



Subject:	Smart Belfast update
Date:	19 June 2020
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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	<p>'Smart Belfast' encourages city partners to work together to exploit leading-edge technologies (such as AI, robotics, wireless networks, data science and industrial service design) in order to address urban challenges in more innovative ways. And at the same time, fostering a creative environment in which start-ups and established businesses can adopt digital technologies to create new products and services.</p> <p>The approach is likely to become increasingly important as Belfast emerges from the Covid-19 crisis. As a powerful contributor to increased productivity, digital innovation will be vital to</p>

	Belfast's economic recovery. Smart Belfast will have a role to play in this. This paper sets out the current work of the team and a number of forthcoming opportunities.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the launch of the Covid Connect platform and that proposals for future developments will be presented to Committee in August. 2. To note the award of €680,431 to Belfast under Horizon 2020's 'Entrepreneurship for the Transformation of Historic Urban Areas' project, and the commencement date of autumn 2020. 3. Members are asked to note the contents of the attached Smart District booklet. 4. To approve Belfast City Council's membership of the World Economic Forum & G20's Smart Cities Alliance. 5. To approve the Council's participation in the ESCR/IRC Data Driven Societies project application. 6. To note the award of £100,000 for Phase Two of Amazing Spaces: Smart Places. 7. To approve the Council's participation in a €250,000 bid to Horizon 2020's nature-based solutions call to address urban air pollution. 8. To approve the Council's support for a £500,000 Urban Mobility project bid to Innovate UK's Smart Grant.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Covid Connect platform</p> <p>During the first phase of the Covid-19 crisis, the City Innovation team were approached by a number of digital companies seeking to offer help in response to challenges faced by government and community and voluntary sector organisations. And at the same time the team had also been approached by organisations, including teams within the Council, seeking technical support.</p>
3.2	<p>In response the team rapidly established the www.covidconnectni.com online brokerage platform over a three-week period. (It was officially launched by the Lord Mayor on 18th May and received publicity locally and nationally.) The platform connects companies offering mainly digital support (often on a pro bono basis) with public, community and voluntary sector bodies. The platform builds on a European funded project the team had already been part of, led by local SME Xpand Group.</p>
3.3	<p>To date, over 80 organisations have signed up to the platform (including EY, Deloitte, Amazon, BT, Microsoft, Kainos, etc.) The brokerage service has already led to a number of</p>

	<p>projects including data analysis on business sectors in the city; solutions for organisations seeking to engage remote with vulnerable client groups; and using sentiment analysis tools to track the update of social distancing guidance to support health organisations.</p>
3.4	<p>The team are currently developing proposals for a longer term role for the platform once the initial crisis response period is over. For example, the platform can be re-purposed to support better collaboration between organisations across the city on a wide range of digital innovation projects. Members are asked to note the work on the platform and that proposals will be presented to Committee in August.</p>
3.5	<p>Entrepreneurship for the Transformation of Historic Urban Areas (Hub-In) Committee had previously approved Belfast City Council's participation in a €7.5 million consortium bid to Horizon 2020 for a project that proposes to work with local communities to develop entrepreneurial skills in relation to opportunities arising from the transformation on historic urban areas.</p>
3.6	<p>The European Commission has informed partners that the bid was successful. Belfast will receive €680,431 of the award over four years commencing autumn 2020. EU partners accepted that Belfast's Maritime Mile met their 'historic urban area' criteria and the Council therefore onboarded the Titanic Foundation as a key local delivery partner. (Other partners we have onboarded included Catalyst Inc, Ulster University, Dept for Finance's Innovation Lab and Future Screens NI.)</p>
3.7	<p>Under an MoU with Titanic Foundation, the Council will recruit a funded staff member and manage the grant finances. Titanic Foundation will be primarily responsible for co-ordinating the designing and deliver of the on-the-ground programme with local communities – connecting the wider maritime mile developments with entrepreneurial innovation programmes with local community.</p>
3.8	<p>Members are asked to note the successful application and that the project is due to begin in Autumn 2020.</p>
3.9	<p>The Belfast Smart District and post-Covid recovery Building on the Smart Belfast approach, work is now under way with the Vice-Chancellors of both local universities, Belfast Harbour and Catalyst Inc, to develop a shared narrative that makes the case for Belfast as a globally significant place for innovative businesses to invest.</p>

3.10	<p>The narrative is constructed around the investment opportunities of the 'Belfast Smart District'. Members will be aware of Belfast Harbour's existing commitment to invest £254 million over the next five years and the plans for digital and innovation investments under the Belfast Region City Deal. Partners are considering opportunities to promote these investments alongside complementary plans for an FDI-focused innovation district at Titanic Quarter; and a Belfast City Council-led 'Smart Core' that focuses on the revival of our city centre.</p>
3.11	<p>As Belfast prepared plans for economic recovery, the importance of place-based digital innovation, that builds of the city's indigenous research and sector strengths, will be an important element of this work. The attached leaflet is a first attempt to share this ambition with both local and international business.</p>
3.12	<p>Members are asked to note the contents of the attached Smart District booklet.</p>
3.13	<p>G20 Smart Cities Alliance membership</p> <p>Following discussions at the Smart Cities World Congress in Barcelona in November 2019, we have been asked to join the World Economic Forum and G20's Smart Cities Alliance. https://globalsmartcitiesalliance.org</p>
3.14	<p>This Alliance is bringing together 20 global cities to establish standards and practice on the ethical development of Smart Cities. There are no charges or fees associated with membership, just a commitment of Officers to engage on the development of the standards. As part of the Belfast group we have also suggested the involvement of Daithí Mac Síthigh, Professor of Law and Innovation at Queen's University Belfast, to take part as an international academic expert on data ethics. Professor Mac Síthigh has agreed in principle to be part of the work, pending Committee approval.</p>
3.15	<p>Members will probably be well aware that digital technologies raise issues of trust and privacy – and that city councils around the world are beginning to take a leadership role in ensuring that emerging smart city projects are designed around a shared ethical approach. Belfast's involvement in this global framework places the city at the forefront of this debate, something which will prove attractive to innovators and technologists.</p>
3.16	<p>Members are therefore asked to approve Belfast City Council's membership of the Alliance.</p>

<p>3.17</p> <p>3.18</p> <p>3.19</p> <p>3.20</p> <p>3.21</p> <p>3.22</p> <p>3.23</p>	<p>Data Driven Societies: Enabling Public Engagement</p> <p>In a similar vein, Belfast has been asked to take part in a bid led by Maynooth University to the Economic and Social Research Council & Irish Research Council to develop a learning network between Dublin, Edinburgh and Belfast that aims to strengthen the potential of data driven innovation and Artificial Intelligence to have a positive impact on individuals and society.</p> <p>If successful, Belfast City Council Officers would be asked to contribute to an international multi-stakeholder network for social science, civil society and public sector organisations across the UK and Ireland.</p> <p>Members are asked to approve Belfast City Council's participation in the project if the funding application is successful.</p> <p>Amazing Spaces, Smart Places update</p> <p>The Council has received confirmation from the Department for the Economy that a final £100,000 has been agreed for phase two (April 2020 to March 2021) of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) project, '<i>Amazing Spaces, Smart Places</i>'. This is a joint project with the Department of Justice to support SMEs to work with council to develop innovative methods to help manage the safe use of our parks and open spaces. This brings the total funding received to a total of £320K.</p> <p>The City Innovation team and officers from City & Neighbourhoods department will be working with two local companies who are now through to phase 2, Civic Dollars and SparroWatch, to further develop proto-types in a real-world park environment. Engagement will continue with park users, communities and Members. The work takes on a renewed significance in the light of the current social distancing challenge as emerging learning will inform how parks are used.</p> <p>Members are asked to note this next award of £100,000 for Phase two of Amazing Spaces, Smart Places.</p> <p>Upsurge: Air Quality and nature-based solutions</p> <p>Smart Belfast was approached by a consortium of European cities wishing to develop a substantial Horizon 2020 bid to trial nature-based solutions to urban air quality problems.</p>
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3.24	The bid is being led by Slovenia's E-Institute and administration of the project locally would be delivered by Queen's University's School of Built Environment working closely with the Council's Resilience team and the City Innovation team.
3.25	If successful, up to €250,000 would be available to Belfast over a four year period to test interventions seeking to reduce local air pollution levels. An outline phase 1 proposal has just been accepted by the European Commission. Partners will now work together to develop a more detailed phase 2 proposal prior to the September deadline. If successful funding will be awarded from December 2020.
3.26	Members will note the opportunity that the project represents in relation to the city's draft Resilience strategy, our Climate Emergency agenda, and the city's Blue and Green strategy.
3.27	Members are asked to approve the Council's participation in the phase two bid development process.
Covid-19 and Urban mobility	
3.28	As cities emerge from lock-down many analysts have noted that there are likely to be a series of urban mobility challenges as well as new opportunities to support active travel (eg walking, cycling, e-bikes or scooters. Understanding existing travel behaviours will be important for new plans and interventions – and the use of digital technology is playing an increasingly important role.
3.29	Smart Belfast are involved in a number of projects to support digitally-enabled mobility. The Council were recently involved in a successful bid to the Department for Finance's Open Data NI competition. This seeks to use a combination of publicly available data and commercial data to explore the impact of new mobility solutions on local SMEs.
3.30	Building on this work, the lead company, Xpand Group, has invited the Council to participate in a more ambitious application to Innovate UK's Smart Grants. This fund is making £25 million to industry to deliver ambitious or disruptive R&D innovations that can make a significant impact on the economy.
3.31	The Belfast bid will focus on mobility solutions in relation to SME survival during in the months after the Covid lockdown. The duration of the project will be between 6 to 18 months with a project value of between £250,000 and £500,000.

3.32	Members are asked to approve Belfast City Council's support for the bid. Further details will be presented to the Committee in August.
4.	Financial & Resource Implications
3.33	All costs associated with this work have been identified within existing departmental budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.34	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Smart Belfast Booklet