partners to facilitate, enable and influence key city developments and ensure an integrated neighbourhood regeneration approach that delivers on inclusive growth.

## **Continue to develop the Destination Hub**

The research for the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy suggested the need for another major city centre tourism destination. The current redevelopment in the area around Ulster University, Streets Ahead and Belfast Central Library provided an ideal opportunity. The Destination Hub will become a space to showcase Belfast's culture, creative and artistic offerings, engaging local communities and visitors, developing skills in the sector and promoting further economic growth and redevelopment.

## **Make the city more easily connected**

Connectivity is vital. Belfast is the transport and logistical hub for the entire region but it is also vital that our communities have access to jobs and to each other. Improving connectivity within the city centre and the city's connections across the region and with other core cities and regions is critical for the development of a sustainable and successful city. It is also a key enabler if Belfast is to exploit its growing reputation as a tourist and business destination. We will continue to build our partnerships with key city anchors, such as Belfast Harbour, and seek to maximise the role of the city as the gateway to the region. Working with our city stakeholders, we will continue to progress a comprehensive solution to city car parking and support walking and cycling as sustainable modes of transport. We will explore options to improve the city's pedestrian routes and cycling infrastructure; including the Belfast Bike Scheme.





# Working and Learning

*BCC will work to ensure people are appropriately skilled for the jobs created in the city.*

Education is the foundation of a better life, not only in facilitating future employment and providing access to a fulfilling adult life, but also as major contributor to a person's wellbeing and to shaping lifelong health. Apart from providing qualifications, education can potentially have a much broader beneficial impact on wellbeing.

## Help to address educational underachievement

We are taking steps to work with schools and younger people to identify ways that they can be supported through GCSE, career advice and practical experience via work related training academies.

## Support residents to access employment through initiatives such as Belfast Workplace and provide upskilling opportunities

We will work with partners to establish 'pathways' to ensure that individuals can progress and avail of the support which they need to access employment. This will involve supporting people at an early age, especially in the city's more deprived neighbourhoods; providing targeted support for the long-term unemployed and economically inactive; and working directly with employers to run 'Employment Academies' to help train people for the opportunities that exist.

With our partners we will facilitate better alignment between regional employment interventions and the needs of the Belfast labour market and skills pipeline, for example through Belfast Workplace.

## Working in partnership

We will work with our partners on a series of "test and learn" pilots to explore new approaches to providing employability and skills support. The three pilots are:

- **Enterprise Pathway:** a new approach to helping economically inactive individuals to start a business.
- **Employer Engagement:** encouraging the 62% of 15,000 businesses in Belfast to engage with mainstream employability and skills support.
- **Advice provision:** trialling a new relationship aimed at linking benefits and work-focused advice in a community setting. The Council will directly link its employment
- The lead agency for NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) is the Department for the Economy (DfE)'s. We are working with DfE to develop an action plan and trialing new approaches to support young people at risk of becoming NEET. The two "test and learn" pilots are:
  - A 'place based' approach will be delivered in the Short Strand/Lower Newtownards Road area.
  - A sectorally focused approach aimed at creating aspiration for young people to want to work in key sectors.

# Resilience & Sustainability

*BCC will work to protect our city and its environment for future generations.*

The Belfast Agenda provides the city with an ambitious vision for our future. However, even the best-laid plans can be knocked off course by unexpected shocks, or long-term stresses. Being a resilient city means reducing our exposure to vulnerabilities, and being better at adapting to challenges, such as the fire at Bank Buildings in August 2018, shaping a new relationship with the European Union, or preparing for a changing climate.

We must become a sustainable city that meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. From the way we heat our houses, how we use water or how we choose to travel have significant long term impacts on our local environment and quality of life. To counteract the growing environmental threats, we will develop initiatives to improve air quality, use energy more efficiently, encourage people to switch to more sustainable transport and deal with our waste sustainably.

## **Resilience Strategy to reduce strategic risks for the city**

We will work with partners to develop, launch and commence implementation of a city resilience strategy to identify ‘multiple problem solvers’ aimed at resolving strategic risks to the city. These will include a strategic focus on climate resilience, children and young people, and connectivity.

## **City wide focus on climate adaptation and mitigation**

In developing and delivering a resilience strategy for the city, we will put a strategic focus on ensuring that Belfast is climate resilient, and that we ensure the city’s environment contributes to the health and wellbeing of all residents. This requires a focus on climate adaptation and climate mitigation.

## **Urban waste and the Circular Economy**

Successful cities manage the impact of growth and ensure that it does not limit the quality of life of future generations. This includes reducing our consumption of non-renewable resources and managing waste and materials effectively, while minimising impacts. We will develop a strategy which will ensure waste is managed effectively and investigate the economic potential of the circular economy to increase skills, jobs and growth.

## **Improve urban air quality**

With city partners, and as part of our broader work on resilience and sustainability, to identify and agree key actions to improve air quality across the city, with a particular focus on public health outcomes.

## **Develop an energy transition plan**

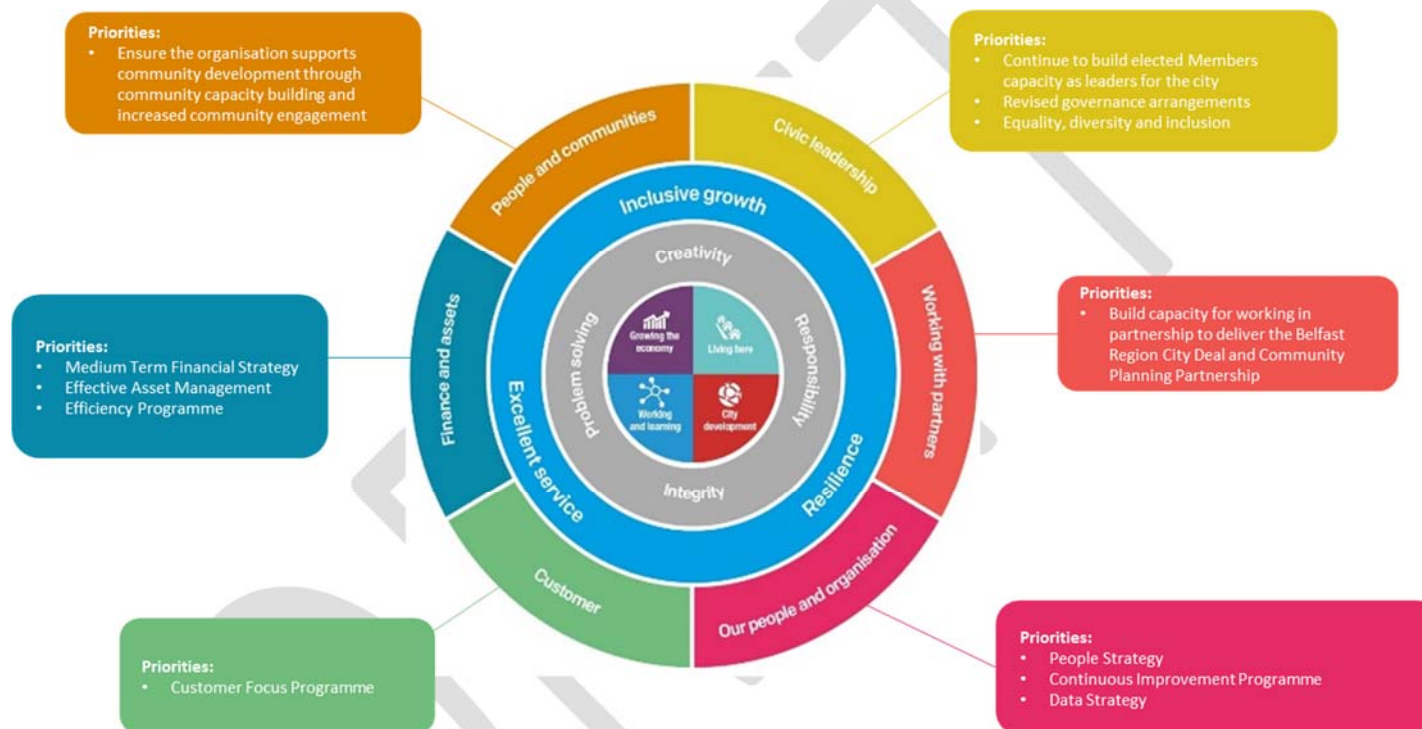
Following agreement on a target year to arrive at net zero carbon emissions as a city, to identify and agree an energy transition plan to deliver on priorities.

## **Support and encourage a switch to more sustainable transport**

With city partners, and aligned with our strategic priorities under Belfast Agenda, to seek to change urban behaviour towards greater use of sustainable forms of transport across the city.

# Our Organisational Priorities

As our city becomes more ambitious so must we. To do this, we can only succeed with the wholehearted support and enthusiastic contribution of our people, our greatest resource. To harness this energy they need to feel valued and understand how they contribute.



In order to help guide us in our change programme we have developed the wheel which sets out the type of organisation we need to be to support the ambition in this Corporate Plan. The inner circle expresses our Mission based on the pillars of the Belfast Agenda. We want to create a resurgent, prosperous city, shared by all of our people and admired around the world. Moving outwards within the wheel the next ring shows our values - Creativity, Responsibility, Integrity and Problem Solving. These guide our actions and should be lived by us all. Our critical success factors are next. These are what all our staff should meet. Finally, the outer ring shows the organisational capabilities we need to deliver the Belfast Agenda.

As an organisation, if we want to perform these capabilities to the best of our abilities, we must continuously look to improve how we do things. We have therefore agreed twelve priorities that will help us improve our capability. For example, in order to improve our ability to provide the best customer experience possible, we have developed a customer focus programme that will enhance the experience felt by all our customers. Likewise, to get the best out of our most important resource we will develop and deliver a People Strategy.



The ability to work successfully with our partners is vital and to get the best out of this we will undertake a programme of work to improve our approach to partnership working.

### **Customer Focus Programme**

One of the key ambitions of the Belfast Agenda is, 'to deliver services differently in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of people.' Our customer focused programme will significantly improve the quality of the services we provide while delivering services cost effectively.

### **People Strategy**

As we move forward, as a council, we need to ensure that our staff are at the heart of this journey of change and improvement.

Our People Strategy will put in place the foundations to ensure we have the skilled workforce we need to deliver our corporate priorities

### **Ensure the organisation supports community development through community capacity building and increased community engagement**

We are committed to working in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. To do so we will strengthen the models of engagement at both a city and council level.

### **Data Strategy**

The Council has a clear need to extract more value from the data it holds and to improve its ability to make evidence-based decisions.

For the Council to reach its desired state of analytics maturity it must take a strategic approach to data that enables the sharing of data across the organisation. It is therefore important that the Council develops a Data Strategy that enables this vision.

### **Continuous Improvement Programme**

While this corporate plan contains a series of strategic improvements we will always look at how we can improve internally.

The continuous improvement programme will deliver a programme of priority improvement projects that resolve organisational challenges, rationalise cost, build capacity, agility and capability and enable delivery of BCC's objectives.

### **Effective asset management**

Our property assets are an important part of supporting and enabling us to transform the way we deliver our services and our regeneration priorities. We are developing an asset management strategy which will set the framework for managing our property portfolio effectively.

### **Medium term financial strategy**

A revised medium term financial strategy is required to secure the financial position of the organisation to ensure priorities are properly resourced and value for money is provided to the ratepayer.

### **Efficiency programme**

A key strand of the medium term financial strategy is the delivery of cash efficiencies to support Members' ambitions on the level of district rate to be set and to support the financing of new priorities.

### **Continue to build elected Members capacity as leaders for the city**

Our elected members, in their civic and community leadership roles, actively serve the communities they represent and the city of Belfast as a whole.

Our ability to deliver value for money services and add real value to the leadership of the city depends on our commitment to provide continuous learning and development opportunities to provide elected members with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their various roles effectively.

### **Revised governance arrangements**

We will manage the 2019 Local Government Election and will review our governance arrangements for the newly elected Council to ensure effective and efficient political decision-making.

### **Build capacity for working in partnership to deliver the Belfast Region City Deal and Community Planning Partnership**

As we seek to improve conditions for our citizens, we must act in partnership with others. Successful delivery of outcomes will only be achieved by working collaboratively with all sectors including: the wider public sector, businesses, the community and voluntary sector, education and training providers and wider civic society.

To ensure that our organisation and staff are able to lead and achieve success we will work with our staff to embed a culture of partnership working.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

Belfast is a modern city, rich in multi-cultural identities and welcoming to all. As the democratically elected body of the city, we recognise this rich tapestry of identity. We will develop a new five-year Equality Scheme for the Council, implement a city wide approach to linguistic diversity and develop a new four year disability strategy.

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