

Development Committee

Wednesday, 16th August, 2006

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors M. Browne, Convery, Crozier, D. Dodds,
Ekin, Hartley, Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Long, P. Maskey,
McGimpsey, Newton, Ní Chuilín and Smyth.

Also attended: Councillor Mullaghan.

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. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

(Councillor P. Maskey, Deputy Chairman, in the Chair.)

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor A. Maskey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st June 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 July.

(Councillor McCausland in the Chair.)

Arts Sub-Committee

The minutes of the Arts Sub-Committee of 2nd August 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 2nd August.

Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 9th August be approved and adopted.

Capital City II Strategy 2006-2010

The Director reminded the Members that the Council's three-year Development Strategy, Belfast: Capital City, had concluded in March. Accordingly, she submitted for the Committee's approval a new strategy entitled Belfast: Capital City II which had been produced in order to guide the Council's development activities throughout the City until the full implementation of the Review of Public Administration. She reminded the Members that a public consultation exercise had been undertaken in respect of the contents of the Draft Strategy and that over twenty responses had been received, the majority of which had been highly positive and constructive, resulting in minor changes only being made to the text of the final draft.

After discussion, the Committee approved the contents of the Draft Strategy Belfast: Capital City II and noted that copies of the document were available upon request from the Department.

State of the City IV Conference

The Committee was reminded that, as part of the Belfast: State of the City Initiative, a Conference had been held in the Waterfront Hall on 9th May. This had proved to be a successful initiative which had brought together representatives from the City's key regeneration and development organisations. In addition, the event had sought to progress the City's urban agenda in order to maximise its potential and competitiveness.

Accordingly, the Director sought the Committee's approval for the holding of the State of the City IV Conference in the Waterfront Hall on Thursday, 9th April, 2007. It was proposed that the theme of the Conference would be "Belfast City- Region". Professor Michael Parkinson, Liverpool John Moore's University, a renowned expert in city competitiveness, had indicated that he would be available to speak at the event. In addition, Professor Parkinson had proposed to develop further the research which he had carried out during 2004 in relation to Belfast's competitiveness with other United Kingdom cities.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Belfast: State of the City IV 2007 Conference be held in the Waterfront Hall, that a budget in the sum of £25,000 be allocated in respect of the holding of the Conference and that the Council should levy a charge only on those persons who failed to attend the Conference having reserved a place. In addition, the Committee authorised the attendance at the Conference of any Member of the Committee who so wished and authorised the payment of the appropriate attendance allowance in connection therewith.

Celebrate Belfast – Progress Report

The Committee considered a report on the progress which had been achieved in relation to the Celebrate Belfast Initiative and noted the information contained therein in relation to marketing activities, the final details of the Arts Council's Art of Regeneration Programme, the development and launch of the Titanic and Gaeltact Quarter Trail leaflets and details in respect of the City Hall Centenary Programme.

Sport

Intercity Sports Initiative

The Committee was informed that the above-mentioned event would bring to the City between 200 and 250 children in the 13 to 17 age group from Dublin, Cork and Cardiff in order to participate with 200 children from Belfast in a Sports Academy. In addition to seeking to improve the skills of the individuals in a variety of sports, the Academy would seek to provide the participants with an opportunity to meet and form friendships with young people from the other cities.

The participants in the Initiative would visit the City for two nights and would attend a prize giving reception to be held in the City Hall. It was anticipated that the cost of the Initiative would be approximately £28,000, of which £21,000 had been requested from the Celebrate Belfast budget.

After discussion, the Committee approved the contribution of £21,000 from the Celebrate Belfast budget in respect of the Intercity Sports Initiative to be held in the City during October, 2006.

Circuit of Ireland Retrospective Trial, 2006

The Committee agreed to provide funding in the sum of £1,000 in respect of the holding in the City of the Circuit of Ireland Retrospective Trial, 2006.

Partnerships

Radio Ulster/Radio Scotland Concerts

The Committee was informed that, as part of the Celebrate Belfast Programme, a series of live concerts with Radio Ulster and Radio Scotland were being developed currently for transmission during the Autumn of 2006. These events would consist of a series of studio concerts with musicians from both localities performing in Glasgow and Belfast and would be broadcast in both regions as well as being available on-line via the British Broadcasting Corporation's website.

The Committee agreed to allocate a sum of £15,000 towards the costs of the events.

Hefei Cultural Festival

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st June, it had accepted an invitation from the City of Hefei, China, to send a delegation of up to ten persons to participate in its International Cultural Festival at an approximate cost of £10,000. This event would take place during October, 2006 and involve three local performers taking part in a series of cultural events. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Chairman

and the Deputy Chairman of the Development (Arts) Sub-Committee (or their nominees) form part of the Council's delegation which would attend the event. The Members were informed that, although the city of Hefei would cover the costs of the Belfast Party whilst in that city, authority to pay attendance allowance to the Members participating would be required.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and authorised the payment of attendance allowances in connection therewith.

City of the Isles Conference

The Director informed the Committee that a City of the Isles Conference would be held in Glasgow during the period from 5th till 6th October. She reminded the Members that the City of the Isles Partnership was a network involving Belfast, Cardiff, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Liverpool and met on an annual basis with the primary aim of sharing best practice in the area of city development.

The Director indicated that the theme of this year's Conference would be "Opportunity to Competitiveness – the use of growth as a tool for social cohesion" and each city would be allocated twenty delegate places at the Conference.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided, approved the attendance at the Conference of the Lord Mayor, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee (or their nominees) together with the Director of Development and appropriate officers. The Committee approved also the payment of the appropriate travelling, subsistence and attendance allowances in connection therewith and approved the establishment of a budget not exceeding £5,000 to cover the costs incurred. The Committee agreed further that the remaining delegate places be offered to relevant organisations within the City and noted that, should any organisation agree to accompany the Council delegation, it would do so at its own expense.

Urbact Final Conference

The Committee was reminded that the Council and its stakeholders within the Quartiers En Crise Network had been involved in a number of Urbact projects, which was a transnational programme for cities across Europe who were delivering Urban II Programmes or had previously been involved in Urban I Programmes. One of the Urbact programmes entitled Udiex had considered the exchange of best practice and learning to address social inclusion in city neighbourhoods. The Director informed the Committee that the Final Udiex Conference, aimed at examining the findings of the Network, would be held in Brussels during the period from 20th till 21st September and that an invitation had been received from Quartiers En Crise, Brussels, requesting that the Council nominate an Elected Member to attend the event.

After discussion, during which the Committee noted that all significant expenses relating to attendance at the Conference would be met by Udiex Secretariat Brussels, the Committee approved the attendance at the Udiex Final Conference of the Chairman of the Development Committee (or his nominee) and authorised the payment of attendance allowance and any incidental subsistence payments in connection therewith.

European Unit – Eurocities Annual General Meeting 2006

The Committee approved the attendance of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, together with the Director of Development and the European Manager (or their nominees), at the Annual General Meeting of the Eurocities Network to be held in Manchester during the period from 22nd till 25th November. The theme of the meeting would be the knowledge economy and the role of cities in meeting, by 2010, the Lisbon agenda goals.

In addition, the Committee authorised the payment of the appropriate travelling, subsistence and attendance allowances in connection therewith.

Interreg – Funding Secured

The Director reminded the Committee that the Comet Interreg Partnership had been in existence since April, 2005 and had been developed to maximise Interreg funding opportunities for the Greater Belfast Metropolitan Area. She reported that the Council's European Unit had been advised of a proposal designed to deliver a procurement programme which sought to improve access for small to medium-sized enterprises to public sector supply contracts across Northern Ireland and the cross-border region. The initiative would provide new and direct access for small to medium-sized enterprises in the Belfast area with contacts in the Republic of Ireland and would include several programmes designed to enable business or social economy participants to develop opportunities in public procurement.

The Council had been included in the overall initiative which would deliver one programme within the Belfast City Council area. The Special European Programmes Body had confirmed an offer of funding in the sum of £109,729, which amounted to 75% of the total programme costs, this offer being subject to the securing of 25% matching funding. A number of Councils were participating in the programme and it had been assessed that Belfast's contribution to match funding, in order to proceed under the Local Sourcing Initiative, would be £10,000.

After discussion the Committee agreed that a contribution in the sum of £10,000 be provided in respect of the Local Sourcing Public Procurement Cross-Border Programme.

Key Infrastructure Projects Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the progress which had been achieved to date in relation to Key Infrastructure Projects:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that a number of key infrastructure areas have been identified for development in the city. The total budgetary allocation was £1.2million. Given the time imperative associated with the expenditure of monies allocated to the infrastructure projects the following projects were selected.

North	North Foreshore	£500,000
South	Disabled Care Site	£300,000
West	Conway Mill	£150,000
	Argyle Business Centre	£150,000
East	Thompson Dry Dock	£100,000

Key Issues

Most of the projects identified above are progressing and it is anticipated that they will all meet the expenditure deadline stipulated by DETI. i.e. 31st December 2007. An update on the progress of each project is detailed as follows:-

North Belfast - North Foreshore

Plans for the development of the North Foreshore Project are progressing well. The business case and economic appraisal for the sites development is complete and has been approved by Senior Economists at DETI. The Cost Benefit Analysis which was undertaken in response to the Belfast Harbour Commissioners consultation submission is also complete.

South Belfast - Disabled Care Site

The Disabled Care Site was subject to a Development Brief and the successful application was submitted by H&J Martin, BIH and The Greater Village Regeneration Trust. GVRT Site ownership will be apportioned between BIH and H&J Martin. The business incubation will be constructed by the developer on behalf of Greater Village Regeneration Trust. The Trust will have a 99 year lease from H&J Martin at a peppercorn rent for the 8,000sq ft of business incubation space. The designs of the space are completed and the planning application will be lodged in June.

West Belfast - Conway Mill

This project had a full financial package identified until DETI withdrew its funding due to State Aid Regulations. The remaining funders have been approached to address the funding shortfall of £500,000. At the Economic Development Sub Committee meeting of 3rd May 2006, Members approved an additional sum of £50,000 towards the development of the project. With additional funding secured, the project is now in a position to move forward.

West Belfast - Argyle Business Centre

The funding package is now in place for this development which will create 12 units of 3333 sq ft on the site. A key condition of Council funding was that the Business Centre would provide enterprise development activities within the local area and that there would be Board Representation from Belfast City Council.

Both conditions have been welcomed by Argyle Business Centre who would welcome strategic guidance from Council. Members are therefore asked to give consideration to the following options for Board participation.

- (i) Chair and Deputy Chair of Development to participate on the Argyle Business Centre Board
- (ii) Two Representatives from the Court Electoral Area (the area in which the Business Centre is located) to participate on the Board, preferably representing the Development Committee.

East Belfast - Thompson Dry Dock

A sum of £100,000 has been allocated to the reinstatement work to the Thompson Dry Dock which is being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. The economic appraisal for the project is complete and is currently with Departmental Economists. It is anticipated that the project will be complete by 31st March 2007.

It is recommended that in light of the above area based infrastructure developments, Members may wish to consider giving approval to undertaking a visit to the key developments to learn further about their progress.

Resource Implications

Financial

£1.2million already allocated to the projects.

Human Resources

Currently managed by Economic Development Manager.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members

- (i) Note the contents of the report
- (ii) Identify the most appropriate option for Board participation on Argyle Business Centre
- (iii) Approve site visits to the Area Based Projects.

Key to Abbreviations

**DETI – Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment
GVRT – Greater Village Regeneration Trust.”**

After discussion, the Committee noted the information contained within the report and agreed to undertake several site visits to the various Area Based Projects. The Committee agreed also that two Members of the Committee representing the Court Electoral Area be appointed to participate on the Board of the Argyle Business Centre, a report on the appropriate method of selection of the two Members to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

Review of the Renewing of the Routes Team

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th January, it had endorsed a proposed review of staffing within the Renewing the Routes Team, in anticipation of the additional work which would accrue from an Integrated Development Fund project and had recognised that the proposed posts would be paid for from revenue funding available as part of the project.

Subsequently, the Council's Business Improvement Section had considered the review of staffing as agreed at the aforementioned meeting. However, it was pointed out that there was a need to revise several job descriptions in line with the duties which had emerged from the Integrated Development Fund Project implementation. This would necessitate also the termination of the currently extended fixed-term contract posts and the carrying out of a recruitment exercise for the revised post.

The resource implications, which had been identified by the Business Improvement Section, together with its recommendations, are set out hereunder:

“Resource Implications

Staffing for phase one of the project was approved at the Development Committee meeting of 14th January 2004. At this meeting two fixed-term (for one year) posts were approved; to focus on project development, these were subsequently extended through to March 2006 at the Development Committee meeting of 15th November, 2004 with the emphasis on continued developmental / consultation activity and direct project delivery or implementation.

To cater for the area extension in the arterial routes programme and the expansion of the work it is necessary to increase the number of staff from 5 to 7 and to have a dedicated resource within the PMU to provide the co-ordination of the project management in relation to the direct capital works elements of the IDF work. The

two additional posts are the Renewing the Routes Project Monitoring Assistant (to assist in monitoring the project) and the Renewing the Routes Design Assistant (to assist with the design of capital projects). This is in accordance with the proposals in the earlier Committee report.

It is proposed that all the posts are subject to a recruitment process and that the current ongoing extension of the existing contracts be terminated on appointment of the new staff. It would be envisaged that the 7 posts be in place by 1st November 2006.

We would recommend that two new posts of 'Renewing the Routes Officer' be created to replace the existing Urban Regeneration Officer posts. The duties and responsibilities of these posts would take account of the increased staffing within the Unit and the broader scope of the work of the IDF.

Three Renewing the Routes Assistant posts would replace the current Urban Regeneration Assistant posts.

As the responsibilities and duties associated with the existing fixed term contract posts will change the extended contracts should be terminated and the revised jobs recruited on new contracts.

Finance

The costs of the project cover from 1st November 2006 to 31st March 2009 inclusive. It is anticipated that all the posts will be filled by that date. The cost of the posts will be funded by the IDF, charges on the IDF capital project management, Development Department and Brighter Belfast.

Costs

Salary costs based on maximum salary points for 29 months	
Total	£464,763
<u>Income</u>	
Brighter Belfast	£12,500
Integrated Development Fund	£265,750
Total	£278,250
Development Department Contribution Nov 2006-March 2009	£ 186,513

There are resources identified currently within the agreed Development Department Revenue Estimates for the delivery of ongoing Renewing the Routes activities. Accordingly there will be no increase in the agreed revenue budget to cover the additional two posts.

Recommendations

BIS recommend:

- The revised structure and job titles set out in the Appendix;
- The termination of all the existing fixed term contracts (URO and URA posts) on the appointment of the Renewing the Routes staff, with the provision for handover, on or before the 30th November 2006.
- To have all the new posts filled by 1st November 2006 on a fixed term for the durations up to March 2009 specified above.”

After discussion, the Committee endorsed the recommendations contained within the Business Improvement Section’s report as set out above, agreed to the creation of new job descriptions which would reflect the duties emanating from the implementation of the Integrated Development Fund Programme and authorised the commencement of a recruitment exercise in respect of the revised posts.

Renewing the Routes Project – York Road

The Committee considered the undernoted report concerning the potential increase in and variation of contract conditions in respect of the Renewing of the Routes Project at York Road.

“Background

This Committee previously agreed a range of potential projects for the York Road area and the specific refurbishment works to the shop premises to be carried out as part of a larger tender for improvements across the city.

The works were proposed to start in May, as part of the approved city wide tender, with a projected 16 week contract period. However, on initiation of the works the contractor identified structural complications with a number of the properties (Appendix 1) which had been concealed prior to the detailed design and commencement of the work.

Structural Engineers appointed by the Council supported the findings of the Contractor and advised that even the cosmetic works proposed in the agreed schedule of works should not be carried out with the buildings in their current condition. Further work was carried out to develop potential options for the resolution of the issue, a summary of these is set out below:

Option 1 – Simple re-instatement of the previous facades/a reduced scheme. The problem with the simple re-instatement option is that it would not create the environmental improvement that was the original intention of the scheme.

Option 2 – The original scheme is carried out by the Council following the completion of the necessary remedial structural works by the owners / occupiers. The issue with this complex option is that the owners/occupiers had not envisaged this outlay when agreeing to participate in the scheme and it would require the owners to provide the Council with a range of assurances regarding the quality of the remedial work before the improvement work could commence.

Option 3 – A third option has now been identified, whereby money might, with committee approval, be allocated from a previously agreed scheme, the 'Gateway Proposal', also on York Road to the refurbishment of the commercial properties. This reallocation could be used towards the cost of undertaking remedial structural works which would allow the scheme to proceed as originally intended. Any variation in the resources would require the approval of both the Committee and Urban II.

The Programme Management Executive of Urban II is supportive of the proposed reallocation.

Key Issues

In order to release funds to address the problems encountered it will be necessary to consider the modification or abandonment of an approved project for the York Rd. Following consideration of the status of the previously approved projects it has been proposed that a proportion of the budget (up to £30,000) for the Gateway proposal could be reallocated to the refurbishment of the commercial properties and, if necessary, supplemented from additional Development Department resources.

Resource Implications

Financial

As these complications were only recently uncovered, having been concealed prior to the commencement of the work and the option of resource reallocation only latterly identified it has not been possible to undertake a survey or estimate the financial impact of any corrective action for inclusion with this report. However, it is anticipated that this information will be available for presentation at the Committee meeting.

Human Resources

No additional staffing implications involved with these recommendations.

Asset and Other Implications

No additional direct asset implications involved with these recommendations.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the potential for the additional option for the progression of the refurbishment works to the shop premises on the York Road through:

- The reallocation of resources from the proposed Gateway project and, if necessary, Development Department budgets, to supplement the committed funds for the refurbishment of the identified commercial premises on York road; and
- If appropriate, approve the variation of the existing contract with the appointed contractor and any consequent increase in the agreed cost of the contract.”

The Committee was informed that, subsequent to the agenda having been circulated, it had been discovered that the structure of the premises identified in the foregoing report would not be adequate to support the proposed new frontages without substantial additional structural work being undertaken.

The Head of Urban Development explained that it would not now be possible even with the additional resources sourced from other budgets to carry out the improvement to the shop fronts as had originally been planned. However, she suggested that the additional finances would enable the shop fronts to be restored to a standard which would be better than they had been prior to the commencement of the scheme. She confirmed that discussions with the shopkeeper were ongoing and undertook to provide further information in due course.

After discussion, the Committee agree to reallocate up to £30,000 from the Gateway Project and other departmental budgets to supplement the already committed funds, which would permit refurbishment work to continue at York Road Shops. The Committee agreed also to the variation of the existing contracts to take account of the changes in the proposed works.

**Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan –
Progress and Current Consultation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan Consultation Process:

“Relevant Background Information

The Council submitted comments on the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan in January 2005 and counter objections to the comments of third parties in November 2005. Planning Service published Plan Amendment No.1 to the Draft BMAP on the 14 February 2006 which contained revisions including additions, modifications and deletions of Plan Proposals. Council representations to the published document were submitted to Planning Service in April 2006.

The Department has decided to hold a Public Local Inquiry by the Planning Appeals Commission for the purpose of considering objections to the Draft Plan including Plan Amendment No.1 to the Draft Plan. Council officers participated in two ½ day workshops on the 29 March and the 4 April with the BMAP Team. Discussions focused on Council representations and objections to Draft BMAP and the most appropriate approaches to the forthcoming public inquiry were explored.

Key Issues

An update on the BMAP process is outlined below, in addition to summaries of the Councils draft response to statutory consultation on Draft BMAP representations and the publication of representations to the Plan Amendment No.1:

- The Council’s BMAP Internal Officers Working Group is currently refining the Council’s position in relation to the issues raised during the various BMAP consultations. Preparatory work is continuing to provide a more detailed justification of the Council’s objections as the basis for potential participation at the Public Inquiry.
- Work is also continuing with Legal Services, in relation to the identification of potential expert witnesses for the Public Inquiry.
- The current BMAP Timetable is outlined below:
 - 14 August 2006; Objectors notified of Pre-Inquiry Meetings
 - First Pre-Inquiry Meeting expected in November 2006
 - Public Inquiry Early 2007

- Planning Service has published copies of all representations in respect of Plan Amendment No.1 to the Draft Plan, received during the 8 week consultation period. A total of 409 representations were received. The Council response is attached in Appendix 2 and is based on previous comments made in relation to Draft BMAP and Plan Amendment No.1. The response must be submitted by the 15 August 2006 to the Planning Service.
- The BMAP Team is currently carrying out statutory consultations on representations made to Draft BMAP. To date the Council have received consultation requests on issues relating to Environmental Health, proposed new Open Space and Cemetery provision. A response to representations on the strategic issues is required by the 31 August 2006. Further consultation is scheduled to take place in August on BMAP strategies and site specific issues.
- The current consultations provide a further opportunity for the Council to put forward representations on BMAP policy and zonings in relation to their statutory functions. The proposed response is attached (Appendix 1) and issues are summarised below:
 - The increasing significance of air quality issues is highlighted with the need for air quality assessment to be incorporated in key site requirements for specified developments.
 - A comment relating to strategic cemetery policy is being put forward however no comment is being made of site specific issues at this stage as a review is currently being carried out by appointed consultants.
 - Amendment to the zoning of North Foreshore as a proposed new open space is being sought as the development potential of the site is still being explored and it is not committed for open space.

Resource Implications

Financial

Resources are identified within budgets for the appointment of consultants to support the work on BMAP.

Human Resources

No additional human resource implications are involved with these recommendations

Asset and Other Implications

No additional asset implications are involved with these recommendations.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the update on the BMAP process
- To consider the content of the draft response to statutory consultations on BMAP set out in Appendix 1 and agree this as an appropriate response for submission to Planning Service by 31 August
- To consider the content of the draft response to publication of representations of Plan Amendment No.1 set out in Appendix 2 and agree this as an appropriate response. This is required to be submitted to Planning Service by 15 August.”

After discussion, the Committee endorsed the contents of the Council’s draft response to the Statutory Consultation on the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and endorsed also the contents of the draft response to the publication of representations to the Plan Amendment No.1. It was noted that copies of both draft responses would be available upon request from the Department.

Renewal of Routes: Pilot Plans for Shankill and Springfield Areas

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st June, it had agreed that funding be sought from the Integrated Development Fund in respect of two regeneration plans for the Shankill Road and Springfield Road. The Director reported that, subsequent to that meeting, some scoping work had been undertaken in these areas to identify the key issues in both areas.

Shankill Road

The Committee was informed that this area had been allocated a budget in the sum of £715,000 from the Integrated Development Fund, which would be combined with the previously approved £100,000 from the Brighter Belfast Fund for the Upper Shankill area. The Members were informed further that the key issues emerging from the scoping work for the Shankill had been defined as:

- (i) commercial improvements focusing on the core shopping area;
- (ii) the identification of and improvements to gateway sites and junctions through enhanced landscaping, lighting and public art; and
- (iii) enhancements to buildings with architectural value through the provision of feature lighting and boundary/landscape improvements.

Springfield Road

The Members were advised that the financial allocation available for this location from the Integrated Development Fund had been calculated at £415,000 and that the pilot plan would include the area from Belfield Heights to West Circular Road. The Director informed the Members that the key issues for the Springfield Road Plan had been identified as:

- (i) the provision of public realm works to improve access and reinforce the role of the area as an economic and social focus;
- (ii) the enhancement of the open space landscaping, lighting and public art; and
- (ii) commercial improvements which would build on the existing shop frontage improvement scheme.

The Committee was informed that, following endorsement, the next phase of the process would be to prioritise the key issues and develop potential projects with estimated budgets. All information, including the Committee's comments, would be submitted to the Department for Social Development for endorsement during September, 2006, following which the plans would be forwarded to the Department for Finance and Personnel for final approval.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided in respect of the key issues and themes relating to the Shankill Road and Springfield Road area plans and the timescale for the submission of those plans to the Department for Social Development.

Estates Management – Markets

The Committee agreed that a special meeting be held to consider the findings of a feasibility study in relation to the provision of an open-air market within the City.

Estates Management – St. George's Market Bad Debts

The Committee considered a report in relation to outstanding debts for the hire of St. George's Market and outstanding rent for a shop unit at St. George's Market.

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Members that all reasonable measures had been undertaken, including legal action, to recover the debts which in some instances dated back to 2001. However, it had proved economically unacceptable to proceed further with the recovery exercise.

The Committee noted that a hiring policy in respect of St. George's Market had been amended to prevent a reoccurrence of such incidents and agreed, in accordance with Section K12 of the Council's Financial Regulation, that the undernoted debts be written off:

£2,925 incurred by Mr. Gow;
£975 incurred by Dalzell and Company Limited; and
£3,425.82 incurred by Mr. G. Dougal.

Appropriation of Land at Ravenhill Road

The Committee considered a report in respect of a portion of surplus land which had been held by the Health and Environmental Services Committee and the Parks and Cemeteries Services Sub-Committee at Ravenhill Road and the adjoining Albert Bridge.

The Director advised the Members that this land had previously been marketed and agreed for disposal to the Boys' and Girls' Club of Northern Ireland and the Patton Group, in a joint venture. However, despite discussions having continued with the prospective purchaser and their representatives, it had not proved possible to secure an agreement with them and, to date, the purchaser had not signed the appropriate legal documentation. Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Committee approve the appropriation from the Health and Environmental Services Committee and the Parks and Cemeteries Services Sub-Committee of approximately 0.1 acre of land at Ravenhill Road and adjoining Albert Bridge and that the property be remarketed, by way of a development brief, the contents of which would be subject to approval by the Committee.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Estates Management – Gasworks Issues

Cusp Plot 4 Hotel Application

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st June, it had agreed that an economic appraisal regarding the provision of a second hotel on the Gasworks Site be undertaken. The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that, despite encountering difficulties, consultants Grant Thornton had now been appointed to undertake the exercise and a report thereon would be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee approved the appointment of Grant Thornton Consultants to carry out an economic appraisal and agreed that a budget of £6,000 be allocated for this purpose.

Proposed Public Conveniences

The Members were informed that, subsequent to discussions with officers from the Health and Environmental Services Department, the Gasworks had been identified as a suitable location for the provision of a semi-automatic public convenience, the provision of which would be funded, developed and managed by the Health and Environmental Services Committee and following construction the site would be appropriated to that Committee. The Members were informed also that Consarc Design Company, who had advised on the planning and design of the Gasworks, had advised that the most appropriate location of the public convenience would be at the pedestrian walkway close to Cromac Street.

The Committee approved the provision of a public convenience at an appropriate location within the Gasworks site.

Noted.

**Use of Delegated Powers in relation to the provision of an
Electrical Supply to the North Foreshore Site**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the provision of electricity supply to the North Foreshore:

“Relevant Background Information

The development of the North Foreshore as a business park (as discussed by the Development Committee at its meeting in August 2005) will require significantly more electricity than is available from the current NIE installed capacity in the area or from any generation capacity which can be guaranteed to be installed on the site in the short term.

NIE has stated that there is in the region of 500kVA of electricity capacity currently available to supply the North Foreshore site. The proposed Dargan Road Waste Transfer Station which is programmed for completion in March 2007 will use in the region of 60kVA, whilst the ARC21 Organics Composting Facility which is programmed to be operational by July 2007 will use in the region of 750–1500kVA depending on the nature of the proposal of the successful tenderer.

NIE has confirmed that they do not have the capacity available to meet these combined needs from local cable infrastructure. Additional electricity supply capacity therefore must be available by July 2007.

The procurement of a Joint Venture partner for the utilisation of landfill gas to generate and export electricity is at an advanced stage with a view to commencing generation in mid 2007.

Key Issues

NIE could increase supply through a new 6.6kV sub-station located on the North Foreshore connected to the local NIE grid infrastructure, at an estimated cost of £500k. However this measure would only increase the supply to 1000kVA which would quickly be exhausted as the business park and ARC21 sites continue to develop. As a result there will ultimately be a need to bring a high capacity cable from Skegoneil Street and construct a 33kV substation to make up supply shortfalls.

If the 6.6kV connection proposal were to be implemented, no export of electricity would be possible for technical reasons outlined by NIE. While the electricity generated could be used to supply facilities on the site, the supply will initially exceed demand and consequently a 33kV connection to the NIE grid infrastructure at Skegoneil Street is essential for any export of electricity to be possible.

NIE has provided an estimated overall cost of approximately £2.25m to £2.5m (depending on final route) for the installation of the recommended cables and all associated switchgear, substation and civil engineering work. This amount is estimated and based on the best currently available information; the final cost will be recalculated on the actual extent of work necessarily carried out and sourcing of proprietary switchgear.

The cost of provision of this 33kV cable connection to Skegoneil Street is distinct from the cost for the 11kV ring main(s) and transformers which will eventually be required to allow the distribution of electricity locally around the site to individual users as the development proceeds.

The anticipated timescale for the completion of the 33kV cable installation and substation works is approximately 12-18 months from confirmation of the order to NIE. In the event that the cable installation is not complete by the time ARC21's Organics Composting Facility is due to become operational, the agreement by BCC to provide a 'serviced site' means that it has an obligation to provide an electricity supply. The only guaranteed method by which this can be achieved is by the use of diesel powered generators at an estimated cost of £70k per month.

As noted above, the timescales involved meant that for sufficient electricity supply to be available to satisfy the needs of ARC21 an urgent decision regarding the cable had to be taken.

A meeting of the Council's North Foreshore Project Team (including the Directors of Corporate Services, Legal Services and Development) was convened at the end of June to consider the available options and financial implications. Taking the potential expenditure, income streams and lease obligations it was agreed that the most appropriate course of action would be to commit to the 33kV cable connection option as soon as possible.

Therefore, on the recommendation of the North Foreshore Project Team, the Director of Corporate Services (in the absence of the Chief Executive) exercised the authority delegated by Standing Order 42 [which states that during July the business of the Council normally managed by the Committees shall, where circumstances render it necessary be discharged by the Chief Executive and Town Clerk or, in his/her absence, his/her deputy acting upon recommendations made by the Directors of Departments] to enter into an agreement with NIE on the grounds of financial prudence.

Resource Implications

Amounts are included in the 06/07 draft Capital Programme as follows:

£0.5m - cable connection from the North Foreshore to the national grid;

£12.2m - provision of infrastructure for the development of the North Foreshore.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee notes the exercise by the Director of Corporate Services of authority delegated by Standing Order 42 to enter into an agreement with NIE to install a 33kV cable and all associated switchgear, substation and civil engineering work for the supply and export of electricity between the NIE equipment at Skegoneill Street and the proposed North Foreshore development site at an estimated overall cost of approximately £2.25m to £2.5m."

The Director reported that she had been advised by Northern Ireland Electricity that the installation of the sub-station and the associated cabling work would result in minimal disruption for the residents in the immediate vicinity. However, she undertook to raise the matter again with Northern Ireland Electricity to ensure that any major excavation work would be carried out only on site at the North Foreshore rather than on the public highway.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the report.

North Foreshore Cost Benefit Analysis

The Committee considered a report in respect of a Cost Benefit Analysis relating to the North Foreshore. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendix referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that at the March meeting of the Development Committee the post Consultation Report of the North Foreshore was presented to Members.

One of the key consultation responses was that of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners who propose that part of the site which is designated for the business park should be used for distribution logistics warehousing. They contend that there is growing demand for warehousing on the Co. Antrim side of the 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.

Key Issues

A Cost Benefit Analysis has been undertaken by KPMG regarding the proposed use of 25 acres of the site that is currently only available for economic development. This Cost Benefit Analysis assessed both the Belfast Harbour proposal and the Environmental Business Park plans. Each option was assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Key quantitative indicators included costs, projected income and timing. The qualitative indicators included maximising waste and recycling opportunities, maximising economic impact, inform and educate local community, promoting energy conservation and minimising impact on future generations.

A third option was also considered which was a hybrid of Distribution Warehousing and the Environmental Business Park.

Each option was weighted and scored against the qualitative and quantitative criteria. The analysis undertaken by KPMG has concluded that the preferred option is the development of the Environmental Business Park. The rationale is that it has the potential to provide more jobs to the area in the long term, fits better with the ethos of the whole site in terms of being sustainable and environmentally focused and has the potential to provide much more to the economy in terms of encouraging innovation, given the nature of the companies likely to be amongst starter companies.

The risk of the uptake of the site is greater with this option but is mitigated by the level of interest expressed to date. A copy of the Cost Benefit Analysis is contained within Appendix 1.

At the Development Committee Meeting on 21st June 2006, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Cost Benefit Analysis Report in order to permit a Special meeting to be held with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to enable Members to receive an update on their plans to provide distribution logistic warehousing on the North Foreshore Site. This meeting took place on the 3rd August. At that meeting representatives from BHC advised the Committee that they wished to see that the 25 acres of land available on the site should be zoned for warehousing. BHC estimates that this could provide 280,000 ft² of warehousing which would yield a potential ground rental income of £375,000 and rates revenue of £900,000. BHC estimates that this would result in the creation of 366 jobs.

Belfast City Council has been working on the concept of an Environmental Business Park since 2002. A technical study and business plan was undertaken in 2004 to test the feasibility of the economic development elements of the site. The business plan concluded that the proposal for an Environmental Business Park should be progressed at the North Foreshore and that the Park could transform the identity of the North Foreshore from a Brownfield, former landfill site to an internationally recognised location promoting integrated , sustainable development and tangible employment opportunities in Belfast. An economic appraisal was also undertaken to test the business case for an Environmental Business Park, the appraisal concluded that the Park would provide:

- Creation of 1000 jobs
- Creation of two social economy projects
- 53,050m² of the site allocated for bespoke unit development (27 Units)
- 19,000m² of the site allocated for speculative unit development (45 Units)
- 7000m² of the site allocated for starter units (35 Units)
- 950m² of the site allocated for the development of an educational facility

In addition to this, Members were also advised at the March meeting of the Development Committee of the application pending with the Big Lottery Living Landmarks fund for the development of the North Foreshore. A project visit was undertaken on the 8-9 May whereby the plans for the development on the site were tested by the Living Landmarks team. Council was advised on the 7 August that its application had been successful and a development grant of up to £250,000 has been awarded towards the cost of developing North Foreshore project to the next stage for submission to the Living Landmarks £10 million to £25 million programme by 31 May 2007.

Resource Implications

Human Resources

Managed by the Head of Economic Initiatives.

Recommendations

To note the contents of the report.

To consider the most appropriate option for development of the economic development component of the North Foreshore site.”

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that initial estimates had suggested that 25 acres could be available at the North Foreshore for development as an Environmental Business Park, with a possible further 10 to 15 acres being available for warehousing or other purposes.

In response to several questions from the Members, the Head of Economic Initiatives indicated that the figures in respect of potential job creation contained within the Cost Benefit Analysis were robust and she expressed confidence that the creation of 1,000 jobs could be achieved in the long term. She reported that a number of companies had indicated their willingness to locate at the proposed Environmental Business Park which would result in the creation immediately of approximately 350 jobs.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to proceed with the development of an Environmental Business Park on a 25 acre site at the North Foreshore and to defer consideration of the usage of any additional acreage until such time as the exact amount of land available had been confirmed by the Health and Environmental Services Department.