



Subject:	Connectivity Issues: Letters to Ministers
Date:	3 rd March 2021
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director City Regeneration & 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"/>
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 on the responses received to letters that were sent to Ministers at the request of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Note the responses received in relation to letters issued from the Council at the request of CGR Committee, in relation to connectivity related matters:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. York Street Interchange ii. Covid 19 Revitalisation Programme: Connectivity Projects iii. Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street iv. Increasing Sustainable Transport in Belfast
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>York Street Interchange (YSI)</u></p> <p>At its meeting on 12th August 2020 the Committee agreed that the Council would write to the Minister for Infrastructure to express its support for the external review of the York Street Interchange project, and to offer an opportunity to engage with the review process. The Council has received a response from the Minister (see Appendix 1) indicating that the review is now complete and that the Minister is currently considering the findings. The Minister went on to promote a collaborative approach between the Department and the Council in terms of the future development of the York St Interchange Scheme and other infrastructure solutions in line with the City Centre Connectivity Study.</p> <p>Also to note, in relation to YSI scheme, at the CGR Committee meeting 13th January 2021 it was agreed that Committee would receive a presentation from Mr. M. Hackett on the issue of an Alternative York Street Interchange and the presentation is being provided to this Committee meeting (3 March).</p> <p><u>Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme: Connectivity Related Projects</u></p>
3.2	<p>At its meeting on 11th November 2020 the Committee agreed that the Council would write to both the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure to formally acknowledge, on behalf of the Council, the commitment of funding to the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, and welcome the support to enable the delivery of a range of measures. In addition, the letter highlighted that it was critical that a collaborative and flexible multi-agency approach is taken across all of the public sector, including the need for fast and effective response across each collective organisations in order to deliver projects on the ground. The Council has received a response from the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Communities – see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 outlining the £19.3m of urgent funding to Councils to prepare our town and city centres to reopen safely. The Ministers also reiterated</p>

3.3	<p>the departmental commitment to providing assistance, support and partnership working in delivering the programme of works.</p> <p>Members will also note that, further to the CGR Committee meeting 10th February 2021, and subject to Council ratification in March, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request additional support through the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme for the business and community cluster grants. An update will be brought back to Committee on this issue in due course.</p>
3.4	<p><i>Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street</i></p> <p>At its meeting on 11th November 2020, the Committee agreed that the Council would write to both the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure to reiterate its concerns regarding the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Scheme, as set out in a previous letter (12 October 2020). In addition, the letter expressed the Council's concern that the opportunity to make impactful change at this strategic junction will be missed if not realised now, and included a wide ranging number of connectivity related issues (copy letter enc at Appendix 4)</p>
3.5	<p>The Council has received a response from both the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure – see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6 respectively. These responses refer to the ongoing work of the joint Junctions Stakeholder Group to review the designs with the Minister for Infrastructure stating that ‘officials would work at pace to bring forward proposals for alternative junction layouts that would better reflect the priority that we all agree needs to be given to public transport, pedestrians and cyclists’ with a further update to be provided to Council soon.</p>
<p><u>Increasing Sustainable Transport in Belfast</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council, at its meeting on 1st December, passed the following proposal which had been proposed by Councillor Harvey:</p> <p>“At the request of Councillor Harvey, the Council agreed to amend the minute of the meeting of 24th November, under the above mentioned heading, to provide that the Council write to the Department for Infrastructure to ask for clarity on its position on increasing sustainable transport in Belfast.”</p>	

	<p>The associated letter from Council to the Minister is included in Appendix 6 of this report with the Ministers response included in Appendix 7. In the response (Appendix 8) the Minister confirms the Departments commitment to creating more opportunities for active travel and making our roads safer for those who walk, wheel and cycle. The Minister goes on to reference the importance of reimaging our city and town centres with a focus on making them greener, more walkable and more connected with commitments from the Department including the establishment of a Walking and Cycling Champion, a £20m capital funding for Blue & Green Infrastructure, progression of two key sustainable transport projects in the BRT Phase 2 and the Ormeau Road Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge, and the pending publication of the final Belfast Bike Network.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minister for Infrastructure response to Committee re York Street Interchange</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Minister for Infrastructure response to Committee re Covid 19 Revitalisation Programme</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Minister for Communities response to Committee re Covid 19 Revitalisation Programme</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Copy of the letter from BCC to Minister for Communities and Minister for Infrastructure re Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Minister for Communities response to Committee re Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Minister for Infrastructure response to Committee re Public Realm Schemes at Shankill Gateway and Fredrick Street</p> <p>Appendix 7 – Ltr – Dfl _ Minister Mallon – Sustainable Transport</p> <p>Appendix 8 – Response – Dfl – Minister Mallon – Sustainable Transport</p>