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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: Kellogg Centre - GCHU
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Call for Evidence | Commission on Creating Healthy Cities
Attachments: BCC Response to CCHC August 21.docx

Sent on behalf of Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive Belfast City Council.

Please note that due to the nature of this response we deemed that it was more appropriate to email our submission than submit through your portal.

Dear Lord Best

Further to your correspondence of the 25/06/2021, I welcome the opportunity to input into the Commission on Creating Healthy Cities' Call for Evidence. We recognise the importance of creating a Healthy City and with our partners the Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities, we recently developed The Bolder Vision blueprint. It outlines a progressive and wide-reaching vision to reimagine Belfast city centre with a focus on developing a greener, walkable and connected core that is more people and family focussed. Further information on this initiative can be accessed at [A Bolder Vision for Belfast \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)

In addition to our attached response to your questions I would also like to brief you on some of the work that we are undertaking in response to the Covid 19 crisis. This includes:

- Council and partners have engaged and developed robust plans to drive city recovery forward. In working to understand the impacts on the city, Council have developed a Recovery plan - [Belfast: Our Recovery September 2020 \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk)
- Our ambitions continue to be for growing a successful city economy that benefits all our citizens –we still want to see our vision for a future Belfast (as set out in our Belfast Agenda) realised.
- We know a stronger Belfast means a stronger NI region – we contend that the NI Executive needs to ensure consideration is given to how Belfast rebuilds in the Executive's Recovery Plans.
- Whilst the vaccination programme is very welcome, we recognise the city is not in 'full steam ahead' recovery mode and a lot of support is still necessary.
- We must do all we can to support our communities in the short term, but also look to rebuild and recover as circumstances allow.
- As local, regional and national plans for recovery develop further over the coming months, there are many opportunities coming our way that we need to be ready to grasp to ensure Belfast is as competitive as possible.

Some things that the Council will be doing in the **short term** include:

- Investing the NI Executive's Covid-19 Recovery support funds, including £3m Covid-19 Capital Revitalisation fund, and a £4m Greenways programme
- Delivering our own new £8m Neighbourhood Regeneration fund
- Continuing to invest in projects to support neighbourhood regeneration – including £20m in 2 new leisure centres commencing in 2020.

- Creating local job opportunities and boosting local supply chains through new developments including investing in digital infrastructure and digital access at our sites, working to boost energy efficiency of our buildings, and investing in zero-emissions transport to boost sustainable connectivity.

Also **medium and longer term** strategic programmes that we will be driving forward and accelerating and reshaping to maximise their impact in supporting and promoting the city's recovery – e.g.

- Accelerating delivery of the £850 million Belfast Region City Deal – this investment will provide a boost for key growth sectors, transform our global profile and create new and better jobs.
- Exploring how we take forward recommendations from our city's Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission for stimulus interventions - including creating an Innovation district, a free innovation zone, and investing in digital infrastructure and skills
- Connectivity – as well as improving connectivity and access to the city through the key projects such as the new Weavers Cross transport hub, delivering phase II of Belfast Rapid Transit and exploring how we improve the Belfast-Dublin Economic corridor
- Improving existing, and creating new world class visitor attractions (new Belfast Destination Hub)
- Clean energy projects and efficiency programmes to help us move towards being a net zero carbon city – we need to use this opportunity to ensure our recovery plans help our city gain the benefits from clean energy and zero carbon transport. We recognise the threats from climate change are growing - there is opportunity which we want to grasp to deliver a step change in this decade as part of a sustainable approach to recovery.

We also want to ensure that our recovery has **inclusive growth at its heart**, so that we make sure it creates opportunities to benefit those in our communities who have previously not been able to access skills and jobs, and the wellbeing benefits that brings.

It is vital that our recovery in Belfast is **Jobs led** – everything we do in bringing forward these major projects will be aiming to protect and retain existing jobs, and to create new jobs... as well as focusing on ensuring our people have opportunities to develop the skills needed to access these jobs.

We will **remove barriers** to participation in those key growth sectors through a widespread **digital inclusion programme** and focus on **educational inequalities**. We will also provide support to new and existing businesses to harness digital technology to drive innovation, productivity and growth.

Next steps – We will continue to **engage with political leaders and decision makers** at all levels of government, to seek buy-in, support and alignment, and to work collaboratively with us in efforts to rebuild and recover.

We are also **engaging with our communities and businesses** over the coming months to shape our plans and their implementation. Our people need to be at the heart of recovery, so we will be creating opportunities for people to have their say. In the current situation this means we need to be innovative in how we do this, so we will be using new online tools to create new opportunities to engage with us.

I trust that you will find the information that we have provided to be of use and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Wylie

Subject: Call for Evidence | Commission on Creating Healthy Cities

Sent on behalf of Lord Best and The Commission on Creating Healthy Cities

Dear Ms Wylie,

I am writing as Chair of the Commission on *Creating Healthy Cities* to request your input in response to our Call for Evidence. The Commission is an initiative of Oxford University's Global Centre on Healthcare and Urbanisation, at Kellogg College, and The Prince's Foundation.

As you will see from the attachment to this email, we have assembled a brilliant group of policymakers, practitioners, and academics. We are supported by senior researchers from the University and have created three subgroups and an International Advisory Board. Our intention is to bring forward our conclusions and recommendations, aimed principally at city leaders and their citizens, in the Spring of next year.

It would be extremely helpful to gain your insights into the challenges of creating healthy cities - not least illustrated by the Covid pandemic - that face policymakers, communities, and citizens.

Although we recognise and welcome the overlap and interdependency of our core themes, we are grouping our questions under 4 headings:

- 1) Housing and the Built Environment;
- 2) Transport and Mobility;
- 3) Health and Wellbeing;
- 4) With an overarching interest in Governance and Decision-making Processes.

Feel free to respond to any questions from our list; or, indeed, to make related points which we have not covered. It would be great to get your views.

With many thanks in advance for your participation and best wishes,

Lord Richard Best
Chair of the Commission on Creating Healthy Cities

www.healthycitiescommission.org/submissions-for-call-for-evidence/

Sent on behalf of Lord Best and The Commission on Creating Healthy Cities by:

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Kellogg College
University of Oxford



Global Centre on
Healthcare & Urbanisation

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Belfast City Council response

1. Governance/decision making processes

1.A How best can City leaders ensure that the voices of citizens/users of services shape their policymaking and keep the public genuinely engaged with the process of policymaking as it proceeds from consultation to decision?

A culture of engagement needs to be embedded within the organisation. This needs to be championed and supported from the top, with Elected Members and senior managers committed to meaningful engagement. This could be evidenced by a clear consultation and engagement framework or policy statement. Belfast City Council adopted a Consultation and Engagement Framework in November 2020 which sets out our vision for engagement and the standards we will strive to meet. It is supported by an officer toolkit that is updated as good practice develops.

A commitment to engagement must also be backed up with appropriate resources to build capacity and for implementing processes and systems to support meaningful engagement. A one-size fits all approach cannot be taken, but instead each engagement must be tailored to its own unique circumstances. This requires investment in capacity building and training to ensure that engagements are fit for purpose and adequately resourced. Belfast City Council has trained over 100 key staff, with many now holding the Consultation Institute's Certificate of Professional Development. We continue to develop our approaches to capacity building and have recently developed a short animated video for employees to explain good practice consultation and engagement.

For many organisations, and in particular local government, engagement has become part and parcel of what we do. It is not a discrete a function, but instead is increasingly becoming part of normal service development and delivery. Whilst our framework and toolkit are designed to help us ensure that we consistently adopt high quality approaches to engagement, we have also established Consultation and Engagement Leads within each Department to ensure that knowledge, skills and support is embedded throughout the organisation. Reputational risk from a poor engagement can be damaging beyond that one exercise, so a joined-up and consistent approach is required. Therefore, a key role for our C&E Leads is to quality assure service based engagements.

As mentioned above, one of the challenges for organisations is that there is not a standardised approach to engagement. Whilst we can have guiding principles and put in place quality assurance processes, the methods of deployment should be tailored to what works best. A stakeholder analysis should be undertaken at the commencement of any engagement exercise as this will help identify who needs to be involved. A number of tools are available to help organisations identify and understand their stakeholders. Equality considerations should form an integral element of a stakeholder analysis and will help ensure that any barriers to involvement are identified and addressed. Targeted engagement and outreach is essential if we are to ensure that all voices are heard, particularly seldom heard and marginalised groups. Belfast City Council has developed a toolkit, invested in training and introduced internal procedures to help officers work through the planning and stakeholder analysis stages.

Organisations will need to employ a wide range of mechanisms and techniques to reach citizens. Whilst covid-19 has highlighted the importance of digital technology, a mixture of online and face-to-face dialogue is normally required. Our processes are designed to help services understand and select the most appropriate method of engagement. These will vary depending on each situation. Access and barriers to participation are key considerations at this stage. Whilst digital can help address this, organisations must also be mindful of digital exclusion. This is something that Belfast City Council is looking at in more detail now; it is an area in which wider support and research would be appreciated. Belfast City Council also has a number of functional and service

related networks that we can call upon to help support community engagement. This includes our community development officers and community centres; community safety and PCSP mechanisms and employability programmes to name a few. Aligning engagement to existing networks can help ensure that we reach the right people in a way that is easier for them, whilst avoiding consultation fatigue. In addition to bespoke methods, we also have the following standing / formal mechanisms:

- Online engagement platform
- VCSE Panel and Network
- Equality Forum (umbrella consultative forum based on statutory equality regulations)
- Disability Forum, Faith Forum and Migrants Forum
- Youth Forum (representative body)
- Various user forums
- Various partnership structures and boards
- Social media

A particularly critical component of engagement is communication and outreach - unless citizens are aware of the engagement, we will not secure meaningful participation. Developing a communication plan as part of any engagement process is required as part of our engagement process. A communications plan not only covers how we will inform people about the engagement but how we explain and provide information to citizens to enable them to participate in a meaningful way. This is particularly important when engaging on societal issues or matters that are complex. Many public sector organisations use a language of their own, so communicating with citizens in plain, user-friendly language can be a challenge. Whilst digital media can help bridge this gap, we have found that the UK Government's accessibility regulations [Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018] has restricted our ability to provide user friendly documents, particularly for documents aimed at younger people or people with learning disabilities. Restricting all online engagement documents to HTML does not always meet all our customer needs and a dual approach would be preferred.

Belfast City Council differentiates between consultation and engagement. Consultation tends to be more structured, formal and closed, with us presenting our "proposals" for comment. Increasingly, we are moving towards a more co-design approach to planning and delivery. This means involving citizens at an earlier stage and enabling shared and participatory dialogue. Our new engagement platform Your Say Belfast, is designed to help support this new approach with the ability to host online forums and ideas generations in an open and transparent manner.

Citizens need to trust an organisation's engagement practices. A policy statement will help with this; however an organisation must also ensure that their engagement processes are open and visible. Closing the feedback loop is also essential in terms of building trust and allowing citizens to understand how their views have been taken into account and what has happened as a result. This will help ensure that they feel that their views are valid and that getting involved is worthwhile. However, most organisations put huge effort into the engagement itself and tend to be weaker at closing the loop, and is therefore an area for improvement.

Whilst engagement is an essential part of evidenced based policy making, it also needs to provide value for money and be commensurate to need. Good public policy is about making best use of resources. Community engagement is no different. Organisations need to establish realistic and cost-effective budgets. However, austerity measures can often mean that engagement is not prioritised or resourced appropriately. Meaningful engagement cannot happen without incurring costs. Investment at a corporate and project level is critical.

1.B - What are the methods that work, and that don't work, in engaging the wider public in the task of creating a healthy city?

We have found that the success of any engagement will come down to good planning and stakeholder management. What works in one instance, may not work in another. Key to successful engagement will be:

- i. Engaging with people on issues and matters that effect or interest them;
- ii. Building trust that by getting involved it will make a difference; that their views will be valued;
- iii. Engaging at the right time so that people can help define the problem and also influence the situation i.e. not another a tick box survey; and,
- iv. Engaging in the right way - using the right engagement methods and engaging in way and time that suits them.

Often, we can design good engagement processes; however, these need to be tied into decision making and operational processes so that community feedback is taken into account and used. The complex and formal accountable decision-making processes of public sector organisation can make this challenging. Within Northern Ireland, the public sector governance framework is particularly complex with many partners involved in making decisions about healthy city related issues. The introduction of community planning has helped develop more joined up approaches but this is still an evolving discipline.

As 'healthy cities' is a complex area with many public sector players, societal issues and numerous cause and effect scenarios and consequences; a joined-up, structured and long term approach to engagement is required. Building capacity within organisations and within communities will be required. This can take time and patience.

Evidence-based Questions:

1.1 - Are any of the current ways of engaging citizens – Citizens Juries, Assemblies, Youth Parliaments, use of deliberative panels, focus groups et al - proven to be effective?

Belfast City Council has not currently used any of the above deliberative mechanisms. We do use focus groups extensively and have a number of standing forums including a very successful Youth Forum [Youth Forum \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](http://belfastcity.gov.uk)

1.2 - What is the evidence of success or failure for neighbourhood forums in England, and Community Councils in Scotland, bridging the community/municipality divide?

This is not applicable in Northern Ireland. However, community planning was introduced in 2014, which is extremely important for improving coordination between public bodies and with communities. Whilst still at the early stages of development (delay due to covid-19), our VCSE (voluntary, community and social enterprises) Panel and city-wide Network will provide a key way to bridge the community / municipality divide.

1.3 - What is the evidence of success or failure of resourcing local government to take decisions locally produces for health and wellbeing?

The recent experience of Covid-19 has illustrated the importance and success of local government, working in collaboration with communities. Prior to that Belfast City Council and the Belfast Community Planning Partnership, can point to successes in terms of local level decision making. This includes:

- Partnership working on excess winter deaths
- Local area / community led work on drug and substance abuse (causal mapping exercise facilitated by Erica Ison was very well received)
- Connswater Community Greenway

1.4 - Can a value-for-money case be made for encouraging and sustaining the enhanced community spirit generated by the pandemic (increased volunteering, extended neighbourliness and more charitable/community activity)?

Yes there is undoubtedly a need to capture the positive community spirit that has been generated by the pandemic. The costs for this are currently unknown to us – more research would be needed to determine the most cost effective ways of doing so.

2. The Built Environment, Design and Placemaking (Housing, Planning and Urban Design and Regeneration)

Given the nature of the questions under this theme we have combined the responses to the various questions into one overall responses

In planning policy terms the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP) will be the statutory basis on which to guide future investment and development decisions to enable the sustainable spatial growth of the city in all its facets up to 2035.

The first part of the LDP, the Plan Strategy, provides an overarching context for the plan to ensure that economic, social and environmental issues are holistically considered to deliver sustainable development.

The broad thrust of the questions in the Call for Evidence highlight the myriad of issues and challenges that the city faces over the next while and the Plan Strategy provides a spatial land use policy framework to positively encourage investment and guide development that facilitates innovation, environmental sustainability, and socially resilient neighbourhoods.

We would also suggest the information contained within the evidence library, which formed the basis of the recent public inquiry would be a useful resource to ascertain the Council's up to date thinking on issues such as sustainability, housing, transport and wider public health. Details can be found at [https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning/Local-development-plan-\(1\)/Local-development-plan/Draft-plan-strategy-documents](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning/Local-development-plan-(1)/Local-development-plan/Draft-plan-strategy-documents)

Whilst we appreciate issues such as COVID have brought into sharp focus how we plan and design our cities, we would suggest that given the statutory requirement to sustainability appraise all planning policy, that the direction of travel of the emerging plan certainly points towards the need to ensure that policy holistically considers all challenges including health and wellbeing.

In relation to your questions around housing we would draw your attention to our response to the Call for Evidence to inform the new Housing Supply Strategy for Northern Ireland. This response was can be accessed at the following link (item 4b) - [Agenda for City Growth and Regeneration Committee on Wednesday, 11th August, 2021, 5.15 pm \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](#)

Belfast City Council is a key partner of Belfast Health Cities and I would draw attention to a recent publication 'designing places for children & young people' that can be accessed at [Publications | Belfast Healthy Cities](#) This document is about creating good built environments for children. The built environment has a particular important influence on a child's health, particularly

through its impacts on air quality, levels of physical exercise, and mental health and wellbeing. By working to make our built environment more child friendly we can achieve healthier, sustainable, and people centred places where people of all ages have a place. The guidelines contained in this document provide advice on various aspects to consider when designing our built environment in a way that improves the quality of life for children and young people, such as safety, connectivity, sustainability and use of public places. This publication can be a valuable resource for facilitating the transformation of the built environment into places that accommodate children of different ages and capabilities. While planners and developers have a crucial role to play in this transformation process, it should be recognised that the placemaking process also requires active involvement from a wide range of stakeholders including children and young people themselves.

3. Transport and movement, infrastructure and technology (smart cities)

In relation to your question around transport we would draw your attention to the Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change document which was published by the Department of Infrastructure in June 2021. This outlines how the Department's priorities for the future of transport here can be supported by the improved planning, management and development of the transport networks over the next 10 to 15 years. A copy of the document can be accessed at: [Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](https://infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/Planning-for-the-Future-of-Transport-Time-for-Change)

Digital Divides

3.1 - Is there evidence available to help our understanding of how the digital divide – both physical and social – may be excluding:

- ***those without any or adequate broadband, preventing access to online shopping, studying, work and recreation;***
- ***those unable to afford the necessary IT equipment and monthly costs;***
- ***those lacking the knowledge/skills to use broadband/internet.***

Whilst we are unable to provide any specific evidence to answer your question, we have provided you with information on a pilot we are currently developing around a Smart Healthy Neighbourhood.

Smart Healthy Neighbourhood - What is it?

The Smart Healthy Neighbourhood will provide a **world-class demonstrator site for multi-generational city living where digital innovation will promote and encourage active, independent, healthy living and ageing and inform the design of neighbourhoods of the future.**

Location & Purpose

The neighbourhood will be located in a residential city centre location within the city's Smart District. The site will provide a testbed where citizens, health professionals, planners, housing developers and technologists will test and trial the latest in health care technologies in a real-world environment. It will provide a much needed environment where the city and region's health tech sector can test and trial solutions to accelerate innovation and supercharge business growth. The testbed will also play a significant role in informing the design of residential development and infrastructure investments required to support healthy living and neighbourhoods of the future.

Characteristics

The Smart Healthy Neighbourhood will offer unique characteristics such as:

- Support for universities and research institutes to optimise economic and social impact for the benefit of the city and region
- Access and support for 'real world' testing and evidence

- Enable solution providers to experiment at scale, validate, qualify and target solutions directly to the needs of end users
- Provide access to multi-disciplinary teams with range of expertise in challenge area
- Reduce innovation and investment risks and enable 'commissioners' to understand the value of and adopt new technology solutions
- Showcase achievements
- Maximise the opportunity that technology and data analytics can provide to re-think how neighbourhoods are planned and designed to help people remain active and productive as they age
- Provide access to new 'real world' sources of data
- Offer support for route to market, business development and commercialisation support as well as
- Provide access to networks and funding within and beyond Northern Ireland

As the Smart Healthy Neighbourhood will be located within the area identified for the Smart District it will benefit from an 'urban sandbox' flexible policy environment with reduced regulatory barriers and eco-system to support development and deployment of solutions at scale. Within the Smart Healthy Neighbourhood as within the Smart District, companies, researchers and innovators will benefit from low cost access to pervasive high speed wireless and fibre connectivity.

The success of the Neighbourhood is dependent upon the existence of an advanced wireless network for gathering data and connecting devices by stakeholders. It requires an urban data platform for gathering and sharing data across partners in support of a collaborative approach and a Citizen Office for Data Analytics to build capacity and engage commitment from citizens.

Alignment with BRCD Investments

The Neighbourhood will also accelerate ambitions of the three health related BRCD centres of excellence. The Connected Devices and Health Technologies Centre and iReach will be able to test and scale trials beyond the research and primary healthcare environment. It will enrich the work of the Global Innovation Institute by enhancing opportunities to collect 'real world' big data for AI analysis, offering a rich environment to support GII's integrated 'One health' agenda. Other benefits include a real world testbed to support advances in cleantech and mobility.

Investment in the Smart Healthy Neighbourhood will provide a unique advantage for local companies, innovators and academics and offers a compelling proposition to attract substantial international investment from health and digital industries.

Key Stakeholders & Beneficiaries

- **Community/End Users:** Provide challenges, data, co-create solutions, test technology and solutions, provide feedback
- **Planning and development:** Support integration of technology with planned infrastructure investments, work with the local community to understand challenges, transfer learnings to urban development policies and new laws and regulations benefitting planners and housing providers
- **Solution/Technology developers and providers:** Offer innovative solutions to the health challenges of the community, adapt technology to suit user requirements, commercialise the technology for wider availability
- **Health care experts:** provide expertise, healthcare data, co-create solutions, scale and adoption
- **Universities & researchers:** transformative and translational research via access real world environment,
- **SMEs:** supercharge innovation, accelerate route to commercialisation

Examples of Similar Initiatives

Smart [Sunderland](#) has promoted use of IoT to promote to encourage use of tech in social care by investing in assistive technologies in over 650 homes across. This will help to ensure that people can remain in their homes. The Council has an ambition to reach 1,500 homes over the next 2 years.

Brighton and Hove Health Living Lab [Brighton](#) & Hove Living Lab offers a location for testing and developing prototypes for mature products and services that have the potential to improve welfare services, reduce pressure on public sector services and enable healthy living.

Smart [Dublin](#) is an initiative to improve the health and wellbeing of citizens in Dublin 8 through collaboration and innovation. D8 was selected due to its proximity to local hospitals, research institutes and vibrant start-up community combined with a residential area of need. It has brought together public authorities, academia, healthcare, local community and industry to focus on health needs identified in the area.

[Edinburgh](#) Bio-quarter have announced plans for a £1 billion health innovation district with plans for a commercial lab space, office space, retail, leisure and housing for a community of 20,000 people. This partnership between the University of Edinburgh, NHS Lothian, the City of Edinburgh Council and regional development agency Scottish Enterprises, has secured £500m worth of capital for the 61-acre site with further £330m of capital investment is planned for the next five years.

Edinburgh BioQuarter seeks to build on commercial life sciences, data-driven health innovation and biomedical sectors and to offer a leading location in Europe which combines globally ranked academic and clinical research at scale with the space to accommodate a large cluster of commercial companies and associated services, as well as residential housing to create a vibrant community.

Initiation Projects

Homes for Healthy Ageing

Belfast City Council is a member of a successful consortium selected by Connected Places Catapult to create one of two testbeds (in the first phase of a healthy ageing testbed roll out across the UK(which will ultimately have 5 testbeds overall)). Our local consortium is led by UU and consists of Queens University, Ulster University, Connected Health Innovation Centre, Public Health Agency Department for Health, AgeNI, Markets Development Association and HIRANI (health innovation & research network).

The overall project value is £2.5 million. This will provide consortium access of up to **£50k** to support the planning and roll out of the testbed (August '21 to April '22) which in Belfast will focus on isolation and loneliness faced by the over 65s. Through the project core fund, Connected Places Catapult will also provide access to world leading academic and industry research to match solutions from healthtech and care innovators to this challenge and to learning from testbeds across the UK.

Funding will also be available to allow the consortium to co-design a challenge call and invite SMEs to trial and test solutions to address the issue of loneliness and isolation. Testing in Belfast will take place in the Markets area, identified through work undertaken by QUB through an MOU with the Markets Development Association.

This testbed project provides funding and access to expertise to enable us to take a first step towards the development of the Smart Healthy Neighbourhood within the Smart District. It will help to validate the critical characteristics required for the development of successful testbeds which will offer supportive environments for citizens, SMEs and city researchers and build capacity to co-create and innovate.

The project will also inform and influence the outworkings of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD). It will inform the development of funds that will be available via the Digital Pillar of the BRCD to support digital innovation as well as the type of digital infrastructure required to support innovation.

Northern Ireland Public Data Panel

Council's City Innovation team is working on a collaborative pilot with Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment (NITRE) and the Administrative Research Research centre to identify best practice in establishing and supporting a public data panel. This work will help to identify how best to engage and support citizens in the consideration of use of data for innovation and research and build their capacity to participate in the innovation process. The project is a precursor for the Citizen Office for Data Ethics (CODE)

Patterns of Working

3.2 - Is there evidence of the effects relating to working practices adopted during the Covid pandemic:

- flexible working,***
- hybrid working at home and in an office,***
- working in office hubs close to home***

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the council experienced an urgent shift towards remote working for a significant section of its office-based workforce in March 2020. Approximately 45% of council staff began to work remotely on a full-time basis at that time.

The majority of these staff continue to work from home, in line with the current PHA and government "stay local" and "work from home where possible" guidance around Covid-19. A temporary homeworking protocol was established to support these arrangements during the pandemic period. This protocol remains in place.

The Northern Ireland Executive has published a planned pathway out of the current COVID-19 restrictions, setting out the approach that will be taken over the coming months, including a move away from the "stay local" and "work from home where possible" messages, and revised guidance around social distancing. The five-phased approach will result in the gradual relaxation of restrictions on workplace attendance.

3.3 - Is there evidence on likely impacts for mobility, following the pandemic, relating to:

- the demand for travel,***
- the viability of public transport,***
- reductions in congestion***

A move towards a long-term blended working model for office-based staff has the potential to support and advance council's strategic objectives around climate and city centre car-parking but we do not currently have any evidence to support this view.

Modes of transport

3.4 - Is there evidence of changing attitudes toward, and expectations for:

- **the role of the car (in particular the role of SUVs)**
- **public transport and continuing need for social distancing**
- **novel forms of transport – mobility as a service, sharing, Uber etc.**
- **walking and cycling – and health – risks, safety etc.**

Belfast City Council launched a public bike hire scheme in 2015 as part of Belfast City Council's physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme currently operates with 400 bikes and 48 docking stations. It was agreed in 2019 to undertake a comprehensive strategic review of the Belfast Bikes scheme and make recommendations for the future management, operation and potential expansion of the scheme. This review has been completed and the findings can be accessed at [Agenda item - Just Eat Belfast Bikes Strategic Review \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/agenda-item-just-eat-belfast-bikes-strategic-review)

Technology

3.5 - What evidence exists to help us to assess the impact of electric vehicles and the outcomes from less air pollution?

3.6 - Is there evidence of benefits of use of technology/apps for travel planning and seamless door to door journeys?

Whilst we do not have evidence to answer these questions, we would draw your attention to work the Council is doing around the development of a new 5-year Air Quality Action Plan for the city. The new Air Quality Action Plan draws upon various forms of air quality and transport planning initiatives, including encouraging sustainable transport, improving public transport, providing new transport infrastructure, introducing cleaner vehicle technologies and supporting behavioural change. We recently consulted on our draft plan and are currently considering the findings of the consultation before we finalise it. Information on our draft plan can be accessed at [Belfast Air Quality Action Plan \(Draft\) | Your say Belfast \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfast-air-quality-action-plan-draft-your-say-belfast)

Green spaces

3.7 - Is there evidence of benefit to health and wellbeing from access for citizens to green space facilities, parks, allotments, etc?

Belfast City Council undertook work in partnership with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) to pilot the use of the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC). Using the SOPARC technique (developed by University of California), the Council looked at measuring levels of usage and activity in the council parks and open spaces. Information of this work can be found at [Agenda item - System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/agenda-item-system-for-observing-play-and-recreation-in-communities) and [Agenda for People and Communities Committee on Tuesday, 12th May, 2015, 4.30 pm \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/agenda-for-people-and-communities-committee-on-tuesday-12th-may-2015-4.30-pm)

We would also draw your attention to our recently agreed Belfast Open Spaces Strategy. Covering about a quarter of the city's total area around 2,390 hectares, our open spaces are a significant resource. Belfast's residents have told us they are proud of the city's natural and built environment and that we need to take care of these natural assets. Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) strategy sets out an ambitious vision that by 2035 'Belfast will have a well-connected, accessible network of high quality, sustainable open spaces recognised for the value and benefits

they provide to everyone who live in, work in and visits our city'. A copy of the Strategy can be accessed at [Agenda item - Belfast Open Spaces Strategy - Delivery Plan \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/agenda-item-belfast-open-spaces-strategy-delivery-plan)

4. Health & Wellbeing (public health, social prescribing, food and exercise, health creation)

Local authorities in Northern Ireland have different powers to those in GB and we do not have responsibility for health and social care. However, Belfast City Council has led the community planning process for the city. We worked with partners, including representatives from the statutory, business, higher education, and community and voluntary sectors, to develop a long-term plan to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the city. Those bodies with responsibility for health in the city sit on the Community Planning Partnership and further information can be found at [Community planning for Belfast \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community-planning-for-belfast)

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland is currently consulting on a Future Planning Model to replace the existing commissioning arrangements and processes in Northern Ireland – Integrated Care System (ICS) NI Draft Framework. An ICS approach brings together partners within the HSC but also beyond, including partners in the voluntary and community sectors and local government, to plan, manage and deliver services based on the needs of the local population. Further information on the consultation can be accessed at : <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/future-planning-model-targeted-stakeholder-consultation>

Belfast City Council are currently finalising our response to this consultation and when this is agreed we will forward you a copy.