



Office of City Recovery – Update and Medium Term Action Plan

Introduction

Dublin City is settling into a more normal pattern in recent weeks and months. The return of workers to offices, as well as students and visitors to the City, has brought back a familiar rhythm to City life. At the same time, several aspects of City life have changed since pre-covid and will remain this way for the near future. Issues that came to light immediately post re-opening, including anti-social behaviour and waste management, have reduced significantly but still rear their head from time to time.

The Office of City Recovery was established in April 2021. This report contains information and analysis on actions taken by the Office of City Recovery, either directly or in partnership with other Dublin City Council Departments, over the last 6 months. It also contains some medium-term actions to be undertaken by core Departments to further embed City Recovery over the next 2 years.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken by hundreds of Dublin City Council staff, particularly in the Traffic, Waste Management, Area Offices, Communications, Street Furniture and Events Sections to enable actions under the banner of the Office of City Recovery.

Toilets

Toilets in public buildings – An initial action of the Office of City Recovery was to organise to open public buildings on a “toilets only” basis. This began from the 26 April with 28 public buildings across the City open on a “toilets only” basis. Analysis of the usage figures, including at City Centre locations, demonstrated that there was little demand for this service, especially in outlying suburbs.

Toilets Wolfe Tone Sq. and Grafton St. – Temporary public toilets were introduced at Wolfe Tone Sq. and Grafton St. in June 2020 as we reopened from the first lockdown. These toilets and their locations have proved hugely popular with citizens throughout the pandemic. While usage fell off dramatically when retail and hospitality reopened, it remains strong with approximately 5,000 and 9,000 people using the facilities at Wolfe Tone Sq. and Grafton St. respectively, on a weekly basis. The facilities at Wolfe Tone Sq. have been relocated to facilitate the completion of the park project. These toilets are now located on Ryders Row.

Toilets incorporated in retail units tender – This tender is complete with the unit at Albert College Park in place. The remaining locations are Clontarf, Griffith Park, Clonmel Street, Wilton Terrace and Sean Moore Park. Utility connections are causing implementation delays at these 5 locations. There are also local objections to the location of the units at Clontarf and Griffith Park, which we are currently working through.

Toilets Portaloos – Dublin City Council installed 150 Portalooos at 14 locations across the City on 4 June. Usage figures for the first weekend of operation were extremely high but as outdoor dining reopened on 7 June, the usage figures declined dramatically. On Saturday 5 June 23,602 people used the Portalooos. However this dropped dramatically in the following weeks to a Saturday high figure of 1,069 on the 26 June. It is apparent that when there are viable alternatives available people prefer to use them rather than Portalooos. Portalooos remained in place on a Friday and Saturday evening on Capel St. and Portabello as large crowds continued to gather at these locations. The provision of Portalooos at Portabello ceased on the 25 September and on Capel St. on the 2 October, as temporary pedestrianisation ended at this location.



One of the key learnings from the last 6 months is that there is a demand from members of the public for a public toilet provision in the City Centre, but it must be high quality, at the right location, well maintained and secure. It must be noted that the cost of staffing and servicing toilets to an acceptable standard is very high and a multiple on an annual basis to the capital cost of provision.

Street Furniture

Guide – Dublin City Council launched a Street Furniture Guide in May to better assist hospitality businesses in navigating and understanding the street furniture application process. This was well received and an asset to hospitality businesses.

Licences – to date there are 477 street furniture licences assessed and issued. A significant amount of work goes into the issuing of each license, including lots of engagement with the applicant, site visits and internal consultation with Traffic, DFB and Area Offices. 184 of these licences were in place before March 2020 with 293 issued since then.

Enforcement – Inspection teams are on the streets daily making sure that every premises has a licence and that the basic requirements of not blocking public footpaths, not putting customers and staff in danger, as well as fire safety regulations are being followed. Significant efforts have been made in this area and we are seeing good levels of compliance across the board. We continue to engage and issue warnings when required. An element of standardisation will need to be done in the coming months to ensure requirements regarding branding and heating are being complied with.

Grants – There have been 157 completed applications, with 216 in draft format for the Failte Ireland Scheme (A) Street Furniture Grants for businesses. Businesses are entitled to up to €4,000 as 75% of cost, once their street furniture is licensed in the public realm or has planning permission on private land. These grants are being managed by the CRES Department.



Fee waiver – Dublin City Council has waived all fees for street furniture until 2023.

City Centre Audits

Audits have been completed on 63 City Centre streets to identify issues in the public realm. In total, 1,393 issues were identified. These have been forwarded to the relevant Departments for prioritisation and rectification. Works have begun to rectify these issues in many cases, and this will continue.

An issue that kept being raised by citizens and businesses throughout the City Centre was the need for power washing of City Streets. A programme of additional intense City Centre power washing has been undertaken by City Recovery and Waste Management in the past months with excellent results. Early issues regarding the volume of public waste being presented on City Streets has also subsided with Waste Management deploying additional resources. The level of general cleanliness in the City Centre is now excellent. The issue of when, where and how commercial waste is presented in the City core needs to be reviewed and addressed. The significant amounts of commercial waste presented for collection on City streets at peak evening times gives an overall feeling of clutter and sloppiness, which is not the reality.



City Animations

Smithfield Light Boxes – Light boxes were installed in Smithfield Sq. on 5 June by the Events Section. These light boxes depict art from the Hugh Lane Gallery and are being used to animate public space. This has proved very successful and popular so far. Additional light boxes have been installed in the Docklands depicting historic images of the area, with proposals for O'Connell St. moving forward.

Local Live Performance Programming Scheme – Dublin City Council's Arts Office sought applications for its Local Live Performance Programming Scheme Summer 2021. All interested parties, including Performing Artists (ensembles/bands or individuals), Promoters, Producers, Venues etc. who wished to receive support, both individual and logistical, for outdoor performance events, were invited to apply. 108 applications were received, and this resulted in a full programme of outdoor live performances throughout the month of September.

Paint the Town – In June, the Council issued a callout for street artists to work on large-scale artworks in appropriate locations across the city. Artists were encouraged to be as creative as possible with their designs. The purpose is to celebrate the city and enhance the experience of the public when coming into the city while supporting Street Art as an art form. The following artists were selected: Shane Sutton, Juliette Viode, Cian Walker and Neto

Work is now complete on 2 of the 5 sites chosen (Dorset Street and Kevin Street), with the remainder on site or commencing in the coming weeks. This collaborative project creates art through partnerships. The art has been made possible by the following property owners: Camden Yard by Westridge at Kevin Street, Terence Harvey Limited at Dorset Street, Kish Fish at Bow Lane, Marlett Group Tara Street /Townsend Street, and Focus Ireland Prussia Street.

A Seat For You – The seat for you proposal was launched on Saturday 12 June. It operated on Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 9pm at The Mansion House, Dublin Castle, O’Connell St. and Capel St. for an initial period of 4 weeks. The locations at O’Connell St. and The Mansion House proved very popular and were extended until mid September.



Failte Ireland Grant Schemes

Dublin City Council has developed concepts and applied for outdoor winterisation grants for Suffolk Street, Merrion Row and Capel Street. These applications were successful and Dublin City Council has been grant- aided €1,186,000. The Planning and Procurement process will now begin for these projects and it is hoped that they will be in place by Q2 2022. A simpler project could be delivered in a quicker timescale but in reality it would be little more than they already have and it is deemed more appropriate to procede with the more longer term sustainable option.



Dublin City Council also submitted a grant application for Smithfield Sq. to the Failte Ireland Urban Animation Grant Scheme, which closed on 15 June. This was a national competitive process with Dublin City Council again being successful to the value of €610,000. This project will be delivered in the coming year.



Marketing Plan

In the months of August and September, Dublin City Council delivered a comprehensive marketing plan for the City under the banner “We Can Dublin Again”. This marketing campaign used the following channels:

- Radio
- Adshel
- JC Decaux
- Dublin Bus
- Social and digital media
- Bleeper Bikes
- Newspaper and Magazine

The aim of this campaign was to highlight key attributes and selling points of the City Centre with a focus on attracting visitors from the suburbs of Dublin and the surrounding counties. The campaign was well received and praised by various stakeholders in the business community.



11/08/2021

13/07/2021

17/07/2021

Stakeholder Engagement

A key part of the work of the Office of City Recovery has been ongoing engagement with all stakeholders in the City Centre. This includes representative groups, businesses of varying sizes, citizens, statutory agencies and non-statutory agencies. The ability to easily engage with any stakeholder and meet on site to

THE IRISH TIMES

discuss issues has been a key cornerstone of the Office of City Recovery and how we have operated.

Next steps – 2 year timeframe 2022 – 2023

The establishment Office of City Recovery was intended as a short term measure to assist, drive and lead the post COVID re-opening of business etc., especially in the core city centre area, where the impacts of the COVID pandemic were especially acute. The initiative has highlighted the critical role of the City Council and the services it delivers in the economic life of the city.

This work of the Office is nearing completion. Over the next three months I intend to work with different Departments in progressing various longer term initiatives that will reinforce the recovery. These include the following:

- Complete public toilet tender and install toilets at 3 locations in the City Centre. (Environment & Transportation)
- Advance public toilet provision in all major City Council parks. (CRES)
- Re-establish, expand and invest in the City Events Programme. (CRES)
- Re-establish, expand and invest in the City Public Arts Programme. (CRES)
- Develop an ongoing marketing plan for Dublin City Centre to highlight positive attributes about the City Centre. (Communications Section)
- Deliver a Public Realm Plan for the City Centre in cooperation with Environment & Transportation Department and the Area Offices with a focus on maintenance, upkeep and implementation of long term public realm plans including the following actions:
 - Further invest in power washing and street cleaning.
 - Appoint a Public Domain Officer with specific responsibility for the City Centre Area.
 - Complete long term Public Realm plans for South Anne Street, Duke Street, Suffolk Street, Lemon Street, Duke Lane, South William Street, Castlemarket, Talbot Street, Talbot Lane and North Earl Street as a matter of urgency.
 - Develop a special City Council internal group to focus on O'Connell Street and deal with public realm issues on the street.
 - Seek to eliminate or greatly restrict the presentation of commercial waste for collection in plastic bags.
 - Seek to reduce the delivery hours for Grafton Street and Henry Street to finish at 9.30am
- Deal with perceptions of Safety in the city centre
 - High Level Street Issues – Housing Department, Lord Mayor and Area Offices
 - City Centre Business Forum – Housing, Lord Mayor and Area Offices.

The Office of City Recovery was always intended as a short term measure. It will cease on 31 December 2021. Over the next three months I will also work with the Chief Executive to ensure that appropriate organisational arrangements are put in place to continue the work of the Office and to maintain a high concentration of service provision etc. for the city centre area.

I propose to organise a Workshop with Brendan O'Brien for all Councillors on the topic of City Recovery and COVID Mobility. This will allow Councillors to have further detailed input and discussion on actions under Covid Mobility and City Recovery. I am suggesting a half-day world café type workshop including:

- detailed presentations on actions to date under the City Recovery and Covid Mobility initiatives.
 - input from Councillors on what has worked well so far and what has not worked well.
 - consideration of how the learnings under each initiative can be embedded.
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Other options to embed City Recovery, which can be discussed at the workshop include:

- A. **Appointment of Senior Executive Officer with Responsibility for the City Centre.** The appointment of a Senior Executive Officer designated as City Recovery Manager. He/she will take over my role and report directly to the Director of Services, North & South City with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the 2 year Action Plan. This could be in addition to the previously outlined additional Public Domain Officer for the City core.
- B. **Continuation of the City Recovery Taskforce.** The Taskforce has worked well to date as a vehicle to engage with Councillors and provide an oversight and approval process for actions. I am suggesting that we could extend the Taskforce for the duration of the 2 year Action Plan with meetings every 3 months. It may also be useful to extend the membership to include the Director of Services North and South City, senior staff from Departments responsible for the implementation of specific actions and Chairpersons of the Central and Southeast Area Committees.
- C. **Change in Assignments for Directors of Services North and South City.** The current assignment of Directors of Services North & South City reinforces the divide in city centre service provision and the lack of focus on the city centre as a whole. I am suggesting that we reassign both Directors of Services with one becoming Director of Services - Centre City, managing the current Central Area and South East Area, and the other becoming Director of Services - Outer City, managing the current North Central, North West and South Central Areas. This only applies to Directors of Services and no other Area Office staff member will change. This will ensure that there is a greater and more consistent focus on the city centre as a whole.

Coilín O'Reilly
Director of City Recovery

20th October 2021
