



**City Growth and Regeneration
Committee Plan 2021-22**

Six-month progress update
April-September 2021

Introduction

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards regeneration and growth of the city in the context of outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy decisions.

Its specific functions include:

- Setting the overall strategic direction for the Council in the areas of cultural and economic regeneration and growth.
- Influencing and contributing to regional regeneration and growth strategies and activities.
- Developing and implementing city-wide economic strategies and policies.
- Managing and maximising the impact of major physical developments in the city.
- Coordinating and promoting major citywide events.
- Considering draft financial estimates for the Committee together with such statements, reports and recommendations as required.
- Monitoring quarterly performance and financial reports and year end reports.
- Approving all revenue purchases of works, goods or services relevant to this Committee which exceed or are likely to exceed the statutory amount (currently £30,000) and subject to tender.
- Monitoring reports on matters that are of direct relevance to the responsibility of this Committee.
- Sourcing and providing support to attract and utilise European and other grants which contribute to the growth of the city.
- Providing support for economic development initiatives.
- Supporting the development of culture, heritage and the arts.
- Working with other agencies to promote Belfast as a key investment and tourism opportunity.
- Developing programmes and actions to support local businesses and attract inward investment.
- Managing Council owned properties including the maintenance and repair of Council buildings, properties and vehicles.
- Managing the Council's markets and maximising their benefit to the city.
- Influencing and contributing to strategies policies and actions affecting skills, employability, transportation and energy in the City.

- Considering Year end and mid-year review of key corporate risks.
- Exercising the Council's functions in relation to:
 - Economic Development;
 - Tourism;
 - Culture and Arts;
 - European and International Relations;
 - Car parks;
 - City Markets;
 - City Events;
 - Belfast Castle;
 - Malone House;
 - Belfast Zoo; and
 - City Regeneration and Development.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee Key Programmes of work

Update on progress 1st April – 30th September 2021

Inclusive Economic Recovery

Area of work	Sub-area	Update
Belfast Region City Deal	n/a	We continue to work with and inform the various strands of the Belfast Region City Deal. (See the SP&R reports for May and August for further details.) In particular this period, we have been informing the innovation strand to ensure it meets the needs expressed by local businesses. An update on the Belfast Destination Hub is shown later in the report and the next meeting for the Gasworks Bridge is on 06.10.21.
Cultural Strategy	n/a	Progress against the cultural strategy up to end of quarter 2 included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the submission of UNESCO bid and development of music recovery strategy; • the re-opening of cultural multi-annual funding and project funding including Community Festivals Funding; • the development and delivery of new funding programmes including Pathfinder Awards and Creative Bursaries; • the completion of Cultural Infrastructure Audit and development of a Co-design Framework; • ongoing role as Strategic Delivery Body for Festival 2022 (Unboxed) to deliver 5 projects in 2022; • the development and delivery of communications plan for culture (2021-24); • delivery of events to date has included Maritime Weekender and ongoing music programming.

Area of work	Sub-area	Update
<p>City Recovery, reopening the city and support for businesses</p>	<p>Business cluster and community capital grants scheme (BCCG)</p>	<p>A total £1,067,204 has been approved for some 51 applications with 7 successful city centre applications and 44 successful applications outside city centre for environmental improvement. Proposals on city wide proposals were sought on interventions that would support business operation and recovery; enhance physical spaces; increase civic participation and sense of ownership; and encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in local area. Officers have worked with applicants on the delivery of this grant programme which is supporting 35 Community Groups and Social Enterprises and 16 business clusters across the city. This funding allocation comprises £700k of funding from the Revitalisation Programme and £450k from BCC as previously reported to Committee. As of end of September £750k has been provided to the successful applicants and Officers continue to work through the remaining successful applicants to secure relevant statutory approvals and support delivery of the projects.</p>
	<p>Revitalisation Fund: Physical interventions</p>	<p>In terms of progress on delivery of the Programme, at the end of September a total of £2.6m has been spent or directly allocated to delivery partners with a forecast to complete the programme by March 2022. The majority of procurement is now complete, and contract works programmes are being finalised with suppliers and contractors for the remaining work packages, minimising the impacts of the global supply and contractor availability issues. Projects include a sustainable and active travel hub at QUB, temporary active travel hub at Cathedral Gardens, a pilot E Cargo bike scheme etc.</p>
	<p>Revitalisation Fund: Local Business Interventions</p>	<p>445 businesses have claimed their funding allocations. The closing date for all claims was the 25th June. There are currently 13 claims in progress. 49 businesses withdrew from the process.</p> <p>Innovation Factory occupancy levels have risen to 60% as of the end of Aug. There is high interest from new firms in sectors including tv/film, digital, engineering, charity and green tech. Brexit support has been provided for 26 businesses including retail, construction, ICT and manufacturing. The Digital transformation programme is currently being procured and is expected to launch in November. It will support over 1000 businesses across NI.</p>

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	City Reference Group and High Street Task Force	Engagement is ongoing and we are liaising with city stakeholders via the City Reference Group and internally via City Recovery Leadership Group. High Street Task Force Call for Evidence launched on Monday 25th October and will close on 6 December. Officers are currently working on draft response.
Increase tourism spend through sustainable tourism products	n/a	<p>Progress against tourism priorities up to the end of Quarter 2 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of draft 10-year tourism plan, Make Yourself at Home; • completion of year 2 of Global Destination Sustainability Index securing top 20 ranking; • launch of Green Tourism accreditation with industry partners; • support for City Connections local tourism programme; • development of Belfast Visitor Experience Framework; • completion of research on impact of Belfast on regional visitor economy; • completion of market research of the Belfast's tourism narrative and review of Belfast positioning and brand. <p>Additional areas of work included securing product development funding to pilot meanwhile use experiential tourism venues in the city centre and securing Belfast as host for the global summit, One Young World in 2023.</p>

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<p>Encourage business start-ups and support indigenous business growth</p>	<p>Provide 'Growing a Business' services:</p>	<p>We have completed our business survey, with Belfast Chamber, and received approximately 400 responses. We will repeat this every six months to inform our work plans.</p> <p>So far this year we have delivered business growth support for 243 businesses in areas such as growth strategies, resilience, enhancing digital and online presence, tendering, plus specialist support for businesses with high growth potential.</p> <p>The 'Way to Scale bootcamp' launched in Aug with 20 Belfast based businesses and 37 participants.</p> <p>We have partnered with Fintech NI to develop a Fintech Action Plan for the region.</p> <p>We are currently working with the other councils to identify replacement business growth funding post 2023 and are jointly delivering a Digi Transform programme across the region.</p>
	<p>Provide 'Starting a Business' services:</p>	<p>Progress to date includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise Awareness Activity - over 450 individuals to test and develop new business ideas. • Start-up support - 306 individuals to develop 200 business plans and 120 jobs. • Social Enterprise and Cooperative Support - 40 organisations this year with one to one mentoring, advice, and guidance. 4 organisations were Cooperatives. We are now focussing on cooperatives with six outreach events (120 attendees), and two further events planned in Oct plus a 'best practice' visit. • Launch of the Social Economy Fund on 14 Oct. <p>Through SOLACE Economy recovery group work is underway to identify the scale of replacement funding & options for Councils post 2023. We are also working with the other councils, Invest NI & DfE on a more ambitious start-up approach post 2023.</p>

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	Manage and support the city markets	<p>St George’s Market and Smithfield Market are now fully operational, following a series of closures and restrictions impacting on business.</p> <p>After a one-year hiatus, the Continental Market will take place from 20th November to 23rd December 2021. It will align closely with the Christmas animation programme.</p>
Promote and market the city internationally	Strategic Networks:	<p>Officers are continuing to support the joint public / private sector Renewed Ambition Programme. The programme of work is continuing at pace focusing on maximising the impact of the joint partnership approach for developing regeneration, infrastructure and a modern inclusive built environment. This involves delivering a programme of content aimed at the real estate audience, both locally and further afield; drive a programme of engagement and advocacy to facilitate two-way conversations with policy makers and politicians, and showcase real opportunities in Belfast; and deliver research to show the positive impact that real estate investment can deliver for our communities.</p> <p>A Workshop took place on 18 Aug 2021 with the CGR Committee, Renewed Ambition Programme (RAP) Task Force, and the City Development Board to present the initial findings from the research into the wider social, economic & environmental impact of real estate investment. work is ongoing to complete the research, including engagement with Executive Ministers.</p> <p>RAP Task Force representatives presented to CGR Committee on 8th September.</p> <p>Work is progressing around Belfast representation at a number of sessions with national and international audiences focusing on housing regeneration and city centre living, digital innovation, sustainable development etc. We are continuing to engage with local and national partners (including DIT and INI) to leverage their networks to attract investment.</p>

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	Invest in Belfast Website	The web page and hosting is being updated and are currently being transferred in house and being re-developed. The website provides an online platform to show case the city’s key growth sectors (inc creative and digital; fintech, hospitality and tourism etc) and real estate opportunities to attract investment from prospective investors and end occupiers to deliver on the city’s inclusive growth ambitions and job creation etc.
	Provide the Investing in Belfast service	We continue to facilitate requests from businesses wishing to relocate to Belfast, though there has been a reduction in requests, as a result of Covid.
Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor (DBEC)	n/a	On behalf of DBEC, we have been leading the procurement & management of a development plan, action plan and strategy. The successful contractor has been appointed and preliminary officer and political meetings are scheduled for November.

<p>City Regeneration and Development</p>		<p>Progress continues across the various strands of the programme as reported in other sections of this report. A summary of highlights is below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic acquisition of 2 Royal Avenue progressing short term and long term uses. • The City Centre Living Vision Public Consultation closed on 24th Sept 2021. Work is ongoing to incorporate consultation feedback and finalise the vision. The mapping of other key City Centre Social Infrastructure is progressing. • Bringing forward projects to create vibrancy and animate city centre streets such as Planning consent granted for enhancement pavement works in Adelaide Street and Planning consent for Castle Place issued • Bringing forward a range of interventions to create permeability, promote safe and open spaces, enhancing the build heritage and history of places within the city centre to drive footfall and create focal points for example the nearing to completion of the Entries and Lanes programme Phase 1, Phase 2 approvals are well advanced and procurement is underway. • A Bolder Vision – city centre connectivity study, developed jointly between Council, Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure, public consultation opened on 30th September. The consultation will seek the view of consultees on a number of proposed ‘Key Moves’ to deliver radial change, as well as other short, medium and long term interventions. This will the support transformation in critical parts of the city to create a green, people focused, connected city centre for current and future users. The 12-week public consultation will run until 23rd December. Stakeholder engagement, both online and in person, is taking place with the draft vision programmed to complete by March 22 • The Belfast Urban Greenway (BUG) Initiative will seek to enhance connectivity to and from the city centre and create an urban greenway concept through the city centre. stakeholder engagement to commence Autumn 2021
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Future City Centre Programme work is progressing to finalise a Vacant Premises programme including, ongoing data gathering and analysis; the refresh of the 'Retail & Leisure Proposition' for the City Centre to provide an updated overview of the city centre's performance in terms of retail and leisure-based occupiers and trends, together with evidence-based recommendations; appointment of a commercial agent to assist with a pilot 'matchmaking' service to align potential business/occupier interest with suitable properties and to assist with the recommendations from the 'Retail & Leisure Proposition'. An emerging Vacancy Grants programme is also being developed. In addition there is a complementary area based programme for the arterial routes – 'Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations' which is aimed at providing specific interventions on conjunction with the businesses. • The Digital transformation programme is currently being procured & expected to launch in Nov. • Working with the Innovation Team re the digital innovation strand of the BRCD to ensure it meets local business's needs. • Engaged with the RSA, to bring forward a Digital Badges project to support employability interventions.

Area of work	Sub-area	Update
	Joint Regeneration Group	<p>The Joint Regeneration Group made up of officers from Council, DfC, DfI, NIHE, LPS and SIB continues to meet on a monthly basis. In order to maximise and provide a focused approach to collaborative working, the JRG have adopted a geographic focus, weaving in agreed thematic areas, eg Housing, Connectivity etc. JRG key areas of focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing led regeneration opportunities • Wider Inner North West to also include the University area, Royal Avenue, and extending up to Castle Street. • Greater Clarendon, Titanic Quarter, Queens Quay, Harbour area • Linen Qtr to include Lower Ormeau, Shaftesbury up to QUB, Gasworks etc • City wide major developments and regeneration priorities / projects.

Area of work	Sub-area	Update
<p>Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS):</p>		<p>Key areas of work so far this year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INW regeneration including the Castle St area: the Masterplan has been published with an action plan. • Cathedral Gardens: pop up play park remains open & work ongoing to establish an alternative location during Cathedral Gardens capital build. Continue to collaboratively work with Physical Programmes on the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens and emerging public consultation in Autumn 2021. • Continue to progress a programme of work aimed at revitalising the city centre including; bringing forward a range of interventions to create permeability, promote safe and open spaces, enhancing the built heritage and history of places within the city centre to drive footfall and create focal points for example the nearing to completion of the Entries and Lanes programme Phase 1, Phase 2 approvals are well advanced and procurement is underway. Further examples include projects focused on tactical regeneration & lighting for example a number of projects are completed including pilot lighting schemes at Castle Arcade, James street South, Church Lane, Exchange Place, Warehouse Entry and Castle Street. Schemes under delivery at Pottingers Entry, Joys Entry. • Corporation Sq/ North-South Spine: Procurement is under preparation to bring to designs to RIBA Stage 3, and
	<p>Major Regeneration Schemes:</p>	<p>We continue to work with partners and input into major schemes. Developments for this period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weavers Cross and Belfast Transport Hub: We continue to actively participate through the Belfast Destination Hub Programme Board. • BHC BCC MOU: Board continues to meet focused around strategic interventions and areas of collaboration. • Engaging with stakeholders in respect of major regeneration schemes including Waterside, Tribeca, UU etc

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	Developer Contributions	A number of projects utilising committed Developer Contributions are underway including procurement for placemaking and public realm enhancement at Little York Street / Little Patrick Street. 5Cs Small Scale Catalyst Project: Stage 2 Concept Design has been accepted following two value engineering workshops.
City Infrastructure	n/a	<p>A range of projects are currently being progressed in tandem addressing the city’s infrastructure requirements which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressing the Infrastructure Study collating internal feedback and reviewing. next steps including engagement with consultants with a view to updating key stakeholders in November. • Junctions Working Group – working with partners in relation to junctions issues including the inner ring road. • Belfast Rapid Transport - continuing to represent Council on the BRT Programme Board, including responding to BRT 2 consultation. • Belfast Streets Ahead – continue to represent Council and input to the proposals for BSA, including advocating for interventions to come forward at pace.
North Foreshore, Belfast Hills and Zoo	n/a	<p>Urban Scale Interventions are working on the feasibility study for the Belfast Zoo and wider site development. The Draft masterplan will be completed in November.</p> <p>Meanwhile, we are continuing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve existing animal enclosures in the zoo. • Explore development options for the Old Zoo site. • Explore the integration of the zoo into the wider surrounding area.

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Destination Hub	n/a	The final BRCD decision has been put back until later in the year. In the meantime, we have been continuing to engage with key stakeholders to ensure interest and input into the design and content of the Hub. We have also been developing a community focused consultation and engagement plan. Work also continues on refining the business case, particularly with regard to the benefits we want to see from the Hub and how these will be measured and monitored.
City Connectivity	Active Travel and Connectivity	See below.
	City Centre Connectivity Study – Bolder Vision	A Bolder Vision – city centre connectivity study, developed jointly between Council, Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure, public consultation opened on 30th September. The consultation will seek the view of consultees on a number of proposed ‘Key Moves’ to deliver radial change, as well as other short, medium and long term interventions. This will support transformation in critical parts of the city to create a green, people focused, connected city centre for current and future users. The 12-week public consultation will run until 23rd December. Stakeholder engagement, both online and in person, is taking place with the draft vision programmed to complete by March 22
	Belfast Urban Greenways (BUG)	The Belfast Urban Greenway (BUG) Initiative will seek to enhance connectivity to and from the city centre and create an urban greenway concept through the city centre. stakeholder engagement to commence Autumn 2021

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	Sustainable Travel Initiatives	<p>We have progressed several initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-cargo delivery: The equipment has been specified and ordered. and Funding Agreement being finalised. • Cycle Stands: The scoping study is complete. Study options were agreed at CG&R on 8/9/21. • QUB Active Travel Hub: Funding has been transferred & is due to open in Sept. • CG Active Travel Hub: We are finalising the design and the tree impact work. Subject to Planning approval, work will commence in Nov. Belfast THRIVES (Transformative Health & Regeneration Initiatives for Vibrancy, Equality and Sustainability) is a pilot partnership between Ulster University [Urban Research Lab] and Belfast City Council, to inform how Belfast’s public spaces can more effectively and inclusively contribute to the liveability of the city and the wellbeing of its inhabitants. Work is ongoing with the UU Project team. • A Playful City: Over the past three years, officers have worked to elevate and embed play in the city centre, placing emphasis on the need to create family-friendly places through engagement and participation with user groups during design development. We are engaging with council partners to agree the project tangibles and delivery plans. There is also ongoing engagement with RCN in relation to the Ambassador of Play Cities. Additional workshop with Placemaking X and partners is due to take place at the end of Sept to explore city challenges.
	Belfast Bikes	<p>The Bike scheme continues to operate. The Strategic Review and proposals for expansion of the scheme were considered by CGR Committee in June 2021. Following the Council call-in process and CGR Committee meeting in September 2021, we are working closely with the Council’s Equality Team to progress the equality screening and considerations.</p>

Area of work	Sub-area	Update
Educational underachievement	n/a	<p>Our GCSE support was significantly disrupted over the last 2 years. Delivery for the current academic year is planned to be both school-based and community-based with places for at least 365 young people not currently predicted to achieve a Grade C (or below) in English & Maths. Due to the impact of COVID, particularly for those already vulnerable, additional activities are being planned (e.g. mid-term intensive learning programmes during Halloween). Through our Youth Support Programme, we are supporting 186 young people who have, or are at risk of, dropping out of education, employment or training. To date, 109 young people have progressed into positive outcomes with 40 into employment and 69 into further education/training.</p>
Access to employment	n/a	<p>427 people have enrolled on Employment Academy programmes, this year, across a range of sectors. 176 have completed their programme and 141 have secured employment so far (an into-work rate of 80%). Of the people still on a programme, 90 are already in work and are receiving support, qualifications or licences needed to access a better job.</p>
Upskilling opportunities	n/a	<p>An interim Belfast Labour Market Partnership (LMP) was formed to undertake a strategic assessment of the city both in terms of supply and demand. This will allow the creation of an Employability and Skills action plan for the city. This will be resourced through Employability NI initially for a period of 18 months. It is expected that a further three-year action plan will follow this.</p> <p>Members of the interim LMP included DfC, DfE, BHSCT, Invest NI, Belfast Met, Belfast Chamber of Commerce, CBI People & Skills Forum, VCSE Panel rep and advice sector rep.</p> <p>We are also engaging with a number of external networks and partnerships including the RSA. This collaboration is based on a bespoke Digital Badges project. These badges will be used to recognise and validate the work undertaken through our programmes as an alternative to the standard practice of asking for qualifications/experience. Work is also underway with partners through the LMP to develop inclusive employment pathways into opportunities within growth sectors such as digital and green.</p>

Community Recovery

Area of work	Sub-area	Update
Maximising housing development & regeneration opportunities	BCC Housing Led Regeneration Programme	A targeted programme of work is progressing focused on housing led regeneration including responding to the DfC Call for evidence on Housing Supply Strategy, strategic site assessments (city centre and city wide) and city centre living vision
	City wide strategic opportunities	We are progressing on identification of public lands through utilising the annual Housing Land Availability Monitor undertaken as part of the LDP processes which helps provides a picture of the amount of land available for new houses, based on existing zonings and extant planning permissions. Allied to this is the Urban Capacity Study work also undertaken as part of the LDP process. This examines the potential capacity for residential development on a broader range of land in the city, irrespective of ownership or planning status. Officers are working collaboratively with a number of other public sector bodies in the mapping and identification of public sector lands for housing. This includes the establishment of a Housing Led Regeneration Sub Delivery Group within the Community Planning structures of the City Development Board, chaired by NIHE Chief Executive to oversee a detailed programme of work which will bring together the various strands of work undertaken by a number of public bodies in relation to the mapping and identification of public lands for housing led regeneration

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Maximising housing development & regeneration opportunities	Strategic City Centre Cluster Sites	The strategic cluster sites include the Inner North West – Northern Cluster, with a development brief agreed with DfC and issued, aimed at achieving the delivery of a residential led mixed-tenure, mixed-use scheme with a focus on place-making development. The Inner North West – Southern Cluster is progressing with a concept regeneration plan seeking to maximise the regeneration potential of this significant area of the city centre, strategically located in close proximity to the core retail area, the new university, the site of the new Destination Hub and existing residential communities. Dunbar Cluster, master planning exercise in underway to maximise the place-making potential arising from the comprehensive redevelopment of a number of co-located sites. Exchange St / Corporation St; Gloucester Street and Ormeau Avenue, planning assessments all complete and progressing with concept making plans at Ormeau Avenue. In addition to the ambitious programme of work within the city centre, a citywide approach has been taken to the strategic site assessments.
	City Centre Living Vision (CCLV):	Comprehensive information has been collated, which is currently being analysed in order to be reflected in finalised vision and engagement undertaken. Further work to be undertaken includes community engagement and development appraisal related work.