

Development Committee

Wednesday, 22nd March, 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, Empey, Hartley, Kelly,
P. Maskey, McCarthy, McGimpsey, Newton,
Ní Chuilín, 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 D. Dodds, Kirkpatrick and A. Maskey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 9th and 15th February, copies of which had previously been 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 March.

Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee

In considering the minutes of the meetings of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 21st February and 15th March, a Member drew the Committee's attention to the minute of 21st February under the heading "Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau" agreeing to write to the Minister with responsibility for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Mrs. Angela Smith, M.P., regarding the reduction in funding allocated to the Bureau. He pointed out that the considerable reduction in funding from the Department would have a detrimental effect on the excellent work which was undertaken by the Bureau and suggested that, in addition, the Minister be requested to receive a deputation comprising the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Sub-Committee and one Member from each of the Party Groupings on the Council not represented by those Members.

Adoption of Minutes

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 21st February and 15th March, subject to the minute of 21st February under the heading "Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau" being amended to provide that the Minister with responsibility for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Mrs. Angela Smith, M.P., be requested also to meet with an All-Party deputation from the Sub-Committee to discuss the reduction in funding allocated by her Department to the Bureau.

Arts Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Arts Sub-Committee of 8th March, copies of which had previously been circulated, were approved and adopted.

Economic Development Sub-Committee

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 8th March, copies of which had previously been circulated.

“Divided Cities” Workshop

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Committee that the Economic Development Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 8th March, had deferred consideration of a report regarding an invitation which the Council had received to participate in a Workshop, entitled “Divided Cities”, which was due to be held on 27th and 28th April in Nicosia, Cyprus, to enable officers to ascertain whether the organisers would be prepared to meet the travelling and accommodation costs for an All-Party delegation from the Sub-Committee, together with an appropriate officer, to participate in the Workshop. She informed the Members that the organisers of the event, the Cyprus Reconstruction and Resettlement Council, had indicated that they would only be in a position to pay for the travelling and accommodation costs for three representatives from the Council.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that it be represented at the “Divided Cities” Workshop by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee (or their nominees), together with an appropriate officer. In addition, the Committee authorised the payment of the appropriate subsistence and attendance allowances in connection therewith.

North Foreshore

The Committee considered a report regarding the recent public consultation exercise which had been undertaken in connection with the development proposals for the North Foreshore. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To update Members following the recent public consultation on the North Foreshore development proposals, to discuss progress and agree a way forward.

This is the post-consultation report on Belfast City Council’s public consultation document entitled, ‘The Future of the North Foreshore- A Consultation’, published on 19th October 2005.

Background

Members are reminded of a special development committee meeting on 4th August 2005, where they agreed consultation on draft development proposals for the North Foreshore. It was proposed that the consultation process would take place during the autumn period and would be facilitated by the publication of a consultation document. This document was widely circulated and was aimed at specific statutory bodies, special interest groups, community groups and private individuals.

Belfast City Council launched the consultation paper at the Goldin Waste Fair at St George's Market on 19th October. The document presented the Council's proposals for the development of an eco-business park, waste management and open space/recreational facilities and invited comments on the draft proposals by 30th November. Around 50 people attended the launch and copies of the consultation document were circulated to those attending. The document was also made available on the Council's web site and so far 3,000 'hits' have been recorded.

Meetings were arranged with interested groups during November/early December. These proved valuable in providing Council Officers with an opportunity to explain the proposals in detail and respond to specific concerns. A workshop was held in the City Hall on 22nd November and although extensively advertised in the local press, only four people attended. Several meetings were held with elected Members from North Belfast and with groupings assembled by North Belfast Partnership Board and some elected Members.

This Report provides a summation and analysis of the comments that have been received, whilst presenting general conclusions and recommendations that will assist in the future development of the North Foreshore.

Current Position

Twenty-three written responses have been received and five meetings held in relation to the draft development plans. The responses vary considerably in size and content.

Overall the responses have been broadly supportive of the Council's vision to 'transform a former landfill site into an area where economic development, waste management and open space can co-exist in a way that creates jobs, facilities for future waste management and provides a valuable open space resource.'

Appendix 1 is a summary matrix of each of the individual consultation responses.

Appendix 2 is an overview of proposal-specific responses. It provides a summary of the responses under the component headings – Eco- Business Park, Waste Management, Open Space and Park and Ride.

Overview of Responses

Overall the responses have been positive and very supportive of the Council's vision. A large number of very constructive suggestions have been made and detailed advice given which can be taken on board as the overall plan for the North Foreshore is developed in more detail over the next few months.

Particular attention is drawn to the response from Belfast Harbour Commissioners who propose that part of the site should be used for distribution/logistics warehousing. They contend that there is a growing demand for warehousing on the Co. Antrim side of Belfast Lough to facilitate port activities but there is insufficient land within the Harbour Estate to accommodate this demand. They see a need to develop some 40 acres of the North Foreshore for this purpose. An analysis of their proposal is underway and will be presented to Members subsequently.

There have been various opinions on the use of the northern part of the site which has restricted uses but generally can only be developed as open space/recreation. Although the proposal showed golf as a possible use, this was not whole heartedly supported by the respondents many of whom believed that there was an over emphasis on golf which was seen as an elitist sport. Whilst they had no objection in principle to a golf course, it should not dominate the site and the facility must be available to everyone. A smaller municipal course would enable more of the site to be used as parkland/open space or for other recreational uses.

The key conclusions from the consultation are:

- Changing the public and commercial perception of North Foreshore will be crucial. The scale of the opportunity and the ecological assets are clear advantages but a possible name change using a competition and logo could be a means of capturing the Belfast public's imagination.
- Given the international importance of Belfast Lough as a Special Protection Area, avoiding disturbance of roosting and feeding birds will be essential and extending the 'ecological approach' to the development and management of the entire site could result in North Foreshore becoming a superb resource for biodiversity, education and public enjoyment as a third Country Park for Belfast.

- The North Foreshore clearly has the potential to become a Belfast wide/metropolitan facility however more work needs to be undertaken to determine the demand for particular recreation and sporting facilities such as golf, bridle paths, pitches and cycling facilities and to ensure that there is no direct competition or displacement of other Council facilities.
- As the Masterplan is progressed a comprehensive and integrated site management and environmental risk assessment is required as part of the project management arrangements. This will take account of the former use of the site and focus on waste depths, waste types, leachate/ groundwater levels and the management of landfill gas.
- To take account of the very significant scale of this development opportunity, the long timescales involved and to build on the consultation process, Belfast City Council should commit to a continuing dialogue with residents, businesses and interested agencies/parties. One possibility would be set up a representative panel which would meet twice a year and use innovative techniques like community planning weekends and visioning days to widen involvement in the planning and development process.

This first stage of the consultation represents the beginning of an ambitious community involvement programme. A programme of further meetings will be conducted with key stakeholders (including a selection of the respondents) to encourage community participation and transparency in the development of the North Foreshore site.

Big Lottery Application

An application was submitted to the Big Lottery – ‘Living Landmark’ fund at the end of 2005. The application focused on the development of North Foreshore as a place to work, visit and play, and specifically requests funds to develop physical connections between the local community and the site by means of a pedestrian/cycle bridge across dual motorway to provide an educational centre (waste, energy, biodiversity, health promotion), and to develop of parkland, open space and recreational facilities. The Council has recently been notified that it is now on a long list of applicants and the projects are to be visited and assessed which will soon be assessed, scored and prioritised. In April a long-list of projects will be visited and assessments updated. In May recommendations will be made to the programme committee, who

decide to award or reject applications for a development grant. In the event of a successful outcome at Stage 1, Stage 2 applications will be prepared from May 2006 to January 2007. (see Appendix 3 for extract from Big Lottery Application).

Equality Implications

None

Environmental Implications

There is consensus that the North Foreshore project has exemplary environmental objectives and has massive potential benefit in maintaining and improving the biodiversity of the site.

Broad support was received regarding Council's plans to generate energy from landfill gas. Particular responses stress the need to conserve EU Special Protected Area (SPA) habitat along shoreline and maintain the site for biodiversity and environmental habitat. An Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the planning process.

Precautionary measures are needed to conserve the environmental integrity of site and comprehensive site management procedures are required to protect and preserve human and environmental health. An Environmental Risk Assessment will address these concerns

Capital City Strategy Reference

- 3.1 To drive the economic growth of Belfast
- 4.4 To ensure sustainable development

Recommendation

To note the contents of the report, comment as necessary on the responses, and agree to establish a mechanism for ongoing dialogue with the community.

A sum of £25K is requested from the North Foreshore Budget to employ a management consultant to compile information in support of Stage 2 of the Big Lottery Application."

The Director of Development drew the Committee's attention to various aspects of the report and indicated that the £25,000 expenditure referred to in the report would not be used solely to employ a management consultant but represented the total estimated costs which the Council would have to incur in order to prepare for the assessment by representatives from the Big Lottery Fund, a portion of which might be used for consultancy purposes.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that it would be essential to establish a mechanism by which discussions could continue between the Council and the residents of North Belfast regarding the proposals for the North Foreshore and that a sum of £25,000 be allocated to compile supportive data in connection with the forthcoming assessment of the funding application by representatives from the Big Lottery Fund.

Estates Management

Gasworks Site – Northern Fringe

The Committee agreed to hold, on a date to be determined in conjunction with the Chairman, a briefing session to enable the Committee to receive a presentation regarding the development proposals for the northern fringe of the Gasworks site.

St. George's Market

The Committee considered the undernoted report regarding market stall prices and hire fees at St. George's Market:

“Purpose of Report

To seek Committee approval to revise market stall prices and hire fees at St George's Market.

Background

1. Stall & Hire Fees

The present fee of £10.00 per pitch (8ft x 4ft table), and £2.00 for an electricity supply to a pitch, was agreed by the Development Committee immediately following refurbishment on 19th April 2000 and subsequently ratified by Council. Previous to that a fee of £9.00 had been set in 1996.

The Development Committee also approved a Stall Discount Scheme, for the hiring of multiple stalls, in March 2001.

Current Position

Stall Fees

The Markets Development Officer has fully consulted with representatives of the Belfast Branch of the National Market Traders Federation with regard to a rise in Stall Prices. The NMTF recognise that no price increase has been applied since April 2000, and acknowledge that a rise in these fees is due. NMTF representatives have indicated to Council Officers that a rise of £2.00, to £12.00 per pitch, would be acceptable to traders.

The Saturday Market Traders have not used NMTF representation to date in their dealings with the Council, but formed their own Traders Committee during 2005. These traders have been paying £10.00 per pitch plus £5.00 car park fee for use of the Hilton Multi-Storey car park. However, with effect from 1st March 2006, car parking fees will be paid directly to the car park owners.

In respect of both Friday and Saturday markets, it is proposed to increase the stall price to £12 plus £3 for electricity. In addition Committee is recommended to continue with stall discount rates for hiring multiple pitches as previously approved which would be as follows:

Traders hiring 4 or more stalls are to be granted the following discounts of the combined price of their stalls:

4 Stalls	£6.00 discount	(half stall)
5 Stalls	£12.00 discount	(one stall)
6 Stalls	£18.00 discount	(one and half stalls)
7 Stalls	£24.00 discount	(two stalls)
8 Stalls	£30.00 discount	(two and half stalls)
9+ Stalls	£36.00 discount	(three stalls)

The Friday Market is full and there are over 50 traders on a waiting list for a pitch. The Saturday Market has grown from 55 stalls when launched in September 2004, to over 70 stalls today (110 stalls during December). This Market still has stalls to let and incentives to commit to weekly trading are required.

It is therefore proposed that by way of an incentive to trade every Saturday at the City food and garden market for the incoming financial year to offer an incentive discount of 25% off stallage rate in return for booking and prepaying for full quarters markets (13 weeks).

The Council currently promotes and operates 3 specialist markets throughout the year at St Georges. These specialist markets such as Craft fairs incur extra expenses to the Council in promotion. Specifically they require customised advertising, live entertainment and children's entertainment far beyond the scope of the normal market activities. Based on historical costs and numbers of stalls occupied it is estimated that these events cost Belfast City Council approximately £40 per stall to operate. The current charge is £30 per stall.

It is recommended that for these specialist markets promoted by the Council that a revised fee of £50 per pitch per day is levied.

Hire Fees

The hire fees for St George's Market were last reviewed in April 2003 and it is recommended that they be increased by approximately 12% in line with RPI.

The current hire fees for St George's Market are shown in the table below with the proposed rate shown beneath each entry in bold.

	Monday to Friday		Saturday & Sunday	
	Commercial Rates	Public or Voluntary Rates	Commercial Rates	Public or Voluntary Rates
1 Session (4 hours)	£ 850.00 £ 950.00	£500.00 £550.00	£1000.00 £1150.00	£550.00 £600.00
2 Consecutive Sessions (8 hours)	£ 975.00 £1100.00	£575.00 £650.00	£1150.00 £1300.00	£625.00 £700.00
3 Consecutive Sessions (12 hours)	£1080.00 £1200.00	£625.00 £700.00	£1300.00 £1450.00	£675.00 £750.00
1 Day (24 hours)	£1200.00 £1350.00	£700.00 £800.00	£1500.00 £1700.00	£750.00 £850.00
Late Session (7pm to 1am)	£1000.00 £1150.00	£575.00 £650.00	£1200.00 £1350.00	£625.00 £700.00

Additional Charges:

Partition Units £3.00 per unit
Fork Pallet Truck £5.00 per hour

Electricity **NIE Rates plus 5%**

Environmental Implications

None

Capital City Strategy Reference

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

Recommendation

Stall Fees

The Committee is asked to

- Raise the price of a Pitch at St. George's Market to £12.00 per market day and the price of an electricity supply to £3.00 per market day.**

- To continue with the 'stall discount' rates for hiring multiple pitches as outlined above.
- By way of incentive to trade every Saturday at the new City Food & Garden Market, for the incoming financial year, to offer an incentive discount of 25% in return for booking and prepaying for a full quarter's markets (13 weeks).
- To approve a fee of £50.00 per pitch per day at Craft Fairs and other specialist niche markets organised in St. George's Market by Belfast City Council.

Hire Fees

The Committee is asked to agree the revised hire fees for events in St. George's Market

The Committee is further recommended to agree that all revised hire and stall fees apply from 1st April 2006 and to be again reviewed in 2 years time."

The Committee adopted the foregoing recommendations.

Celebrate Belfast – Progress Report

(Mr. G. Copeland, Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report on the progress which had been achieved during the previous month in relation to the Celebrate Belfast Initiative and noted the information contained therein in relation to the introduction of a central ticketing system at the Belfast Welcome Centre, launch of the pilot scheme in respect of the Node Interactive Tour Device, details of sports and City Hall Centenary events to be held and the various marketing and public relations activities which had been undertaken to publicise the Initiative.

Orangefest

The Committee agreed that a series of events, entitled Orangefest, be held in the City Hall during the period from 3rd till 12th July and noted that the expenditure in respect thereof would be recouped from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland by way of its Art of Regeneration Programme.

European Youth Brass Band Championships

The Committee agreed that the Belfast School of Music be authorised to hold a concert in the City Hall on 24th April as part of the European Youth Brass Band Championships.

Belfast Big Wheel

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, earlier in the month, the Council had received a proposal to locate on a temporary basis within the grounds of the City Hall a 60 metre high wheel similar to the London Eye. The project would be funded by the Department for Social Development and was designed to highlight its plans regarding the redevelopment of the public realm within the City centre. She drew the Members' attention to plans and computer-generated images of the installation, copies of which had been circulated at the commencement of the meeting.

In answer to Members' questions, she indicated that all costs associated with the proposal would be met by the Department for Social Development and pointed out that the operator, World Tourist Attractions Limited, would be levying a charge on those persons who wished to take a ride within the gondola-type pods attached to the wheel. The Department had proposed that the wheel be located within the grounds of the City Hall either from June till August or from November, 2006 till February, 2007.

She advised the Committee that the Department for Social Development had requested also that, during the period of time the wheel would be located within the grounds, an exhibition regarding the proposed plans for the City Centre public realm be located within the marble area of the City Hall, thus enabling the public to view the proposals.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed, in principle, that the wheel be located within the City Hall Grounds and that the associated exhibition be held within the City Hall, subject to the Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 24th March, granting the necessary authority for the use of the City Hall and grounds for the staging of the events.

Celebrate Belfast Community Fund

The Committee considered a report regarding applications which had been received for financial assistance under the second tranche of the Celebrate Belfast Community Fund. The report indicated that, under the terms of the Fund, the undernoted twenty organisations had been recommended to receive funding:

Applicant	Amount Recommended (£)
St. Paul's Church	17,464.50

Ulster Wildlife Trust	6,545
Beechmount Community Project	5,574.75
North Belfast Explorer Scouts	7,250
Royal National Institute of the Deaf	12,860.75

Applicant	Amount Recommended (£)
Suffolk Community Forum	12,917
Volunteer Development Agency	4,000
South City Resource and Development Centre	6,651
Welcome Trust Disabled Care Centre	7,000
Blind Centre for Northern Ireland	6,220
Basement Youth Club	3,020
Voluntary Service Bureau	3,875
Greater Shankill Sports Committee	2,150
City of Belfast Swimming Club	2,350

Walkway Women's Group	3,980
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	4,850
May Street Presbyterian Church	1,800
Loughside Football Club	3,878
Hilltop and Glenluce Care Limited	2,680
Forward Learning	4,175
	119,241

After discussion, during which the Head of Economic Initiatives explained the criteria which were applied in considering applications for assistance under the Fund, the Committee agreed to provide grant assistance as outlined.

Lagan to the Lee Partnership

The Committee agreed that the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee and the Development Committee (or their nominees) attend a reception for representatives from Cork City Council and the Irish Dancing Commission during the World Irish Dancing Championships were being staged in Belfast from 8th till 16th April.

Structure/Governance

The Committee deferred consideration of that portion of the report in connection with the objectives and targets for Celebrate Belfast to enable further information to be obtained.

In answer to a question from a Member regarding an application from the Greater Village Regeneration Trust for funding to erect a statue to Ruby Murray, the Events Manager explained that, since the application had not met the established deadline of 31st March, the Department had been unable to support the project through money which had been provided by the Millennium Commission for the provision of public art in Belfast. In answer to further questions, the Head of Economic Initiatives undertook to submit to a future meeting details of those public art projects in Belfast which had been supported under the Programme.

European Unit Progress Report

The Director of Development submitted a report in relation to the progress which had been achieved in the previous month by the European Unit. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendix referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To advise Members of project development within the European Unit in relation to,

- (i) Quartiers En Crise**
- (ii) Urban Matrix Project**
- (iii) Eurocities Annual Subscription**
- (iv) Urban Futures Conference Stockholm**
- (i) Quartiers En Crise**

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is a member of the ‘Quartiers en Crise’ or ‘Neighbourhoods in Crisis’ network. This network was established in 1989 and consists of twenty European towns and cities. Its principal aim is to facilitate the exchange of views and best practice for persons living in, working in and representing some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Europe. In addition, network members have been involved in a number of projects designed to promote social inclusion and integrated approaches to urban regeneration. Members should note that the network was renamed in 2004 and is now known as the QEC-ERAN – European Regeneration Area Network. This decision was taken to put a more positive slant on the organisation’s name and image and reflect the over arching urban regeneration focus of all programme activity.

The Belfast Group is led by the North and West Belfast Health Trust and its membership includes the Belfast Regeneration Office, the South & East Trust, the Belfast Area Partnership Boards, DEL, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Belfast Education and Library Board, Belfast City Council and communities throughout Belfast. The Council was formerly represented on the Group by the Director of Development and since 2003, by the European Manager.

The Belfast Group played a key role in securing European funding for North Belfast under both the Urban II Community Initiative and Interreg IIC Programme and for West & North Belfast under the Equal Community Initiative.

Since 2004 the Belfast Quartiers En Crise group has chaired a Belfast Urbact Steering Committee to co-ordinate and promote three of the six Urbact Programmes that the City of Belfast is involved in. Members will be aware of the Council's direct involvement in three of these programmes including;

- One focusing on youth with direct participation through the Community and Recreation Department
- One focusing on urban integration which is now complete
- One focusing on urban regeneration, entitled Regenera led by the City of Lyon with participation by the Development Department

Regenera Progress

The Regenera project involves 13 cities from across Europe focusing on urban regeneration and the approaches to integrated urban development in vulnerable communities of Cities.

Each Member City hosts a workshop based on sub themes of the overall urban regeneration theme, ranging from housing and community safety to physical regeneration and the comparable approaches to these areas across Europe.

From 21st to 23rd September 2006, Belfast will take in turn host the Regenera Network for a sub themed workshop entitled 'Women and Regeneration'. The details of this workshop will emerge as planning gets underway. Belfast City Council is asked to host the three day programme in partnership with the Quartiers En Crise Partners and Urban II, located in North Belfast. The event will be an ideal opportunity to showcase

Belfast during its' Centenary year and in particular to highlight projects and examples of best practice in relation to women's role in the regeneration process in Belfast, particularly at community level.

Members are asked to agree to host the event at a maximum cost of £3,000 for a welcome reception. All other organisational costs relating to the event will be covered by the City of Lyon and Urbact Programme Funds. Members are also asked to agree to the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the development Committee or their nominees at the three day event.

Members are also asked to agree to payment of the annual Quartiers En Crise subscription of £2,500

(ii) Urban Matrix

Belfast City Council along with 9 other cities and Eurocities, has been successful in securing funding to complete a European project funded under the Framework Six Programme. The project is entitled Urban Matrix and is based on the fact that networking knowledge is the key to Sustainable Urban Development (SUD). The project will connect knowledge providers, such as universities, with end users, such as local authorities to allow exchange of best practice and expertise in sustainable urban development.

In summary, the programme will facilitate the collection of information and practice on successful urban development approaches that Cities in Europe can adopt.

The project will be divided into five work packages:

1. Project management – ensuring effective completion of the project.
2. Demand identification and database creation – develop a methodology to chart the demand of information and support on research results from European cities.
3. Supply identification – organise the supply of information through the use of an interactive website on urban development.
4. Thematic workshops – organise thematic workshops to foster the exchange of experiences among other European cities.

5. **Communication and evaluation – evaluating the demand driven methodology designed to exchange information on know how and solutions for urban development.**

The project will assist cities and local authorities in Europe to achieve progress on future and existing European Policy requirements, targets and objectives as set out in a key number of European strategic actions such as the Lisbon Agenda, the European Sustainable Development Strategy, the 6th Environment Action Programme and specifically the Thematic Strategy on Urban Environment.

In conclusion the Urban Matrix project addresses general issues related to urban sustainability but has a specific focus on the environmental aspects of sustainability.

Benefits for Belfast City Council

- **Collecting and presenting information – making accessible urban sustainability know how coming from other cities, research institutions, organisations and EU institutions.**
- **Identifying and charting BCC demand of information, policy support, sustainable development strategies and solutions**
- **Providing tools to match the demand and the offer to produce tailor made responses to the identified needs of each partner city.**

Duration and Cost

This is a four year project, beginning in February 2006 and finishing in 2010.

Belfast City Council does not have to financially contribute to this project apart from assigning an officer from the European Unit to coordinate the work as necessary.

Belfast City Council contribution will be approximately 2.73 months of work assigned from one officer over the four year period. Travel and subsistence costs for the officer will be available through the project.

Total cost of project, funded by the EC, will be approximately £500,000.

Members are asked to approve Council's participation in the urban matrix project to contribution in kind only from one European Officer's time over that period.

(iii) Eurocities Annual Subscription

Background

Members will be aware that one of the main areas of European activity for Belfast City Council (BCC) has been through membership of Eurocities. Eurocities is a European network of over 129 metropolitan member cities covering a total population of over 100 million. Membership is open to democratically elected city governments, in cities which have a minimum population of 250,000, portray an international image and serve as an important regional centre.

Members will recall their decision at a meeting of the Development Committee on 19th April 2000, to continue membership of Eurocities and to begin the process of active involvement in the network, particularly through the Economic Development and Urban Regeneration Committee (EDURC). Due to a re-organisation within EUROCITIES the Committee structure has been replaced with Forums with EDURC now known as the Economic Development Forum.

Current Position

Belfast City Council activity within Eurocities may be summarised as follows:

- (i) Belfast City Council is lead partner in the Brownfield Europe network, involving 8 European cities and funded through the Interreg IIIC community Initiative programme.
- (ii) Studies: Belfast City Council is engaged in comparative studies involving over 30 cities in Europe, looking at
 - (a) most successful and transferable local employment initiatives
 - (b) City Marketing Approaches
- (iii) Belfast City Council continues to be engaged in a high profile lobby with the European Commission with regard to strengthening the urban dimension in the future cohesion policy and confirming a role for local and regional authorities in the Structural Funds Programmes post-2006.

- (iv) In terms of other Eurocities Forums, Belfast City Council has commenced engagement in two other areas – the Social Affairs Forum on behalf of Community & Recreation Services looking at the Lisbon agenda and high level social policy issues, and the Environmental Forum on behalf of Health & Environmental Services within the Environmental Forum.
- (v) Belfast City Council leads the Cleaner Cities Working Group within the Environment Forum looking at Pan-European approaches to waste awareness in cities.
- (vi) In addition the Council is involved in five other working groups within the European Forum looking at strategic environmental policy e.g. air quality, waste and recycling, greening the local economy, and noise.
- (vii) Belfast City Council also attends the Yearly Eurocities AGM and the annual meeting with the European Parliament in Brussels to raise the profile of cities with MEPs. In addition, the European and Policy Units within the Development Department have been keeping a watching brief on the Eurocities Governance Working Group, particularly focusing on the role of cities as regional drivers.

Conclusion

Belfast City Council is now one of the most active members of Eurocities and has gained considerable profile within the Network and indeed, within the European Institutions. The City, and the City Council, is increasingly viewed as a centre of best practice in many areas, particularly Brownfield development, partnership models, local participation and governance, and local employment initiatives. As a result the Council is regularly being asked to host inward study visits and to present successful projects and lessons at Eurocities meetings. An example of this was the Eurocities request to chair a workshop on international co-operation in relation to China at the 2005 Eurocities AGM in Lyon. A further example is the current request for Belfast City Council to facilitate a workshop at the Urban Futures Conference in Stockholm in May 2006, on the theme of 'local government as a catalyst for regeneration'.

In conclusion Belfast City Council has benefited greatly from membership of Eurocities in terms of profile, opportunity to lobby on city issues, leverage of funding and partners, and engaging in studies to explore best practice throughout similar cities in Europe.

Belfast City Council has now received an invoice for €14,690 (approximately £10,000) for annual membership fees of the Eurocities Network for the period 2006/2007.

Members are asked to approve this payment.

(iv) Urban Futures Conference – Stockholm

Members are asked to consider attendance at a forthcoming conference to be held in the City of Stockholm, Sweden from 3rd to 5th May 2006. The conference is being jointly organised by the European Commission, the Swedish Government and the City of Stockholm. It is the most important conference scheduled by the European Commission for 2006 focusing on urban governance and partnership.

This is a particularly relevant event for Belfast City Council in terms of the RPA and imminent changes within the Council. It will be attended by politicians on a local, regional, national and European level and Members are invited to interact with a cross-section of practitioners and researchers on the future challenges for urban areas within the context of European Policy.

Members will be aware that the European Institutions have recently signed off the next round of Structural Funds for Member States for the period 2007 to 2013. In parallel the planning and negotiations are ongoing to design the Community Strategic Guidelines which will guide and determine how Member States develop their National European Union spending programmes for that period. These will be known as National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF). The UK Government through the Department of Trade and Industry launched the consultation on the UK NSRF on 28th February 2006. Belfast City Council through the European Unit will be making a response to this document which puts forward the outlining proposals for European Structural funds spending in Northern Ireland, based largely on the Northern Ireland Economic vision. A draft response will be brought to Members in due course.

The European Commission has undertaken consultation with respect to the role of cities and cohesion policy and Belfast City Council has participated in this exercise to ensure that.

- (a) there is an enhanced explicit role for local authorities with respect to the development and delivery of NSRFs and

(b) that there is a clear urban dimension to the programmes.

The Stockholm Urban Futures Conference is therefore a very timely opportunity to engage in the Urban and Sustainable Communities Debate, and Belfast City Council has been invited to attend and also to deliver a workshop at this event. It is anticipated that the Belfast Workshop will focus on the Council's experience in spearheading urban development through a public/private partnership approach. The Council through the Development Department has been asked to look particularly at the key success projects in the City which have been developed in recent years as a direct result of Belfast City Council leadership.

This is an excellent opportunity to showcase the City of Belfast at the most strategically important and prestigious conference of the year in the context of urban development. Belfast City Council has been asked to host a workshop for 1.5 hours and to involve Senior Politicians and Officers. It is anticipated that both the Chair and Deputy Chair would have a role. The workshop will focus on the Council's strategic leadership approach through the State of the City Initiative, Brownfields development including the Gasworks and the WP5, tourism and renewing the routes.

A copy of the draft conference programme is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

Members are asked to approve the attendance of Belfast City Council at this event through the participation of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees, the Director of Development, and the Head of Economic Initiatives.

Costs

The anticipated costs for attendance per person is £2,191 giving an overall total of £8764.

Equality Implications

None

Environmental Implications

None

Capital City Strategy Reference

1.3 To foster and maintain international alliances.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve

- (i) the annual Belfast City Council contribution to the Belfast Quartiers En Crise Network at a cost of £2,500
- (ii) the provision of a welcome reception for the Regnera Network visit September 2006 at a Maximum cost of £3,000
- (iii) the attendance of the chairman and Deputy Chairman or their nominees at the Regenera Workshop in September 2006
- (iv) Belfast City Council participation in the Urban Members Project with Council contribution of 2.73 months of a European Officer's time.
- (v) to approve the annual membership fees of the Eurocities Network at a total cost of €14,690 or approximately £10,000 for the period 2006/2007.
- (vi) to approve the participation of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees, the Director of Development, and the Head of Economic Initiatives at the Urban Futures Conference, Stockholm 3rd to 5th May 2006, at a maximum cost of £8,764

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendations."

The Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Titanic Signature Project

The Committee was informed that the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Industry had invited the Council to partake in a public/private partnership which was being established to advance the Titanic Signature Project. This Body, to be known as "The Titanic Alliance", would include also representatives from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Titanic Quarter Limited, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and East Belfast Partnership.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to accept the invitation from the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Industry and agreed further that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Committee undertake the role of nominees to "The Titanic Alliance".