



Subject:	City Centre Regeneration Task Force – Quarterly Update
Date:	7th August, 2019
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration and Development
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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"/>
Sometime 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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update Members in relation to work around the City Centre Regeneration Task Force.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the update on the City Centre Regeneration Task Force including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- progress around the co-commissioning of a study on city centre connectivity;- review on non-domestic rates;- proposed City Centre Reference Group;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City centre living; and - the proposal to invite representatives of Edinburgh City Council to present to the Committee lessons learnt from the 'Edinburgh City Centre Transformation' programme.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 7 November 2018, agreed to establish a City Centre Regeneration Task Force, jointly chaired by BCC's Chief Executive and the Head of the Civil Service. Members were also advised that Committee would receive, on a quarterly basis, an update on the work of the Task Force.
3.2	An update on the work of the Task Force was provided to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 13th February. The Task Force has met four times since November 2018 and have meetings scheduled up until December 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 was an immediate need to drive, and resource targeted city centre recovery efforts in response to the Bank Buildings fire but also to consider the longer term revitalisation and regeneration of the city centre from an integrated and sustainable perspective.
3.3	In terms of a medium/long term plan for city centre regeneration, there was a consensus that the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) was a solid basis upon which to take forward a refreshed action plan and prioritisation in respect of the regeneration of the city centre. BCCRIS was developed and agreed by the Council and sets out the policies, projects and priorities to underpin the regeneration and growth of the city centre and surrounding areas. The Department for Communities (DfC) have also adopted BCCRIS as one of their policies. The delivery of the outcomes within BCCRIS is however dependent upon a range of stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors, anchor institutions and the residential and business communities.
3.4	A stocktake and gap analysis of the various policies, projects and priorities in BCCRIS was undertaken to coincide with the work of the Taskforce. This included a review of what was progressing, highlighted gaps and identified how the priorities aligned with the outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda, Programme for Government and other strategies. As previously reported this has formed the basis of the City Centre Regeneration Task Force action plan

which is focused on the prioritisation of actions and projects or interventions in three thematic priority areas:

- **City Resilience** – medium to long-term city centre recovery plan; city centre leadership and management and catalyst development opportunities to stimulate wider regeneration.
- **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 and realisation of growth ambitions; enhanced open spaces and family/leisure based activities; improved tourist and cultural offering.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity** – public realm and connectivity into and around the city centre; transport strategy/car parking etc.

3.5 The Regeneration Task Force agreed various priority actions aligned to the public sector from the thematic areas. Cross-departmental work is progressing through a Joint Regeneration Group made up of BCC and central government officials. Recent priority areas that have been considered included:

Co-commissioning of a study on reimagining City centre connectivity

3.6 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 5th June, noted that BCC, in collaboration with DfC and Dfl, would commission a study to examine how the city centre should develop in a way that is accessible and welcoming for all. The commission is to be overseen by a Steering Group made up of senior members of staff within BCC, Dfl and DfC and will report directly to the City Centre Regeneration Task Force and the appropriate governance arrangement of the member organisations, i.e. Departmental Permanent Secretaries and CG and R Committee.

3.7 The Steering Group has had a number of successful meetings to scope out and agree the extent of the study to create a vision for the future use of the city centre. The objective of this study is to develop a shared vision for the future of the city centre reflecting how people will use the city spaces and places within the changing city landscape. The Steering Group are working to finalise the Terms of Reference and Specification for the study to enable the procurement of consultancy team to carry out the study and to create the vision.

3.8 To establish best practice, and to help shape the scope of this work, officers have engaged with a number of authorities and bodies, including the Institute of Place Management and Edinburgh City Council. Edinburgh are currently out to consultation on their City Centre

Transformation focusing on connecting the city and transforming places. It is proposed that Committee extend an invitation to Edinburgh City Council to present and discuss the opportunities, benefits and issues experienced during their ongoing 'Edinburgh City Centre Transformation' programme at a date to coincide with the drafting of the Vision document.

Review of Rates

3.9 Members may be aware that the Department of Finance (DoF) announced a review of non-domestic rates on 9th May 2019. City centre businesses continuously raise the issue of rates in terms of their longer- term sustainability. As part of this review DoF are working in conjunction with DfI and DfC to consider issues currently affecting high street and town centres (including rates) and facilitated an Innovation Lab on 2nd and 3rd July. This was attended by a range of key stakeholders and considered the challenges affecting city and town centres, and sought to identify recommendations to address these challenges. The Director of City Regeneration and Development and Head of Finance represented Belfast City Council at the Innovation Lab. As this work progresses a further update will be brought back to Committee.

City Centre Living

3.10 As part of the ongoing objective to increase the city population the Task Force has also considered issues affecting the delivery of housing in the city centre. This has included consideration of the definition of affordable housing and potential additional products within this definition; progression of the city centre waiting list; funding and procurement issues and consideration of how public sector and other lands can be brought forward in a strategic way to deliver on a range of housing tenures across the city. A consultation by DfC is currently underway in respect of the definition of affordable housing and the Council is preparing a response, welcoming the review which suggests a broader range of intermediate housing products be included within the definition. That response will be the subject of a report to Planning Committee on 13th August. Alongside this, NIHE are moving forward with developing the city centre waiting list and further details will be provided to members as this progresses. Members will also recall that a report was brought to Committee in June on the Strategic Sites Assessments of city centre lands in public ownership. This report identified key strategic sites in the Inner North West, Greater Clarendon and Linen Quarter with the potential to provide mixed use development including housing across a range of tenures. A workshop on the potential of these locations is to be held with Members on Wednesday 4th September at 5pm and further details will be circulated in advance.

Establishment of a City Centre Reference Group

3.11 The City Centre Regeneration Task Force Action Plan included an action on creating a City Centre Reference Group to inform the ongoing work of city centre revitalisation, the work of the Task Force and wider long-term regeneration and development activities in the city centre. At its meeting on 14th June 2019, the Task Force agreed to the establishment of a City Centre Reference Group. This will enable two existing groups, the City Recovery Lead Group, established to mitigate the effects of the Bank Buildings fire, and a recently formed City Strategic Forum (Belfast City Centre Management led), to be stood down in the near future. It is recognised that there remains a requirement to continue with the City Recovery Lead Group in the short term given the issues that remain as a result of the Bank Buildings fire. However, it is intended these will evolve into a wider and more strategic reference group consisting of a range of stakeholders across all sectors that can contribute to the range of issues and work-streams emerging from the Task Force Action Plan and wider city development issues. It is proposed this Reference Group will be chaired by the Council's Strategic Director of Place and Economy, with Belfast City Centre Management acting in a secretariat role. The remit and work of the group will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure alignment with the work of the Task Force, and in line with the emerging governance boards emerging from the Belfast Agenda.

Presentation from the Institute of Place Management

3.12 Belfast City Council has recently obtained partner membership with the Institute of Place Management (IPM). The IPM is an international professional body that supports people committed to developing, managing and making places better. IPM work with policy makers, practitioners and providers to identify the core aspects involved in the effective management, development and marketing of places. They have recently been appointed by Government to lead the High Streets Task Force in England and deliver support to local authorities and communities who want to transform their high streets. The Co-Chair of the IPM, Professor Cathy Parker visited Belfast in mid-June. Professor Parker is regarded as an expert in place management and is one of the co-authors of the recent UK Government-commissioned report 'High Street 2030: Achieving Change'. Professor Parker attended the City Centre Regeneration Task Force and shared research and findings on city centre and high street trends and the future focus for high streets in managing the retail offering. Specifically Professor Parker made reference to the criticality of city centres for the wider economy and surrounding areas; the need for investment for successful city centres, and the importance of city leadership.

3.13	<p>Referring to the High Street Report, Professor Parker highlighted key factors that had been identified in transforming places in other towns and cities. These included strong leadership; blending expert and local knowledge; communication; involvement of young people and co-ordination of efforts. She also referenced empirical research which identified the top 25 factors for successful town and city centres. These included vision/strategy, appearance, activity hours, liveability, experience, entertainment/leisure, recreational space, a balance of independent /chain retailers and the offer and diversity within city centres.</p>
3.14	<p>Officers are currently working with the IPM to review the emerging action plans for the city centre to ensure alignment with best practice and to maximise the potential of priority projects to deliver the ambitions of the city centre.</p>
3.15	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p>
	<p>None directly associated with this report.</p>
3.16	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p>
	<p>None associated with this report. The Council's Equality and Diversity Officers will be consulted on any future changes to strategies or plans that are currently in place.</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>