

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th March, 2022

HYBRID 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, Hussey, T. Kelly, Long,
Lyons, Maskey, McLaughlin, McMullan, O'Hara and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 9th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentation

Visit Belfast - Annual Business Plan 2022/23

The Chairperson introduced Ms. K. Thomson, Chief Executive, National Museums NI and Mr. G. Lennon, Chief Executive, Visit Belfast, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

Ms. Thomson outlined how the tourism sector had been profoundly affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the previous two years and how it was a key sector that would contribute to the rebuilding of the city's economy. She stated that Visit Belfast had been developed through consultation with Council officers, to be fully aligned to the Council's key strategic priorities and to act as a key vehicle in rolling out the ten year tourism strategy, Make Yourself at Home.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th March, 2022**

Mr. Lennon provided a presentation on Visit Belfast's Rebuilding City Tourism Plan which focused on supporting tourism recovery. He outlined how a new regenerative model for tourism would contribute towards building a resilient economy, delivering inclusive growth and protecting the environment.

He highlighted that tourism was key to the city's wellbeing and that it had generated £417million in tourism spend in 2019 and had accounted for 21,863 tourism related jobs. He pointed out that tourism had been a catalyst for community and societal regeneration, and referred to examples, such as the Cathedral Quarter and the Crumlin Road Gaol.

He reported that Visit Belfast had put in place a number of key initiatives, policies and themes to create robust framework to rebuild city tourism over the subsequent three years.

He outlined the progress to date in 2021/22 and informed the Committee that the progress now placed Belfast as the fifth most transformed destination in 2021 and was nineteenth out of seventy-three destinations from around the world, on the Global Destination Sustainability Index. He stated that the outlook for 2022 was positive, due to conference bookings, cruise calls, cultural events and milestones, and Belfast's designation as a UNESCO City of Music.

Mr. Lennon summarised Visit Belfast's policy framework, key themes and sustainability and impact action plan and he outlined the marketing focus and framework.

He informed the Committee that, with regard to business tourism, Visit Belfast's objective was to secure enough conferences to bring £40million to the local economy and 82,000 bed nights. He reported that a campaign was to be developed to target business visitors to encourage them to extend their stay or return in the future for a leisure visit.

He referred to visitor servicing and destination management and outlined a model that would be used to enhance the visitor experience and spread the benefit of tourism.

He pointed out that there were 144 cruise calls expected in 2022/23, generating £11million economic spend from around 300,000 cruise passengers. He reported that Visit Belfast had been working with Belfast Harbour to develop a cruise sustainability plan.

During discussion, the representative's answered a range of questions in relation to targeting tourists who arrive in Dublin, the environmental impact of cruise liners, tourism levies and accessibility.

In response to a query from a Member, the Director of Economic Development stated that a report on the Council's 10-year tourism strategy would be submitted to Committee, following a consultation, which had been approved by the Committee in February and that it would include an update on neighbourhood tourism.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their informative presentation, and they retired from the meeting.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th March, 2022**

The Chairperson drew the Members' attention to the report which had been published alongside the presentation which outlined the request for funding from Visit Belfast for the 2022/23 financial year and set out the organisation's strategic plan, which focused on supporting tourism recovery.

The Committee:

- Noted the draft Visit Belfast business plan 2022/23 and that the overall funding requirement for Visit Belfast in the coming financial year had been taken account of in the revenue estimates that had already been approved by the Council;
- Approved a multi-annual funding agreement for 2022-25 and agreed a funding allocation of £1,997,465 for 2022/23, subject to the development of a funding agreement that would confirm priority areas of activity and agreed targets;
- Approved an inflationary increase of 2% in year 2 and year 3 of the funding agreement, subject to satisfactory progress against targets and budget setting; and
- Approved the renewal of Visit Belfast's Management Agreement with the Council to operate Leisure Marketing, Business Tourism and Visitor Servicing in Belfast, including the operation of Welcome Centre at 8-9 Donegall Square North.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their informative presentation and they retired from the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two items 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 two 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.

A Bolder Vision

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the Bolder Vision consultation and key moves and the ongoing engagement with the Ministers for Communities and Infrastructure.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th March, 2022**

She outlined the emerging governance proposals and referred the Members to a Memorandum of Understanding that would form the basis of a framework for collaborative partnership working under the Bolder Vision.

The Committee:

- Noted the findings from the Bolder Vision consultation and Key Moves Update Report and agreed to re-affirm the Council's position in relation to the Key Moves to ensure embedment of those principles within the final Bolder Vision Strategy and the emerging Catalyst Opportunities Plan;
- Noted the ongoing engagement with the DfC and DfI Ministers and other partners, including workshops with Translink, DfI Section Office and the Capital Projects, Policy and Public Transportation Directorates;
- Agreed to the proposed BCC/DfI/DfC partnership and Memorandum of Understanding approach, subject to agreement from DfI/DfC;
- Agreed to delegate authority to the City Solicitor to finalise and agree the Memorandum of Understanding document with DfI and DfC, with the finalised document to be brought back to the Committee at the appropriate time; and
- Noted the planned BCC/DfI/DfC statement that would follow the Ministerial meetings and the next steps to bring forward the Bolder Vision Strategy and Catalyst Opportunities Plan.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 3 2021/22

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an overview of the Quarter 3 finance report.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure

High Street Taskforce Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reported that the High Street Task Force had been finalising the recommendations report following the recent call for evidence which would represent a collaboration across various sectors, .That would include central and local government, business, academia and the third sector, and would summarise the findings, advice and recommendations of the High Street Task Force.

She pointed out that the work of the High Street Task Force had been aligned to the focus of the Committee's priorities and Committee Plan as well as to other Council led programmes and priorities and that the launch of the High Street Task Force report

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th March, 2022**

and recommendations had been proposed for 21st March and would, in due course, be presented to the Executive for its consideration.

She informed the Members that the Living High Street Craft Kit, which had been developed through a cross-sectoral co-design of high streets and town centres led by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Architecture and the Built Environment, had been due to be published in the coming months and would provide an innovative way of considering how high streets could be redesigned by communities and combine social, environmental and economic insights.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the work of the High Street Task Force and the intention to launch a High Street Task Force report and recommendations following the recent call for evidence process;
- Noted the alignment of the High Street Task Force work to the strategic priorities of Council and of the Committee; and
- Noted the imminent publication of the Ministerial Advisory Group 'Living High Streets Craft Kit' and the opportunity to use the approach of co-design, particularly in neighbourhood centres and on arterial routes.

Blue and Green Infrastructure Funding

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an overview of the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update the Committee on DfI’s Blue Green Infrastructure Funding relating to Active Travel Projects

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to

- **Note the Letter of Offer from DfI for capital funding to deliver Active Travel Enabling projects and that officers are currently in ongoing discussions with the Department on funding draw down and around the conditions of the LoO in particular the tight timeframes and risk in terms of delivery of the projects as outlined within this paper. A verbal update on the outcome of these discussions will be provided to Committee.**
- **Dependant on the outcome of the ongoing discussions with DfI (with verbal update to be provided to Committee) to agree to recommend to the SP&R**

Committee advanced procurement of the covered cycle stands and cycle repair stands with further details on locations to be brought back to this Committee. Whilst the LoO is very welcome and is aligned to Council priorities officers would however highlight that any recommendation to accept this will need to consider any risk to delivery and potential financial implications in terms of clawback etc.

- Dependant on the outcome of the ongoing discussions with Dfl, to agree to the delivery of secured cycle units through an Expression of Interest approach to identify suitable delivery partners, with the outcome on the EoI including specification requirements to be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee;
- Note the proposal to develop the designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine, and agree that Officers work with Dfl and others to secure funding and to bring the designs through to RIBA Stage 3

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The CG&R Committee received an update, and provided approvals, in September and October 2021 on the Active Travel Enabling projects under delivery through the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, including a new temporary Active Travel Hub in Cathedral Gardens, expansion of the Belfast Bike scheme and replacement of the fleet, the establishment of an e-cargo bike pilot scheme and 10 new covered cycle parking locations located on Council assets across the city. The Committee were also informed that there was potential to seek additional funding through the Dfl Blue Green Infrastructure Fund to deliver additional covered cycle stand locations as well secure cycle parking that could be delivered in partnership with, for example Translink or Multi-Story Car Park suppliers that can provide publicly accessible locations within a managed and serviced area.

3.2 Report

As reported to the SP&R Committee in January 2022 Council submitted proposals to Dfl for greenway and active travel projects that could potentially receive capital funding this financial year. These proposals were put forward based on receiving funding by October/November 2021 to facilitate completion by the end of the financial year. The submitted proposals had a focus on enhancements to live projects that have the best chance of delivery within the financial year.

On this basis a business case was submitted to the Department seeking funding to deliver a further roll out of city-wide covered cycle stands, secure parking units to be delivered with partner organisations and the introduction and installation of bicycle repair stations along the active travel network. This application was submitted in recognition that Active Travel and connectivity are strategic priorities for Belfast, identified within the PfG, Belfast Agenda and underpinned within A Bolder Vision for Belfast. Through the Community Planning Partnership – City Development Board it was also agreed across the Partners that connectivity and sustainable and active travel should be a priority for the city, both in terms of meeting our sustainable objectives but also in terms of making the city a more accessible, attractive and liveable city. While the CG&R Committee received a report from Dfl in December 2021 on the Belfast Cycle Network outlining the timeframe for developing up and delivering the much-needed expansion of the capital infrastructure it is recognised that an opportunity exists now to deliver Active Travel enabling projects in advance of these capital works, and to further compliment the schemes and projects delivered through the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme.

- 3.3 The SP&R Committee were informed in January 2022 that although funding had not been confirmed, Dfl had publicly announced their intended support for four capital proposals – enhancements to the Forth Meadow Greenway Project at Sections 1 & 3, enhanced Connectivity between City Quays, Greater Clarendon and City Centre, and Active Travel Enablers such as cycle parking and bike repair stands. The SP&R Committee were informed that no formal offer of funding had been made, and that further work was required to establish the timeframes constraints given global supply chain issues and the need to mitigate against these issues, as well as constraints put forward in relation to match-funding requirements, and the Committee noted these risks to delivery.**
- 3.4 On the 2nd February 2022 Council received a Letter of Offer from Dfl to provide capital funding to support Active Travel Enabling Projects in line with the Business Case submitted to the Department. The Letter of Offer for £207,500 of capital funding includes cycle parking, secure cycle parking and cycle repair stands. It should be noted that the LoO commits Council to in year spend but given that we are now in March, this is the focus of ongoing discussions between officers and Dfl, and a verbal update will be provided to Committee on the outcome of these. Officers are working to ensure that funding could be drawn down in a manner which would ensure**

deliverability and protects the interests of the Council and provide a level of comfort to Council in terms of advance procuring where possible, as well as allowing adequate planning, further procurement and installation of the capital schemes. The approval of the procurement and delivery of these schemes will also be subject to approval at the SP&R Committee. Whilst the LoO is very welcome and is aligned to Council priorities officers would highlight that a recommendation to accept this cannot be made if there is a risk to delivery and any potential financial implications in terms of clawback etc.

- 3.5 Under the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme Officers had engaged Sustrans to identify a list of locations for covered cycle stands that can be further developed to bring forward the additional units under this funding stream. Officers from CRD, PP and CNS are currently working through this list and identifying potential for use of Council lands and 3rd Party landowners and any required permissions prior to bringing a final list of locations to Committee. Given the timing of the Letter of Offer, and pending Committee approval it is proposed to advance procure the covered cycle units with a list of locations to brought back to this Committee for agreement prior to installation. This is subject to the outcome to ongoing discussions with the Department in relation to the draw down of funding and conditions within the LoO.
- 3.6 With regard to the secure cycle units these are more complex in in terms of the need for physical assets /infrastructure, different operational models, staff resourcing, revenue tails etc. Officers have held a number of discussions with potential delivery partners including, Translink and Multi-Story Car Park Operators, that can utilise existing physical assets and provide strategically located, publicly accessible, and maintained and operated locations that could deliver out additional secure cycle parking as pilot projects for this type of provision. Subject to the outcome of discussions with the Department in relation to the Loo and pending Committee approval, it is proposed to engage the wider market through an Expression of Interest, with a potential to provide capital grant funding to delivery partners to install and operate secure parking infrastructure within their existing assets and to provide regular monitoring and reporting on the usage and uptake of the scheme to further inform potential future projects. It is proposed to run the Eol from the end of March of a period of 3 weeks followed by application and capital grant award process. Delivery partners will be assessed on their location in relation to key trip attractors and the Belfast Cycle Network, as well as their operating model and ability to

adequately deliver a publicly accessible model. It is proposed that the results of this EOI is brought back to Committee at the earliest opportunity, and prior to awarding funding to deliver the secure cycle units. This is subject to the outcome to ongoing discussions with the Department in relation to the draw down of funding and conditions within the LoO.

3.7 Officers are also working on a list of locations for the cycle repair stations, aligned to the existing cycle network and Council assets. Subject also to the outcome of discussions with the Department it is proposed to advance procure these units to meet the funding timeframes with further detail on locations to be brought back to this Committee at a future date.

3.8 **Enhanced Connectivity between Greater Clarendon, City Quays and the City Centre.**

There have been ongoing discussions between DfI and Council in relation to the enhancement to the connecting routes to and from the city centre and the greater Clarendon area. This will better link communities from the Greater Clarendon / Sailortown area to and from the city centre. Given issues of severance with the city centre this was identified as a priority connectivity project in the Greater Clarendon and Sailortown Masterplan / Accessibility Guide progressed by DfI in conjunction with BCC, DfI and other partners including local communities. Building on these discussions and the proposal within the Masterplan /Accessibility Guide an application was submitted to DfI to develop up the designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine to RIBA Stage 3, under a project entitled 'Enhanced Connectivity between Greater Clarendon, City Quays and the City Centre'.

3.9 This project relates to the development of design proposals to enhance the urban environment and connectivity between the city centre and the Greater Clarendon area through the design of public realm/open space and active travel infrastructure improvements within the project area, known as the 'North-South Spine'.

3.10 As above the 'North-South Spine' concept was developed as part of the Greater Clarendon & Sailortown Masterplan and subsequent Public Realm & Accessibility Design Guide, which noted the importance of improved north-south pedestrian and cycle links (and east-west links) in terms of integrating Greater Clarendon and Sailortown into the city centre, enhancing local links to the Cathedral Quarter and City Quays, and linking the

two new proposed city parks at Cathedral Gardens and City Quays.

- 3.11** Alongside the emerging plans for ‘City Quays Gardens’, it is proposed to develop similarly ambitious streetscape and open space design proposals for adjacent connecting streets. The proposed area takes in Tomb St, Corporation St and Little Patrick St/Great Patrick St, and design development would focus on enhancing local public realm and ease of movement, while contributing to wider city connectivity, including pedestrian and cycle links between City Quays and Custom House Square, the Cathedral Quarter and UU campus and accommodation. It is proposed that the appointed team would develop design information to RIBA Stage 3 for environmental and connectivity improvements for streets and spaces within the project area. Proposed interventions may include, but would not be limited to, enhanced pedestrian crossings, dedicated cycle lanes, soft landscaping, lighting, resurfacing, open space, street furniture. This is subject to the outcome of ongoing discussions with the Department in relation to the draw down of funding and any conditions which may be contained within a future LoO.
- 3.12** In line with the RIBA Plan of Work, preparation of design information to Stage 3 would include site appraisal, concept development, options appraisal, business case development, feasibility studies, development of project brief / budget / programme and stakeholder engagement. Specific outputs from the currently proposed design development work would include:
- RIBA Stage 3 Report
 - Outline Specification
 - Cost Plan
 - Planning application submitted
- 3.13** On completion of RIBA Stage 3, funding options to support capital delivery would be further explored with delivery partners, including Dfl, as a ‘shovel-ready project’, in order to progress to delivery/construction. It should also be noted that a number of developer contributions have been agreed in principle for public realm provision, but not yet secured within this area,
- 3.14** A business case has been submitted to Dfl and the indication from Dfl is that an offer of circa 50% funding may be made by the Department. Officers are currently exploring opportunities for match-funding to meet the remaining funding

requirements. Further updates will be brought to this Committee at a future date.

3.15 Finance and Resource Implications

The capital costs associated with the Active Travel Enabler projects referenced in this report are to be covered from the DfI Blue & Green Infrastructure Fund (subject to the verbal update at Committee in relation to conditions of funding). In relation to the 'Enhanced Connectivity between Greater Clarendon, City Quays and the City Centre' design work, a LoO has not yet been received although DfI has indicated it may be forthcoming based on circa 50% of the cost. There are ongoing discussions in relation to further third-party funding for the remaining cost and an update will be brought back to Committee.

All proposals will be subject to the Council's Capital Governance Process. A verbal update will be provided to Committee on the outcome of ongoing discussions with DfI in relation to the drawdown of funding.

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

Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening will be carried out on the schemes prior to implementation."

The Committee:

- Noted the Letter of Offer from DfI for capital funding to deliver Active Travel Enabling projects and that officers had been engaging in ongoing discussions with the Department on funding draw down and the conditions of the LoO, in particular the tight timeframes and risk in terms of delivery of the projects;
- Agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, dependent upon the outcome of discussion, advanced procurement of the covered cycle stands and cycle repair stands with further details on locations to be brought back to this Committee;
- Agreed to the delivery of secured cycle units through an Expression of Interest approach to identify suitable delivery partners, with the outcome on the EoI, including specification requirements to be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee, subject to the outcome of ongoing discussions with DfI; and

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th March, 2022**

- Noted the proposal to develop the designs for the Greater Clarendon North South Spine and agreed that Officers would work with Dfl, and others, to secure funding and to bring the designs through to RIBA Stage 3.

Academy of Urbanism Congress

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To make Members aware of the upcoming Academy of Urbanism Congress that is planned to be held in Belfast, 8-10 June 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked:

- To note the proposal to host the annual Academy of Urbanism Congress in Belfast on 8th June 2022 and the opportunity for Council and its partners to shape and participate in the programme.
- To note the emerging key themes that will shape the agenda and potential venues and agree to a Council contribution of £10,000 to be met from existing budgets.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background: The Academy of Urbanism

The Academy of Urbanism (AoU) is, a not-for-profit, politically independent network of people and organisations devoted to creating and sustaining great places. Its mission is to understand, promote and celebrate what makes great places and practically apply these lessons to improve towns and cities across Europe and beyond.

3.2 Membership to AoU is open to everyone involved in the design, development and management of great places, with specific membership opportunities for young urbanists, professional academicians and community leaders. Members span city management and policymaking, community leadership, town planning and urban design, academic research and teaching, arts and cultural development, infrastructure and engineering, property management, politics and media. The Academy supports the Urbanism Awards that celebrate excellent practical delivery and

generate a continuing resource of best practice guidance. By way of local example, recently the Connswater Community Greenway was voted as the best place in the UK and Ireland at the 2020 Urbanism Awards. Additionally, there are specific knowledge-sharing programmes such as Place Diagnostics, which can help places to engage people in challenging urban issues and they also publish a monthly journal, 'Here and Now'.

3.3 AoU Annual Congress, 8-10 June Belfast 2022

As part of the AoU delivery of programmes and events that support places and people to explore and share good placemaking practice, its major flagship event includes an annual Congress, showcasing a different European city each summer. The AoU are proposing to hold their 2022 AoU Congress in Belfast. Past host cities include Eindhoven, Cork, Copenhagen, Rotterdam, Dublin, Aarhus, Glasgow, and Bristol. The Annual Congress is an inspiring, thought-provoking and entertaining opportunity to exchange ideas and hear leading-edge thinking from urbanists around the globe. It is an opportunity to embed the Academy within a city and use the assembled expertise of attendees to tackle live local issues alongside local partners through hands-on workshops, walking tours, and discussions.

3.4 The AoU are very much of the view that a successful Congress owes as much to the passions of local community participants as to the insights and inspiration of invited presenters. Based on previous years, there are usually 100-120 participants that attend Congress. It is anticipated that a number of these are drawn from the local area, but others will be visitors to Belfast and will have a chance to explore the city and hear how projects in Belfast are responding to our challenges as well as creating their own best practice.

3.5 There has been recent engagement by AoU with Council, DfC and DfI in relation to the proposed Congress. It is recognised that cities across the world are facing many challenges. This is particularly so given rapid responses necessitated by COVID and the increasingly immediate impacts of a climate in crisis which are testing our urban centres like never before. These, and the acceleration of changed practices such as home working, online shopping, and the future of tourism, are issues facing cities around the globe. Combined with the ongoing work already underway across the Council with central government agencies, communities and private sector, our opportunity is to use the MoU to help guide the

long term, sustainable change needed in how our cities function, look, and feel for people.

- 3.6 Belfast has a history of resilience and overcoming challenges and this year the proposed title of the Congress is *Belfast: Cities Overcoming Challenges*. Change and challenges can inform cities in unexpected ways. As new energies combine in ways not seen in the city before there is an opportunity for Belfast to learn from others and build on their existing priorities and plans and reflect on what more needs to do to make the next three decades a success.
- 3.7 The AoU Congress in Belfast is an opportunity to explore current strategic issues such as A Bolder Vision, the work of the High Streets Task Force, climate and resilience priorities, citywide regeneration and significant place-focused cultural initiatives, including the UNESCO City of Music and the forthcoming Year of Culture to explore how Belfast can better engage people and communities in the city's authentic placemaking. It is an opportunity to explore and highlight Belfast projects and practice alongside international examples of urbanism.
- 3.8 A key strand for example will include showcasing some of Belfast's cultural, urban and community professionals to an international audience and embed cultural practice in the city's regeneration to emphasise the importance of place character to the Year of Culture. It offers both local participants and visitors a chance learn more about the themes from a Belfast perspective and draw upon local case studies that link local to wider global issues facing cities. The agenda is currently being developed but potential local case study projects could include Culture Night, housing-led regeneration, StreetSpace, Sailortown, Belfast Opera, Portview, community and resilience projects. There is growing interest in the conference locally and the AoU have already been contacted by local stakeholders who are seeking to highlight their projects.
- 3.9 Supporting these thematic sessions, the AoU Congress also provides that chance to host sessions in venues across the city that will show off the diverse and rich range of facilities. Discussions are underway with potential host organisations such as 2 Royal Avenue, St Mary's University College, Carlisle Methodist Church, Banana Block and Ulster Museum. In addition, there are a number of site visits proposed that will enable Congress delegates and communities to work together and explore issues around good urbanism through specific site visits and workshops. It is intended that these support

local people to build confidence in city development issues and connect with local and international practitioners. Discussions are currently underway in relation to this and potential site visits may include Cathedral Quarter, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, Eastside, Forward South and the Weaver's Cross/Belfast Transport Hub.

It is proposed that there will be an opening evening session in the City Hall on 8th June 2022.

3.10 Engagement to date

To date meetings have been held with BCC, DfI and DfC and the Chair and Board members of AoU to discuss the theme, format and potential sponsorship. It is also proposed to engage with the Community Planning Partnership City Development Board in order to link in with key city stakeholders including partnership bodies, private sector and public sector agencies. These discussions are ongoing and will shape the agenda, venues and keynote speakers.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

The estimated cost of Congress is approximately £50,000 and the AoU is seeking a £10,000 contribution from Council, which can be met from existing CRD budget. AoU is in discussions with DfC, DfI, SIB and Arts and Business for additional financial support.

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

None associated with this report.”

The Committee:

- Noted the proposal to host the annual Academy of Urbanism Congress in Belfast on 8th June 2022 and the opportunity for Council and its partners to shape and participate in the programme;
- Noted the emerging key themes that would shape the agenda and potential venues; and
- Agreed to a Council contribution of £10,000 to be met from existing budgets.

**Public Consultation on Sydenham to Holywood
Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Routes**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members that the Department for Infrastructure is running a public consultation on the Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling routes from 11 February – 1 April 2022 by way of a short questionnaire.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note that the Department for Infrastructure is undertaking a public consultation, by way of a short questionnaire (link in report below) on the Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling routes.
- Note that there has been ongoing engagement by DfI with the East Area Working Group and Council officers in relation to the future delivery of the routes and that this is likely to continue to be an appropriate mechanism for future discussions. Members may however wish to respond directly to the current questionnaire and reports can be brought back to the relevant Committees as appropriate if these proposals progress further.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 On 3 June 2021, the Minister for Infrastructure published ‘*Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change*’. This document articulates the Minister’s vision that active travel becomes a pillar of change within towns and cities to cut emissions, to improve health and wellbeing, and to better connect families and communities. It commits to the adoption of the sustainable transport hierarchy where prioritisation is given to sustainable travel by providing for walking and wheeling, then cycling, then public transport ahead of private vehicle use.
- 3.2 The Minister followed this by publishing ‘*Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021*’ on 4 June 2021. This document set out her ambition to make Belfast a more cycle-friendly city and provides a blueprint for the development and operation of the cycling infrastructure in the city for the next ten years. The Belfast Cycling Network

proposes a number of routes between Belfast and North Down:

- a greenway type route alongside the Belfast to Bangor railway line; and
- a walking and cycling path alongside Holywood Road and the A2 north of Tillysburn.

3.3 In February 2022 Dfl opened a consultation on the Sydenham to Holywood link and are seeking views as to whether priority should be given to developing one of three routes and noted that the first two routes are already within the Belfast Cycling Network, but the third route is not a part of the Network:

- a) a path along the railway from Sydenham through Holywood Exchange (red)
- b) a path along Holywood Road through Holywood Exchange (green)
- c) upgrade the cycling route alongside the Sydenham ByPass (blue)

3.4 Each of the proposed routes is between 4.0 and 4.8km long and all of them start at the underpass vehicular entrance to Victoria Park and terminate near Kinnegar, Holywood. The routes would also provide a link between the existing Comber and Connswater Greenways and Holywood Exchange and the North Down Coastal Path. The preferred route will determine which scheme will be included in the Belfast Cycling Network delivery plan for construction in the short term and which scheme(s) will be included in the longer term.

3.5 The link to the questionnaire is here [Sydenham to Holywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Routes - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#) and Members may wish to respond directly to this

3.6 Over the past couple of years, and in advance of the recent public consultation, there has been ongoing engagement with the Dfl, the East Area Working Group and Officers on cycle routes and greenways. Dfl presented the proposed Sydenham to Holywood consultation routes at the AWG meeting on 3 February 2022 where it was agreed that after the completion of the public consultation, Dfl would return to the AWG to present the consultation findings. Given the previous feedback and engagement with Dfl, it is likely that the AWG will continue to be an appropriate mechanism for Dfl, Members and officers across Physical Programmes, City & Neighbourhood Services and City Regeneration & Development to enable further discussions to progress to the next stage. Dfl has noted that there is currently no budget to

deliver the scheme at this time but would like to continue engaging with Council to work up options for delivery and once the routes have been agreed.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

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

None associated with this report.”

In response to a number of comments from Members around the infrastructure at the entrance of Victoria Park and preference towards greenway route options, the Director of City Regeneration and Development informed the Committee that she would pass the comments to the Department of Infrastructure.

The Committee:

- Noted that the Department for Infrastructure was undertaking a public consultation, by way of a short questionnaire, on the Sydenham to Hollywood Walking, Wheeling and Cycling routes;
- Noted that there has been ongoing engagement by DfI with the East Area Working Group and Council officers, in relation to the future delivery of the routes, likely to continue to be an appropriate mechanism for future discussions; and
- Noted that Members might wish to respond directly to the questionnaire and that reports could be brought back to the relevant Committees as appropriate, should the proposals progress further.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Culture Work Programme 2022/23

The Director of Economic Development and the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, provided the Committee with an overview of the undernoted 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 2022/23 aligned to the implementation of year 3 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 2022/23 including the budget implications at 3.16 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 year one and year two of the strategy. The strategy made a commitment to publishing an annual report in order to demonstrate the impact of cultural development on the city's wider agenda. Due to the pandemic this was not completed in 2021 however a report will be presented to Committee in quarter one of the new financial year that summarises 2020/1 and 2021/2 with a view to it being circulated to key city stakeholders.

3.3 In 2021/22 this work included:

- £3.08m funding through 117 awards via the following schemes: Cultural multi-annual funding including support for Arts/ Heritage organisations and Festivals/Events – 51 organisations supported; Transition funding for 11 organisations that had previously been in receipt of multi-annual funding; four Pathfinder awards for organisations not in receipt of core public sector support; Creative Bursaries for 10 individuals; 14 A City Imagining targeted cultural leadership grants; five Access and Inclusion grants in partnership with DfC; 20 Community Festivals Fund in partnership with DfC and four Creative Development Awards.
- Additional investment was also made through the Creative Communities programme as part of Peace IV.
- Completion of cultural mapping of the city including infrastructure audit.
- Development of Co-design Framework for culture, arts and heritage.

- Strategic Delivery Body for Festival 2022 including commissioning of *Our Place in Space* and support for four additional projects.
- Securing UNESCO City of Music Designation and developing of music strategy.
- Delivery of meanwhile use at 2 Royal Avenue.

3.4 As the city hopes to emerge from the pandemic, year 3 of the strategy will seek to combine cultural recovery with renewal in line with the commitments and priorities set out in *A City Imagining*.

3.5 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.

3.6 A further £79,768 was agreed in relation to *Pathfinder* development funding for four organisations. Approval was also granted to re-opened small grants (project funding) that had been suspended during the pandemic.

3.7 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 and further evidenced by the impact of COVID-19, Committee agreed in February 2022 to bring forward a specific funding programme for studios and artist-led organisations.

3.8 Sectoral Development

In addition to funding, Belfast City Council fulfils an important role in leading and supporting sectoral development initiatives. In 2022/23 it is proposed that these will continue to build on work undertaken to date as part of the implementation of the cultural strategy as outlined below. These include bespoke programmes designed in partnership with sectoral organisations to specifically meet the priorities of the cultural strategy including:

- Belfast Audience Panel
- Heritage Action Plan
- Disability Action Plan

3.9 Council also operates a number of sectoral Forums: Belfast Festivals Forum and Belfast Visual Arts Forum. To complement this work, new partnerships with Theatre and Dance NI and Craft NI are proposed.

3.10 Members will be aware the Council has commissioned a report LGBTQIA+ visibility and representation in Belfast's Culture, Arts and Heritage. Recommendations will be brought back to Committee and developed into an action plan. A similar report is due to be commissioned on minority ethnic representation.

3.11 As well as these Belfast focussed sectoral and participation programmes, Council also provides partnership funding to larger strategic programmes such as *Blueprint for the future – a capacity and financial growth programme for the arts*. Blueprint is a bespoke programme designed to meet the unique needs of arts organisations and is based on a four-year programme of research led by Arts & Business NI and delivered by Small Change NI. Belfast City Council has engaged with partners throughout this development phase. It is designed to support small to mid-scale arts and cultural companies from across Northern Ireland. It will support and develop a cluster of organisations, investing in them over a five-year period to strengthen long term financial sustainability. Council's invested in year one ensured that the diversity and breadth of Belfast's sector was recognised in the programme. 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 two of the programme.

3.12 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.

3.13 Cultural Participation and Engagement

As well as sectoral support for culture, arts, heritage and events, Council also delivers initiatives designed to increase accessibility and cultural participation. Research and development projects were completed in 2021/22 and this will be further developed into targeted initiatives in 2021/22. Included below is an outline of this workstream.

- Opportunities to engage with heritage and arts with specific focus on support for telling Belfast Stories through skills development programme.
- In 2021 toolkits were developed to support the activation of public space through community and cultural led programming. As part of ongoing city recovery, it is proposed that additional support is offered to organisations seeking to use these spaces across the city.
- Designing capacity building programmes to improve accessibility of cultural initiatives in the city through initiatives such as Gig Buddies and how this can be expanded to venues and events across the city.
- Promoting cultural diversity in Council led events through new programming approach in partnership with the cultural sector.
- In addition to local engagement the cultural strategy also recognised the importance of supporting the cultural sector and practitioners to engage and connect globally ensuring opportunities for Belfast to participate in international networks.

3.14 **Strategic Initiatives**

2024: Designated Year of Culture

2024 marks the beginning of the second implementation phase of *A City Imagining*, a ten-year strategy. It is also the year that has been earmarked as potential for strategic cultural and tourism programmes that will specifically support recovery of the international market. The cultural strategy committed to a year of culture to ensure that the energy, creativity, ambition and potential that had been harnessed as part of this European Capital of Culture process could be followed through on, to the benefit of the people of the city and region. This is envisioned as a yearlong programme of home-grown authentic cultural products with significant international appeal. It will demonstrate how *A City Imagining* is delivering against the five outcomes for the city as identified in the Belfast Agenda.

- 3.15 Added to the established strategic context, there is now an opportunity to pivot these plans in the context of city recovery from Covid-19 in terms of both social cohesion but also in terms of the repositioning of Belfast internationally. As part of recovery plans it is proposed that the 2024 programme is launched in 2022. It had been planned to launch the initiative in 2021 however this was delayed due to the pandemic.

This will require programme development building on work already underway such as the development of *Urban Forest* in partnership with the Eden project. Ongoing engagement will be required with the cultural sector to bring forward a co-designed commissioning approach. Further detail will be presented to Committee throughout 2022 as emerging plans develop.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2022/23 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals.

**3.17 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 content of the report and the progress against the delivery of the cultural strategy priorities; and
- Agreed to the proposed actions for 2022/23, which included the budget implications, which would be met from existing departmental budgets.

Draft Music Strategy

The Director of Economic Development reported that, following on from Belfast having been designated as a UNESCO City of Music in November, 2021, it had been recognised that Council would need to reinforce the strategic ambitions around music development in the city, in order to complete the necessary requirements for the UNESCO designation.

He outlined the statistics, which had been gathered through an economic appraisal, undertaken by Sound Diplomacy, which included:

- In 2019, the Belfast music ecosystem had delivered a total economic impact of 3131 jobs, which represented 2.05% of the city's employment; and

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th March, 2022**

- The direct employment generated in 2019 (1781 jobs), represented 1.16% of the workforce in Belfast, which had been a larger contribution than other sectors, such as construction of buildings.

He referred to engagement, which had taken place and stated that robust consultation and partnership building, through continued work with the City of Music Steering Group, since 2019.

He pointed out that the draft music strategy had four strategic themes and that each had four strategic priorities. He stated that the strategy put forward recommendations for the following areas:

- Leading the Way – The Belfast Music Governance Model, including recommendations on a dedicated music officer/office working on strategic delivery;
- Take Back the City – The Belfast Music Leadership Model, including the recruitment of a new Belfast Music Board to oversee the strategic delivery;
- Friends of Belfast Music – Partners and Allies, including developing partnerships with Arts Council Ni, Tourism NI and BBC to deliver on shared ambitions; and
- Something to Sing About – Belfast Music Branding and Communications Strategy, including promotion of our UNESCO City of Music status locally and internationally.

He outlined to the Committee the next steps required in order to implement the strategy from September, 2022.

The Committee:

- Noted the content of the report;
- Approved the draft music strategy to commence a 12-week public consultation in April 2022; and
- Agreed to receive a presentation of the final strategy, for consideration, following completion of the consultation.

Chairperson