

Development Committee

Wednesday, 15th February, 2006

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Convery);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors M. Browne, Crozier, D. Dodds, Ekin,
Hartley, Kelly, Kirkpatrick, P. Maskey, McCarthy,
McGimpsey, Smyth and Stoker.

In attendance: Ms. M. T. McGivern, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Long and Newton.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th January, which had been printed and circulated, 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 February, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "SS Nomadic" which, at the request of Councillor D. Dodds, had been taken back for further consideration.

SS Nomadic

The Committee considered further the undernoted minute of the meeting of 18th January under the heading "SS Nomadic":

"The Committee considered further the undernoted minute of the meeting of 7th December under the heading 'SS Nomadic':

'A Member pointed out that the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee had requested that the principal Committee take a decision in regard to the Council's interest in the purchasing of the SS Nomadic. He expressed concern that no information concerning the costs associated with the purchasing, transporting, maintaining and developing the Nomadic as a tourism attraction in Belfast had been presented to the Committee prior to the meeting.

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Members that the reserve price on the vessel was now £180,000 and the estimated cost of transporting the vessel to Belfast would be £80,000.

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that, as an original artefact from the Titanic era, it would be desirable to have the SS Nomadic returned to Belfast. It was pointed out that, given the plans for the Titanic Signature Project within the Titanic Quarter, the acquisition of the SS Nomadic would add considerably to that scheme. The Members were informed that, once the vessel was returned to United Kingdom waters, grants of up to 50% of the costs of restoring the vessel might become available. Therefore, it would be worthwhile for the Council and other organisations within Belfast each to contribute monies to facilitate its return to Belfast.

Other Members were of the opinion that, given the large sums of money which would be involved in the SS Nomadic project and bearing in mind recent announcements regarding the Government's proposed spending plans, it was unlikely that Government Departments or Public Bodies would be in a position to provide funding towards the costs.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that the Chairmen of the Development Committee and the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee, together with the Director of Development, meet with those organisations which would have an interest in having the SS Nomadic returned to Belfast in order to determine the condition of the vessel, the cost of refurbishment and possible sources of assistance, together with the scrap value, and ascertain whether it would be viable to purchase, transport and refurbish the SS Nomadic with a view to it becoming a tourist attraction within Belfast and that a report thereon be presented to the January meeting of the Committee.'

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted the undernoted report in respect of this matter:

'Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update on the current status of the SS Nomadic with regard to the auction of the vessel.

Background

Over the last two years the Council has been presented with details on the existence of the last remaining White Star ship built in Belfast, the S/S Nomadic. These reports were submitted in August and December 2003, March and August 2004, and December 2005. The 1911 built, SS Nomadic was a purpose built passenger tender for the Olympic class liners, which included RMS Titanic and was originally based in Cherbourg, France. In August 2003 the Titanic Working Group recommended that a statement be issued on providing Council support in salvaging the vessel.

In March the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee agreed to commission a structural survey of the vessel. The purpose of the survey was to assess the current state of repair of the ship. This survey identified that the super-structure of the vessel had been removed leaving only the lower decks, which contain some of the original woodwork. In addition this survey also indicated that the ship was water-tight and could be transported back to Belfast.

Salvaging of the SS Nomadic

The purchase of the vessel has been considered by the Council over the last two years. The Council position, which was agreed at the Development Committee of August 2004, was that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure should take the lead. In addition, the Council agreed to send an all-party delegation to meet the then Minister for the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, Ms Angela Smith MP to ask her Department to take the lead on the funding of the salvaging of the ship.

The meeting with the Minister took place on 15th November, 2004 and was attended by Councillors McCausland, Michael Browne, Walsh and Long. The Minister stated she was sympathetic to the Council's case and recognised the historical importance of the ship to Belfast. However, she stated finance was not available within the department, but suggested that a loan from Central Government could be made available through the normal channels. This offer was not accepted by Council. In November 2005 the Council's Events Manager again enquired whether the Department of Culture Arts & Leisure's (DCAL) position, on the SS Nomadic, had changed. Unfortunately DCAL have re-stated that no funding for the project is available and they will not take the lead on this initiative.

Auctions

To date a number of auctions have been set by the Paris Port Authority. The scheduled auction, in September and November 2004 were postponed due to legal issues and at the auction of 10th November 2005 the reserve price for the vessel was not met and the vessel was removed from the sale. At the auction in Paris on Thursday 10th November 2005, no one put forward a bid for the SS Nomadic, therefore a decision was made to hold another auction on Thursday 26th January 2006 to auction the ship for 250,000 Euros (est. £185,000). International media are now excited by the project and Sky News plan to cover the auction.

Overall Costs

In addition to the purchase price of £185,000, there would be an estimated £85,000 costs attached to the transportation of the ship back to Belfast. Once in the city the vessel could be placed on the historic ships register and be eligible up to 50% of funding towards restoration costs. Additional services such as mooring position would also be required, but this may be sourced from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. In relation to the overall restoration costs there is an estimated figure of £7 million. This figure is based on a previous survey by Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, under the guidance of the Minister of the time, Cllr M McGimpsey.

Requests for Support

Since December's the Head of Economic Initiatives has received three letters seeking Council's participation in securing the SS Nomadic for Belfast, (Appendix 1).

On the 9th January 2006 a meeting was held by the Chair of the Development Committee and the Chair of the Tourism Sub-Committee, with representatives from the Belfast Industrial Heritage Ltd (BIH) and the Belfast Titanic Society (BTS).

Both Belfast Industrial Heritage Ltd and Belfast Titanic Society expressed strong support with regard to the salvaging of the vessel for the city. Members should also be aware that Belfast Industrial Heritage are still pursuing sponsorship from large scale corporations and receiving financial pledges through their public campaign. Belfast Industrial Heritage Ltd are keen to point out that they are not seeking funding from Belfast City Council to pay for the restoration of the SS Nomadic as funding will be sought by virtue for SS Nomadic being listed on the Historic Ships Register when she arrives in a UK Port.

At the time of writing this report and subsequent to the above meeting, Belfast Industrial Heritage has raised £27,000 in pledges for SS Nomadic plus is in negotiation with two possible corporate sponsors.

Subsequent to the meeting on the 9th January, with the Chairs of Development and Tourism, the Head of Economic Initiatives is currently clarifying sources of possible support from Titanic Quarter Limited and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. This is being conducted in parallel with revised requests of support from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of Economic Trade and Industry.

Equality Implications

These are currently being reviewed by the Equality Officer

Environmental Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

5.1 To promote Belfast's culture and market the experience the city has to offer.

Resources

The new auction price of the ship is €250,000 plus transportation costs for the ship to be returned to Belfast. The estimated total cost of transportation would be £85,000. The transportation cost is based on the Harland & Wolff survey commissioned by the Council in March 2004. This would mean the purchase and transport of the vessel, to Belfast, would cost an estimated £270,000.

Recommendation

In the light of this information, Members are requested to consider the purchase of the vessel to a maximum of £250,000 for the auction of the SS Nomadic and its transportation back to Belfast. Members are asked to note the current auction will take place on the 26th January 2006.'

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, subsequent to the papers having been issued for the meeting, it had been ascertained that:

- (i) *Belfast Industrial Heritage had now obtained £31,000 in pledges towards the costs of ensuring that the SS Nomadic was returned to Belfast;*
- (ii) *the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure would not provide any finance towards the project but would be prepared to offer the Council a loan;*
- (iii) *it was not legally possible for the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to financially support the Scheme; and*
- (iv) *Titanic Quarter Limited would be interested in supporting the project on the understanding that other organisations made financial contributions.*

In answer to a Member's question, she indicated that officials from the Development Department had contacted representatives of the Paris Port Authority to request that the date of the auction be moved from 26th January in order to provide the Council with more time to endeavour to obtain the monies to purchase and transport the vessel to Belfast.

The Chairman (Councillor McCausland) informed the Members that, as a result of several meetings which he had held during the week with representatives of various Government Departments, officers of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure had advised him that it had been established that maritime heritage was not its responsibility but rather the Department of the Environment and that that Department was examining the possibility of providing funding for the project. He also believed that, for the first time, there was a willingness within Government that it should endeavour to assist in the return of the SS Nomadic to Belfast. He was therefore of the view that the Committee should agree to contribute a considerable level of funding towards the project, thus bringing pressure to bear on the Government to provide a commensurate amount towards the costs involved.

During a lengthy discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that, given the apparent Government support, the Council should commit money to the project and thereby encourage other parties to make financial contributions towards the costs involved. Other Members pointed out that, since the Nomadic was a key part of the Belfast story as a result of its link to the Titanic, it would be an important tourist attraction for the City. Accordingly, the Council should do everything in its power to ensure that the vessel was returned to Belfast.

Several Members pointed out that, during the lengthy period of time the Council had been debating whether it should purchase the SS Nomadic, no other organisation had committed itself to assist, or had indicated that it would be keen to join in a partnership with the Council regarding the project. In addition, given the costs which would be involved, particularly in respect of the refurbishment of the vessel, and the uncertainty as to whether other organisations would provide funding to assist the Council to purchase, transport and refurbish the Nomadic, no bid should be made for the vessel.

After further discussion, it was

*Moved by Councillor Humprey,
Seconded by Councillor Crozier,*

That the Committee agrees that a letter be sent to the Paris Port Authority requesting that it defer the auction of the SS Nomadic until February, to provide £100,000 from the Council's reserves towards the cost of purchasing and transporting the vessel back to Belfast and that the Council continue to hold discussions with various organisations regarding the provision of financial assistance to the project.

Amendment

*Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor McGimpsey,*

That the Committee agrees that a letter be sent to the Paris Port Authority requesting that it defer the auction of the SS Nomadic until February, to provide a maximum of £250,000 from the Council's reserves towards the costs of purchasing and transporting the vessel back to Belfast and the Council continue to hold discussions with various organisations regarding the provision of financial assistance to the project.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the amendment and seven against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Accordingly, the original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Humphrey and seconded by Councillor Crozier was put to the meeting when ten Members voted for and four against and it was accordingly declared carried.

The Senior Committee Administrator informed the Committee that, since the decision to provide funding towards the project would require ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, the £100,000 could not be spent until after that date. Accordingly, if the auction were to proceed as scheduled on 26th January, the Council would not be in a position to submit a bid."

The Chairman (Councillor McCausland) reminded the Committee that, since it had last considered the matter, the Department for Social Development had bought the SS Nomadic at auction and was in the process of establishing a Charitable Trust which would be responsible for obtaining the necessary monies to meet the costs of transporting the ship to Belfast and its subsequent refurbishment. He indicated that it was the intention of the Department to discuss with the Council how best to use the £100,000 which the Committee had agreed to provide towards the cost of purchasing the vessel and transporting it back to Belfast. He pointed out also that, he was of the opinion that the Council would have at least one seat on the Board of the Charitable Trust.

Following a lengthy discussion in the matter, it was

Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor Crozier,

That the Committee agrees to rescind its decision of 18th January allocating £100,000 towards the project and agrees further that discussions be entered into with the Department for Social Development in respect of the formation of the Charitable Trust which would be responsible for the transportation of the SS Nomadic back to Belfast and for its refurbishment and that, subject to a satisfactory outcome to those discussions, a substantial financial contribution be made to the Trust.

On a vote by show of hands six Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Arts Sub-Committee

(Ms. D. Murtagh, Principal Solicitor, attended in connection with this matter.)

In considering the minutes of the meeting of the Arts Sub-Committee of 9th February, copies of which had previously been circulated, a Member drew the Committee's attention to the minute under the heading "Festivals Calendar" and expressed concern that included within the draft Calendar was an event, namely the Belfast Pride Festival, which sought to promote a particular sexual orientation. Accordingly, he proposed that the event be omitted from the draft Festivals Calendar.

The Principal Solicitor advised the Committee that to remove the Belfast Pride Festival from the draft Festivals Calendar in the absence of any valid justification, would leave the Council vulnerable to a legal challenge in that, firstly, it had failed to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity as required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and, secondly, that it had breached its Equality Scheme in which it had committed itself to the fulfilment of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of its organisation.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that it would vote on the matter by means of a recorded vote.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Crozier,
Seconded by the High Sheriff (Councillor Humphrey),

That the minutes of the Arts Sub-Committee of 9th February under the heading "Festivals Calendar" be amended to provide that the Belfast Pride Festival be omitted from the draft Festivals Calendar on the basis that the event seeks to promote a particular sexual orientation.

A poll having been taken on the proposal, there voted for it five Members, viz., the Chairman (Councillor McCausland); the High Sheriff (Councillor Humphrey); and Councillors Crozier, Kirkpatrick and Smyth; and against it seven Members, viz., the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Convery); and Councillors M. Browne, Ekin, Hartley, Kelly, P. Maskey and Stoker. One Member, Councillor McGimpsey, did not vote.

The proposal was accordingly declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Arts Sub-Committee of 25th January and 2nd and 9th February.

"Impact of Cultural Activities on the Development and Use of Urban Spaces" Conference

The Chairman (Councillor McCausland) informed the Committee that, subsequent to the papers for the meeting being issued, an invitation had been received from the Northern Ireland Centre for European Co-Operation for the Council to participate in the above-mentioned conference which would be held in Sardinia between 23rd and 25th March. He stated that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Arts Sub-Committee had expressed an interest in participating in the event. The Centre had indicated that it would meet the costs of the conference fees, travel and accommodation in respect of the Council's representatives.

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that the Conference, which was a collaboration between the Theatre En Vol from Sardinia, the Kulturhus Aarhus in Denmark and the Belfast Community Circus School, would examine the increasingly important role of shared urban space in bringing people together.

During discussion in the matter, a Member expressed concern that the matter, which was not on the agenda, was being discussed and expressed the view that this was contrary to normal Council procedure.

In response, the Director of Development indicated that, when she had been made aware that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Arts Sub-Committee were keen to attend the Conference and taking into consideration the limited time available, she had sought the approval of the Chairman of the Development Committee to have the matter raised at the meeting. The Committee Administrator informed the Members that, whilst it was normal Council practice for only those matters which were listed on the agenda to be discussed at the meeting, there were occasions when, due to the urgency of the matter, such items were considered. He pointed out that, since the Conference was being held in March, it would be necessary for the Committee to decide at this meeting whether the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Arts Sub-Committee could attend the Conference in Sardinia.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that the question of the attendance of representatives from the Council at the Conference could be discussed.

After further discussion it was

Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor Ekin and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that the Council be represented at the “Impact of Cultural Activities on the Development and Use of Urban Spaces” Conference in Sardinia from 23rd till 25th March by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Arts Sub-Committee (or their nominees) and authorises the payment of the appropriate subsistence and attendance allowances in connection therewith.

Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 8th February, copies of which had previously been circulated, were approved and adopted.

Economic Development Sub-Committee

In considering the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 8th February, the Head of Economic Initiatives drew the Committee's attention to the minute under the heading “Enterprise Support”, agreeing to the appointment of the position of Enterprise Officer on the basis that the terms of reference for the post would be circulated prior to the meeting of the principal Committee at which the minutes would be adopted and that those Members of the Sub-Committee, who were not Members of the Development Committee, be invited to attend. She reminded the Members that a report in the matter had, as requested, been circulated.

Following discussion, the Committee expressed satisfaction with the terms of reference for the position of Enterprise Officer as outlined in the report and agreed to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 8th February.

Estates Management – Gasworks Site

Siting of Northern Ireland Electricity Sub-Station on Plot 4

The Director of Development informed the Committee that, due to the greater than expected usage of electricity in the Gasworks Estate, a further sub-station was required. It was intended that the new sub-station would serve primarily Plots 4 and 6, although excess power could be re-directed, if necessary, to supply the entire site. The developer of Plot 4, Ormeau Gasworks Limited, had agreed to site the sub-station at this location, had undertaken to fund the costs of the electrical equipment and associated works which would be carried out by Northern Ireland Electricity and would supply a suitable brick-built building for the equipment. In addition, prior to the works being carried out, Northern Ireland Electricity required a lease to be in place which would grant to the Company rights over the use of the ground on which the sub-station rested, an easement for an underground cable through Plot 4 and access to the sub-station for maintenance purposes.

She reported that the Director of Legal Services had indicated that the lease to Northern Ireland Electricity would have to be made directly between it and the Council, with the developer, Ormeau Gasworks Limited, being named as the third party. On completion of the building works on Plot 4, in accordance with the Development Agreement and subsequent grant of lease to Ormeau Gasworks Limited of the entirety of that Plot, the lease between the Council and Northern Ireland Electricity would be assigned to Ormeau Gasworks Limited.

The Committee noted the information provided and agreed that the Council enter into a lease agreement with Northern Ireland Electricity and Ormeau Gasworks Limited regarding the provision of an electricity sub-station to be sited on Plot 4 of the Gasworks Site.

Proposed Shuttle Bus Service

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th January, it had agreed to defer the introduction of a dedicated shuttle bus service between the Gasworks Site and the City centre to enable further information to be obtained on the possibility of a service being provided which would commence in the suburbs and finish at the Gasworks Estate.

The Director of Development informed the Committee that to operate a bus service from the suburbs would be expensive since it would have to cover the North, East, West and South areas of the City. In addition, the travel to work survey which had been undertaken on behalf of the businesses which operated in the Gasworks Site and consultation with Translink, had suggested that a shuttle service from the City centre to the Gasworks which operated every twenty minutes throughout the day would provide the most effective service. She advised the Members that the cost of providing the shuttle service would be £40,000 per annum.

During discussion in the matter, a Member made the point that, since one of the main reasons for introducing the shuttle bus service was to reduce the number of cars which were parked in streets adjacent to the Gasworks by persons who worked within the Site, it would be important for the Council to undertake a survey in order to ascertain whether the numbers of parked cars was reduced following the introduction of the bus.

The Director of Development informed the Committee that, given the costs of providing the shuttle bus service, she concurred with the view which had been expressed by the Member and indicated that the Committee would receive on a quarterly basis a report in the matter.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that a shuttle bus service to operate for a period of one year between the City centre and the Gasworks Site, at a cost of £40,000, be commenced as soon as was practicable, with 50% of the cost being met through the annual service charge paid to the Council by tenants in the Estate and the remaining 50% being obtained through the income from the visitors' car park.

**Belfast Regeneration Office's
Neighbourhood Renewal Programme**

The Director informed the Committee that, following lengthy discussions, it had been agreed that the Department for Social Development and the Belfast Regeneration Office would involve the Council in progressing the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme for Belfast and continue to consult with Members and Officers as the Programme developed.

She pointed out that, given the importance of the neighbourhood renewal agenda and the significant impact which it would have on deprived areas across the City, it was important that the Council was involved in and influenced the process from the beginning and ensured that the outcomes would benefit Belfast's citizens. This was of particular importance since it was likely that, as an outcome of the forthcoming Review of Public Administration, the Council would become responsible for neighbourhood renewal, regeneration and community planning.

She reported that it had been decided that there would be merit in the Council providing technical assistance to support the developing and ongoing work of the newly-formed Neighbourhood Partnerships. Accordingly, research had been undertaken to establish the level of support which the Council would have to provide. As a result, the Belfast Regeneration Office had agreed, in principle, to fund for an initial period of one year the creation of two posts of Technical Support Officer to be based within the Council and provide technical assistance to the Partnerships. She indicated that it was the intention of the Belfast Regeneration Office to trial this joint inter-agency approach in a neighbourhood in each of the four quadrants of the City. The outworkings of the process would be further explored and she sought the Committee's approval to undertake further discussions in this regard with the Regeneration Office.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that officers from the Development Department continue to hold discussions with the Belfast Regeneration Office regarding the opportunity for the Council to provide practical support to the Neighbourhood Renewal process. In addition, the Committee agreed to approve, in principle, the appointment of two Technical Support Officers for a fixed period of one year, subject to the Belfast Regeneration Office agreeing to fund the posts for this period of time.

Special Meetings

The Committee agreed that two special meetings be held, on dates to be determined in conjunction with the Chairman. The first meeting, to which all the Members of Council would be invited, would consider the possibility of the Council becoming responsible for the Laganside Corporation's estate when that organisation ceased to exist on 31st March, 2007. The theme of the second meeting would be to receive a presentation from Belfast City Centre Management regarding its business plan for the period 2006 – 2009.

Celebrate Belfast – Progress Report

The Committee considered a report regarding the progress which had been achieved during the previous month in relation to the Celebrate Belfast Initiative. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To update Members on issues relating to Celebrate Belfast programme.

Background

Members at the Development Committee meeting in March 2003 agreed that a programme of cultural activity and celebrations should be delivered in the city in 2006 to coincide with the Centenary Celebrations for City Hall.

The Celebrate Belfast programme is designed to showcase and promote the city to local and international audiences. The programme will promote the city's cultural offering and will provide an opportunity to attract additional visitors and enhance the range of cultural products available in the city. Members have agreed that the Belfast celebrations will follow a two stage process: collaboration with Cork in 2005 as part of their European Capital of Culture status and with other cities in England, Scotland and Wales; and a year of cultural celebration in Belfast 2006, which will co-ordinate with the Centenary programme.

1. Programme Information

1.1 Calendar of Events

Celebrate Belfast is a diverse dynamic celebration for all citizens of and visitors to Belfast to enjoy. At the centre of the celebrations is the Centenary of the City Hall, which will be marked with a wide range of projects and activities including lectures, tours, theatre and outdoor shows.

In January a number of key events were staged as part of the overall Celebrate Belfast programme. These included: Cathedral Quarter Festival's 'Out to Lunch' theatre performances; the Belfast International Cross-Country event, at Stormont and the Chinese New Year celebrations.

1.2 Specific Proposals

1.2.1 FriendShip Festival, 7th – 31st January (partnership event with Liverpool 2008)

This festival programme included freely accessible music, theatre, carnival, circus, dance, literature, sports and public arts events, which took place across the city.

There were four main themes: 'Cross Community' (partnerships of two or more Community development groups); 'Friends' (celebratory events); 'Sharing' (educational events); and 'Friendly' (matches, games).

Belfast's participation was part of a UK-wide FriendShip Project, an initiative which showcased culture and celebrated and explored the meaning of friendship. The main component of the FriendShip Festival was the FriendShip's visit to Belfast from 7th to 27th January. The actual FriendShip was a cultural interactive vehicle containing a cargo of treasure chests full of information and learning materials about all the UK cities taking part in the FriendShip Project.

The FriendShip visited 5 venues and 10 primary schools within the Belfast area, which are indicated below.

**FriendShip Project Venues and Participant
Schools**

Hazelwood Primary School
Glenwood Primary School
Holy Rosary Primary School
Currie Primary School
St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School
St Anne's Primary School
Lowwood Primary School
St Catherine's Primary School
St Teresa's PS
Finaghy Primary School

Custom House Square
Odyssey Pavilion
An Droichead
Connswater Centre
Belfast City Hall

In total some 1,200 people took part in the initial event at Custom House Square, on the 7th January. In addition some 30 community groups participated in the event and a total of 1,500 school pupils participated. The overall event also attracted a significant level of positive press coverage as part of the programme (see appendix 1).

Recommendation

To note details of the FriendShip festival.

2. Strands update

2.1 Festivals

Through the work of the Belfast Festival Forum a number of key initiatives have been put in place to create a coordinated approach to festivals within the city. Along with a publication highlighting the festivals within the city, a festivals calendar publication has been produced, which will provide the public with information on the extent of festivals and their activities within Belfast (see appendix 2).

Additional skills development work has also been undertaken to build capacity levels within the festivals sector. This has included a press relations day facilitated by the Head of Belfast City Council's Corporate Communications, Mr Eamon Deeny. This event took place on the 9th February and it is estimated that some 40 representatives of various festivals will attend.

2.2 Festival Programme

As part of the overall festivals in 2006 there will be a range of activities that will take place under the banner of Celebrate Belfast. This will include the staging of the second C S Lewis festival and a Council staged New Year's Eve concert. Additional events for senior citizens are also being explored with Community and Recreation. These would take the form of a series of concerts throughout the remainder of the year. The overall cost of these activities would come from the Celebrate Belfast budget for festivals, which is currently set at £250,000.

Recommendation

To note the details of the festival activities and to recommend that £250,000 be allocated to the cost of staging: the 2006 C S Lewis festival; Belfast City Council's New Year's Eve Concert and the series of senior citizen concerts organised by the Community and Recreation Department. Additional sponsorship for these events is also being sought.

2.2 Cultural Quarters

Gaeltacht Quarter

Currently Forbairt Feirste and Queen's University are formulating outline text for a trail leaflet for the Gaeltacht Quarter. This will highlight key cultural and historical locations within the area. A half-day itinerary will also be included in the literature allowing visitors to schedule their visit around set locations within a pre-determined time frame. The initial literature print run will be 15,000, with an option to renew and update the information as required. The trail leaflet will be printed as a bi-lingual publication in both Irish and English and will be available by the end of April 2006.

Members are also asked to note that similar literature and guides will be produced for Cathedral, Queens and Titanic quarters over the coming year. This literature will link to the Council's new tourism signage infrastructure and allow visitors and citizens to explore key locations within each quarter, along with examples of half-day itineraries.

Familiarisation visits by hospitality staff are also planned for the quarters throughout the next year and these will run in parallel with the development of the trail literature and tourism signage. The overall costs of these publications and familiarisation events would be £50,000, which is currently within the Celebrate Belfast 2006/7 estimates.

Recommendation

To note details of the Cultural Quarters literature as part of the development of these areas within the city. In addition to recommend the allocation of the £50,000 to the development of these products. This finance is within the current 2006/7 Celebrate budget estimates.

2.3 Sport

Sport will play an integral role in the celebrations, with Belfast hosting a number of world-class events such as the Special Olympics National Games and the Commonwealth Fencing Championships. A number of meetings have been held with the Community and Recreation Department and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland to develop a strategy, which will take the sporting strand forward.

In addition the Celebrate Belfast unit has been liaising with Community and Recreation on the extension of the 'Street Soccer' and 'Midnight Soccer' programmes which have been previously held at the Waterworks sports facility. Celebrate Belfast is also exploring a European coaching link via the Sports Development Unit within the Council. This would involve the development of coaching links with European cities via the Sport Urban network. This would include city links with such locations as Paris, Lyon, Amsterdam and Lisbon.

The overall cost of the 2006 Sport element of the Celebrate Belfast programme would be £50,000. This finance is currently within the 2006/7 estimates.

Recommendation

To note above elements of the Sports strand of Celebrate Belfast and approve the allocation of £50,000 to this programme. Members are asked to note that this finance is within the Development Department estimates for Celebrate Belfast.

2.4 Centenary

The City Hall Centenary will form an important strand of the Celebrate Belfast programme. A range of special events and activities are planned to mark this birthday celebration and are considered under the auspices of the P&R committee. The updated programme of activities, which will be presented in January 2006 to Policy & Resources Committee, is contained in (see appendix 3). The key item to note is the opening of the City Hall Exhibition on the 21st February running to the end of 2006.

Recommendation

To note the City Hall Centenary programme details.

3. Funding

3.1 Celebrate Belfast Community Fund

Members are reminded that in November that the Committee agreed to the funding of 21 community groups via the above programme. In January 2006 the Committee also agreed to a second phase of this funding. As in the first phase there will be a minimum sum of £1,500 that can be applied for. Members are also reminded that there was public advertisement placed in all daily and weekly Belfast papers at the start of February 2006. Additional promotional activity for the fund was also communicated via the Council's Community Services section and NICVA. A letter to remind all 51 Members of the scheme was also posted to all Councillors on the 3rd February 2006.

Members are also asked to note that the Committee in January 2006 agreed that previous recipients of the scheme would be ineligible to apply for the second phase of the Celebrate Belfast Community fund.

Recommendation

To note the above details.

4. Partnerships

4.1 Lagan to the Lee Partnership

In January 2006 Members agreed to the following programme as part of the 'Lagan to the Lee' project and hospitality connected to the following events. Members also noted that these events may change according to artistic and resources being made available from Cork.

Lord Mayor's Show
Belfast Festival of Fools programme
Belfast Maritime Festival
Belfast – Cork Sports Challenge
City Hall Proms Concert
Celebrate Belfast Closing event

Since January's Committee the Council's Celebrate Belfast team has met with Cork City Council to confirm that the following events may be included within the programme.

Titanic Made in Belfast
World and Ulster Irish Dancing Championships
European Brass Band Championships
Garden Gourmet

All funding for these events and changes to the programme would be funded through the allocation of Cork City Council's £90,000. Cities from the Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Inverness have also been included within the Celebrate Belfast cultural network. Participation with the programme will be via artistic input into the 2006 events schedule. Funding for this element of the programme would be £20,000, which is part of the overall Celebrate Belfast budget estimates for 2006.

Recommendation

Members are asked to endorse Cork City Council's support for the programme of Belfast events as part of the Lagan to the Lee partnership. Members are also requested to recommend the allocation of £20,000 to additional partnerships for the 2006 year.

5. Marketing and Public Relations Activity for Celebrate Belfast

All marketing activity has been produced in conjunction with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) with input from the Council's Corporate Communications. This relationship will continue to ensure that a co-ordinated communication strategy is developed. The overall production and design of the Celebrate Belfast marketing material will be channelled via BVCB.

£90,000 of funding for the 2006 marketing material has been allocated to cover a variety of activities, including press, radio and outdoor advertising throughout the next eleven months. This will also cover the cost of the development of printed material, out-of-state marketing and the co-ordination of a central events database via BVCB.

Recommendation

To recommend the allocation of £90,000 for marketing activities connected to Celebrate Belfast.

Equality Implications

The policy being screened does not have a significant impact on equality of opportunity and therefore does not require an EQIA.

Environmental Implications

None

Capital City Strategy Reference

- 5.1 To promote Belfast's culture and market the experience the city has to offer.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the foregoing report. Also to agree to the following recommendations:

- To note the details of the festival activities and to recommend that £250,000 be allocated to the cost of staging: the 2006 C S Lewis festival; Belfast City Council's New Year's Eve Concert and the series of senior citizen concerts organised by the Community and Recreation Department. Additional sponsorship for these events is also being sought.
- To note details of the Cultural Quarters literature as part of the development of these areas within the city and to recommend the allocation of the £50,000 to the development of these products. This finance is within the current 2006/7 Celebrate budget estimates.
- To note above elements of the Sports strand of Celebrate Belfast and approve the allocation of £50,000 to this programme.
- Members are asked to endorse Cork City Council's support for the programme of Belfast events as part of the Lagan to the Lee partnership. Members are also requested to recommend the allocation of £20,000 to additional partnerships for the 2006 year.
- To recommend the allocation of £90,000 for marketing activities connected to Celebrate Belfast.

Members are asked to note that the finances for all the above elements are within the Development Department estimates for Celebrate Belfast in 2006 and have been approved at January's Council."

The Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

European Unit - Progress Report

The Committee considered a report regarding various projects which were being progressed by the European Unit.

Connect Project

The report indicated that, as a result of a visit by members of the Connect Group to Stockholm, it had been agreed that it would be beneficial if a representative from the Waste Management Section of each of the Local Authorities involved in the Project were to undertake a visit to Stockholm to view Hammarby Sjostad. It was a former industrial brownfield site whose redevelopment was recognised as an excellent example of environmental best practice and urban development. The full costs for the visit would be met by the Connect Project.

The report indicated also that the Final Conference of the Connect Project would be held in Belfast from 16th till 18th October.

Urban Lobby

The report highlighted that Belfast had benefited from previous Urban Programmes and that negotiations were currently being undertaken in Brussels regarding future similar funding mechanisms for the period 2007 till 2013. As a result of Northern Ireland being re-classified as being of Objective Two status, the Leader, Urban, Equal and Interreg initiatives would not be available to the Province. However, there had been much discussion in the European Commission regarding the possibility of operating a type of Urban Programme for all Objective Two Member States, although it was anticipated that there would be considerable competition for such funding. Accordingly, it was recommended that a draft position paper be prepared which would be used to lobby Governments with the view to securing a form of Urban Initiative Programme for East and South Belfast, since both the West and North areas of the City had benefited from earlier Urban Programmes.

After discussion, the Committee agreed

- (i) to note that a representative of the Waste Management Section participate in the visit to Stockholm from 31st May till 2nd June;

- (ii) that all Members of the Committee who so wished be authorised to attend the Final Connect Programme Conference in Belfast from 16th till 18th October, with the payment of the associated attendance and subsistence allowances in connection therewith being authorised also; and
- (iii) that a paper be developed to enable lobbying of Central and National Governments to be undertaken with the aim of securing a type of Urban Programme for East and South Belfast.

Street Name Plates

The Committee was reminded that, in 2005, the Development Department had obtained European funding for a Town Centre Re-invigoration Scheme, which included a project to replace the street name plates in City Centre Conservation Areas with old-style plates.

The Director informed the Committee that a full audit of all the name plates in the City centre had been undertaken and that the style of the plates had been agreed with the Council's Building Control's Service and the Environmental Heritage Services. She displayed for the information of the Members a sample street name plate and pointed out that a budget of £65,000 had been allocated towards the cost of the project, with the Department for Social Development providing a further £25,000. In addition, she advised the Committee, since the Department for Social Development's contribution had exceeded that which had been anticipated, a number of name plates would also be erected on streets which were outside the specified Conservation Areas.

She stated that it would be necessary to invite tenders for the manufacture and erection of the signs and, since the required commencement date for the project was April, 2006, recommended that the Committee agree to delegate to the Director of Development, in consultation with the Chairman, authority to accept the most advantageous tender received, on the understanding that it would be within the £90,000 budget for the project.

The Committee agreed to delegate the authority sought.

Appointment of Consultants for Construction-Related Design Services in Connection with Proposed Leisure Facilities

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th November, 2004, it had agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Development and the Head of Urban Development, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve a select list for construction-related design services and to proceed to tender.

The Director informed the Committee that twelve applications had been received and that these had been evaluated in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures. Following this process, three applicants had been rejected due to the lack of financial capability and, of the remaining applicants, the six which had scored highest in the evaluation had been requested to submit tenders. Following an evaluation of these tenders, she recommended that the most advantageous tender received, that submitted by Faulkner Browns, Northumbrian Way, Killingworth, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in the fee of 11.8% which would be applied to the cost of the construction works, be accepted, subject to the completion of form of contract to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

North Foreshore Infrastructure Developments

The Committee considered the undernoted report, copies of which had previously been circulated, regarding infrastructure development work on the North Foreshore:

“i) Waste Transfer Facility

Purpose of Report

To obtain approval to:

- a. proceed with the provision of Infrastructure works to facilitate development of a Waste Transfer Station for Health and Environmental Services Committee;**
- b. amalgamate the Infrastructure and Waste Transfer Station projects into combined contracts;**
- c. select list and tender approvals for the combined contracts being dealt with by the Health & Environmental Services Committee.**

Background

Committee will recall that at its meeting on 18th March 2004 it agreed that the south eastern portion of the site would be used for Waste Management purposes.

The Waste Transfer Station is required for the purpose of providing the Council with a bulking-up facility at which its domestic waste can be deposited for loading into purpose built vehicles for haulage to sites outside the Council area thereby avoiding the cost associated with the Council's waste collection vehicles undertaking individual trips to landfill sites at some distance from the City.

To service the proposed facility the Council will be required to provide infrastructure development.

Current Position

Consolidation of the southern portion of the existing site has been proceeding for some time under the direction of the Department. This work is a necessary precursor to any future site development.

Due to the nature of the Landfill Site further works are necessary to prepare the site for the development of the Waste Transfer Station.

In addition it will be necessary to provide electrical power distribution, water, gas and drainage installations together with provision for the collection and removal of foul wastes, roads, paths and street lighting, service access and distribution strips, CCTV installations and landscaping.

The necessary work categories, together with budget costs, are set out below.

<u>Proposed Infrastructure Works Elements</u>	<u>Budget Cost</u>
1. The development of an access road with street lighting and service strips	£445,500
2. Relocation of existing Weighbridges and Ramps	£105,000
3. Provision of a pumping station	£75,000
4. Fees and Statutory Charges	£175,000
5. Contingencies	£90,000
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£800,500</u>

Financial

The proposed infrastructure works will be funded from the allowance of £12,200,000 included in the draft Capital Programme for 2006/2007 for the Provision of Infrastructure to Facilitate Development of the North Foreshore – Development Department.

Environmental Implications

The landfill gas collected from the site will be used as fuel in the landfill gas electricity generation scheme.

All relevant environmental considerations will be addressed in the design and delivery of the projects.

Equality Considerations

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

4.4 To ensure sustainable development.

Proposal

Given the extent of interdependence of this infrastructure project and the Waste Transfer Station, which are the responsibilities of different Committees, it is proposed that the most practical approach to the delivery of these projects is to amalgamate them into combined contracts, with approvals to tenders coming from a single source.

This should be the Committee with the more relevant role on any amalgamated project, rather than merely the greater capital contribution, with the most relevant Committee being agreed by the appropriate Directors in consultation with the Chairs of the Committees.

In the case of this particular amalgamated project, the most relevant Committee is considered to be the Health and Environmental Services Committee.

The Committee is therefore requested to approve:-

1. the budget of £800,500 for the construction of the infrastructure works;
2. the amalgamation of the Infrastructure Works with the Waste Transfer Station project into combined contracts;
3. invitation of select list applications and subsequent tenders for the necessary works;
4. select list and tender approval for the combined contracts being dealt with by the Health & Environmental Services Committee.

A corresponding report is being presented to the Health and Environmental Services Committee.

Recommendation/Decision Required

It is recommended that the Committee agree to the above proposals.

ii) **ARC 21 Organics Treatment Facility**

Purpose of Report

To obtain approval to proceed with the provision of Infrastructure works to facilitate development of an Organics Treatment Facility by Arc21.

Background

Committee will recall that at its meeting on 18th March 2004 it agreed that the south eastern portion of the site would be used for Waste Management purposes.

To service the site for the proposed Arc21 facility the Council will be required to provide infrastructure development.

Current Position

Consolidation of the southern portion of the existing site has been proceeding for some time under the direction of the Development Department. This work is a necessary precursor to any future site development.

Due to the nature of the landfill site further works are necessary to prepare the site for the development of the proposed Arc21 organics facility including the provision of a gas control membrane and gas extraction measures including boreholes and collection pipe work, pumps and the like.

In addition it will be necessary to provide electrical power distribution, water, gas and major drainage installations together with provision for the collection and removal of foul wastes by pumped means, roads, paths and street lighting, service access and distribution strips and landscaping.

The necessary work categories, together with budget costs, are set out below.

	Proposed Works	Budget Cost
	Infrastructure	
1.	Drainage	£415,000
2.	Services Installations	£30,000
	<i>Site conditioning</i>	
3.	Further compaction and filling Of the site	£500,000
4.	Gas protection/collection measures	£1,680,000
	<i>Other</i>	
5.	Fees and Statutory Charges	£599,000
6.	Contingencies (10%)	£262,000
	Total:	£3,486,000

ARC21 has invited tenders for an Organic Treatment contract with the option for contractors to use between five and twelve acres for the proposed facility. Until tenders are returned, evaluated and a contractor selected the assumption has to be that all 12 acres will be used.

Financial Implications

The draft Capital Programme for 2006/2007 includes amounts of:

- ? £12,200,000 for the Provision of Infrastructure to Facilitate Development of the North Foreshore – Development Department;
- ? £19,808,000 for Site Closure/Conditioning – Health & Environmental Services Department

Items 1 to 2 in the list of proposed works elements are to be funded from the Development Department's Infrastructure allowance and items 3 to 4 are to be funded from Health and Environmental Services Department's Site Closure/ Conditioning allowance. Items 5 & 6 are to be apportioned pro rata between the two allowances. The allocation of the budget costs for the proposed works against these allowances is as follows:

Infrastructure Items 1 and 2 plus apportionment of items 5 and 6 – Development Department	£600,000
<i>Site Conditioning</i> Items 3 and 4 plus apportionment of items 5 and 6 – H&ES Department	£2,886,000
Total:	£3,486,000

Environmental Implications

The landfill gas collected from the site will be used as fuel in the landfill gas electricity generation scheme.

The provision of the Organics Treatment Facility will contribute to the Council's recycling initiatives.

Equality Considerations

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

4.4 To ensure sustainable development.

Proposal

Given the extent of interdependence of the two projects, which are the responsibilities of different Committees, it is proposed that the most practical approach to the delivery of these projects is to amalgamate them into a single contract, with approvals to the tender coming from a single source.

This should be the Committee with the more relevant role on any amalgamated project, rather than merely the greater capital contribution, with the most relevant Committee being agreed by the appropriate Directors in consultation with the Chairs of the Committees.

In the case of this particular amalgamated project, the most relevant Committee is considered to be the Development Committee.

The Committee is therefore requested to approve:-

1. the budget of £600,000 for the construction of the infrastructure required for the provision of the proposed Arc21 Organics Treatment Facility;
2. the amalgamation of the two projects into combined contracts with all necessary approvals for the contracts being dealt with by the Development Committee;
3. invitation of select list applications and delegation of authority to approve the select list of contractors for the execution of the necessary work;
4. the subsequent invitation of tenders from those contractors on the select lists.

A corresponding report will be presented to the Health and Environmental Services Committee.

Recommendation/Decision Required

It is recommended that the Committee agree to the above proposals regarding North Foreshore Infrastructure Development and ARC 21 Organics Treatment Facility.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained in the foregoing report.

Project Management Unit – Staffing Resources

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to a structure review of the Project Management Unit:

“Purpose of Report

To seek approval from the Committee to the carrying out of a structural review of the Project Management Unit (PMU) by the Business Improvement Service (BIS), in consultation with the Core Improvement Team.

Background

Amongst its functions, the PMU manages the provision of design services, both in-house or through the engagement of external consultants, for the delivery of projects included in the capital programme.

When the Development Department was formed in 1999, the PMU staff structure included a fixed term Clerk of Works post. However, following the resignation of the postholder in 2001, difficulty was experienced in recruiting a suitably experienced replacement and consequently, in March 2003, the fixed term post of Clerk of Works was deleted from the staff structure of the PMU. The Clerk of Works service has since been procured through external consultancy service, with varying degrees of success.

The PMU currently consists of a Project Manager, six Assistant Project Managers, two seconded Engineering Assistants and a Design Technician who is employed through the agency agreement.

External consultants are engaged, through a framework arrangement, to provide design and cost management services as and when necessary under the direction of the PMU.

While the Gardiner & Theobald report (for BCC - 1998) was the starting point for the establishment of the Project Management Unit, the recommendations in the Government led Latham Report (Constructing the Team : 1994) and Egan Report (Rethinking Construction: 1998) formed the basis of its functions and procedures.

Current Position

The Capital Programme for the 2006/07 and future years includes numerous and major proposals.

From the establishment of the PMU in 1999 it was always intended that in-house staff would develop initial concepts and options on capital projects and outsource further design input only where the in-house resources would otherwise be overextended.

The nature of the Capital Programme is such that while it is agreed in principle, the number of projects and their scope varies each year and clients often cannot provide precise programming for their individual delivery with briefing details, option consideration, land & planning issues and funding arrangements to be resolved.

In recent years the number of projects at various stages of development has meant that the in-house resources have been unable to handle much of the design aspect of the projects which have been progressed, and the framework consultants have therefore been utilised to a greater extent than expected.

One of the major difficulties in managing construction projects is ensuring appropriate standards of briefing and implementation of works. Experience over recent years has shown that, although the consultants engaged are the optimum available, having been selected by means of a competitive quality/price process, the service delivery generally has been merely adequate and the management, control and co-ordination input required from the PMU staff is higher than could have been anticipated.

In respect of the external delivery of the Clerk of Works service there are shortcomings relating particularly to reporting and responsibility and detailed quality control.

A recent risk assessment workshop undertaken with Internal Audit identified these areas as major potential risks associated with the successful delivery of capital projects.

Two reports published in March 2005 (Improving Public Services Through Better Construction : National Audit Office and Modernising Construction Procurement in Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Audit Office) identified aspects of the construction procurement process which required improving and encouraged public sector organisations to adopt the good practice recommendations made, including the implementation of the Office of Government Commerce Gateway Process initiative.

In parallel with the publication of these reports a recent review of the PMU by Internal Audit identified (along similar lines to those above) potential risks in BCC's capital project procurement and made recommendations for mitigating those risks.

Proposal

It will not be feasible for the PMU staff to effectively manage all those projects proposed in the Capital Programme with the existing staff resources and, while the lead consultant role and design aspect of projects can be outsourced, it is not appropriate to outsource the project management aspect due to the control and co-ordination requirements particular to the Council, which need to be retained in-house.

Consequently it would be advantageous if the PMU was resourced by an appropriate composition of in-house technical staff to provide direct, robust quality management, control and co-ordination of the projects during the design and implementation stages appropriate to the number, nature and extent of those projects.

It is therefore proposed that the resources within the PMU should be reviewed to ensure the necessary proficiency, capability and flexibility to realise improvement in the delivery of projects allocated, is available as and when required. The current Interim Director of Improvement obviously has detailed knowledge of the issues involved from his time as Head of Urban Development and, given the impending potential changes in local government, it would be valuable for any review to include consultation with the Core Improvement Team.

Financial Implications

Under the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice, project management services are cost neutral to the Department and it is therefore anticipated that the cost of any adjustments to staff resources resulting from this report's recommendation will be accommodated within the Service Level Agreement for PMU services.

Environmental Implications

None.

Equality Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

2.1 To ensure the importance of design in all matters to do with the physical environment of the city;

2.4 To ensure sustainable development of Belfast and its environs.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the BIS, in consultation with the Core Improvement Team, undertake a structural review of the PMU with a view to establishing an appropriate level of staffing to ensure that appropriate design standards and processes are developed and implemented for all projects managed by the PMU.

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendation.”

The Committee adopted the foregoing recommendation.

Tenders for the Supply and Delivery of Annual Supplies

The Director of Development informed the Committee that tenders had been invited by public advertisement for the supply and delivery of Annual Supplies for the period from 1st April, 2006 to 31st March, 2007, with the option of renewal on an annual basis for a further two years, with the exception of the following tenders:

- (i) the supply of toilet hygiene and floor care, which would be for the period 1st April, 2006 till 31st March, 2007, with the option of renewal on an annual basis for a further period of four years;
- (ii) the supply of broken stones and screenings, which would be for the period 1st April, 2006 to a date on or before 1st March, 2007, depending on landfill logistical requirements; and
- (iii) the provision of removal/porterage services, which would be for the period from 1st April, 2006 till 31st March, 2007, with the option of renewal on an annual basis for a further three years.

She explained that the Procurement Unit co-ordinated purchasing for the Council as a whole and entered into contracts which would ensure that the best price could be obtained by working from a central contract.

The Director reported that twenty-three companies had submitted tenders for various categories of work, vis., the supply and delivery of protective footwear and helmets, broken stones and screenings and toilet hygiene and floor care and the provision of removal/porterage services and of a taxi service. The schedule of the tenders being recommended for acceptance had previously been circulated to the Members. She stated that the list of recommendations made represented the only, lowest, equal lowest or lowest on aggregate tenders received and that they were based on the evaluation criteria listed within the individual tenders.

The Committee noted the comments of the Director of Development and adopted the recommendations contained within the aforementioned schedule a copy of which was signed by the Chairman (Councillor McCausland).

Additional Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan Consultation

The Director informed the Committee that correspondence had been received from the Planning Service indicating that it was undertaking a further period of consultation in relation to an amendment to the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. She apologised for the fact the item had not been placed on the Agenda for consideration but pointed out that, as the information had been received only during the previous afternoon, this had not been practical. She stated that the consultation period would be of eight weeks duration and that, given the importance of the proposals contained within the amendment to the Metropolitan Area Plan, it would be necessary for a special meeting of the Committee, to which all Members of Council would be invited, to be held in early April to discuss the Council's response.

The Committee agreed that the above-mentioned special meeting be held on a date to be determined in conjunction with the Chairman.

Chairman