

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 5th April, 2023

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);  
Alderman Dorrian;  
Councillors Bunting, Duffy, Ferguson,  
Harvey, Hussey, T. Kelly, Lyons,  
Maskey, McCabe, McLaughlin,  
Murray, Nelson, O'Hara, Spratt and Whyte.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie and Heading.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the 8th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd April, subject to the request of Councillor Ferguson and with the permission of the Council, the Chairperson (Councillor Murphy) had agreed that the minute under the heading "Belfast Zoo - Fees and Charges" be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

### **Declarations of Interest**

In relation to item 4.d) Cultural Work Programme 23-24, Councillor McCabe declared an interest in that she was employed by Feile an Phobail, and left the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

### **Correspondence received from Department of Health – GP Indemnity**

The Committee was reminded that, at its Special meeting in February, it had received a presentation from the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the Department of Health (DoH) in relation to GP Services in Belfast. The Committee had agreed that it would write to the Permanent Secretary to request an update on the work being undertaken to resolve GP indemnity in Northern Ireland, together with the following questions which had been added by the Council at its meeting on 1st March:

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- What mitigation measures were being taken to try and address the number of GPs leaving the Health Services?; and
- What measures were being taken to try and increase the number of medical students year on year?

Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to the Permanent Secretary to request an update on the matter and a response had been received (copy available [here](#)) for consideration.

The response provided details of the Department of Health's review of the arrangements for clinical negligence indemnity cover for GPs in Northern Ireland, together with an update on the DoH "Attract, Recruit Retain scheme". which had been introduced by the SPPG to assist in increasing the numbers of GP Partners and salaried GPs remaining in Northern Ireland and joining practices across the region.

Noted.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following three items were restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following three items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

**Future City Centre Programme - Vacant to Vibrant**

The Committee was provided with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Grant Programme and further recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel for consideration.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant pilot capital grant scheme; and
- Approved the recommendations of the Assessment Panel as outlined within Section 3.8 of the report.

**City Centre Public Realm Catalyst Projects**

The Committee was provided with an update on the status of the secured financial Developer Contributions aligned to public realm and pedestrian crossings, and recommendations to commit developer contributions associated with a range of planning applications.

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The Committee:

- Noted the update on the committed financial developer contributions secured to date and the status of the delivery of these;
- Noted that, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approval, it was intended to commit secured developer contributions amounting to a cumulative total of £1,298,000 to progress the Little Patrick Street and Little York Street Public Realm Improvement Works, and Lancaster Street Entrance Gateway upgrade;
- Noted that, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approval, it was intended to commit secured developer contributions amounting to a cumulative total of £612,800 to progress the Blackstaff Square Public Realm Improvement Works in conjunction with the Department for Communities; and
- Noted that a report on a review of the Developer Contribution Framework would be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Matters referred back from Council**  
**Belfast Zoo – Fees and Charges**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the item to allow a report to be submitted to the Committee in June to provide further financial information.

**Positioning the City to Compete**

**Tourism Work and Events Work plan 23-24**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update for approval on the Year 2 Action Plan (2023 /2024) for Tourism Plan for Belfast - *Make Yourself at Home* and to provide an update on the Council annual events programme and bids for large-scale events.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to:**

- **Note the contents of this report and provide approval for Officers to progress with the Year 2 Action Plan, as detailed including the priorities as set out at Appendix 1 including associated budgets.**

- Note the outline plan for Lord Mayors Days
- Approve interim funding of £25,000 each to Fáilte Feirste Thiar and EastSide Tourism from existing organisational budgets.
- Approve the hosting of a EUROVISION viewing event in 2RA to be funded from existing budgets

### 3.0 Main report

The purpose of the *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan is to:

- Deliver on the tourism priorities set out in the *Belfast Agenda* recognising the importance of tourism to *Growing the Economy* and *City Development*.
- Align to the ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, in order to ensure that tourism development supports cultural development and is based upon an authentic and sustainable Belfast offer.
- Support economic and social recovery in the context of COVID-19 including stabilisation, recovery and growth with the opportunity to build back better.
- Provide strategic context to the Belfast Region City Deal that sets out wider city
- priorities to ensure Belfast's appeal internationally and ability to attract out of state visitors.

### 3.2 Tourism Growth

Despite significant growth and the success of flagship projects such as Titanic Belfast there is still a gap in scale and maturity of the local industry when compared with other regions. Notably, Northern Ireland lags behind UK regions and Republic of Ireland with respect to tourism as a driver for job growth. However, the positive trajectory in place before Covid-19 had identified tourism growth as both a feasible and a necessary part of inclusive economic growth. The challenge for any tourism development plan is to create a sustainable model that continues to support the growth that is essential for city success and the creation of jobs.

- 3.3 Belfast's tourism and hospitality sectors directly support 19,300 jobs, one third of the sector in Northern Ireland. Key tourism sectors such as Accommodation and Food Services, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation and finally Transportation.
- 3.4 The hospitality sector is an employment - intensive one, supporting a disproportionate number of jobs compared with the average sectoral GVA: jobs ratio. Between 2013 and 2019 employment in Accommodation and Food Services in Belfast

increased by 18.2 percent, compared with 8.5 percent growth in the city's total employment.

3.5 It was in this context that Tourism NI set the ambitious target of doubling the value of the tourism industry to £2 billion by 2030. A key element of this opportunity further reinforced by ambitions of the Belfast Region City Deal was getting a bigger share of the international visitors coming to the island of Ireland to travel to Belfast and the Belfast region.

3.6 The emerging 'Belfast Agenda' refresh (new tourism targets tbc) notes the importance of Belfast being a 'culturally vibrant' city which the Tourism Plan is a significant contributor to with cross cutting priorities of *Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty and Sustainable and Economic Growth*.

3.7 The Draft Economic Strategy for Belfast identifies an increase the value of Tourism in Belfast from £417 million in 2019 to £800 million by 2030. Belfast is the gateway to tourism in Northern Ireland and generates 40% of the region's tourism spend. The current challenge is the need to develop a greater range of quality tourism products that will attract more visitors and encourage them to stay for longer.

### 3.8 Tourism Recovery

As NI recovers from impact of Covid-19 on tourism with the aim to build back to pre-pandemic levels by 2024, Belfast as the regional driver will be hugely significant to this growth ambition, both in terms of visitor spend and the creation of new jobs. It is therefore imperative that our city break destination is developed in a strategic way which maximises the economic benefits that can be derived from tourism for local businesses and communities, as well as increasing visitor numbers and spend and improving overall satisfaction levels. While full year statistics for 2022 - 23 are not yet confirmed, recovery has been stronger than expected including for example - 1.3m hotel rooms sold: 93% of 2019 levels and hotel revenue 19% above 2019 levels; 141 cruise ships welcoming 250,000 cruise visitors came to Belfast: 91% of 2019 levels; 95 conferences attracting 30,711 delegates generating over 103,000 bed nights.

### 3.9 10 - Year Plan

The *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan sets out a vision for the future of tourism in the city that is centred on a people-based and sustainable model of development with a focus on:

- Increasing the coherency of the Belfast experience
- Supporting quality authentic products
- Developing skills
- Strengthening the city's position through marketing and communications

### 3.10 The approach

The past two decades have given rise to a number of trends within tourism development. This has included the popularity of approaches such as cultural tourism, green tourism or local tourism. What each of these approaches and associated models have in common is an increasing awareness that sustainable forms of tourism must respect the local context and support the economic, social, environmental and cultural values of a place.

3.11 In the context of Belfast, even before COVID-19, this is a complex proposition. The city requires further growth with a clear international agenda and need to continue to attract and grow out of state visitors. The Tourism Plan seeks to set out how this growth can be achieved in a responsible and inclusive way recognising that the city's greatest asset is its people.

3.12 The plan sets out a shared vision for tourism in the city and is supported by 4 strategic themes and three of catalyst projects. The strategic themes are:

- Grow Belfast
- Experience Belfast
- Position Belfast
- Sustainable Belfast

### 3.13 Strategic Themes

#### *Strategic theme 1: Grow Belfast*

*Make Yourself at Home* identifies the role of tourism in city recovery including the need for stabilisation of the tourism sector and the requirement for further growth in Belfast. This includes:

- Strategic context and evidence-based proposition that Belfast acts as a catalyst for the region.
- Measurement of the attractiveness of the city as a destination and how this plays a key role in maximising the economic impact of each visitor by increasing average length of stay and daily spending levels.

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- Priority areas for investment e.g., catalyst projects.
- Introducing social, cultural and environmental measures to better understand and advocate for the true value of responsible tourism growth.

**3.14 As part of the Year 1 Action Plan for Make Yourself at Home, the following has been delivered against the theme of *Grow Belfast*:**

- Management of Visit Belfast contract in respect of marketing, destination management and visitor servicing - to deliver on increased visitor numbers staying longer and spending more, thereby supporting tourism jobs in Belfast.
- Delivery of Conference Subvention Programme to assist in winning conferences and business events for Belfast.
- Delivery of an Accessible Tourism Programme to improve the visitor experience and value of the 'purple pound'. This focused on a programme of education and training including an engagement session with 40 businesses (Visit Belfast) members, a 'Living Library' training session for businesses to learn from people with disabilities and a series of 'Be Communication Confident' training videos for tourism / events organisations to access at own pace and in own time.
- Implementation of Food and Drink Tourism plan to increase associated spend and improve experience, while strengthening Belfast's position as a food and drink destination - therefore supporting the sector to be sustainable and economically viable. A Food and Drink Network Committee has been established including cross-sectoral representation within the city. The first year of the Action Plan has been delivered and has focused on 'Focus on Food' conference which attracted 260 delegates and included a producer zone, keynote speakers (including food columnist for The Guardian, Grace Dent), positioning exercise, audit of photography and finally an audit of Council assets with regard to public-facing Council-managed assets. Funding was also secured in-year from Tourism NI and DAERA to uplift Council budget and associated activity.
- Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI) application resulting in elevation of Belfast as a business events destination to 8th position in the world - ensuring Belfast is globally competitive in securing conferences and business events for Belfast,

resulting in associated economic benefit / sectoral support.

- Ongoing scoping of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme to support development of cultural tourism products, which promote enhanced visitor footfall, dwell time and spend across the city's neighbourhoods and extend tourism's economic benefits to communities throughout the city.

**3.15 Strategic Theme 2: Position Belfast**

*Make Yourself at Home* sets out a dynamic model for city positioning that strengthens Belfast's role as the gateway to the region in a way that responds to key markets including:

- Business Tourism and sub-sectors within this group.
- Leisure tourism target markets including - geographic considerations and the visitor journey.
- This theme also takes forward a new approach that pushes beyond traditional marketing methods towards enabling the people creating the Belfast experience to tell their story.

**3.16 As part of the Year 1 Action Plan for Make Yourself at Home, the following has been delivered against the theme of *Position Belfast*:**

- Ongoing work with Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to ensure Belfast is positioned as a Gateway to Northern Ireland and a must-see urban destination on the island of Ireland by capturing GB and ROI city break market and attracting greater share of Out of State visitors to Ireland- primarily through contract management of Visit Belfast.
- Through Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme scoping activity - supporting the work of Belfast Stories in supporting organisations to tell the key stories.

**3.17 Strategic theme 3: Experience**

- *Make Yourself at Home* identifies the importance of experiential priorities including:
- Experiences that can be brought to life through the development of an optimal mix of 'anchor' and ancillary products that get people into an area and keep them there.
- Encouraging international visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interacting with

people, engaging the senses and learning the history and stories of the places.

- prioritises delivering immersive moments that inspire tourists not only to share their experience with others but also make them want to return to the city.

**3.18** As part of the Year 1 Action Plan for Make Yourself at Home, the following has been delivered against the theme of *Experience Belfast*.

- Working with the industry to encourage the development and delivery of quality visitor experiences including securing Tourism NI product development funding for new products such as Ceili at the Castle, Music Tours and music workshops.
- Ongoing scoping of Neighbourhood Tourism Programme - working towards aim of increased footfall, dwell time and spend in neighbourhoods with associated economic and employability benefits.
- Ongoing scoping of enhancement of the visitor experience at Council-owned assets including Belfast Zoo, Belfast Castle, Tropical Ravine, City Cemeteries, Malone House and City Hall to ensure an action plan is developed for future implementation which creates synergy with the city's 'Belfast brand' and Tourism NI 'Embrace A Giant Spirit' brand to deliver on experiential tourism.

The Tourism Plan identified the need for improvements in connectivity and accessibility through signage, wayfinding and interpretation which requires a scoping exercise to be undertaken, subject to budget approval in Year 2.

**3.19** *Strategic theme 4: Sustain Belfast*

Members will be aware that Belfast signed up to this benchmarking following Committee approval in August 2020. The Global Destination Sustainability Index is the world's leading benchmarking and performance Index for cities, their events and their visitor economy. Its purpose is to engage, enable and inspire cities to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in. In addition to benchmarking a city's environmental strategy and social sustainability performance, the GDS-Index assess criteria that are industry specific: industry supplier support (restaurants, hotels, conference centres) and convention bureau strategy and initiatives.

**3.20** Since 2019, over 60 cities have started the process of benchmarking and assessment. The goal is to have 300 cities

collaborating by 2023. The Index is based on 69 Indicators broken down into four categories:

- City Environmental Performance
- City Social Performance
- Supplier Performance
- Destination Management Performance

3.21 Belfast has now completed a third year of benchmarking resulting in significant improvement taking our place within top 20 cities. A series of related recommendations are included in *Make Yourself at Home*. A number of these relate to Visit Belfast's role as the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and Visit Belfast have already made significant progress in implementing these as part of their current funding agreement with a commitment to build on this on a multi-annual basis.

3.22 As part of the Year 1 Action Plan for *Make Yourself at Home*, the following has been delivered against the theme of *Sustain Belfast*.

- Ongoing work with Visit Belfast on Global Sustainability Index and Tourism NI on regenerative tourism - improvement to 8<sup>th</sup> position in the world.
- Green Tourism Certification - working with the industry to increase their sustainability credentials which has resulted in 80% of hotel rooms in Belfast being accredited, ongoing work with a range of tourism providers to gain bronze or move upwards to silver certification and working on a cruise sustainability plan for Belfast.
- Working with key stakeholders such as Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to ensure that sustainability is embedded in tourism products and events across the city.
- Sustainability fully integrated in all tourism / event planning.

## 2.23 Catalyst Projects

All four of these strategic themes are underpinned by the need to support inclusive economic growth and to differentiate the Belfast offer in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. A fifth strand to the plan considers key strategic opportunities that could bolster investment in the sector in order to support recovery and future growth. These are catalyst or accelerator projects and are outlined below.

**3.24 Catalyst Project 1: Our Place – support for local tourism**

The Neighbourhood Tourism Framework is under-way and will be brought to Committee in June 2023 for approval. The Tourism Team also continue to work with colleagues across Council to ensure targeted investment in tourism through the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

**3.25 Catalyst 2: Make Yourself at Home**

Strategic and operational planning is ongoing for the delivery of the One Young World event in October 2023. Other major bid-for events have been progressed during the financial year 2022 / 2023 including the Fleadh Cheoil and the European Football Championships in 2028 with a decision due in September 2023). Work also continues across the tourism, culture and events team to prepare for Year of Culture in 2024. A detailed report will be brought to committee in June regarding 2024 and next steps and lessons learnt regarding our bid to host the Fleadh Cheoil.

**3.26 Catalyst Project 3: Our Stories**

The Tourism and Events Teams continue to work with colleagues in Belfast Stories to connect to local tourism product development and infrastructure through a hub and spoke model. Importantly the Hub will be an exemplar for responsible and sustainable tourism demonstrating the principles set out in the ten-year plan. Through the focus on Belfast Stories, the project will also be transformative for the positioning of the city. The development programme for this project as part of BRCD is fully aligned to this tourism plan with cross-cutting priorities and synergies.

**3.27 Implementation**

The ongoing success of the Tourism Plan requires ongoing review and delivery. To support this a number of key early actions have been identified for action in Year 2:

- Setting up of proposed governance and partnership model to drive the implementation of *Make Yourself at Home*.
- Scoping short and long-term investment priorities and financing strategy including tailored action plans to address areas of priority.

3.28 Appendix 1 sets out priority actions for Year 2 of the *Make Yourself at Home* Tourism Plan.

3.29 City Connections

In particular, Members will be aware that for the past number of years Council has supported two specific organisations (Fáilte Feirste Thiar in West Belfast and EastSide Tourism in East Belfast) to deliver a City Connections programme. It is proposed City Connections is replaced by the new Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme which will be open to organisations from across the city. In order to support transition and given that the new programme will not be operational until later in the year it is proposed that £25,000 each (50% of previous annual investment) is allocated to these organisations. If approved this will be sourced from existing organisational budgets.

3.30 City Events

Members will be aware that significant work has taken place in recent years to realign City Events with Council's wider cultural and tourism ambitions. This has included a renewed focus on working in partnership and developing programmes that support the local cultural sector and represent an authentic Belfast Experience.

3.31 Included in Appendix 1 are the proposed events for 2023/24. Further detail on approach and programmes will be presented to Committee at relevant points throughout the year. Members will note that there are currently no plans to deliver Halloween in 2023. It is proposed that this event is reviewed in line with the development work that has taken place on other events. This should include options for city events to represent greater cultural diversity within the city and how a partnership model could be developed. An update will be presented in due course.

3.32 In approving the 2023-2024 programme, including ad hoc events, Committee is also asked to approve officers to enter into any license agreements or SLAs required for the successful delivery of these events.

3.33 Eurovision

Members are asked to consider 2 Royal Avenue potentially hosting a ticketed live showing of the EUROVISION final. The event itself would feature compere / live performances, screens / PA, Stage and Lighting Contractor. The venue could

have an approximate capacity of 250-300 depending on final layout. It is expected that organising and hosting the event would come at a cost of approximately £7,500 which would be found from existing departmental budgets.

**3.34 Lord Mayor's Day**

Lord Mayor's Day will take place on Saturday 22 April 12-5pm in the grounds of Belfast City Hall, with satellite activity in 2 Royal Avenue. The free, all-ages event includes live music, dance, aerial circus and street theatre performances, have a go multi-sports activity, make your own multi-cultural arts and crafts, Carnival games stalls, drop-in circus workshops, creative writing activities, and Age Friendly Belfast activities. The theme for 2023 is 'Celebrating Belfast'. The event budget is £42k which is sourced from existing departmental budgets.

**3.35 Financial & Resource Implications**

There are currently no immediate new financial implications to this report. Appendix 1 sets out a breakdown of budget against programmes of work to be allocated from existing departmental budgets. Further detail on proposals for investment in local tourism will be presented to Committee in due course.

**3.36 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). A specific screening has been carried out on this associated tourism plan and was included as part of the consultation exercise. Mitigating actions have been considered as part of the implementation plans. Catalyst projects such as Belfast Stories will be subject to a separate Equality Impact Assessment. It is also anticipated that should any investment programmes emerge from this plan these will be subject to further equality screening.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development, in response to a Member's question, advised that a report would be submitted to the Committee in June to provide an update on the development of Neighbourhood and Local Tourism across the city.

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After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and approved the Year 2 Action Plan, as detailed, including the priorities as set out at Appendix 1 which included the associated budgets;
- Noted the outline plan for the Lord Mayors Days;
- Approved the interim funding of £25,000 each to Fáilte Feirste Thiar and Eastside Tourism from existing organisational budgets;
- Approved the hosting of a EUROVISION viewing event in 2 Royal Avenue to be funded from existing budgets; and
- Noted that a report would be submitted to the Committee in June to provide an update on the development of Neighbourhood/Local Tourism.

### **Update on Music Strategy**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’ including its corresponding priorities. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress to date and seek approval to the allocation of funding to a number of important strands of the music strategy.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the contents of this report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’**
- **Approve the allocation of £20,000 towards the Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues**
- **Approve the allocation of £50,000 for the creation of a digital music support service and marketing channels**
- **Approve the allocation of £30,000 towards the development of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24.**

#### **3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the final ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’. These**

Mirroring the A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are a number of actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector.

- **Theme 1**: Place artists at the heart - Recognising the value of creators
- **Theme 2**: Nurture the sector - Strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators
- **Theme 3**: Ignite the live experience - Liberating the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth
- **Theme 4**: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO - Sharing the gift of music with the people of Belfast

### **3.2 Update on Music Board**

The Music Strategy sets out governance recommendations for Belfast Music, including the formation of a Belfast Region Music Board, comprising between 15 and 20 members, to bring to life the UNESCO City of Music designation.

The board will help to embed music in all communities across the city to make music a sustainable career option for creators and people who support them. Following agreement of the full Music Strategy in December 2022, an open call was launched for applications to join the Belfast Region Music Board with applications closing in February 2023.

A total of 60 applications were received from across a range of disciplines. After an extensive shortlisting and scoring process, 18 board members have been selected to participate on the board. After preliminary shortlisting by the Culture Team, with final selection was decided on with a wider panel including external moderation from key partners in the Music Strategy, namely the British Council NI and Thrive NI.

Following the appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair at the inaugural meeting in early April, the board will begin work to review and agree the remaining implementation plan for 23/24. This full implementation plan and corresponding budgets will be presented to members in June 2023.

### **3.3 Support for Venues**

Theme 3 of the Music Strategy has a focus on supporting venues, with priority 9.5 including a commitment to review

current support for venues to upgrade the quality of their event spaces and equipment. As a key stakeholder in the strategy, officials from the Culture Team have been in discussions with the Music Venue Trust, a UK registered charity which acts to protect, secure and improve Grassroots Music Venues, to explore opportunities to enhance support for venues in Belfast.

In 2022, the Music Venue Trust established the Pipeline Investment Fund (PIF), a new grant-giving fund to support venues. PIF is open for small-scale grant applications (up to £5,000) from UK-based grassroots music venues to support two areas of work:

- Small-scale capital applications; including lights, sound, access, ventilation and minor building alterations
- Staff & training; diversifying your workforce, succession planning, skills development, and strengthening local community ties

The fund will prioritise support for organisations who may be excluded from other available funding and PIF is open to all venue operators and organisations that meet any of the three definitions of a Grassroots Music Space, namely Grassroots Music Pub (GMP), Grassroots Music & Arts Space (GMAS) and Grassroots Music Venues (GMVs).

- 3.4 To expand upon the scheme's success in England, it is proposed to allocate £20,000 and work in conjunction with the Music Venue Trust to run a programme specifically targeted at venues in Belfast. This funding, which will support a minimum of four venues, will be administered through the Music Venue Trust PIF process with scoring and final decisions made via a panel consisting of MVT staff and Belfast City Council. This initial pilot programme will be reviewed in-year to assess the impact of this programme, with a view to potentially expanding this work to support more venues.

3.5 **Communications and website**

The draft roadmap was published in the wake of Belfast being named a UNESCO City of Music, wherein six core commitments were set out for the City to deliver upon One of these – a local initiative – was the commitment to 'launch a dedicated music support service' providing professional development, networking and music entrepreneurship advice, reaching 1500+ musicians and music businesses annually

**3.6 Theme one of the Music Strategy has a focus on exploring and developing professional development opportunities to educate and equip music creators with the critical knowledge, contacts, and tools for building a sustainable career within the sector. The Belfast music roadmap sets out a number of recommendations for action, several of which an online platform can help to deliver. These include:**

- **2.1: Develop a Music Support Service (initially a digital space/website) which will act as a point of contact for all questions arising from within the music community (new, emerging and tipping point artists), deliver and promote educational and development opportunities, and facilitate connections amongst and beyond individuals and organisations working within the music sector.**
- **7.2: Create a one-stop-shop online Music Directory to promote and connect all facets of the music business and those working in it.**
- **14.1: Create a one-stop listing service for venues, organisations and the hospitality sector to promote their music activity to the city's locals and visitors**

**3.7 It is envisaged that an online presence will**

- **provide a wealth of information for creators and professionals, from membership associations and charities offering health support to the latest news, views and events relating to the development of NI's music sector.**
- **Hosts a Directory, allowing individuals and organisations to find each other for mutual support and engagement.**
- **Provide a monthly newsletter**
- **Become the go-to place for future consultations, charters, or Council resources, complementing and amplifying related information on the Council's website.**
- **Be used to host the toolkits outlined in recommendations 7.4 (sponsorship toolkit) and 12.2 (green toolkit).**

**3.8 To begin the development of this online platform, it is proposed to allocate £50,000 toward the creation of a digital space, website and the continuation of a dedicated Belfast Music social media channels.**

### 3.9 Music Industry Mentoring Programme

Point 6.1 within Theme One of the Music Matters strategy recommends investment in *'the delivery of a specially designed mentoring programme for individuals working in music, including continued professional development for senior or experienced individuals working in music'*

The public Consultation for the Music Matters roadmap stressed the importance of developing the infrastructure around the music creators of our city by addressing skill gaps and providing opportunities for knowledge and mentoring. It is proposed that a tender will be created to invite interested parties to design a short course of training and mentoring for individuals currently working or considering working in areas such as the following:

- Agents
- Managers
- Labels
- Marketing & PR

The course must be able to upskill participants to be able to provide greater support to the wider music community in these currently under-developed areas of the sector. It is proposed to allocate £30,000 towards the development of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24.

### 3.10 Output Conference Update

Established in 2016, Output Belfast has earned its reputation over the last 6 years as Ireland's biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the conference will take place on 1st June 2023 and feature a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Activity includes music and creative digital showcasing and networking events, business development panels and workshops and meetings and networking with key international creative digital companies,

3.11 As part of our commitment to priority 2.5 within the music strategy, which reads 'Develop regular music business touchpoints throughout the year using existing conferences to offer more regular but bitesize opportunities for micro learning', we have increased elements of the Output Conference activities for 2023 to ensure that there is a day

taking place after the main conference that is focused on community engagement and networking. It will capture the incoming industry delegates the day following the conference for engagement in 1-1s / speed-networking while other activities will be planned throughout the day.

**3.12 Update on City of Music Industry Sessions**

Theme one of the Music Strategy focuses on the development of musicians, including action point 2.4 which seeks to 'provide opportunities via events and programmes to provide regular access to professional associations in music to deepen existing relationships and create new ones'.

To build towards this wider goal of increasing networking and knowledge of the local sector, officials have developed the City of Music Industry Sessions, a series of free monthly information sessions for the local music community. Hosted in 2 Royal Avenue, this series features panel discussions and advice from experts across a range of disciplines, preceded by networking opportunities and advice clinics hosted by the Culture Team. Each event will offer learning opportunities for both the music creators and music industry personnel to ensure development of both in tandem. The first event, which focused on how to get tracks played on radio as well as how to access careers in this field, took place on 21st March with 35 industry professionals in attendance to receive advice from featured experts from BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio Ulster.

- 3.13** Six more sessions are planned for the coming months, including more informal networking sessions prior to the panel discussions. Officials are engaging with colleagues in Enterprise and Business Growth and other teams across Council to ensure alignment with other support packages provided across Council and explore opportunities to add further value to the industry sessions through advice clinics in relevant industry areas.

**3.14 UNESCO City of Music Opportunities**

Relationships with other cities within the UNESCO City of Music network continue to be developed through attendance at UCoM cluster meetings. Learning from strategies employed by these cities has allowed the Culture Team fresh insights into best use of the Music Matters roadmap as well as support on achieving UNESCO aims

Opportunities for the Belfast music community continue to be developed through the network. An agreement with the city of

**Hannover, Germany, will see an exchange of music industry personnel between the cities to provide skill and network development for those involved. This exchange will begin in early June as representatives from Hannover come to Belfast to engage with the Belfast music community during the Output Conference, in which they will actively participate.**

**An exchange is being arranged with UCoM City London, Canada, that will begin in July 2023. This opportunity will allow for two folk-music artists to be provided with attendance at a song-writing camp, two pre-festival performances, one main-stage performance at Home County Music and Art Festival, as well as music industry 1-1 meetings across Ontario with agents, bookers and other personnel that will benefit the Belfast artists. Priority 2.2 within Theme 1 of the Music Matters strategy relates to sourcing performance opportunities for Belfast music creators to perform internationally and the UCoM Network will benefit the fulfilment of this goal.**

**3.15 Financial and Resource Implications**

- **Approve the allocation of £20,000 towards the Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues**
- **Approve the allocation of £50,000 for the creation of a digital music support service and marketing channels**
- **Approve the allocation of £30,000 towards the development of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24.**

**These costs are to be met from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development.**

**3.16 Equality & Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

**This music strategy is part of the overarching cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA. An equality screening has been completed and mitigating actions will be considered as part of any initiatives.”**

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development stated that the Belfast Region Music Board Members were currently being appointed and further details would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

The Committee:

- **Noted the contents of the report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast”;**

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- Approved the allocation of £20,000 towards the Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues;
- Approved the allocation of £50,000 for the creation of a digital music support service and marketing channels; and
- Approved the allocation of £30,000 towards the development and delivery of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24.

**Update on Dublin - Belfast Economic Corridor**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th August, 2022, it had received an update on the progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), including work on the strategy and action plan. Since that meeting, the strategy had now been completed and agreed by all of the DBEC partners. It articulated a vision to sustainable economic growth across the region, identifying areas of focus for the partnership to address future opportunities and seeking to address any gaps in existing provision.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the vision of the strategy was to become a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative Research and Development, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. This included an ambition to be world renowned as a major international centre in growth sectors such as Professional Services, Advanced Manufacturing, ICT and Life and Health Sciences.

He highlighted that the strategy articulated a number of strategic objectives for the partnership, which included;

- Increased skills and training to meet the labour requirements of the region, building on and expanding the existing workforce;
- Advocated for cross-border infrastructure to strengthen connectivity and access to markets and labour;
- Enhanced cross-border collaboration in Research and Development and Innovation, targeting investment in high growth sectors and the green economy;
- Promoted sustainable and climate-conscious growth along the corridor, aligned with councils' development plans and wider policy objectives;
- Aligned with and supported economic development partners to increase trade and investment along the corridor; and
- Marketed the region and elevated the DBEC brand so that the region becomes globally renowned as an attractive place to live and do business.

He stated that the action plan outlined key pillars to support effective delivery, including ways of working, governance and resourcing, and communication and marketing. Priority actions identified across the short and medium term included:

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- Undertaking further stakeholder engagement and developing a coherent marketing and communications strategy in line with the strategic objectives;
- Progressing the Shared Island feasibility study around sectoral Innovation Hubs along the corridor, with the aim of preparing an application for external funding by Quarter 4 2023. In parallel with circular economy activities at Belfast City Council and Dublin City Council, gathering insights on circular economy initiatives along the corridor;
- Identification and preparatory scoping for relevant external funding opportunities, including Peace Plus and Shared Island;
- Undertaking research on existing skills strategies and enterprise plans and identifying key barriers to skills development with the aim of developing a clear skills policy and strategy; and
- Mapping of key assets along the corridor with development potential and highlighting infrastructure gaps.

He advised that, as part of the governance structure for the partnership, the DBEC political advisory group continued to meet. There were 24 councillors who made up a Political Advisory Group (3 nominees from each council area), with the Council nominees being Alderman Dorrian and Councillors Beattie and Hanvey.

***Shared Island Fund***

The Director of Economic Development reported that, in order to bring forward collaborative activities aligned with the strategic priorities set out in the plan, a number of applications for funding were submitted to the Irish Government's Shared Island Initiative in late 2022.

The DBEC partners were successful in attracting financial support of €150,000 to carry out a feasibility assessment on the development of a network of regional innovation hubs across the corridor region. These locations would support current or emerging business clusters in particular locations, to the benefit of the entire region. He advised that the project would look at pairing up locations based on sectoral strengths and clusters, such as Fintech in Dublin and Belfast.

The Director of Economic Development stated that the proposal also incorporated an ambition identified by the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission to support growth sectors such as Fintech and capitalise on linkages with cities such as Dublin.

He highlighted that a procurement exercise was underway to secure external advisory support for this work. It was being led by Fingal County Council and Belfast City Council officers would participate in a project steering group. A preferred bidder had been selected and it was expected that this project would commence in the first week of March 2023.

He pointed out that, in addition, Dublin and Belfast City Council were awarded €250,000 to carry out major feasibility research on capital projects to support the circular economy. Opportunities to develop the sector within the context of the Dublin Belfast

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Corridor would be considered as part of this work, although the primary focus was on the cities of Dublin and Belfast. There had been extensive work with colleagues from both councils preparing the terms of reference for technical support, with Dublin City Council as lead partner. This tender was issued through a procurement framework following guidance from the Office of Government Procurement in Dublin. The Tender was currently open and would close on 20 March 2023. The partners continued to monitor and review opportunities for further funding from the Shared Island Unit. Officials from the Unit made a presentation on live and pending opportunities to the Political Advisory Group meeting in January. The partnership was also monitoring relevant opportunities for funding under Peace Plus.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor partnership.

**Cultural Work Programme 23-24**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current status of the ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* and seek approval for key actions in 2023/24 aligned to the implementation of year 4 of the strategy.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the contents of this report and progress against the delivery of the cultural strategy priorities.**
- **Agree the actions for 2023/24 as set out in the report and in appendix 1 including the budget implications at 3.19 to be met from existing departmental budgets.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in August 2019 the final ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast *A City Imagining* was agreed. This included draft implementation plans for a three-year period to be reviewed and finalised on an annual basis.**

**3.2 Despite the challenges of Covid-19, significant progress has been made in delivery against strategic targets in the first three years of the strategy. In 2022/23 this work included:**

- **£3.08m funding through 117 awards via the following schemes:**

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- **Cultural multi-annual funding including support for Arts/ Heritage organisations and Festivals/Events – 51 organisations supported**
- **Four Pathfinder awards for organisations not in receipt of core public sector support**
- **21 Community Festivals Fund in partnership with DfC**
- **22 organisations supported through Arts and Heritage small grants**
- **Five Access and Inclusion grants in partnership with DfC**
- **8 organisations supported through Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants**
- **19 individual artists supported through the Micro-Grant Programme for Creative Practitioners**
- **Creative Bursaries for 10 individuals**
- **6 partnerships with key sectoral organisations**
- **A partnership with Theatre and Dance NI, including funding for 7 recipients, across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector, as part of the first ever INVEST programme**
- **Partnership with Craft NI to develop Craft NI Gallery including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 19 Belfast events for Craft Month**
- **A partnership with Thrive NI to continue the Audience Panel, representing 200 members, and provide tailored advice to embedding people-led approaches within cultural organisations**
- **A partnership with Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to deliver Open Heritage Belfast and other events, advocacy, advice & support.**
- **Investment and delivery against the Creative Communities programme as part of Peace IV.**
- **Delivery against the Extended Cultural Programme including creative commissions to four organisations**
- **Strategic Delivery Body for Festival 2022 including delivery of Our Place in Space and support for four additional projects**
- **Development, consultation and publication of the music strategy**
- **Delivery of the Belfast Canvass Project and city animation projects across 30 sites across the city**
- **Continue with support to increase participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people through initiatives such as the Gig Buddies programme and a new partnership with the University of Atypical**

Year 4 of the strategy will seek to combine cultural recovery with renewal in line with the commitments and priorities set out in *A City Imagining*.

**3.3 Investing in the cultural sector**

At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration in February 2022 recommendations for core-multi annual funding were agreed providing support to 42 organisations for two years as well as continuation of four-year scheme that supports a further 13 organisations. This funding amounts to £2,430,010. A further £79,768 was agreed in relation to *Pathfinder* development funding for four organisations.

The Culture Team also runs a series of small grants (project funding) including the community festivals fund, including £133,244 for Arts and Heritage Projects and £69,000 (plus, DfC match funding) for Community Festivals.

**3.4 Review of CMAG**

Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG) are now in the fourth and final year of its first cycle. During this time, the council administered two rounds of two-year funding (2019/20–20/21 and 2021/22–22/23) and one round of four-year funding (2019/20–22/23). As part of the evaluation framework for CMAG, it was agreed there should be a summative evaluation of both the monitoring and evaluation process and programme impact carried out by an independent evaluator. The first cycle of CMAG coincided with a period of unprecedented change in the operating environment, including the Covid-19 pandemic, which seriously limited the ability of festivals, events and cultural sectors to deliver activities and outcomes that would contribute to the overall impact of CMAG and the Investment Programme.

3.5 Due to the challenges of the past four years, it is recommended that the evaluation focuses primarily on a process review, exploring what worked well and what could be improved. This review will be completed by May 2023, with a report and recommendations on the future of CMAG presented to Committee in June 2023.

**3.6 Artist Studio and Creative Workspaces**

In addition to these established funding schemes, the cultural strategy committed to a broader investment model that considered the diversity of the city's cultural landscape.

In response to detailed consultation with the sector, Committee agreed in February 2022 to bring forward a specific funding programme for studios and artist-led organisations. Following an extensive grants process, 8 organisations received combined support of £100,000 through the Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2022/23. This support contributed to a range of organisational needs, including research work to locate/secure long-term accessible accommodation, infrastructural improvements, the development of new organisational strategies, development training and audience development. To respond to the continued need within the sector, it is proposed to continue this funding in 23/24 through a similar grant process starting in April, with final allocations presented to members in June 2023.

- 3.7 In addition to the funding for artist studios, members agreed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast. This research study, which will explore the current and future requirements of artist workspaces in Belfast, is led by Turley Communications and will involve extensive consultation with the sector, benchmarking and policy recommendations. To ensure alignment with other statutory partners, council officials have been working closely with the Arts Council NI in the development of this review. It is envisaged that the scope of this work will inform a set of robust action focused recommendations that could be implemented on a phased basis. The final report and recommendations will be brought to Committee in June 2023.

3.8 **Sectoral Development and Partnerships**

In addition to funding, Belfast City Council fulfils an important role in leading and supporting sectoral development initiatives. In 2022/23, this included a range of strategic partnerships with Arts and Business, Craft NI, Theatre and Dance NI, Thrive NI, the Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society and the University of Atypical.

- 3.9 Through the partnership with Arts and Business, Belfast City Council supports Blueprint for the Future – a financial resilience programme which supports a network of arts and cultural organisations to encourage income growth and long-term financial stability. Belfast City Council has engaged with partners throughout the development phase and significant progress has been made in securing additional resource to grow the programme. In March 23, it was announced that 17 Northern Ireland arts organisations will receive over £765,000 over the next two years from both public and private

fundings. Council support is £30,000 per year amounting to 10% of total project costs and it is recommended that this level of funding is maintained in year three of the programme.

- 3.10** In response to the needs of the theatre and dance sector, Council developed a partnership with Theatre and Dance NI to launch the first ever Invest Programme throughout 2022. This programme included bursaries for seven recipients across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector and is designed to support, upskill and help create the next generation of inclusive artists to lead Northern Ireland's theatre and dance sectors. It is proposed to continue this programme for a second year.
- 3.11** Through its partnership with Craft NI, support from Belfast City Council resulted in 20 events as part of August Craft Month. Craft NI have continued to expand their Craft Gallery based in Royal Avenue, with council support including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 52 makers. It is proposed to continue this work to develop the Gallery to enable more Belfast makers to sell their products in Belfast city centre.
- 3.12** Through a partnership with Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society, support resulted in the delivery of Open Heritage Belfast and other advice & support to the heritage sector. It is proposed to continue this work. With a view to developing a heritage plan, officials conducted a quotation process to commission a Heritage Audit and Roadmap for Development in January 2023. However, no suppliers reached the required threshold to begin this work and a new enhanced quotation will be issued in April 2023. A report and recommendations presented to the Committee in Autumn 2023.
- 3.13** Further wraparound support programmes
- In addition to these bespoke programmes, Council officers will continue to engage with the sector and respond to challenges and opportunities throughout the year. This wraparound support will be provided to all organisations in receipt of funding. In addition, leadership mentoring will be offered working with external specialists. Advice, training and capacity building will also be provided to organisations who have been unsuccessful in securing Council funding.
- 3.14** Through its sector support programme, Council operates a number of sectoral Forums, namely Belfast Festivals Forum and Belfast Visual Arts Forum. Priority 15 of *A City Imagining* has an emphasis on encouraging environmental

responsibility and the role of culture in changing behaviours. To help build towards this goal, foster greater collaboration and encourage best practice in the sector, its proposed to establish a Green Arts Forum, in partnership with other statutory and community stakeholders, to promote and develop sustainability practice in the cultural sector.

**3.15 Cultural Participation and Engagement**

The cultural strategy made a commitment to publishing an annual report in order to demonstrate the impact of cultural development on the city's wider agenda. Officials are engaging with the culture department within Queen's University, Belfast to explore partnership working in evaluating the 10-year cultural strategy including investment programmes and impact. Officials are also currently reviewing best practice from other cities to assess the impact of appropriate measurements and data. An update and recommendations will be presented to members in Autumn 2023.

**3.16** As well as sectoral support for culture, arts, heritage and events, Council also delivers initiatives designed to increase accessibility and cultural participation. Members will be aware the Council has commissioned a report regarding LGBTQIA+ visibility and representation in Belfast's Culture, Arts and Heritage. Officials have received a draft copy of the report and recommendations and the proposed action plan will be presented to members in June 2023. A similar report on minority ethnic representation has been issued to market, with a report and recommendations to be presented to Committee in Autumn 2023.

**3.17** The Cultural Strategy also contained a commitment to complete an accessibility audit of cultural venues to publish accurate access information on an online platform. Through its partnership with the University of Atypical, social narrative videos have been produced for seven key venues in the city to provide key information for audiences with a disability. In addition, University of Atypical delivered training for twenty disability champions and supported organisations to enhance their Equality, Access and Inclusion offer to d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse audience members. It is recommended to continue this partnership, supporting eight new venues, creating an additional 20 disability champions and increase the number of organisations who can access this support.

**3.18** In addition, it is proposed to progress the development of an equality, access and inclusion 'kitemark' accreditation for arts

events taking place during Belfast 2024. This accreditation could apply to events taking place in non-arts venues and would demonstrate that the events have been independently assessed as achieving a good standard of equality, access and inclusion. UofA plan to develop the 'EASIMark' accreditation process starting from March 2023, field test this in from August 2023 onwards, and with the scheme being fully operational from January 2024 to coincide with the launch of Belfast 2024.

### **3.19 Financial & Resource Implications**

There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2023/24 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals. A breakdown of specific areas of spend are included in Appendix 1.

### **3.20 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.”

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of this report and progress against the delivery of the cultural strategy priorities; and
- Agreed the actions for 2023/24 as set out in the report and appendix 1 (copy available [here](#)) including the budget implications at 3.19 to be met from existing departmental budgets.

## **Strategic and Operational Issues**

### **Committee Plan 2023-24 and End of Year Report 2022-23**

The Committee was provided with an end of year progress update ([Appendix 1](#)) on the key actions contained in the 2022-23 which Committee Plan, as agreed by the Committee in June 2021, together with the draft Committee Plan for 2023-24 ([Appendix 2](#)).

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that the 2022-23 Committee Plan End of Year Report (EOYR) and the draft Plan for 2023-24 were both developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda, in particular taking into account the emerging work underway with the Belfast Agenda Refresh. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contained the commitments within the

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Corporate Delivery Plan, which fell under the remit of this Committee, plus additional deliverables that had been agreed by the Committee throughout the 22/23 period and were relevant to the Standing Orders. She reported that the Plan outlined the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee was overseeing to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda.

***Committee Plan 2022-23 End of Year Report***

The Director of City Regeneration and Development pointed out that, while the Committee had received regular updates on progress for specific programmes and initiatives, Appendix 1 set out an overview of progress against the main commitments in the Committee Plan 2022-2023. She explained that the End of Year Report focussed on the second half of the financial year as members had already received a six-monthly update at December 2022's committee.

She informed the Committee that highlights from the EOYR included:

- The Council had improved its Global Destination Sustainability Index rating to 8th out of 65 other cities across the world. 80% of Belfast Hotel Rooms were now Green Tourism Certified;
- Belfast was named the world's best conference destination for a 2nd consecutive year;
- £17m had been secured for an 11-council Entrepreneurship Support Service;
- The Council had engaged with 755 individuals, supporting them to progress to start a business;
- 60 Social Enterprises and Co-operatives had received one-to-one mentoring, advice and guidance; four were new co-operatives; and 25 events/ workshops were delivered with over 300 attendees;
- The £50,000 Social Economy Incentive Fund was launched in September 2022 to support social economy businesses business growth plans;
- The Council had won 'Council of the Year' at the Social Enterprise Northern Ireland Awards in October 2022;
- The Belfast-Dublin strategy and action plan had been finalised. This helped a successful joint application with Dublin City Council to the Shared Island Fund for a €250,000 award to conduct a feasibility study on circular economy facilities in both cities;
- By the end of Quarter 3 the zoo had welcomed 184k visitors. This was 14k higher than the five year average;
- The assembly of the two remaining properties, for Belfast Stories, had been completed. The Council was in ownership of all properties at the site and the project was currently out to procurement for the Integrated Design Team;
- Since September, the GCSE support programme had engaged 281 young people. The Council were also supporting 170 young people through our Youth Support Programme. So far, 87 had completed accredited training and 65 were undertaking essential skills qualifications;

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- Since April 2022, the Council had had over 700 places on Employment Academies. On average, 93% of those who started an Employment Academy successfully completed, and for those, achieved an into-work rate of 75%;
- The Vacant-to-Vibrant Pilot Grant scheme was launched. To date, 32 applications had been supported by officers to develop their applications, with 6 of those already approved and a further two recommendations for approval at this Committee meeting;
- The emerging draft Bolder Vision Strategy had been approved by the Committee in August 2022 with work ongoing to finalise the Strategy and Action Plan with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Communities (DfC) and bring it forward.
- The Renewed Ambition Programme of work, to promote Belfast, was completed with local partners;
- The Council established new City Centre Governance structures including a Members City Centre Area Working Group to help to progress priorities and address issues;
- The Council commenced delivery of Public Realm Catalyst projects aligned to Developer Contributions including Great Victoria Street/Shafsbury Square area and Little York Street / Little Patrick Street.
- The Council delivered the majority of the £4.039m of the DfC Covid Revitalisation Programme with work ongoing to deliver the final two projects;
- DfI had provided the Council with a Letter of Offer to fund the “Grey to Green” programme in March 2023 (subject to capital approvals);
- The Southwest Quarter Revitalisation proposal had received a letter of offer of £250k from DfC;
- The Council had progressed its plans to improve active travel options for the city including Active Travel Enablers / covered cycle stores; secured cycle parking at Castle Court, the Active Travel Hub at QUB, the Cathedral Quarter Active Travel Hub, and three new Belfast Bikes stations;
- The Council finalised a number of Pre-Applications Discussions on the emerging Housing Led Regeneration sites, progressed Memorandum’s of Understanding with other public landowners, completed concept regeneration plans and had opened an Expression of Interest process to engage the investment and development market to bring these regeneration opportunities forward at scale; and
- The Council had completed the City Centre Living Vision with key findings and recommendations to be brought back to Members.

***Draft Committee Plan 2023-24***

The Director of City Regeneration and Development stated that the draft Committee Plan for 2023-24 (Appendix 2) followed a similar structure to the Corporate

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Delivery Plan, plus additional deliverables that had been agreed by the Committee and that were relevant to the Standing Orders of the Committee.

She pointed out that highlights within the plan included:

- Further development of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme;
- Delivering the Music Strategy and Belfast 2024;
- Delivering a programme of City Events;
- Introducing the new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) in September 2023;
- Finalising the refreshed Social Economy Action Plan and introducing a new incentive to improve the financial management skills of new and growing social enterprises;
- Undertaking a development and investment plan to support the sustainability of St. George's market;
- Completing Belfast Stories Audit and commence RIBA 2 design consultation;
- Working with the Partnership Boards and the Education Inequalities sub-group to secure longer-term options to support young people;
- Delivery of Employment Academies in priority areas;
- Progressing the Belfast Labour Market Partnership including extending the Digital Badging initiative and progressing the Bridges to Progression service to support 180 young people;
- Finalising A Bolder Vision Strategy and Action Plan taking a civic lead on delivering a significant transformation of the city centre streets and places;
- Advancing Public Realm Catalyst Schemes aligned to the Developer Contributions, including the 5Cs, Little York/Little Patrick Street, Blackstaff Square and Great Victoria Street;
- Providing input and strategic direction to major regeneration and development projects, including maximising regeneration impact of the Belfast Stories;
- Leading the Community Planning Partnership's City Development Board on the identified priorities of housing-led regeneration; connectivity, active and sustainable travel; Future City Centre; and citywide regeneration and investment;
- Working with partners to maximise residential development opportunities and jointly working to overcome obstacles to increasing residential development including city centre living;
- Producing a lobby position paper to advocate for devolution to Council of enhanced regeneration powers and associated funding;
- Taking forward a Regeneration Framework and Project Prioritisation process together with associated feasibility studies and business case development to attract the necessary investment for city-wide regeneration priorities;

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- Finalise a Competitive Dialogue process to attract investment at scale for the delivery of housing-led regeneration;
- Concluding the Development Brief process for the INW Northern Cluster;
- Continuing working through the City Development Board (Housing Led Regeneration Group) to analyse public sector land ownership in a city-wide context identified through the Urban Capacity Study and Housing Monitor to identify opportunities for housing together with other privately owned land;
- Progressing next steps for development of identified sites under the citywide strategic sites assessment process, including Member engagement; planning and site appraisals and feasibility studies;
- Continue to work through the City Development Board (and Housing Led Regeneration Group) to identify inhibitors to delivering housing opportunities progressing and to identify mechanisms to unlock these challenges;
- Working with partners to promote and develop regeneration opportunities within the Innovation District;
- Delivering remaining projects under DfC's Covid Recovery Revitalisation Programme;
- Delivering Tranche 3 of the Business Cluster and Community Grants;
- Delivering the Vacant-to-Vibrant Capital Grant scheme;
- Progressing the future-use options and attracting funding for 2 Royal Avenue; and promoting the Sixth investment and development opportunity; and
- Delivering the Tactical Regeneration projects, including Grey to Green, Active Travel Enablers, 5C's Revitalisation Programme, and Entries Phase 2 programme physical projects.

***Progress Reports***

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, following agreement on the draft Committee Plan, officers would bring a six-monthly progress report against all commitments in the Committee Plan in October 2023 and a further end of year report in April 2024.

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development highlighted that, in relation to 'Working with partners to promote and develop regeneration opportunities within the Innovation District' outlined in the report, whilst this had been previously brought via the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, it was noted that work was to be commissioned via the Innovation City Belfast Partnership (including Belfast City Council as a partner) to undertake a spatial plan to consider the emerging Innovation District in more detail, and that a future report would be brought to the Committee and included as part of the 2023 / 2024 City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan.

She also confirmed that, in relation to the refresh of the Car Parking Strategy being deferred pending the finalisation of the Local Development Plan and Belfast Metropolitan

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Transport Plan (BMTP), officers had met with DfI recently and they had noted that progress was underway, in particular, in how the BMTP related to the Climate Action Plan. She advised that the Committee would be kept up to date with the progress of the BMTP.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the end of year report; and
- Approved the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2023-24.

Chairperson