

Development Committee

Monday, 24th April, 2006

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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

Also attended: Councillor Stalford.

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th and 22nd March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd April.

Arts Sub-Committee

In considering the minutes of the meetings of the Arts Sub-Committee of 5th and 11th April, a Member drew the Committee's attention to the minute of 11th April under the heading "Development and Outreach Initiative 2006/2007" agreeing, inter alia, to adopt a recommendation of the Head of Economic Initiatives not to provide any financial assistance to Féile An Phobail. He stated that he had been informed that the recommendation had been based on an error which had been made by staff within the Culture and Arts Unit during the assessment process and that a meeting between representatives of the organisation and officers of the Unit had failed to resolve the situation. The Member sought an assurance that, should it be found that an error had been made by the staff of the Culture and Arts Unit, Féile An Phobail would not be financially disadvantaged.

In reply, the Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that she would investigate the situation as a matter of urgency and inform the Councillor of her findings. She pointed out that the decisions of the Arts Sub-Committee in relation to the successful applications for grant-aid had resulted in the budget for the Development and Outreach Initiative 2006/2007 being fully committed.

Adoption of Minutes

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Arts Sub-Committee of 5th and 11th April.

Economic Development Sub-Committee

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 5th April be approved and adopted.

Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 12th April were approved and adopted.

Review of Estates Management Unit

The Committee considered a report regarding a structural review of the Estates Management Unit which had been undertaken by the Business Improvement Service. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To appraise the Committee of the result of the structural review of the Development Department’s Estates Management function undertaken by the Business Improvement Service.

Background

Members will recall that at the meeting of the Development Committee on 20 April 2005 they agreed to the engagement of the Business Improvement Service (BIS) to address a number of structural changes to the Estates Management Unit to ensure that an adequate number of surveying staff was provided to ensure the protection and best use of the Council’s Property assets in the light of additional workload, including that related to the North Foreshore Development.

Current Position

An in-depth review was undertaken of the current processes in operation within the Unit to determine the current method of working, areas of responsibility and areas of concern regarding the current establishment of posts and the anticipated future requirements.

The Estates Management Unit provides a comprehensive and professional valuation and estates management service for all the Council's large property portfolio. Additionally, the Council policy of creating a corporate landbank for non operational properties held by various committees has seen an increase in the stewardship of property by the Estates Management Unit.

Over the past year the work of the Unit has substantially increased with the additional responsibility for work associated with:

- Accommodation
- The Leisure Review
- Annual Programme of Assets Valuations
- Workload relating to land and property formerly under the stewardship of other committees, now appropriated to Estates through the creation of a corporate land bank.
- Continued development of the North Foreshore.

With the growing remit of the Estates Unit it has been necessary to create 3 temporary posts for a number of years to discharge the basic responsibilities accorded to the Unit. This report seeks approval for the regularisation of the staffing requirements.

Operational Remit

Traditionally, the role of the Estates Management Unit was to be responsible for matters concerning acquisition, disposal, development and occupancy of Council property. This included direct responsibility for management of the Council's Balmoral and Duncrue Industrial Estates and management and control of the Council's Smithfield and St. Georges Markets. Over the last decade, the Unit has also played a major part in the regeneration and development of the Gasworks site.

North Foreshore

The development of the North Foreshore site has over the last few years placed further demands on the Estates Unit; an Estates Officer (on a temporary contract) is currently dedicating 70 per cent of his working week to this project. As this project matures, the requirement for a Development Surveyor will grow and change. Eventually, the emphasis will shift to the marketing and leasing of sites to the private sector to maximise income.

Property Management

As part of the Unit's proactive approach to managing the Councils estate, they have recently undertaken a revaluation of all Council property. This is carried out for the purposes of inclusion in the financial statements of the Council and to provide the basis for capital charging. Additionally the unit provides a statement of fixed physical assets held by land and also held by property for the purposes of the Councils accounts. The Council holds significant assets and these were valued with a total value of £362 million.

Central to the role of the Estates Management Unit is the requirement to liaise with departments in connection with the management of their properties and advise generally on matters affecting disposal and acquisition. The Unit provides advice on some 75 projects for the Community and Recreation Department in addition to a smaller number of projects for Corporate Services and Health and Environmental Services annually.

The Unit are presently managing 18 properties on behalf of Community and Recreation Services and a further 300 minor property interests belonging to various departments. In taking on the management of these properties Estates Management are seeking to stop the Councils loss of income and loss of property and damage to reputation etc. In order to do this effectively Estates Surveying resource is required.

Lease Management

The Estates Management Unit is also responsible for providing the Council with a comprehensive Lease Management Service. Lease Management is a complex, lengthy, extensive and resource demanding activity. Providing sound advice on the drafting of new leases and the successful interpretation and implementation of covenants in existing leases is critical to the maintenance and enhancement of the value of the Councils property. The Unit currently manages approximately 200 leased properties.

The Estates Unit are responsible for initiating and negotiating all rent reviews in accordance with the terms specified in the lease. The settlement of rent reviews is very often a protracted process. This consumes considerable resources within the Unit and presently there are numerous rent reviews outstanding due to pressure of work on existing staff.

Estates Management staff are also responsible for pursuing compensation monies. This service can be delivered but not without adequate resourcing.

At its meeting of the 20th September 2002, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to create a corporate asset bank of non operational property and concluded that this should become the responsibility of the Estates Management Unit to ensure a co-ordinated approach to property asset management across the Council and to assist in exposing opportunities to optimise utilisation and enhance and capitalise upon increases in the value of Council property.

Amongst properties formally appropriated to the Estates Unit for management are four major sites in west Belfast which were formerly held by Community and Leisure Services and which have been transferred to Development Committee. These sites – Hannahstown Hill, Glen Road, Colin Glen and Monagh Wood – have brought with them a variety of problems and issues e.g. disputes with previous owners, with the Housing Executive, travelling community etc. about ownership claims, interests and development proposals, all of which have to be addressed and properly resolved. Additionally these sites have to be policed, maintained and managed.

With the review of 14 civic amenity sites some sites will be non operational and others surplus to requirements. Future management and development of these assets will rest with the Unit.

Increase in Rental Income

Estates Management operates as a self financing Unit, and services are therefore cost-neutral to the department.

The Unit manages assets including the Industrial Estates at Balmoral and Duncrue, the Gasworks Business Park, St Georges and Smithfield Markets. The Unit has increased income from these properties over the last 4 years by 74%; a rise of £1.6 million, giving an average increase of 16.52%. This high level of return must be compared with general returns on investment over the period of 4%-6% and inflation less than 4%.

Equity rents received on the Gasworks alone last year amounted to £342,000. This represents a massive return to the Council as the Estates Management Unit originally negotiated and acquired the entire site in the early 1990's for £1 million approximately.

The Unit increased rental return from these properties in 2004/05 to £3.804million; a 16.5% uplift compared to 2003/04.

The Budget Summary Report for period 13 shows that the annual gross expenditure for the Estates Management Unit for 2004/05 was £2,410,960 with gross income of £5,170,291 leaving a net profit of £2,759,331.

Benchmarking

In order to assess the approach in other organisations a benchmarking exercise was undertaken locally via the Valuation and Lands Agency, QUB Estates and Management and Services Branch and North Down Borough Council Unit. Sunderland City Council, Lewisham County Council and Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council were also chosen as other benchmarks due to similarity in size and population.

A short high level questionnaire was designed, seeking information on Estates and Facilities Management, Asset Management, Valuation, Regeneration Activity, Staffing Structures, Finance and Performance Management. This was distributed to appropriate Councils via APSE members e mail query service, PSnet and Public Sector Benchmarking Service (PSBS).

NDBC , VLA, Queens University and the EMSB were selected due to the fact that they provide a service similar to that of Belfast City Council's Estates Management Unit and in the Northern Ireland Context.

Sunderland City Council, Lewisham County Council, and Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, were chosen as other local authority benchmarks due to similarity in size and population. Councils in England have differing responsibilities to those in Northern Ireland but the range of services offered make comparisons more realistic.

BCC is unusual in Northern Ireland in having its own professional internal estates and valuation service. None of the other Councils employ staff directly in this capacity with the exception of North Down Borough Council (NDBC) which has a Principal Policy Officer, responsible for a property portfolio of approximately 400 hectares and an asset value of around £80 million. NDBC however do not carry out valuation of their assets as this is done by the Valuations and Land Agency (VLA). Many of the Councils use the services of the VLA for negotiations of acquisitions, disposals and valuations while some also use private sector estate agents for some transactions and leasing. Most Councils have a designated Officer to deal with land matters and liaise with the VLA.

The Valuation and Lands Agency provides a wide range of valuation and estates surveying services. The services offered include acquisition, development, disposal, asset management and estate surveying. Belfast City Council (BCC) has previously employed the VLA to carry out valuation of its property portfolio due to lack of available resources in house. However BCC were not wholly satisfied with their work. Additionally the exercise cost the

Council around £50,000. Latterly this task has been carried out in house utilizing the expertise of the Estates Officers.

Queens University employs 1 general practice surveyor and approximately 11 project managers (depending on workload), and other clerical staff, within estates planning and development. Whilst Queens has a substantial rent roll and property portfolio, it is not as large as that of BCC. The EMSB of DFP, which has a property portfolio in excess of 200 buildings, employs approximately 12 staff in estate management; these are largely administrative staff given that the majority of the professional/surveying requirement of the work is undertaken by the VLA.

Lewisham County Council has a three pronged approach to its estate management. The asset management strategy team is made up from 3 qualified surveyors whose main role is to focus on long term sustainable development in the Council area. The Disposal team is charged with selling Council properties and looking after accommodation issues for corporate usage and the Management review team has five employees who would manage day to day activities of the various estates. The daily involvement of personnel on the ground means situations are quickly resolved and rarely turned into longer term issues.

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council run a very similar estates function to Belfast but on a larger scale. A team of twelve staff provide a service which includes:

- Sales
- Lettings
- Acquisitions
- Property Management
- Asset Valuations
- Insurance Valuations
- Professional Property Advice

Sunderland County Council has a team of twelve estate valuers within its property services team. The value of Capital assets is approximately £735 Million which is greater than that of Belfast but the regeneration aspect of their work makes for a valid comparison. The estates department in Sunderland work with an urban regeneration unit that has short, medium and long term aspirations.

The general consensus amongst councils with whom we spoke was that suitably qualified and experienced staff are hard to source and consequently they tended to stay away from short/fixed term contracts wherever possible.

Estates Personnel

The number of established posts within the Estates Management Unit (excluding Markets staff) has remained unchanged since the early 1990's. The Estates Management Unit is currently headed by the Estates Manager and includes:

- 2 Estates Officers (1 of whom is working reduced hours i.e. 4 days per week)
- 1 Assistant Estates Officer
- 1 Markets Development Officer*
- 1 Senior Markets Supervisor*
- 1 Markets Supervisor*
- 5 Markets Assistants*

*The Markets staff are not included within the scope of this phase of the review however BIS will address the Markets Section in phase II.

Additionally the Unit is supported by a further two Estates Officers and one Assistant Estates Officer employed on temporary contracts to meet workload needs. The two temporary posts of Estates Officer have been in place for approximately 4.5 years and 18 months respectively. The temporary post of Assistant Estates Officer has been in place for approximately 9 months.

Of these two temporary Estates Officers, one is currently responsible for managing the Gasworks site in its entirety. This includes continuing infrastructure development, facilities management and construction and implementation of Management and Development Agreements. Additionally this post holder has responsibility for Capital Asset Valuation, compensation cases regarding vested property, land acquisition and disposal and sourcing and securing suitable office accommodation for Belfast City Council.

The second temporary Estates Officer post has responsibility for managing the Duncrue Industrial Estate. There are major ongoing problems with the management and control of landfill gas across this site and this post holder has responsibility for managing this to maintain both the Councils asset value, developers' investments and to ensure the health and safety of the people in the Estate. This post holder is also heavily involved in the regeneration of the North Foreshore development project. Additionally, this post holder has responsibility for the disposal of former travellers sites around Belfast.

The North Foreshore Development project is currently headed by a Project Manager on a seconded basis. This Officer has been in post for a period of two years and six months owing to continued extensions to his contract. The project is also supported by a temporary Estates Officer as mentioned above, spending approximately 70 per cent of his week on North Foreshore issues and a Site Engineer who is primarily responsible for setting out areas to be consolidated on the site in accordance with the arc-21 programme.

Staffing Issues

Findings from benchmarking, interviews and work shadowing, emphasise the requirement to have effective staff resource dedicated to the management of a large scale property portfolio.

With an estate valued at £360 million plus, and in excess of 300 assets, the staff resource attached to managing Belfast City Councils portfolio is minimal in comparison to that attached to similar units in other Councils and Organisations. Staff resources have remained the same for many years despite increased workloads within estates and an urgent need exists to recognise the added value the Unit provides, and will continue to provide, if adequately resourced.

Since the role of the North Foreshore Project Manager was created the development of the site has progressed immensely and this momentum needs to continue. It is imperative that the role of the North Foreshore Project Manager is secured so that co-ordination of site preparation, infrastructure development, planning, risk management, estates management, economic development, project management, waste management and landscaping are continued and all progressing at a similar pace, to a set programme.

To carry out this work and ensure proper continuity it is recommended that the role of North Foreshore Project Manager is secured as a permanent post within Development Department and that it is supported by a full time post of Estates Officer. By creating this post the Council will recognise the increasing demands of this project and the need to free up some time for existing estates staff to address outstanding workload and concentrate on the complex task of managing such a large property portfolio.

It is imperative that the structure of the Estates Management Unit is amended to reflect its needs and to eradicate the need to rely on temporary staff thereby providing security and continuity in the long term. Accordingly it is recommend that the two temporary

posts of Estates Officer are made permanent, creating an establishment of five. However, to further assist the management of the Unit, it is recommended that one of these established posts of Estates Officer is redesignated Assistant Estates Manager. This post will be responsible for providing a deputy role for the Estates Manager and a single point of contact on estates issues. The number of Estates Officer posts will therefore revert to four.

Additionally, the temporary post of Assistant Estates Officer should also become a permanent position on the organisation structure for the Unit, bringing the establishment to two. This compares favourably with the structures in the other organisations with whom we benchmarked.

Having professionally qualified estates staff employed on permanent contracts allows for both an effective and efficient service, without the need to rely heavily on VLA or other external contractors. The Estates Management Unit will be more able to strike a balance between a reactive and a proactive service and capitalise on this to the advantage of Belfast City Council. Given their award winning experience in regeneration and their general professional expertise BCC's Estates Officers are able to stay abreast of developments across the property market, presenting an excellent public and business profile nationally and internationally.

Structural Arrangements

Since June 2005, the position of Head of Urban Development has been vacant. The Director of Development has requested that the Estates Management Unit and the staff involved in the development of the North Foreshore Project are managed in the interim by the Head of Economic Initiatives. This situation is outlined in the interim structure included in the appendices of this report.

The Estates Management Unit can provide development expertise in guiding the development process at North Foreshore and in recognition of this a dotted line has been inserted on the reporting structure between the posts of Estates Manager and the North Foreshore Project Manager and the posts of Assistant Estates Manager and the new post of Estates Officer. Similarly, the Assistant Estates Manager's responsibility towards Markets staff when deputising is illustrated by a dotted line.

Recommendations

The recommendations will allow the Unit to more effectively manage the Councils property portfolio by placing the appropriate

resources within the Unit to support its development activity and by eliminating the need to rely on temporary staff.

- That the Estates Management Unit undertakes the annual Capital Asset Valuation for Belfast City Council.
- That the seconded post of Project Manager on the North Foreshore Development Project is replaced with a permanent revised post of Project Manager, North Foreshore.
- That a new post of Estates Officer is created to support the Project Manager, North Foreshore.
- That the two temporary posts of Estates Officer within the Estates Unit are made permanent creating an establishment of five.
- That one post of Estates Officer is redesignated to Assistant Estates Manager and assumes responsibility for providing a deputy role for the Estates Manager.
- That the temporary post of Assistant Estates Officer is made permanent, creating an establishment of two.
- That the Estates Management Unit establish formal performance indicators to monitor its performance and its contribution to the overall health of the organisation.

Financial Implications

There are no additional costs associated with these recommendations. As the Estates Management Unit is self financing, the Department can meet the costs of all the recommendations under its current budgetary allocation and through the recoupment of the additional post through work carried out and charged by Service Level Agreement to other property holding Departments/Sections of the Council.

Environmental Implications

None.

Equality Implications

None.”

In answer to a Member's question, the Director confirmed that the proposed restructuring within the Unit had been agreed by the Core Improvement Team and was therefore in line with the recommendations contained within the report regarding the future management and recruitment of staff which had been agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st April.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Visit to Nottingham and Leeds/Bradford

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 17th August, 2005, it had agreed to amalgamate the internal Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan Working Groups so that only one Group would consider issues in relation to the development of both Area Plans. She informed the Members that, following discussions within the Working Group, it had been suggested that visits be undertaken later in the year to Nottingham and Leeds/Bradford to view guided bus ways and light rail schemes in those cities.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, together with one Member from each of the other Political Groupings represented on the Planning and Transport Political Working Group, accompanied by the Director of Development and the Planning and Transport Manager (or their nominees), participate in the visit, at an approximate cost of £225 per person. In addition, the Committee approved the payment of the appropriate subsistence and attendance allowances in connection with the trip.

Renewing the Routes Initiative

The Committee considered a report regarding the progress which had been achieved recently regarding the Renewing the Routes Initiative. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To update Committee on progress on the Renewing the Routes Initiative. This includes:

- **An update on progress on the lower Ormeau Road and a request for additional resources to support this activity**
- **An update on the application for funding under the Integrated Development Fund for work in the west Belfast and greater Shankill areas of the city and a proposed way forward on this initiative**
- **An update on progress on developing an art piece for Carlisle Circus and a request for approval for a representative structure for the public art project short listing panel for this location.**

Background

Lower Ormeau

At the meeting of the Development Committee on 15th June, 2005, the draft regeneration plan for the lower Ormeau area was endorsed as a basis for project development and implementation.

Integrated Development Fund

As reported to the January 2006 Development Committee, the application approved and the subsequent letter of offer for the work under the Integrated Development Fund comprises two elements:

- Existing areas: Lower Falls, Upper Springfield, Lower Shankill, Upper Shankill, Crumlin Road and the area adjacent to Broadway roundabout. Indicative allocation of £300,000 per node.
- Extension of the existing areas: Falls Road (lower Falls Road as far as beginning of Stewartstown Road – 3.5km), Springfield Road (bottom of Springfield Road as far as Springfield Park – 2.5km), Crumlin Road (Hillview Road as far as Braehill Road – 3km) and Woodvale Road (0.5km). Indicative allocation of £230,920 per km plus £70,000 for development of integrated plans. Total additional coverage – 9.5km.

Carlisle Circus

At the Development Committee meeting of 18th January, 2006 members approved the concept of a sculpture or art piece for Carlisle Circus. The concept of an art piece related to the theme of Otto Jaffe was approved for the commissioning of the final artwork.

Carlisle Circus is a prominent site both within the wider city and as a gateway to North Belfast. A commitment to consultation will also be required from the artist appointed to ensure that the local communities are involved and can take some degree of ownership for any final works. Initial community and school consultation has taken place between Oct 2005-Jan 2006. The process was co-ordinated by the council artist in resident Eleanor Wheeler. Members are asked to consider, for information, Appendix 2 which contains a brief summary of the community consultation and feedback from the various community organisations and their representatives.

Current Position

Update on progress on lower Ormeau

Since approval of the draft plan for lower Ormeau at the June 2005 Development Committee, a local steering group has been working on project development activity for priority schemes. Progress to date is recorded in Appendix 1. Activity and associated budgets are summarised below:

<u>Proposed Works</u>	<u>Indicative Budget</u>
<u>Enhancement of land at Dromara Street</u> Including new pathway, additional tree planting, clearance of low shrubs, creation of kick-about area, additional street furniture	£26,000
<u>Enhanced lighting scheme on road frontage</u> Traditional lighting columns – enhanced lighting	£35,000
<u>Mural project</u> Removal of murals and installation of new works - sites to be identified (up to four sites)	£12,000
<u>Vacant land at River Terrace</u> Land quality assessment for allotments	£5,000
<u>Residential frontages</u> Painting/minor works to residential frontages	£10,000
<u>Alleygating</u> To be implemented in identified locations (see appendix)	£28,000
<u>Targeting vacant sites</u> Targeting derelict sites for action by using statutory powers (cleansing, building control), carrying out clean-ups or planting work	£4,000
SUB-TOTAL	£120,000

Members will note that the budget for all these activities is in excess of the £100,000 available under Brighter Belfast. The lower Ormeau area is the only one of the arterial routes nodes for which it has not been possible attract additional contributions from other funders.

Members are asked to note progress to date and to consider allocating a maximum of £20,000 additional funding from Development Department resources to allow all schemes to progress to implementation stage.

Integrated Development Fund

Officials from the project sponsoring body, the Department of Social Development (DSD), have, under instruction from the

Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), set down a number of pre-requisites for drawing down and managing this programme. In

an effort to progress this initiative, it has been suggested that officers work on draft plans for two agreed areas in the first instance, based on comments received from DFP indicating what information they require and how they wish the information to be presented. In parallel, scoping work on the other areas can progress so that these can quickly move towards implementation once DFP give the green light to this approach.

At the Development Committee meeting of 18th January, 2006, it was noted that clarification was to be sought from DSD and DFP as to appropriate management structures for initiatives developed under this fund and, in particular, the role of local elected members. DFP and DSD have suggested that the final decision on any projects to be supported should be made by DFP, based on draft plans submitted to them for endorsement and they have not set down any requirements in terms of local consultation. Following initial discussions with elected members for these areas, Council officers are suggesting the local steering groups be established to develop and agree priority schemes for their area. These will form the basis of plans submitted to DFP for approval. The composition of these groups will be agreed with elected members and local community groups.

Carlisle Circus

In accordance with best practice in commissioning such pieces of public art the procurement process will comprise of several defined stages.

The first stage of the procurement process will be a call to artists to submit expressions of interest in carrying out this work. In recognition of the importance of the site and the level of resources allocated the call for expressions of interest will be advertised on a UK-wide basis. At this stage any prospective artists will be provided with an information pack outlining the physical characteristics of the site and contextual background information in relation to the theme for the work and the consultations carried out to date.

Otto Jaffe was a leading member of the Jewish community in Belfast in the period 1870 through to the early 1900s, and his many contributions to life and society in the city included positive impacts on health, education and general philanthropy. It may therefore be appropriate to consider these themes, as an element of his present legacy, as well as cultural and ethnic diversity in general, and its role in North Belfast. This could form the basis for consultation and the development of a final artwork.

The second stage comprises consideration and approval of the submissions from the prospective artists as the basis for the final piece of art work. It is proposed that the Council, through representation from the Development Committee / Development (Arts) Sub-Committee, will participate on the short listing panel for this second stage of the commissioning process. It is proposed that, in addition to the Committee representatives (2), the panel would comprise of representatives from the community (3), Department of Regional Development (1), PSNI (1), an independent professional opinion (1) (Arts Council representative) and Council Officers (2). The panel will assess the submissions against established criteria in the form of a brief. The criteria will be based on identified themes emerging from community consultation.

This stage will involve the initial consideration of all the submitted designs and if necessary an evaluation process to ensure the submissions for full consideration by the panel are practical and deliverable. The winning submission, agreed by the panel, will then form the basis for the artist to be commissioned to carry out further consultation prior to the finalisation of the public art piece based on this consultation and the original submission.

The short listing panel will then be reconvened to approve the final submission as a piece of public art in the context of this further consultation and the overall brief. Following the final approval of the panel the work will be subject to the third or final stage of formal procurement/ installation.

The budget for the artwork was previously £40,000 and it is proposed that the commissioning or consultation phase has a separate allocation of £10,000 available for consultation.

Equality Implications

There are no relevant equality considerations.

Environmental Implications

The arterial routes programme will enhance the physical appearance of the identified areas through a range of physical and environmental improvements.

Capital City Strategy Reference

4.3 To promote dynamic precincts and neighbourhoods.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- **Note progress to date on the schemes at lower Ormeau and consider allocating an additional £20,000 from Development Department resources to allow all schemes to progress to implementation stage**
- **Agree to develop two draft regeneration plans for agreed areas in the first instance and present to DFP for endorsement. Scoping work on the other areas to be progressed in tandem, in anticipation of comments and response from DFP**
- **Agree to engagement in local steering groups for the Integrated Development Fund projects, the format of which is to be agreed with members in advance of their creation**
- **Agree the proposed arrangements for the short listing panel and the representation from the different sectors including the Chairs of Development and the Arts Sub-Committee (or their nominees)**
- **Agree the additional allocation of up to £10,000 towards the commissioning and consultation of the Carlisle Circus art piece**
- **Agree the themes for the art piece to include health, education and general philanthropy (as Jaffe's current legacy) as well as cultural and ethnic diversity in general, and its role in North Belfast."**

During discussion in the matter, a Member pointed out that the residents of River Terrace in the Lower Ormeau Road area had submitted a petition to the Council requesting that the area be included in the proposals for alleygating and indicated that he understood that this work could be undertaken at a cost of approximately £10,000. He stated that the report indicated that, whilst alleygating would occur in the Lower Ormeau area, River Terrace was not one of the streets at which such work was proposed. He suggested, therefore, that the Committee should meet the costs of having this work carried out.

During discussion in the matter, several Members made the point that there were a number of streets across the City which would benefit from alleygating and whose residents had requested a number of years ago that such work be undertaken. It was suggested that the Committee would be setting a dangerous precedent if it agreed to provide alleygates at River Terrace.

The Director of Development informed the Committee that River Terrace was owned by the Department for Social Development and that Council officers had discussed with representatives of the Department the possibility of erecting alleygates in that location. To date, the Department had indicated that it was not in favour of such work being undertaken on its property. Accordingly, no reference had been made in the report to the possibility of alleygating River Terrace. However, the discussions with the Department for Social Development regarding this matter had not yet been concluded and she undertook to submit a further report to the Committee in due course.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Director regarding the possible alleygating of River Terrace and adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Gasworks Estate: Safety at the Water Feature

The Committee considered a report regarding the water feature located within the Gasworks Estate. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To seek Committee’s views on the future of the Water Feature located in the Gasworks estate.

Background

At the Committee meeting of 21st September 2005 Members were informed of the numerous incidents of youths swimming in the Water Feature during the summer months and of the near drowning of a six year old boy last August.

In view of the continuing risks involved, the Committee agreed that safety at the Water Feature be reviewed to see if any further measures can be taken to discourage persons from entering the water which has a uniform depth of 12 feet.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) was duly instructed to carry out the review.

Current Position

Rospa have now completed their investigations and a copy of their report is contained in Appendix A.

The report states that Belfast City Council has fully implemented the series of recommendations made by Rospa in 2004. These safety measures meet the ‘duty of care’ required of land owners to take action which can be reasonably foreseen as necessary for the prevention of accident and injury to persons.

However, the report qualifies this endorsement by describing the safety measures currently in place as applying to 'normal, rational behaviour by responsible people' and in recognition that an element of people on the site will continue to behave unreasonably, recommend that additional measures be introduced, namely manned patrols of the public realm area by security staff during daylight hours, May to September. The cost of this measure will be about £30,000 per annum.

The report considers other options including safety chains placed around the water's edge, a computerised monitoring system to detect persons entering the water and the idea of a steel mesh placed just below the waters edge. All of these proposals were dismissed by Rospa as being either unnecessary or counter productive.

Rospa acknowledges that the existence of the Water Feature imposes a residual risk which arises from the fact that some people will from time to time enter the water no matter what preventative measures are in place.

The Principal Solicitor in Legal Services Department has advised that, taking into account the safety measures which have been put in place in an attempt to make the Water Feature as safe as possible and also taking into account the fact that Council is fully aware of the risks, particularly to children, of retaining the Water Feature in its current form, Council would be very likely to be held liable for any accident or death arising as a direct result of the presence of this large body of water.

The Workplace Health Manager, Mike Keating, has expressed concerns that while manned patrols may help control the problem, they will also increase the risk of confrontation and work related violence particularly as the youths who enter the Water Feature have little respect for authority.

Mr Keating also advises that from a health and safety perspective, where practical to do so it is preferable to remove the source of a risk rather than increase the number of control measures being applied as these measures still cannot guarantee complete safety. He therefore recommends that consideration be given to substantially filling in the Water Feature so as to render it safe. While this action would incur initial capital cost it would, he advises, benefit from reduced costs of carrying out ongoing risk control measures and would minimise Council's risk liability.

PSNI and local community representatives from Lower Ormeau Residents Association and the Markets Development Forum have also expressed concerns about the dangers presented by the Water Feature. PSNI say that they cannot be expected to always respond to call-outs when youths enter the water.

Members will note that on the other hand the removal of the Water Feature would not be welcomed by either Radisson SAS or the site developers, Inislyn Ltd. The presence of the Water Feature played a significant part in their selection of the site for the hotel and remains, in their opinion, an enhancement to the character of both the hotel and the public realm area.

Options

Looking to ways forward there are two principal ways in which the situation can be dealt with:

- a. To introduce the recommended additional security patrols in the Public Realm during the summer months at a cost of about £30,000 per annum. This will mean that Council fully complies with the recommendations made by Rospa. An onus, however, will be placed on Council to ensure that the numerous recommended procedures for the safety management of the Water Feature are carried out at all times.

Or

- b. To remove the risk altogether by filling in the basin of the Water Feature and converting the land to an alternative facility, for example, a public amenity area or a water feature having just a few centimetres depth supplied by fountains using re-circulated water. This would cost in the region of £200k to £300k, depending on the scheme adopted. Given the time frame and the work implications it is suggested that in the first instance Members may wish to consider adopting option A. for this summer and seeking much further information and advice including costs for option B. before making the final decision.

Environmental Implications

None

Equality Implications

None

Capital City Strategy Reference

3.2. Making best use of Council's assets

Recommendation

Committee is asked to consider this report and to agree away forward.”

Following discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that additional security patrols be employed during this year's summer months in the vicinity of the water feature. In addition, the Committee agreed, due to the health and safety risks involved, that the water feature within the Gasworks be removed as soon as was practicable and that a report on the associated costs be submitted to a future meeting.

Request from the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership

The Director of Development informed the Committee that the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership was, in view of the forthcoming Review of Public Administration and the conclusion of the Peace II Programme, considering its future and had suggested that the Partnership and the Council establish a joint working group to examine possible options regarding future regeneration within the City.

She pointed out that the Policy and Resources Committee had considered this matter at its meeting on 21st April and had agreed that the Council representatives on the working group would include the Chairmen and the Deputy Chairmen of the Policy and Resources and the Development Committees, one representative from each of the Party Groupings on the Council which currently nominated representatives to the Local Strategy Partnership Board but were not represented by the above-mentioned Members, the Chief Executive and the Director of Development.

The Committee noted the information and endorsed the composition of the working group.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Stage Elevators and Suspension Installations at the Belfast Waterfront Hall: Appointment of Consultants

The Committee was reminded that in July 2005 a firm of specialists, Theatre Projects Consultants, had been engaged to provide, under the direction of the Project Management Unit, a report on the stage elevators and suspension installations at the Belfast Waterfront Hall. The Company's investigation had confirmed that significant replacement and upgrade work would be required. The Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls Board, at its meeting on 23rd November, 2005, had agreed that new stage elevators and suspension installations be obtained at a cost of £1 million, plus fees and associated costs.

The Director of Development reported that, since Theatre Projects Consultants had extensive knowledge of the installation and operational requirements of the Waterfront Hall and since only it and one other company within the United Kingdom had the ability to undertake the work, negotiations had been held with Theatre Projects Consultants to ascertain if it would be prepared to design and administer the work which would be required to provide new stage elevators and suspension installations. Subsequently, Theatre Project Consultants had submitted a quotation which was considered by the Project Management Unit to be acceptable.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that Theatre Projects Consultants be appointed to design and administer the work which would be required to provide new stage elevators and suspension installations at the Belfast Waterfront Hall and noted that a sum of £1.4 million had been included in the draft Capital Programme 2006/2007 for this project.

Street Name Plates

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 15th February, it had considered a report regarding a project to replace the existing street name plates in the City Centre Conservation Areas with old-style plates. The report had indicated that a sum of £90,000 was available for this work and that the Committee had agreed that tenders be invited for the manufacture and erection of the signs on the understanding that the expenditure would not exceed the £90,000 budget for the project.

She pointed out that an additional sum of £12,500 had been made available for the project from the European Union's Town Centre Reinvigoration Programme. Accordingly, the Committee noted that an amount of £102,500 was available for the manufacture and erection of old-style street name plates.

She pointed out also that a further submission had been made to the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate seeking additional funding of £25,000 towards the project and that the Council would be required to provide a financial contribution equivalent to one third of any funding obtained. She informed the Committee that it was possible that extra funding would become available from the Directorate in the near future but that this would be subject to the Council agreeing to provide a contribution equal to one third of that amount. She recommended that the Committee delegate to her, in consultation with the Chairman, authority to accept any additional funding which might become available and to increase the Council's financial contribution accordingly.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

City Reformers' Programme

The Director informed the Committee that Belfast had been included as one of eight European cities which had been invited to participate in a new city network entitled City Reformers. The project was being organised by the London School of Economics and the Brookings Institute and was being funded by the Rowntree Trust.

The Director stated that the City Reformers' Programme was a very interesting and challenging initiative and the cities involved would participate in a number of joint workshops. The core costs of the Programme would be met by the Rowntree Trust, although the Council would be required to meet the travel and attendance allowance costs associated with attendance at the various meetings. She stated that the Programme provided an opportunity for Belfast to share its own practice, learn about the other cities and to access the experience and knowledge base of the London School of Economics and the Brookings Institute. Accordingly, she recommended that the Council participate in the Programme.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman