



Subject:	Update on City Centre Revitalisation Programme
Date:	4th March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Acting Director of City Regeneration and Development John Greer, Director of Economic Development

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 on the progress of the Revitalisation Programme and the City Centre Regeneration Task Force.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. the progress on the City Revitalisation Programme;ii. the status of the Bank Buildings cordon; andiii. the future governance structures and procedures to deliver the Regeneration Task Force (RTF) Action Plan.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p data-bbox="272 206 911 239">City Centre Revitalisation Programme update</p> <p data-bbox="272 255 1469 389">Members are reminded that, at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22nd February 2019, approval was given to move ahead with a range of activities focused on city centre revitalisation. The work was built around three key strands, namely:</p> <ul data-bbox="323 461 930 595" style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and Environmental Improvements • Enhanced Animation Programme • Marketing and Communications
3.2	<p data-bbox="272 667 1469 801">The work was intended to build on the learning from and consolidate some of the initiatives that had been developed to mitigate against the most significant impacts of the fire at the Bank Buildings. The broad objectives were to:</p> <ul data-bbox="323 819 1342 1115" style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and enhanced city centre offering to drive footfall across all sectors • Improve attractiveness and vibrancy • Enhance connectivity and permeability • Maximise tourism and cultural opportunities and attract visitors • Encourage more families and young people to use the city centre • Support existing businesses and augment ongoing programmes of activity.
3.3	<p data-bbox="272 1180 1469 1314">Following on from the November 2019 update on this programme to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, details on activity and key outputs since that time are set out below.</p>
3.4	<p data-bbox="272 1384 879 1417"><u>Physical and Environmental Improvements</u></p> <p data-bbox="272 1435 512 1469"><u>i. Pop- Up Park</u></p> <p data-bbox="272 1487 1469 1973">Work is continuing on delivering a multi-functional family-friendly pop up park in Cathedral Gardens with a completion date of Spring 2020. A bid to DfC for additional funding was successful which will enable the enhancement of the initial proposals. Park Hood, the appointed design team, carried out engagement with key stakeholders including St Anne’s Cathedral, Cathedral Quarter BID, Cathedral Quarter Trust and Ulster University during October / November 2019. In addition sessions were facilitated with children and young people, all of which has shaped a final design that aims to create a ‘meanwhile use’ that caters for a broad range of users. The project is expected to be in place for a period of up to two years as a pilot project informing design development of the permanent Cathedral Gardens works.</p>

ii. City Lighting and Dressing Strategy

3.5 Work is underway to develop a City Lighting and Dressing Strategy, including the definition of key principles and mapping of distinct character areas within the city. A number of lighting pilots have been progressed which will trial approaches and opportunities for collaborative working to inform the development of the strategy. These include an interactive projection onto shop frontages in Castle Street (phase 1 install February 2020), a bespoke lighting feature in Castle Arcade (installed December 2019), and the Christmas projections on Royal Avenue. Evaluations of the pilots are currently being undertaken. An anti-graffiti artwork treatment to multiple shutters/frontages along College Street and Fountain Lane is also underway. A Lighting and Dressing Strategy will be prepared to incorporate all findings from the above work and map potential delivery routes for future initiatives. A further report on the City Lighting and Dressing Strategy will be presented to Committee in Spring 2020.

iii. Belfast Entries

3.6 The appointment of sub-contractors is underway to complete Phase 1 works during March 2020, subject to planning. The environmental improvement works comprise painting, new lighting, surface repairs, artwork and new wayfinding features. Phase 1 Entries include Castle Arcade, Winecellar Entry, Crown Entry, Wilson's Court, Joy's Entry, Pottinger's Entry and Cole's Alley. Design concepts are also being developed for a potential second phase, should funding become available.

iv. Deep Clean and Graffiti Removal

3.7 The cleanliness and physical appearance of the city centre was a key issues that was consistently raised by the majority of stakeholders. The City and Neighbourhood Services Department is continuing to operate a hot water washer to provide a deep underfoot clean to the public realm, and have a dedicated team working on the deep clean throughout the city centre. The initial focus for this work is on the underfoot cleaning (pavements/granite) and the gable walls.

v. Enhanced Animation Programme

3.8 In keeping with the commitment to develop more family-friendly activities in the city centre, a programme of Christmas animation was developed and delivered. This comprised an engagement hub located on Royal Avenue, a programme of light projections on derelict properties and on the shipping containers at Bank Buildings and a programme of musical performances across all of the city centre, with a focal point within a vacant unit in

Castlecourt. The engagement hub was a significant attraction, welcoming more than 5,300 visitors over the month. There were 43 musical performances over the Christmas period, drawing audiences in excess of 4000 people. Royal Avenue – the key location for much of the activity – was the one area of the city that experienced an increase in footfall over the Christmas period.

Marketing and Communications

3.9 Working collaboratively with city partners to create awareness of Belfast’s unique Christmas offering, we developed and implemented an integrated marketing and public relations campaign “This Christmas Make it Belfast” building on the “Make it Belfast” campaign which ran earlier in the year. The integrated public relations and marketing plan which ran from 16th November through to w/c 9th December used a mix of tactical media (Outdoor, Radio, Digital, Ad-Walkers) to target audiences in Belfast and the Greater Belfast area whilst traditional PR was utilised targeting key press and broadcast outlets. Due to the vast and varied programme of activities, an always-on approach was adopted for social media throughout the months of November right through to the start of January to promote the animation programme. The investment helped reach over 6.2m people online and generated over 5,000 online interactions.

Site Hoarding

3.10 Primark presented to the City Centre Reference Group (CCRG) in November 2019, providing an update on the work at Bank Buildings. This included advising that the line of the hoarding would be kept under review throughout the project, but that it was unlikely that it could be reduced before 2022.

3.11 Given the Council’s role as a civic leader, the Strategic Director for Place and Economy instructed officers to procure a consultant to undertake an independent view on the site and the hoarding. The independent assessment has been completed and is line with the findings of Primark. The City Centre Reference Group was advised of this at their meeting in January. It was agreed that the City Centre Stakeholder Group (chaired by BCTC, membership consists of BCCM and 3 BIDs) would consider the impacts of the longer term hoarding on the city centre and report back at a future date.

3.12 Council officers will continue to work with officials in Dfl to engage with Primark site management staff regarding the location of the site hoarding on Castle Place and will update the committee as appropriate.

Next Steps/Way forward

3.13 Whilst the City Centre Revitalisation Programme and its associated budget allocation will soon come to an end, it is clear that there is a need for a longer-term approach to create a safe, vibrant and sustainable city centre. This is particularly the case given the changing roles of city centres across the world driven, to a large extent, by the decline in High Street retailing and the growth of online business. As reported to the Committee in February 2020, officers are working across the Place and Economy Department and with city stakeholders to develop a Future City Centre Programme. Taking this approach will give greater visibility to the work, will allow greater alignment of resources and will maximise the effectiveness of our investment. It will also enable us to engage external partners to secure buy-in to this wider programme of activity.

City Centre Regeneration Task Force update

3.14 The Regeneration Task Force (RTF) was established in November 2018 to address the longer-term challenges of the city centre. Quarterly progress updates were reported to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. The Task Force comprised the Chief Executive, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy and the Director of City Regeneration and Development in Belfast City Council as well as the Head of the Civil Service and the Permanent Secretaries of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), Department for Communities (DfC), Department of Finance (DoF) and the Department of the Economy (DfE).

3.15 As reported to this Committee in November 2019, the Task Force agreed that it would stand down in its current format by the end of March 2020 but that the priority activities and the commitment to collaborative action would continue. The strategic partnership approach of the Task Force has been integral to the progress made around priority areas within the RTF Action Plan and there are a number of examples of this including:

- Processes are in place to address overcoming the obstacles to the city centre housing supply including the establishment of a city centre waiting list, procurement advice and position for Housing Associations, piloting and testing mixed tenure development, the definition of affordable housing with a view to bring forward additional products for affordable housing
- The first phase of the Strategic Sites Assessment has completed the review of strategic public sector assets and appropriate governance is now in place to deliver this phase and subsequent phases of the project. A Phase 2 Strategic Sites

	<p>Assessment with a city-wide approach will be carried out in line with this committee's priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Centre Connectivity Study and the production of the Bolder Vision for Belfast and progress towards Phases 2 and 3 • The review of non-domestic rates has commenced with Innovation Labs in July 2019, followed by a public consultation in autumn 2019. Officials in DoF have compiled an emerging issues report summarising the consultation response for review by the Minister • The delivery of the Revitalisation Programme across a range of statutory agencies.
3.16	<p>At its meeting on 20 January 2020, the RTF formalised future governance arrangements, agreeing that the primary place for strategic collaboration should be under the Community Planning structures - specifically the Growing the Economy and City Development Boards. The Task Force agreed that the Joint Regeneration Group (JRG) comprising Belfast City Council, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure, Land and Property Services, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Strategic Investment Board will have ongoing responsibility for monitoring and co-ordinating the delivery of the Action Plan, escalating where appropriate to the Growing the Economy and City Development Board and ensuring linkages with the City Centre Reference Group. The JRG is co-chaired by the Council's Director of City Regeneration and Development and DfC's Director of Belfast Regeneration Directorate.</p>
3.17	<p>An overview of key thematic areas of the Action Plan was provided to Committee in November 2019. Members will recall that the priority areas within the action plan align with the priorities of this Committee as agreed in February 2020. Members will therefore continue to be updated on progress at future meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All items of expenditure set out above are being delivered within the budget approved for the Revitalisation programme at the 22 February 2019 meeting of the SP&R Committee.</p>
3.19	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></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	Documents attached
	None