

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 12th January, 2022

REMOTE MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and
Councillors, Beattie, Brooks, Donnelly, Ferguson, Gormley,
Hanvey, Heading, Howard, T. Kelly, Long, Lyons,
Maskey, McLaughlin, McMullan and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance/Deputy Chief Executive;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Head of Finance; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was recorded for Councillor Hussey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 8th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 10th January.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Correspondence Received – Road Safety Review and York Street Interchange

The Director of City Regeneration and Development pointed out to the Members that correspondence had been received following the Notice of Motion which had been agreed by the Council, at its meeting on 4th October 2022, in relation to Road Safety Review.

She added that, following the Council's ratification of the Committee's decision to withdraw corporate support for the York Street Interchange scheme, a response had been received on the Minister for Infrastructure's behalf, from her Private Secretary.

The Committee noted the correspondence.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following item was 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 five 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.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2022/23

The Director of Finance/Deputy Chief Executive outlined the content of the report to the Committee.

The Committee:

- Agreed to the cash limit of £19,461,512 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2022/23 and the individual service estimates;
- Agreed that the decision would not be subject to call-in, as it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15 February 2022; and
- Noted the next steps in the rate setting process.

Request to Present

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee that a request had been received from The National Lottery Heritage Fund (HLF) to present to a future meeting of the Committee.

He pointed out that, in the request from HLF, the Policy and Public Affairs Manager stated that, as the Committee was responsible for supporting the development of culture, heritage and the arts, HLF would like the opportunity to talk about its role in supporting heritage in Belfast, as it was central to place and neighbourhood regeneration plans for repurposing the city and town centres, transport, planning, job creation and social cohesion.

The Committee acceded to the request from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to present to a future meeting.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

A Bolder Vision Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update regarding the engagement programme and feedback from the consultation for the Bolder Vision for Belfast.

She informed the Members that a Ministerial workshop had been scheduled to take place in City Hall to address key issues associated with the delivery of A Bolder Vision, including Belfast Streets Ahead 3 and 5 and Glider Phase 2.

She reported that the responses to the online survey on the Your Say Engagement HQ platform with the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities had been very positive, with approximately 75% of the respondents being residents in Belfast. She added that, of the responses that had been received to date, there had been significant support for the four moves:

1. Create a Civic Spine;
2. Reimagine the Inner Ring Road ;
3. Promote City Centre Living; and
4. Embrace the River Lagan and Waterfront.

She informed the Members that there had been particular support for the creation of a civic spine and creating the right environment to support city centre living.

She highlighted that there had been an extensive programme of in-person and virtual meetings, including two public webinars, throughout the consultation, and that there had been targeted engagement with partnership bodies that had a wide membership and reach in order to disseminate information and host engagement sessions.

She informed the Committee that the consultation period had been extended in order to address a previous technical issue that had occurred regarding access to the virtual room platform.

The Committee noted:

- The consultation activity, feedback to date and associated issues in relation to approval, timeframes and delivery;
- The upcoming DfC/DfI Ministerial workshop, which had been due to take place on 12 January 2022; and
- The proposed community led seminar, Joining the City, planned for January 2022.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

International Events Update

The Director of Economic Development updated the Committee on the proposed programme for international events as part of the cultural strategy, A City Imagining 2020-30, and draft tourism plan.

He informed the Members that a four-year implementation plan had been developed which included a programme of homegrown events with a targeted and strategic approach to international events to provide legacy for the city as well as a direct economic return, creating the conditions for long-term transformation of the city.

He reported that, as Belfast had successfully bid to host the One Young World Summit in 2023, a funding package of £1M had been offered by the government, subject to full business case approval, towards the overall cost for the event, which was approximately £2.7M. He added that, following the initial bid for Belfast to host the event, a contribution of £350,000 had been allocated from within the cultural investment programme, subject to Committee approval and that the remaining funding would come from income generation from the private sector, including fees and corporate sponsorship.

He pointed out to the Committee that, as part of the bidding process in successfully securing Belfast as the designation of UNESCO City of Music in November 2021, the Council had set out a five-year plan in partnership with the music sector which focussed on sector development and civic participation and that there was an opportunity to complement those initiatives through international music events such as Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

He informed the Committee that the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann was an annual event which encompassed a range of entertainment activities and was the most important event in the traditional music calendar. He added that, although the initial outlay to secure the event was approximately £2.5 million, there were also significant opportunities for the host city to recoup the investment through partnership initiatives.

He stated that, in line with the Cultural Strategy, draft Tourism Plan, UNESCO designation and recovery programmes, an expression of interest would indicate 2024 and 2025 as the optimum years to host the event.

The Director pointed out that Tourism NI had been developing a business case to host the World Rally Championships in August, 2022 and that the total request from local government, incorporating council areas where activity would be taking place, was a total of £500,000, of which a request of funding from Belfast City Council was £175,000. He added that, whilst no funding had been specifically earmarked for the World Rally Championship, the investment programme for the Cultural Strategy and Tourism Plan allowed for funding to be allocated to international activity, where the benefits had been clearly established.

The Committee:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th January, 2022**

- Noted the contents of the report and the proposed programme of international events as part of an overall strategic approach to tourism and cultural development;
- Agreed £350,000 as the Belfast City Council contribution towards hosting One Young World in 2023, subject to a final business case sign off by Tourism NI;
- Agreed to submit an Expression of Interest for Belfast to host the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann within the next three years and receive update report in due course; and
- Agreed to refer the request of £175,000 for the World Rally Championships to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

Update on Christmas Activities

The Director of Economic Development reported that, as part of the Christmas programme in November and December 2021, in response to the pandemic, the programme had aimed to meet the development objectives set out in the ten-year Cultural Strategy, which included long-term recommendations for events in the city and better strategic alignment across the Council in the design and delivery and he provided the Members with a summary of the following activities which had been delivered:

- Window animation;
- Lighting and illumination;
- Christmas lighting scheme;
- 2 Royal Avenue;
- Christmas Market; and
- Marketing and communications activities.

Several Members reported that they had received positive feedback on the Christmas programme of events and thanked the staff that had been involved in the development and delivery of the Christmas activities.

The Committee noted the content of the report and that further information on the socio-economic impact of the Christmas activity would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Consultation on the draft Smart
Belfast Urban Innovation Framework**

The City Innovation Manager stated that the Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework aimed to foster an environment to support collaborative innovation between partners across industry, academia and the public sector to address urban and economic

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th January, 2022**

challenges, based on the understanding that Belfast's more complex challenges often required novel solutions which were difficult for the public sector to develop on its own.

She pointed out that Smart Belfast also reflected the growing impact of new technologies on urban policy and planning and that it aimed to maximise opportunities represented by new investments, including the Belfast Region City Deal digital programme, and the emergence of Innovation City Belfast as a regional partnership for innovation and would be particularly important in leveraging innovation in order to support the delivery of the new Bolder Vision for the city centre.

She outlined the initial project pipeline and reported that a number of major projects were already under way or at an advanced development stage, that included:

- The delivery of €7.9 million 'Hub-In' Horizon 2020 project that aimed to transform the Maritime Mile through community-based innovation and local enterprise;
- The development of a new £20 million 'Innovation for Societal Impact Fund' to support collaborative innovation between the city region SMEs, researchers and public bodies;
- The £2.5 million Connected Places Catapult 'Homes for Healthy Ageing' programme to bring innovation to issues around loneliness in older people;
- The €1m 'Access to Finance' project that was working with local SMEs and the Economic Development teams to design new tools for designing future grant programmes and interventions;
- The Innovative Procurement Playbook project with Sejong, South Korea, to improve our understanding of the challenges of innovative procurement and exportation of innovative products to international markets; and
- Collaboration with the mobile industry, asset owners, businesses and public sector partners to develop a £30 million Belfast Region City Deal proposal that aimed to accelerate the roll-out of advanced wireless connectivity across the Smart District, university campus areas and Titanic Quarter.

She highlighted that, as part of the consultation process for the new framework, engagement would take place between January and April 2022 via:

- Party Group briefings;
- The Belfast City Council 'Your Say' platform where organisation and individuals could respond formally to a series of questions on each element of the framework;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th January, 2022**

- A public Smart Belfast webinar series which would offer insights into urban innovation practice form keynote speakers and further detail on the delivery of the programme; and
- Community focused workshops on the citizen in a smart city.

The Committee noted the content of the Smart Belfast urban innovation framework and the plans for individual party briefings from early in 2022.

Update on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and National Development Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a progress update on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and work on a development plan, strategy and action plan to progress this work.**
- 1.2 **The report also provides members with a synopsis of the Republic of Ireland Government’s Shared Island Initiative and draws out elements of the National Development Plan aligned with cross border economic co-operation, with specific reference to the Dublin-Belfast corridor.**

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 **The Committee is asked to:**
 - **Note the contents of this report and progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.**

2.0 Main report

- 3.1 **At its meeting on 9th June 2021, Members were provided with an update on progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor including proposals for work on a development plan and governance structure involving business and elected representatives. Members noted the progress to date and endorsed the approach.**
- 3.2 **Since the last committee update, the DBEC group proceeded with the commissioning of a development plan, strategy and action plan for the partnership. Belfast City Council acted as lead partner on the tendering and contract management of this work. The development plan is progressing well. It is being supported**

by a working group of officials from across the partnership. Activities include:

- Review of successful corridors, including staffing, funding, legal and governance structures including powers and purpose, and successful initiatives or projects carried out by the partners
- Review of existing cross border structures/entities and funding, legislative environment
- Review of existing research and delivery in priority sectors to identify gaps in provision/research, areas of alignment and potential for collaboration
- Identification of options to support the development of a DBEC entity aligned with the partnership's ambitions including recommended governance, legal and operating structures
- Development of a detailed resource plan to support the delivery of the DBEC entity including identification of potential sources of funding.

3.3 To date, the delivery team has undertaken research in relation to future governance, operational, legal and resourcing models for the partnership. This has included a comparative analysis of other corridors and consultations with existing cross border institutions and relevant internal and external stakeholders. The next steps for stage 1 include finalising consultations with cross border bodies and preparing the implementation and resourcing plan. Once approved the delivery team will proceed to stage 2 of the project.

3.4 Since the previous update, the inaugural meeting of the Dublin Belfast Political Oversight Group took place on 23rd November 2021 at City North Hotel, Dublin. The CEOs of the council partners attended the meeting along with the three elected representatives from each council. A Chair and Vice Chair of the group were elected to serve a one-year term. The Chair is Councillor Pete Byrne from Newry Mourne and Down District Council and the Mayor of Fingal, Councillor Seána Ó Rodaigh, of Fingal County Council was elected as Vice-Chair. The team delivering the development plan used this session as an opportunity to undertake a consultation workshop with elected representatives and officials and this will feed into the development plan.

3.5 It was previously decided to delay the convening of a business advisory group until work on the development plan and strategy

has progressed. It is expected that the private sector will be consulted as part of the current work.

- 3.6** One of the key considerations in the development plan will be to look at how this work can support the delivery of key commitments by the NI Executive and the ROI government. In the case of the latter, this will include reference to the renewed National Development Plan (NDP) which outlines strategic economic investment plans to 2030. The plan also sets out investment commitments relating to the Shared Island Initiative (launched in October 2020) which aims to enhance co-operation, connection, and mutual understanding on the island of Ireland, as well as East-West.
- 3.7** The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor Initiative is referenced within the NDP, notably: “The Government will continue to support fully the work of cross border local authority partnerships and pursue opportunities for collaborative investment and working in implementing the Shared Island NDP investment priorities”.
- 3.8** Some potential opportunities identified through this document include:
- **Announcement of €50 million through The Shared Island Fund in Budget 2021 to advance key projects and a commitment to a total of €500 million to this fund out to 2025**
 - **The plan will support the purchase of new and additional fleet for the Dublin-Belfast Enterprise service allowing for trains to move to an hourly frequency when the new fleet is introduced by 2027. This All-Island Strategic Rail Review is also currently underway, led by ARUP consultants**
 - **Support for a joined-up approach to environmental protection and sustainability across the island, including an electric vehicle and sustainable transport network**
 - **Development of a National Clustering Policy that will set out Ireland’s approach to promoting the emergence and further growth of large scale, self-sustaining, business clusters**
 - **Creating new all-island research centres and innovation is identified as a priority. A funding allocation of €40m to support cross border academic research was**

announced in summer 2021 and a call for projects closed in November 2021.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 The work on the development plan will be resourced from the 2021/22 Enterprise and Business Growth budget.

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

- 3.10 The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.”

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

Update on Renewed Ambition Programme 2022

The Director of City Regeneration and Development outlined the undernoted report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Members on the Renewed Ambition Partnership Programme for 2022 aimed at delivering regeneration, infrastructure and a modern built environment for Belfast and wider City Region

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the update on the programme of work which is being delivered via the Renewed Ambition Partnership Approve entering into contractual arrangements on behalf of the Renewed Ambition Partnership with event organisers for UKREiiF - the UK’s Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, noting that attendance at this event will be funded through the Renewed Ambition Partnership.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1** At the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 8th September 2021, an update was provided on the Renewed Ambition Programme – a public-private partnership programme of work underpinning regeneration, development and infrastructure activities in the city. This was accompanied by a presentation from representatives from the Renewed Ambition Taskforce who provided an update on the programme of activity to date. This included proposed areas of focus for the 2022 programme aligned to securing investment and regeneration for the Belfast region. A key objective is to build awareness of the Belfast investment proposition aimed at attracting investment and creating employment opportunities to support the delivery of regeneration projects across the City, with a focus on creating the physical, digital and social infrastructure / assets we need for inclusive sustainable growth.

2022 Programme of Activity

- 3.2** In 2021, the Renewed Ambition programme delivered a structured five pillar programme focused on activities that help to ensure Belfast and the wider region is positioned to continue to attract investment and deliver on inclusive growth.
- 3.3** It is proposed that the 2022 programme will continue be delivered as a collaborative programme of activity across the following key pillars:
- **Research – Research aligned to the impact of real estate investment to inform the city proposition and narrative.**
 - **Events - Programme of content aimed at the local and international real estate audience which aims to showcase the Belfast Region for future investment through participation at virtual and in-person conferences and showcase events.**
 - **Engagement and Advocacy - Programme of engagement and advocacy to facilitate two-way conversations with policy makers and showcase real estate opportunities to the investor community. This aims to position the Belfast Region positively and seeks to identify and try to address barriers that investors, developers and occupiers may face when they consider Belfast as a destination.**

- **Communications - Media engagement reinforcing positive messaging around Belfast's investment proposition through international marketing and communication campaigns targeting the national and international real estate investment and development community.**
- **Repository - A shared access repository on the Invest in Belfast website which facilitates sharing of data, marketing collateral and intel to help ensure consistent messaging and shared narrative is used by all partners when promoting the city region.**

3.4 The Renewed Ambition Taskforce have agreed that overarching objectives of the programme for 2022 includes:

- **Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region**
- **Continue to promote and market Belfast locally and outside Northern Ireland**
- **Increased engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular target investors and government**

3.5 These objectives form part of an overall Belfast proposition for economic growth and investment. Having the right physical, digital and social infrastructure in place is essential for the creation of jobs and delivery of sustained, inclusive growth. It also aligns with a key action from the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission report within the context of 'Positioning the City to Compete' and delivering a Global Future'.

3.6 As set out in the September 2021 CGR report, from a Council perspective, the key aims of the Renewed Ambition Partnership and the 2022 Programme includes:

- **Securing longer term institutional investors to support agreed regeneration plans of the Council and partners including investment to deliver housing development at scale;**
- **Securing investment in the built environment on a city-wide basis to facilitate opportunities for jobs and business, communities and providing physical and social infrastructure to deliver on inclusive economic growth;**

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th January, 2022**

- Waterfront regeneration and key infrastructure, connectivity and innovation related projects;**
 - Investment to help address dereliction and support the re-use and preservation of heritage assets**
 - Investment in tourism and cultural products to underpin regeneration priorities**
 - Investment in clean tech, environmental and sustainability initiatives**
- 3.7 In terms of events, due to the on-going health pandemic, the programme will include a hybrid of in-person and virtual events aimed at showcasing Belfast to a global investment audience and will potentially include a Belfast presence at UKREiiF.**
- 3.8 UKREiiF, the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, is a new three-day event which is due to take place in Leeds on 17-19 May 2022. This will also be subject to Covid restrictions in place at the time.**
- 3.9 Supported by local authorities, developers and investors from across the UK, this event is to gather the key players and decision makers within the investment and real estate markets to highlight investment and development opportunities, whilst connecting and facilitating new relationships to drive inclusive economic growth through development and regeneration.**
- 3.10 The event aims to accelerate the Levelling Up agenda through investment in real estate and encouraging and energising support to transition to a more sustainable and Net Zero mindset within the real estate industry through a three day programme of seminars, including keynote presentations and panel discussions, with an estimated over 3,000 attendees. Attendees are to include representatives from local and central government, national and multinational investment firms, institutional investors, pension funds and the real estate supply chain.**
- 3.11 Key themes across the programme of activity at the event are the UK's Net Zero Target; Social Value and Inclusive Growth; The Future of Real Estate; Building Better Communities and a focus on securing inward investment. Areas of focus include Levelling up across the UK and in particular cultivating the development of greener, smarter, healthier places while driving inward investment; Building Net Zero UK – and the role that the built environment can play its part in creating net zero UK; and facilitating shared learning across the real estate on how to embed social value within the private sector.**

- 3.12 From the Council's perspective, the emerging event themes align with our priorities and programmes of work focussed on Net Zero / Climate; A Bolder Vision; Belfast Region City Deal Projects; housing led regeneration including the potential for institutional investment; social value and delivering sustainable inclusive growth.
- 3.13 The event includes a dedicated exhibition space with over 80 exhibitors aimed at providing a platform for local authorities to showcase investment opportunities to investors, developers, and occupiers. Confirmed UK cities exhibiting include Birmingham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester and Liverpool.
- 3.14 The Renewed Ambition Partnership have proposed that the Belfast Region Partnership team take a stand in the exhibition area and organise a three-day programme of activity including focused investor seminars, participation in forums and round table discussions with a key objective of showcasing investment opportunities within Belfast and the wider City region, notably investment in housing, innovation, net carbon zero, key regeneration projects and Belfast Region City Deal projects.
- 3.15 Discussions are on-going with the event organisers to maximise Belfast Region's presence to delegates, including securing speaking opportunities on the main stage programme and fringe events.
- 3.16 As previously outlined to Committee, the Renewed Ambition Partnership is supported by a range of public, private and key anchor institution partners. Work is on-going to secure further private and public sector sponsorship and, as in previous years, it is envisaged that external funding will again form the majority of the overall budget for delivery of the 2022 programme. In addition to key private sector sponsors, the Belfast Region City Deal partner councils have also indicated, subject to relevant Council approvals, that they wish to continue to support the programme into 2022 to continue to build on the collaborative approach.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.17 The Renewed Ambition Partnership is delivered as a public private sector sponsorship fund and is supported by a range of public, private and key anchor institutions. Work is on-going to secure sponsorship and as in previous years, it is envisaged that external funding will again form the majority of the overall sponsorship income for delivery of the 2022 programme,

including the Belfast presence at UKREiiF. As well as private sector partners, the Belfast Region City Deal partner councils have also indicated, subject to relevant Council approvals, that they wish to continue to support the programme into 2022 to continue to build on the collaborative approach.

The Renewed Ambition Partnership (RAP) Taskforce, the governing body for the Partnership, have agreed that a Belfast presence at UKREiiF should be included in the RAP 2022 programme of activity, with associated costs being funded through the Partnership sponsorship. It is envisaged that the maximum budget to deliver this event will be £40,000.

Approval is sought for officers to enter into contractual arrangements on behalf of RAP with event organisers for UKREiiF, noting that this will be funded through the sponsorship secured from public and private partners to deliver the wider Renewed Ambition Programme.

Council had previously agreed a contribution of £80,000 for the 2022 Renewed Ambition Partnership.

Approval for any officer attendance at UKREiiF will be sought in line with the corporate travel policy and subject to prevailing Covid guidance in place at the time.

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

None associated with this report.”

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the programme of work that was being delivered via the Renewed Ambition Partnership; and
- Approved entering into contractual arrangements on behalf of the Renewed Ambition Partnership with event organisers for UKREiiF - the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, noting that attendance at this event would be funded through the Renewed Ambition Partnership.

Strategic and Operational Issues

**Community Planning Update:
City Development Board**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on community planning with a specific focus on the work being taken forward by the City Development Board.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the on-going work being progressed through the Belfast Agenda’s City Development Board.**
- (ii) Note the alignment and synergies with the work of the Committee.**
- (iii) Note the feedback from the City Development Board Workshop on 19 November and the priority areas identified by partners, as well as support from non-statutory partners including DfI, DfC and SIB and the private sector to lead focused discussions and coalesce with partners.**
- (iv) The role and ongoing opportunities for Elected Members to input and shape the work being taken forward through Community Planning Partnership, including the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated delivery plans, over the coming months and years.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that a series of delivery focused Boards have been established to enable and encourage greater collaboration across city partners to deliver the ambitions and priorities set out within the Belfast Agenda and address key challenges facing the city and its communities.

City Development Board Update

3.2 Members will also be aware the work underway to review and refresh the Belfast Agenda for the period 2022-2026. Since the launch of the review in September 2021, we have been continuing the conversation with our city partners, including through the established Delivery Boards, to help shape the refresh the Belfast Agenda.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th January, 2022**

On 19th November a workshop was held with the City Development Board, chaired by Neil McInroy former Chief Executive of CLES. The workshop had a strong attendance with representation across the VCSE, statutory partners, Belfast Chamber as well as representatives from the local development community. The session also involved Senior Officials within DfI, DfC, NIHE and SIB with focused discussions amongst the Board members to secure collective agreement on actions and interventions. Specifically, the workshop focused on:

- Taking stock of the current priority themes of the City Development Board in the context of Belfast Agenda commitments through the lens of Housing-Led Regeneration; Regeneration and Investment; Future City Centre; Connectivity, Access and Active Travel.
- Securing collective agreement on a small number of priority interventions that the Board can drive forward over the coming 4-years.
- Shaping and influencing the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated delivery plans.

The out-workings of this workshop will feed into subsequent engagement phases, enabling the co-design of action plans and a relevant, refreshed Belfast Agenda which can deliver a positive impact for everyone in the city.

3.4 A number of key overarching areas which emerged during the workshop discussions are summarised below:

- It was felt that City Development should be drawn out as an additional priority in the ongoing refresh of the Belfast Agenda.
- There was general consensus that the priorities are the right ones with housing led regeneration and connectivity in its widest sense highlighted as particularly important priorities for the city, with delivery of A Bolder Vision for Belfast viewed as being critical.
- A permanent residential population in the city core is critical to the next stage of city development, alongside the development of housing regeneration across the city.
- It was discussed that a holistic approach should be taken to connectivity, access and active travel - important that this was considered collectively across all partners particularly given its cross-cutting nature and the number

of different stakeholders involved.

- **The opportunity to take forward the framework of the Council's Future City Centre Programme as a collective partnership approach to help address the challenges issues impacting upon the city centre.**
- **The importance of the city centre for economic reasons but also the need to create experiences within the city centre which would encourage people to visit and dwell.**
- **Importance also of neighbourhood centres /arterial routes and ensuring complementarity with the city centre.**
- **Diversification of the city centre offer is critical to include residential, culture and leisure type uses creating a 24 hour, 15 minute city. Need to create the conditions to make the city centre an attractive place to live.**
- **Given the significance of the climate agenda, activities to reduce carbon and support climate adaption are important, and that we align the work of the City Development Board with the Resilience and Sustainability Board.**
- **The availability of land/space across the city was highlighted as an opportunity to enable and unlock city development priorities, including housing, specifically in relation to targeting dereliction and vacancy.**
- **Important to work with developers to encourage sustainable development and maximise opportunities to maximise wider social benefits including more green space, sustainable initiatives, and support increased biodiversity.**
- **Consideration should be given to protecting and enhancing our environment and built heritage as part of future focus of the Board.**
- **Belfast needs to compete with other cities. Its investment proposition should be reinforced and shared amongst partners. Measure what is in the Belfast Agenda – have clear targets, indicators and measure progress.**
- **Master-planning, placemaking and good urban design are very important for successful city development.**
- **Co-ordination of activities important particularly given the disparate nature of powers and resources across various stakeholders. Lots of activity – who is the conductor? Role**

of Community Planning viewed as being critical to help drive progress.

- 3.5 In addition to the workshop it is important to note that there have been other significant areas of work which have already commenced and/or are emerging across the City Development Board's four priority themes – some examples are outlined below.

Housing-Led Regeneration

- 3.6 As reported to the Committee in December under a Housing Led Regeneration update report, a Housing-Led Regeneration Delivery Group has been established under the auspices of the Community Planning Partnership; City Development Board and is chaired by NIHE Chief Executive and membership including BCC, DfC, SIB and LPS. Of particular relevance to this Committee is the direct alignment with this group and the work around progressing the both the city centre and city-wide strategic site assessments and seeking to unblock some of the challenges impacting on the delivery of housing regeneration. To note also the alignment with recommendations in relation to housing as presented within the Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission "Reset for Growth" report. This includes the recommendations around establishing a delivery vehicle to utilise public sector land and undertake land assembly to facilitate housing at scale across the city centre.

City Regeneration and Development

- 3.7 There is now a focused drive with partners to consider how we reflect the considerations of the Board in relation to the priority area of City Regeneration and Development on a city wide basis. This involves looking at how partners can best work together to ensure our strategic intent is taken forward. In relation to key areas of discussion from the workshop and opportunities to add value these included:

- Important that we clearly understand the key regeneration and place-shaping powers required to support the focus and ambitions of the Board and how these can be best levered amongst partners to deliver on priorities.
- Consideration of how major consented and proposed development / regeneration schemes can be maximised in terms of wider economic, social and environmental impacts. Consideration also of the challenges impacting upon the delivery of such schemes and the role that partners could play to unlocking some of these barriers

and ensuring that the wider economic, social and environmental impacts are realised.

- Partnership opportunities for financing should be explored and consideration of the role of this Board and the other CPP Boards in identifying external funding opportunities and collectively prioritising projects or priority areas for external funding opportunities amongst partners.
- Highlighted the importance of enhancing access and connectivity to the arterial routes and communities.
- Accelerate investment opportunities to bring forward mixed tenure city centre housing stock and to maximise the wider regeneration benefits for the city centre and how we may enhance / educate perceptions of city living.
- Highlighted the need for a targeted and holistic approach to addressing the challenges around dereliction and vacancy in both local neighbourhoods and city centre. Consideration to be given as to how best to scope strategic opportunities for existing vacant / derelict space and explore potential opportunities to bring forward proposals for meanwhile uses in vacant spaces pending longer term development and also consider opportunities for enhanced greening. This would link in with the housing led regeneration work.
- Important that we secure clear ownership and accountability for implementation and delivering outcomes.

Connectivity, Access and Active Travel

- 3.8 Progression of A Bolder Vision (ABV) was highlighted as being a critical priority although reiterated that this would require the support and buy in of a number of partners and Government Departments and aligned resourcing (financial and delivery). The Board highlighted the opportunities which are presented through the ABV proposals, specifically on strengthening the city core and addressing perceived severance to surrounding communities and enhancing connectivity. Highlighted also was the criticality of progressing the Belfast Metropolitan Travel Plan and new Belfast Local Area Plan to act as key enablers and drivers to unblock the city and region's growth ambitions. In addition, enhanced public transport options including extension of the Glider; delivery of key greenway projects; policy changes and modal shift; improvements to critical inner ring road

junctions and waterfront development were also considered as priority areas.

- 3.9** It was highlighted that connectivity was not just about active travel but also enhanced public transport options; treatment of the inner ring road (including key junctions); maximising the waterfront and blueways; removing severance and barriers to movement between city centre and surrounding communities.
- 3.10** The Board felt that it was important that connectivity, access and active travel should be considered collectively across all partners particularly given its cross-cutting nature and the number of different stakeholders involved. It was felt that a holistic approach and better co-ordination was needed of the various policies plans, projects and proposals across all partners, to ensure a collective and cumulative impact. It was considered that the Board could play an important role in this as part of the forward priority actions for the Board. Members will also note that they had previously agreed that an overarching Connectivity Framework be brought back as part of this Committees workplan.

Future City Centre

- 3.11** As previously reported to Committee in October, a City Centre Delivery Group is to be established to drive collaboration and delivery. It was felt that the framework adopted by Councils' Future City Centre (FCC) programme provides an opportunity to harness added value through a collective partner approach in driving this programme forward. In relation to feedback from the workshop on this priority area the following key considerations have been collated:
- Highlighted the ongoing work of the High Street Taskforce and the importance of engaging with this and seeking to secure appropriate funding and clarity of responsibility for delivery.
 - Development of a specific action plan for the city centre, with commitment from all partners to the delivery of specific projects and programmes. The Council's Future City Centre Programme was considered as a sound basis for developing this action plan.
 - Important that we adopt an experience-based approach to creating a destination of choice. We need to ensure that we are utilising all the skill sets that we have in the city to ensure that this happens.

- Access and utilising the waterfront, as a unique selling point for the city, should be a priority.
- Need to revisit the governance and possible extension of place-shaping regeneration powers.
- Potential to bring empty shops back to life by making ground floors active for meanwhile space. Noted that BCC was bringing forward a Vacancies Programme and better utilising under-utilised sites (e.g., Council owned surface-level carparks which have been subject to Council's Strategic Site Assessments).
- Address dereliction and vacant sites (public and private sector owned) via use of greening/biodiversity and meanwhile uses pending longer-term development.
- Activity around enhancing the heritage offering should be progressed.
- Highlighted the need to consider, identify and bring forward smaller-scale actions including tactical regeneration, activation of space, improved lighting, meanwhile uses etc which can add vibrancy and deliver quick wins.
- Opportunities to explore potential asset transfer, including within the public sector.

3.12 The immediate focus with the Board is now working to translate the proposals and activities from the workshop into a composite action plan. A co-design approach is being adopted whereby actively engaging with key partners and stakeholders to help shape and to secure buy-in and commitment and importantly the resources to support implementation.

3.13 Role of Elected Members

Elected Members will be engaged as part of this process and help shape the priorities and action plans going forward for the next 4-years. The All-Party Members Working Group will be a key platform for Members to have line-of-sight and input into the work being taken forward through Community Planning and the respective delivery boards. Regular update reports will also be brought to this group alongside the Committee for consideration and input.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.**

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

- 3.15 There are no equality, good relations or rural need implications in this report.”**

The Committee:

- Noted the on-going work being progressed through the Belfast Agenda’s City Development Board;
- Noted the alignment and synergies with the work of the Committee;
- Noted the feedback from the City Development Board Workshop on 19 November and the priority areas identified by partners, as well as support from non-statutory partners, including DfI, DfC and SIB and the private sector to lead focused discussions and coalesce with partners; and
- Noted the role and ongoing opportunities for Elected Members to input and shape the work being taken forward through Community Planning Partnership, including the refresh of the Belfast Agenda and associated delivery plans, over the coming months and years.

Chairperson