



Subject:	City Centre Revitalisation Programme/Sundays in the City Initiative
Date:	11th September, 2019
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager: Economy

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the City Revitalisation programme that has been developed to support city centre animation and vitality and to seek approval to proceed with an engagement and consultation exercise focusing on Sundays in the city.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the report and agree the proposed approach to moving forward with the research, engagement and consultation work on "Sundays in the City", as set out in sections 3.6-3.10 below.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that, following the fire at the Bank Buildings in August 2018, the Council as well as a range of public and private partner organisations invested in a programme of activities to support city centre development. Following on from an initial response focusing on “City Centre Recovery”, the programme has now moved to focus on “City Centre Revitalisation”. This reflects the need for a longer-term approach to investment, taking account of all the possible functions of the city centre. It reflects a wider approach to city centre regeneration, including issues such as retail offer and mix, accessibility, cultural development, family spaces, residential investment and tourism development.</p>
3.2	<p>Members will also be aware that the issue of Sunday trading hours and, in particular, the proposed designation of Belfast as a “holiday resort” has been discussed by the Council on a number of occasions in the past. The effect of this designation would provide large shops (above 280sqm in size) with an option to extend their Sunday trading hours on up to 18 Sundays (other than Easter Sunday) between 1 March and 30 September in any calendar year. At present, all units below this size can operate without any trading restrictions (apart from relevant licensing restrictions etc.).</p>
3.3	<p>At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 5 June 2019, as part of a discussion on the Revitalisation Programme, it was agreed that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the Terms of Reference to progress proposals for designating the city centre as a ‘Holiday Resort’, taking into account issues beyond opening hours and outlining the extent of the associated consultation process”.</p>
3.4	<p>As noted above, the conversation with partner organisations now covers a range of issues associated with developing a mixed-use economy to support city centre viability and to encourage sustainability. The City Revitalisation Programme is set within the context of a wider regeneration strategy and action plan for the city centre, based on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy. The City Centre Regeneration Task Force (involving the Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretaries from relevant government departments, working alongside senior Council officers) aims to support a collaborative public sector response to drive and resource the city centre revitalisation efforts in the long-term. The priority areas of focus emerging from the City Centre Joint Regeneration</p>

Taskforce mirror the themes identified by businesses and the representative organisations within the city and include:

- City Resilience – a medium to long term city centre recovery plan involving various stakeholders and the continued need to drive forward and support the retail, office, tourist and city centre living product
- Re-imagining and Diversification – recognising the need to diversify the city centre, including provision of family centric activities, enhanced tourist and cultural offering, city centre living, enhancing the evening economy etc.
- Infrastructure and Connectivity – enhance public realm and open space ensure permeability and connections through the city, transport and car parking issues etc.

3.5 At the 22nd February 2019 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, members agreed that the broad objectives of the Revitalisation Programme should be:

- Creating an enhanced city centre offering to drive footfall across all sectors
- Improve attractiveness and vibrancy
- Enhance connectivity and permeability
- Maximise tourism and cultural opportunities and attract visitors
- Encourage more families and young people to use the city centre
- Support existing businesses and augment and promote ongoing programmes of activity.

3.6 Updates on the City Revitalisation programme have been brought to this Committee on a regular basis. There is a significant programme of work already under way with ongoing commitments from public and private partners. However one of the issues that has been raised by a number of these organisations – and reflected in the Committee decision of June 2019 – is the need to consider specific interventions that will animate and activate the city centre on a Sunday. This will need to consider issues such as opening hours, public sector transport provision, city marketing, investment in animation and licensing issues.

3.7 The rationale for treating Sunday as distinct from other days is that the current usage levels and patterns on a Sunday are very different from other days of the week. This is not only because of opening hours but also because of issues such as a significant volume of cruise visitors coming to the city on a Sunday (up 46% on figures from last year, with 144 ships now expected into Belfast with an estimated 276,000 passengers and crew – 20 ships and 45,000

passengers and crew on Sunday visits) and an increased appetite from the hospitality sector to programme activity on a Sunday to meet user demands (e.g. the growing popularity of the “Sunday brunch” among hospitality providers). Hotel occupancy figures also suggest that Saturday continues to be the busiest evening for hoteliers, with average occupancy levels across the city in excess of 84% throughout the year – and higher in the summer season (source: STR). At present, St George’s Market is one of the only city centre attractions that is open on a Sunday morning and footfall figures indicate that this is the busiest opening day of the market, and that the 10am-2pm period is the busiest time of the day.

3.8

In order to inform any future approach to specific proposals for investment in the city centre on a Sunday, it is proposed that a focused research, engagement and consultation exercise is undertaken. The terms of reference for this piece of work will include the following:

- To develop an informed understanding of the current usage levels and types (user profile (resident/visitor); time spent; activities undertaken; economic impact) in the city centre on a Sunday
- To explore opportunities to drive additional footfall and spend by attracting new visitors to the city on a Sunday
- To identify barriers to accessing the city centre on a Sunday (for those that wish to do so) and to engage with partners to develop collaborative solutions to address these barriers
- To build an understanding of approaches in other cities and to develop learning that may be relevant for the Belfast context
- To understand the socio-economic impact of any additional city centre animation activities on a Sunday
- To understand the impact that any change to opening hours may have on the city centre
- To understand the investment required to encourage the additional visitor numbers to the city on a Sunday and to build a business case to lever resources from partner organisations, in the context of the City Revitalisation proposals.

3.9

It is proposed that the methodology for this work will include a mixture of primary research, a structured engagement process involving key individuals and specific organisations and a wider public consultation piece to maximise the reach and explore a breadth of views. Consideration will also be given to creative mechanisms for engagement and information

gathering, building on the learning from the recent engagement exercise on the new Cultural Strategy. The primary research is likely to focus on:

- Building an understanding of what the future city centre demographic looks like, to include population projections for city centre living, hotel occupancy trends, number of cruise ships arriving and tourists visiting the city centre
- Building an understanding of the evidence base from a tourism perspective, to include the profile of tourists to the city and a better understanding of what the tourist expects from a destination like Belfast
- Benchmarking Belfast against other cities to include Sunday animation and licensing issues
- Review of approaches in other successful city centres, accessing research from credible independent experts such as the Institute for Place Management (www.placemanagement.org/)
- Building an understanding of the physical makeup of the city centre and the potential impact that extending opening hours may or may not have, including the number of businesses and employees that may be affected if opening hours were extended
- Consideration of the impact on workers of additional activity in the city centre.

3.10

In addition to the research activity, it is proposed that an extensive engagement process is undertaken to include:

- One to one engagement with stakeholders including BCTC, BIDs, Visit Belfast, The Hotel Federation, Hospitality Ulster, Tourism NI, Retail NI, Parenting NI, Trades Unions to understand current position, including accessing any available research and exploring opportunities for developing collaborative approaches (if appropriate)
- One to one engagement with city centre small businesses (those that can currently open and do so; those that can open and choose not to do so)
- One to one engagement with larger retailers that cannot currently open to understand current trading patterns on a Sunday – particularly looking at how Belfast fares alongside comparator cities
- One to one engagement with cultural organisations to understand current Sunday activities and explore opportunities for programming, in line with visitor/user trends and demands and
- One to one engagement with workers potentially affected by any change to opening hours of cultural or retail facilities.

3.11	<p>It may also be appropriate to undertake a public consultation on this matter. This will seek to understand if and how people use the city centre on a Sunday; what might encourage them to do so if they don't already and what they would like to do in the city. In order to ensure compliance with legislation, an Equality Screening will also be required. This can be done in parallel with the consultation exercise.</p> <p><u>Timeframe and Work Programme</u></p>												
3.12	<p>Subject to Committee endorsement of this approach, it is proposed that the timetable for this work will be:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="276 705 1471 1189"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="276 705 869 757">Action</th> <th data-bbox="869 705 1471 757">Milestone</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="276 757 869 808">Consultation period (8-12 weeks)</td> <td data-bbox="869 757 1471 808">October-December 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="276 808 869 913">Undertaking research and engagement activity</td> <td data-bbox="869 808 1471 913">September-December 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="276 913 869 965">Analysis of consultation and findings</td> <td data-bbox="869 913 1471 965">December 2019-January 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="276 965 869 1120">Committee decision re: budget implications and any policy change e.g. Holiday Status designation</td> <td data-bbox="869 965 1471 1120">February 2020</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="276 1120 869 1189">Operational programme of activity</td> <td data-bbox="869 1120 1471 1189">April 2020 onwards</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>	Action	Milestone	Consultation period (8-12 weeks)	October-December 2019	Undertaking research and engagement activity	September-December 2019	Analysis of consultation and findings	December 2019-January 2020	Committee decision re: budget implications and any policy change e.g. Holiday Status designation	February 2020	Operational programme of activity	April 2020 onwards
Action	Milestone												
Consultation period (8-12 weeks)	October-December 2019												
Undertaking research and engagement activity	September-December 2019												
Analysis of consultation and findings	December 2019-January 2020												
Committee decision re: budget implications and any policy change e.g. Holiday Status designation	February 2020												
Operational programme of activity	April 2020 onwards												
3.13	<p>If approved by Committee, a designated officer team will lead on the development of the evidence gathering and engagement activity.</p>												
3.14	<p>The resource implications associated with any additional activity as part of the City Revitalisation Programme will be brought back to the Committee for information and approval.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>												
3.15	<p>An equality screening will be carried out as part of this process. A rural needs assessment will also be undertaken at that time.</p>												
4.0	Documents Attached												
4.1	None												