

Development Committee

Wednesday, 18th April, 2007

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman); and
Councillors Convery, Crozier, D. Dodds, Ekin,
Hartley, Humphrey, Kelly, Maginness, P. Maskey,
McGimpsey, Newton and Ní Chuilín.

In attendance: Ms. M. T. McGivern, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Mr. T. Husbands, Managing Director,
the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls;
Mr. J. Walsh, Principal Solicitor; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 21st and 26th 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 2nd April.

Evaluation Report on Celebrate Belfast

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report regarding the programme of events which had been held as part of Celebrate Belfast:

“Relevant Background Information

In 2002 Belfast bid to become European City of Culture in 2008. The announcement in late 2002 that Belfast had not been short listed was a considerable disappointment to many people and organisations across the city and further afield. However the legacy of the 2008 bid process was the City’s ability to build and develop on the positives that had been created. Belfast City Council and key stakeholder groups continued to work together to address the many challenges that the bid had highlighted.

The Council also actively participated in the Cultural Cities Network that was formed by the 12 cities which had bid to become City of Culture. In this context the Council decided to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme of cultural celebrations for 2005/2006. In March 2003 the Development Committee agreed that programme of cultural activity and celebrations should be delivered to coincide with the Centenary Celebrations for City Hall in 2006.

Preparations for the programme commenced thereafter; with an initial announcement of the programme being made in July of that year with the launch of the Council's Culture and Arts Plan (2003-2004).

By early 2004, the Millennium Commission's Urban Cultural Programme (UCP) was announced. This funding programme provided an excellent opportunity Belfast to enhance the planned programme of celebrations. An application was submitted to the UCP in April 2004, which resulted in a £1.35 million award in July 2004. This was followed £370,000 being allocated to the Council through the Arts Council's 'Art of Regeneration' programme.

The Celebrate Belfast programme was designed to showcase and promote the city to local and international audiences. The programme promoted the city's cultural offering and provided an opportunity to attract additional visitors and enhance the range of cultural products available in the city. The Belfast celebrations followed a two stage process: collaboration with Cork in 2005 as part of their European Capital of Culture status and with UK cities; and a year of cultural celebration in Belfast 2006, which is co-ordinated with the City Hall Centenary programme.

Key Issues

Programme Development - Following the success of the UCP bid, the Council began an extensive consultation process to develop the programme in greater detail. In late 2004 a series of consultations were undertaken with key stakeholders, the culture and arts sector and voluntary and community groups. These consultations aimed to encourage involvement in the development and delivery of the programme, explore how the wider community could become involved, and discuss the benefits of the programme for Belfast. The Council at this stage also began to put in place an internal management and team structure to deliver the programme. This consisted of a core team of officers on fixed term contracts with input from other Council Departments and Units. Additional funding to support the delivery of the programme was also sought from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Council's own funds.

Programme Overview - 'Celebrate Belfast' was launched in October 2005 with a major opening event entitled 'Look Up! Belfast'. The 15 month programme of events ran until December 2006 and included new and enhanced events and activities centred on the four programme themes of: Centenary; Festivals; Cultural Quarters; and Sporting Activities. In total over 1,000 arts, cultural and sporting events were held during the 15 months. A major

partnership with Cork ('Lagan to the Lee') during its year as European City of Culture in 2005 was incorporated into the programme as was the celebrations for the centenary of Belfast City Hall in August 2006.

Summary of Celebrate Belfast 2006 Outputs

Programme Aims and Objectives - The overarching aim of the Celebrate Belfast programme was to help stimulate economic activity and contribute to the cultural life in Belfast in the following ways: increased arts activity; increased tourism and economic activity; increased community activity; and a change in the perception of Belfast as a place to live and visit. To support these aims, 11 objectives were developed. These were to:

1. showcase Belfast as an international cultural destination with the capacity to host world-class events: - this was achieved by staging over 1,000 events.
2. develop a programme that will connect to every citizen of the city and attract significant visitors: - this was attained with audiences over 3.68 million and participant numbers of over 268,000.
3. incorporate cultural diversity and single community events that celebrate different cultural traditions: - 118 cultural diverse events were funded by the Council, with 41 community based events run by organisations such as Willowfield Parish Community Association, Ashton Community Trust, An Droichead, City of Belfast Swimming Club, Voluntary Development Agency and Greater Shankill Sports Development Committee.
4. harness the power of culture and act as a mechanism for Belfast's social and economic regeneration: - It is estimated that over £25.1 million was generated. A breakdown of this is contained within the Executive Summary in Appendix 1. This represents a £13.2 return for every £1 of Council investment.
5. further develop the creative clusters through the showcase of Cultural Quarters: 20,000 pieces of literature were produced illustrating the developments with Queen's; Cathedral; Titanic and Gaeltacht quarters. This was complimented with familiarisation trips for staff in the tourism and hospitality industry; the creation of the world's first GPS operated tour guiding system and the completion of new tourism signage within Queen's and Cathedral Quarters.

6. use the programme to provide significant opportunities for widespread community involvement and creative learning and development: - 32 organisations and 10 schools across the city took part in the Friendship Festival in January 2006. Alongside this 41 community groups received funding for projects based in the community. This was against a target of participation of 50 community organisations.
7. enhance existing events and integrate new commissions encompassing the four main streams of the year – Festivals, Cultural Quarters, Sport and Centenary: - 29 festivals were funded celebrating a wide range of cultures (such as Hinduism, Ulster Scots and Chinese New Year), genres (music, comedy, circus and film) civic and community events. A number of festivals were also aimed at young people (Lantern Parade, Belfast Children’s Festival and Cinemagic). Further support was also provided to festivals through the Festivals Forum and other initiatives.
8. showcase City Hall as a cultural venue and to make it more accessible to a greater number of visitors: - 60,000 attended various events at City Hall including the ‘Century of Memories’ exhibition. Over 40 cultural events such Cahoots NI ‘House of Fun’ were also staged to open up City Hall to new audiences.
9. strengthen the cultural infrastructure of the city by establishing domestic, national and international partnerships: - The Council worked with a considerable number of local councils including Derry, North Down, Down, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Dungannon and Coleraine. On an national and international front, the programme interfaced with Liverpool; Southampton; Cork and Hefei in China on number of cultural projects including the ‘Friendship Festival, ‘Lagan to the Lee’ and Sisters Cities Cultural Showcase in China.
10. act as a conduit for increased tourism in Belfast: - Events staged as part of Celebrate Belfast received 80.2% positive rating from visitors from NI and 80.4% from out of state visitors. 5 promotional events were undertaken with BVCB with 25 Support for Sport events generating an estimated 25,000 bed nights.

11. leave a cultural legacy: - A number of targets were set under this objective and these were achieved via Council's work on: the NI Science Parks Titanic related visitors centre; the Council's input to the SS Nomadic; the creation of the a new cultural venue in the city, Black Box. Additional legacies include the creation of the Belfast Festival's Forum and the Belfast Carnival Consortium; skills enhancements through marketing and sponsorship workshops for the festival and cultural sectors in the city. Additionally festivals achieved a financial target of over £4.6m.

In total 32 targets were set for the 11 objectives of the Celebrate Belfast programme. 21 were achieved, 5 were partly achieved, 1 is pending a decision on the SS Nomadic and only 5 were not reached. Reasons for non-achievement are included in the main Evaluation Report. Overall the programme generated £25.1 million for the Council's £1.9 million investment and post programme feedback indicates that the concept of a cultural celebratory year was very well received by all groups connected to the initiative.

Key lessons learned from the Celebrate Belfast report along with a detailed analysis of the recommendations will be brought to Committee at a later date. Appendix 1 contains the Executive Summary of the Evaluation Report. The full report can be made available to Members on request, with a presentation from consultants Deloitte made to Members at Committee.

Resource Implications

Financial

Funding for the Celebrate Belfast programme came from three sources: the Millennium Commission (Urban Regeneration Programme), the Arts Council of Northern Ireland ('Art of Regeneration' programme) and the Council's own funds.

<u>Funding Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>%</u>
Millennium Commission (Urban Cultural Programme)	£1,350,000	38.4
Arts Council of Northern Ireland (Art of Regeneration Programme)	£370,000	10.5
Belfast City Council	£1,795,000	51.1
<u>Total</u>	<u>£3,515,000</u>	

Human Resources

The staffing levels to deliver the above elements were created through a number of seconded and fixed term contract posts. In total 7 posts were created with all of these contracts coming to completion by the end of March 2007.

Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the Executive Summary and to approve the expenditure of £5000 to launch the Evaluation Report at a reception to which all external partners and stakeholders in Celebrate Belfast will be invited.”

The Committee was advised that representatives from Deloitte, the company which had been appointed to undertake an assessment of Celebrate Belfast, were in attendance to advise the Members as to their findings. Accordingly, Ms. Angela Hodkinson and Ms. Sarah Cherry were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

The representatives from Deloitte gave a presentation to the Committee regarding the aims and objectives of Celebrate Belfast, its key achievements and the legacy which had been created by the programme of events. They pointed out that 3.68 million people had attended the one thousand cultural, arts and sporting events, approximately 1,100 persons had developed skills as result of the events and that Celebrate Belfast had been of significant economic benefit to the City. They indicated that the programme of events had been very successful for the Council and that there was a need for it to build on the achievements of the year. They concluded their presentation by pointing out that Celebrate Belfast had achieved the majority of its aims, objectives and targets.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the presentation thereon regarding Celebrate Belfast and authorised expenditure of £5,000 in connection with the launch of the Evaluation Report on the programme of events at a reception to which all external partners and stakeholders would be invited.

The representatives from Deloitte then withdrew from the meeting.

Arts Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Arts Sub-Committee of 4th April were approved and adopted.

Economic Development Sub-Committee

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 4th April be approved and adopted.

Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee of 11th April.

Sprucefield – Planning Application

The Principal Solicitor reminded the Committee that, in the previous year following a Judicial Review taken by the Council and other interested parties, a decision taken by a former Minister with responsibility for Planning to grant planning permission for a John Lewis Department Store and twenty-nine other retail units at Sprucefield, near Lisburn, had been quashed.

He informed the Committee that the Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment had announced recently his intention to grant planning permission for an identical application at the same location. The Principal Solicitor circulated for the information of the Members correspondence which the Chief Executive of the Planning Service had issued to the Minister prior to the decision having been taken.

The Principal Solicitor indicated that, given the contents of the letter, Senior Counsel had expressed an opinion that the Council would have grounds to challenge the decision and could, therefore, obtain leave to apply for a Judicial Review. This course of action would involve two stages: obtaining leave to apply for a Review and then having the matter determined in Court. He pointed out that, when the Council was in possession of all the relevant papers, it would have to be decided whether to proceed with the Judicial Review.

He stated that it was essential for the Council to proceed to obtain leave to apply for the Review as quickly as possible. At the same time the Council should ascertain whether other interested parties would be prepared to join the action with the Council, since a joint approach would limit the Council's financial liability. The Belfast Chamber of Commerce had indicated already that it would be prepared so to do and other parties had not ruled out their involvement. He assured the Members that, when the first stage of the process had been completed, a further report would be presented to the Committee regarding whether the Council should proceed to a full Judicial Review.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that an application for a Judicial Review of the Ministerial decision to approve the Sprucefield planning application be made and that a report be submitted to a future meeting in relation to the grounds for challenge and the potential costs.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan – Cemetery Provision

The Principal Solicitor reminded the Committee that Cemetery provision was one of the Council's statutory functions and that the Council was endeavouring currently to ensure the future provision of appropriate facilities. To this end, the Council had made representations supporting the principle of, and seeking minor modifications to, Policy PU1 "Cemetery Provision" contained within the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

The Planning Appeals Commission had indicated recently that it was seeking to delete Policy PU1 from the Area Plan prior to the commencement later this month of the Public Inquiry into the Plan. This action, which had been taken immediately prior to the Inquiry and without consulting the Council, had denied the Council the opportunity to make any representations in this regard. The Council had indicated to the Commission that it was considering seeking a Judicial Review in this matter. As a result, the Commission had withdrawn the proposal to delete the Policy.

The Principal Solicitor explained that, despite the decision to withdraw the deletion of the Policy, there remained a number of procedural issues concerning the manner in which the Commission had acted in this regard which might require the Council to seek a Judicial Review. Should this be considered necessary, a further report would be submitted to the Committee.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Principal Solicitor.

**Renewing the Routes: Draft Integrated Development
Fund Plans for the Falls, Springfield and
Crumlin Roads and Updates Thereon**

The Committee considered the contents of the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

At the Development Committee meeting of 20th September, 2006 priority schemes for inclusion in the draft regeneration plans for the upper Springfield and Shankill areas were approved. These plans have been subsequently submitted to Department for Social Development (DSD) and are currently being considered by Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) economists before the budgets are released. Although indications from DSD have been positive, no confirmation of approval of the plans has yet been received.

Following submission of the plans for upper Springfield and Shankill, work has continued on the plans for the other areas eligible for support under the IDF, namely Crumlin Road and Falls Road (incorporating the lower part of Springfield Road). Scoping and discussion work has been carried out, in conjunction with relevant statutory contacts (including elected representatives for the areas) and a range of priority measures for funding is included with this report for endorsement by committee Appendix 1 - Falls/Springfield Road and Appendix 2 – Crumlin Road).

The Falls Road has been broken down into smaller areas which were considered to represent workable and cohesive neighbourhoods. These are: Divis Street to Broadway junction (including Springfield Road), Broadway to Falls Road/Glen Road junction and Falls Road/Glen Road junction to Finaghy Road north. Maps of each of the three areas are included as Appendix 3.

The Crumlin Road has been broken down into four focus areas have been identified on the Crumlin Road: Carlisle Circus, Lower Crumlin Road, Ardoyne Shops and Glenbank.

Key Issues

Priority themes for IDF work at Falls/Springfield and Crumlin Road

The key issues emerging from the scoping work for the Falls/Springfield Road were identified as:

- Identifying and improving gateway sites and junctions through enhanced landscaping, lighting and public art
- Commercial improvements, focusing on the core shopping areas at Andersonstown and Broadway, taking account of associated traffic management measures
- Targeted and sustained clean-up and graffiti removal campaigns
- Enhancing buildings and sites with some architectural or heritage value through feature lighting or boundary/landscape improvements.

It should be noted that the proposed value of the works in the Andersonstown area are indicated as exceeding the projected budget available from the IDF approved resources (Appendix 1). This potential deficit arises from the commercial complexity of the area and highlights the potential for additional funding to be pursued to supplement the existing commitments. The identification of the area as a 'secondary arterial route' by DSD could provide the opportunity for a joint initiative to address this project deficit. In the absence of further funds being identified the specification for proposed works, on which the costs are based, will need to be reduced and prioritised. In this context the proposed over-programming is suggested, on the basis of the potential for a joint initiative, with the caveat that the scope of the works may have to be reduced should additional funding be unavailable.

The key issues emerging from the scoping work for the Crumlin Road were identified as:

- **Built Heritage** - the Crumlin Road is a road with significant historical importance, schemes identified will celebrate the built heritage through the architectural lighting, restoring boundary walls, highlighting projects through tourism signage and heritage projects
- **Commercial improvements** -focus areas have been identified throughout the route, the areas are hubs of activity with local shops serving the community. Commercial improvements will be focused in these areas
- **Environmental improvements** -a major issue affecting the Crumlin route is the dereliction and lack of attention to the general environment, comprehensive environmental improvements are required at all focus areas to complement other developments
- **Projects that make connections and linkages** throughout the route and to the city centre are also a priority e.g. tourist signage, tree planting throughout the route.

Members are reminded that the Renewing the Routes initiative funded by IDF is a three year programme running from April 2006 to March 2009. In order to maximise opportunities for achieving the challenging spend deadlines, a number of administrative measures are proposed.

Revision of legal documentation

At present, Belfast City Council enters into a legal agreement with all property owners in order to protect its interests in the scheme for a period of up to five years. The nature of the agreement and legal process depends on the value of the works and the status of the property owner (community/statutory or private).

As part of the letter of offer from DSD for the IDF work, it is stipulated that legal agreements must be undertaken with the relevant property owner. Given the increase in the volume of works to be undertaken and the significant administrative burden involved in the current process, the Director of Legal Services has proposed an amended procedure.

Where the value of the works does not exceed £20,000, a draft letter of offer will be produced. The letter of offer is signed by both the council and the property owner. The contractor is tied into this agreement as an 'agent' of Belfast City Council. The council will continue to enter into a separate works agreement with the appropriate contractor. The stipulations protecting council's interests in the case of disposal and allowing the contractor access to the site will remain within this letter of offer. This letter of offer will not require the involvement of a solicitor.

Where the value of the works on an individual property exceeds £20,000, the Director of Legal Services advises that Belfast City Council should continue to enter into a legal agreement incorporating a licence agreement and deed of covenant and charge and that the property owner should continue to be liable for their legal fees in this instance.

Contribution to Improvement Works

Under the existing arrangements the legal process has necessitated the owners to make both a time and financial commitment to project in advance of the implementation. This process has, in addition to securing the commitment has through the indirect financial contribution, provided a degree of ownership. In light of the streamlined approach to the legal processes proposed above and the removal of a substantial element of the financial cost associated with the previous process. it may be appropriate to seek a nominal contribution from owners towards the cost of the project.

This approach would replicate the approach required by Urban II for existing commercial schemes on the arterial routes in the north of the city. In these circumstances the contribution would be utilised either to extend existing initiatives or to fund additional works within the identified areas.

Procurement of Proposed Works

Given that the works to be undertaken in this programme fall into a range of categories (as dictated by the letter of offer from DSD), it is proposed that a small number of measured-term contracts be established for the delivery of the works across all areas and in all categories. This approach will maximise efficiencies, both in project development and delivery timescales and in budgetary terms, and will also provide considerable flexibility, given the complex and multi-faceted nature of some of the proposed schemes.

In keeping with previous practice (namely the process used for the Building Upgrade Programme and endorsed by the Policy and Resources (Finance, Administration and Information Systems) Sub-Committee at its meeting on 27th March, 2003, it is proposed that a range of work schedules are compiled for measured-term contracts with tenders being invited from select lists of contractors created by means of public advertisement.

While the measured-term arrangements will cover the majority of the schemes there will be some works elements for which it is not appropriate. In such situations, these works will be subject to separate, project specific, procurement exercises with tenders again being invited from select lists of contractors created by means of public advertisement.

It is therefore recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Development, in consultation with the Chairman, to:

- Approve the selects lists and
- Subsequently accept the most advantageous tenders for the measured-term contracts and the project specific contracts within the overall budget limit of £3.8million for the carrying out of the identified schemes within the IDF areas, subject to the completion of the necessary formal written agreements by the Director of Legal Services.

Living Over The Shop (LOTS)

Recent discussions with officers from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) highlighted the potential for a pilot scheme to be developed on one of the areas identified as part of the Renewing the Routes initiative. In order to progress the development of a pilot it will be necessary for the Council to identify a target area and invest resources in the carrying out of developmental or survey works to support an application.

Under a LOTS scheme owners of properties with vacant floor space that could be suitable for residential conversion would be eligible for grant assistance through the NIHE as detailed in the appended information leaflet Appendix 4.

As part of the package of previously approved IDF projects the Council has already initiated design and survey work for the Woodvale shops on Shankill Road. This work in conjunction with a wider land use survey and building assessment (to be carried out by Building Control) could assist in the development of a submission to the NIHE for a pilot project.

It is, therefore, suggested that the Shankill Road forms the basis a bid to the NIHE for consideration as a pilot arterial route LOTS project.

Resource Implications

Financial

The IDF application value is £4,063,750 comprising £265,750 revenue and £3,798,000 capital. The amount allocated to the Falls/Springfield Road area totals around £1.8 million while £800,000 is to be spent on Crumlin Road.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Endorse the draft regeneration plans and outline budgets for the Falls/Springfield and Crumlin Road areas as a basis for project development and implementation as detailed in appendix 1 and 2 respectively
- Note and approve the proposed revised process for legal documentation associated with this programme
- Grant delegated authority to the Director of Development and the Chairman of Development Committee to approve the selects lists and subsequently accept the most advantageous tenders for the measured-term contracts and the project specific contracts within the overall budget limit of £3.8million for the carrying out of the identified schemes within the IDF areas, subject to the completion of the necessary formal written agreements by the Director of Legal Services
- Approve the submission of a bid to NIHE for the designation of Shankill Road as a pilot arterial route (Living Over the Shops) LOTS project, subject to the satisfactory outcome of an initial survey to be carried out by Building Control
- Endorse the policy of securing a nominal contribution towards the cost of the works from commercial owners
- Note the general progress in relation to this initiative and the intention for further reports to be submitted to Committee in relation to the ongoing implementation.”

The Director of Development advised the Members that copies of the Regeneration Plans and the associated outline budgets for the work on the Falls, Springfield and Crumlin Roads were available on the Members' Portal.

During discussion in the matter, a Member expressed concern at the delay in the Department for Social Development approving the plans for the Springfield and Shankill Roads and suggested that a deputation from the Committee meet with officials from the Department in this matter and to discuss the possible funding by the Department of "secondary arterial routes".

Several Members expressed the view that the attractiveness of a number of the schemes on arterial routes which had been completed had been diminished as a result of the Roads Service applying tarmac rather than paving stones on the pavements. In this regard, the Director of Development informed the Committee that the Council had requested the Roads Service on a number of occasions not to apply tarmac to pavements and that they had had some success in this regard. Information on the Roads Service's policy in the matter would be provided to a future meeting.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report and, in addition, agreed that an all-party deputation meet with officials from the Department for Social Development regarding the Renewing the Routes Initiative.

West Belfast Infrastructure Project

The Committee was reminded that, as part of the Council's Local Economic Development Plan, a number of key infrastructure sites in the City had been identified for development purposes. The project which had been selected for West Belfast involved the redevelopment of Conway Mill for creative industries, enterprise and educational purposes. The Council had agreed to provide a sum of £200,000 towards the creative industry element of the scheme. However, following discussions between the Council and the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Committee had agreed, at its meeting on 6th December, 2006, to withdraw its offer of financial support for the project and had requested that officers examine the possibility of assisting another infrastructure scheme in West Belfast.

The Director informed the Committee that a project to redevelop the St. Comgall's site on the Falls Road had been identified. However, as the promoters of the scheme intended to apply for funding under the Peace III Initiative this would preclude the Council from providing financial assistance, since European Union funding could be provided once only on any project. Accordingly, she recommended that the £200,000 which had been earmarked for the West Belfast Infrastructure Project be re-allocated to the project to redevelop the North Foreshore.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Integrated Cultural Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the Integrated Cultural Strategy:

“Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council has launched the consultation on a draft Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast. The full document has been made available via the Council website.

The Arts Sub-Committee has been integral to the development of the draft strategy and the process has involved an extensive consultation process since 2005. Consultation has been undertaken with BCC Council Members, key public bodies, stakeholders within the cultural sectors, community groups and organisations indicated in the Council’s Equality Policy.

Development of complementary material includes a Summary document, a Review of the Belfast City Council Culture and Arts Plan, a document on the Impact of the Arts and a Belfast City Council Cultural Action Plan. Preparation of these is ongoing and these additional documents will be completed for launch with the strategy document.

Key Issues

The development of an Integrated Cultural Strategy for the City is a major achievement in bringing together the diverse range of stakeholders in the cultural sector to support a shared platform for cultural development.

The draft strategy document includes positive supporting statements from

- Maria Eagle the Minister with responsibility for DCAL
- Rosemary Kelly, Chair of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The extensive consultation already undertaken has paved the way for the Council assuming a leading role in cultural development within the city. The process has had widespread support from both the sector and public body stakeholders.

Consultation

As a draft document, the publication has been primarily available on the Council website in PDF and MS Word versions as well as in a fully accessible format.

Notification and awareness of the consultation was widely made via an extensive e-mail database of contacts. Organisations with their own mailing lists have also been encouraged to circulate the information. The draft strategy was press launched and a photocall took place at the Grand Opera House extension, to further help raise awareness of the draft strategy. It was extensively reported in the media.

Letters requesting comment have been sent to funding clients and key stakeholders, and a limited number of printed versions have been distributed and are also available on request. Stakeholders have been asked to formally endorse the strategy in order that this can be included to strengthen the ownership of the finalised document.

The consultation period on the draft Integrated Cultural Strategy commenced on 2 March 2007 for 8 weeks and will close on 27 April 2007, although we have indicated that formal responses by the 15 April would be helpful. An update on any responses will be verbally reported to the Development Committee.

At the time of writing this report no formal written responses have been received. However, some informal comment has been received relating to the music section of the document and suggested changes to this section are included in Appendix A to reflect these comments.

A number of consultation meetings have been sought with key partner organisations (e.g. Arts and Business, Audiences NI, Belfast Education and Library Board, Heritage Lottery Fund, Public Record Office of NI, Ulster Museum, Ulster University). Although it has been difficult to secure dates due to the Easter holiday period a number of meetings and telephone conversations have been held. Verbal indications and informal responses from cultural organisations and stakeholder bodies have so far been positive.

Launch of the Strategy

Launch of the strategy is anticipated before the end of this Council term so that it can be launched by the Chair of the Arts Sub-committee in May before the dissolution of the Council Sub-committees. To facilitate this, the Arts Sub Committee recommended at its meeting of 28th February that approval of the

production of the final document be brought before Development Committee. It is recommended that the Development Committee approves the production of the final document with minor amendments to reflect comments received.

Resource Implications

Financial

A resource of up to £7,000 is required for design, print and distribution of the Integrated Cultural Strategy and associated documents and for a launch event. This is included within the Culture and Arts Budget.

Human Resources

Staffing resources are included in the work programme of the unit.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- agree the production of the Integrated Cultural Strategy with minor amendments
- agree the launch of the strategy for May 2007 and associated expenditure

Key to Abbreviations

DCAL – Department of Culture Arts and Leisure

Documents Attached

Appendix A - Revised Music section of the document.”

During discussion, the Chairman (Councillor McCausland) indicated that he was aware of a number of organisations which intended to respond to the consultation on the draft Integrated Cultural Strategy which was due to end on 27th April.

Following further discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that the final version of the Integrated Cultural Strategy be presented to its monthly meeting in May and that the Strategy be launched in June by the current Chairman of the Arts Sub-Committee (Councillor Kelly). The Committee also authorised expenditure up to a maximum of £7,000 in connection with the design, printing and distribution of the Integrated Cultural Strategy document and for the costs which would be associated with the launch event.

European Unit – Update Report

The Committee considered the undernoted report regarding the progress which had been achieved in the previous month by the European Unit:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the European Unit provides monthly progress reports to the Development Committee. The only issue to report to Members this month is with respect to the recent consultation process undertaken by the Department of Finance and Personnel with the respect to the Mainstream Structural Funds programme for Northern Ireland 2007-2013. Northern Ireland will of course have access to other European funding programmes including Interreg II, Peace III, Urbact and others. This will be reported to Members at a later stage.

The Department of Finance and Personnel launched a consultation exercise on 20 December 2006, to seek stakeholder views in relation to the draft Northern Ireland European Competitiveness and Employment Programmes for the period 2007-2013. The consultation invited comment on the ERDF Programme which will be delivered by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, and the ESF Programme which will be delivered by the Department of Employment and Learning.

Members will be aware that from 2007 Northern Ireland has moved from an Objective One region in transition, to an Objective Two region. This is due to improved economic performance and the fact that the majority of European Structural Funds will be allocated to Objective One Convergence Priority which will target mostly the new accession countries in central and Eastern Europe.

The Northern Ireland Competitiveness and Employment Programme is worth £325 million over the 7 year period.

The draft Operational Plan is set in the context of National Economic Policy, the Northern Ireland Economic Vision and the new Northern Ireland Regional Economic Development Strategy.

Expenditure is proposed over the following priorities:

ERDF - £211,000 (European Union only)

Priority 1: Increasing investment in research and technologically and promoting innovation

- Priority 2: Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship**
- Enterprise and entrepreneurship
 - Local Economic Development
 - Tourism product and market development
 - Signature tourism projects

- Priority 3: Improving accessibility and enhancing the environment**
- Sustainable energy
 - Telecoms – next generation services infrastructure
 - Telecoms – broadband innovation and ICT support

ESF: - £114,000 (European Union only)

- Priority 1: Helping people into sustained employment**
- Community Sector Programme delivery
 - Innovative partnership activity

- Priority 2. Improving workforce staff and adoptability**
- apprenticeships
 - adult upskilling

As with all European Union Programmes there are cross cutting themes to take note of

- Equality and good relations
- Promoting sustainable development
- Creating sustainable communities

Key Issues

Belfast City Council via the Development Department has submitted the attached response Appendix 1 with regard to the consultation process for the draft ERDF/ESF Programme. This was submitted for the deadline of 14 March set down by the Department of Finance and Personnel subject to approval of full Council on 1 May. Although the broad outline of indicative activities proposed under each priority are to be welcomed by Council, some key concerns and recommendations include:

- Seeking more information on the direct delivery role for Belfast City Council
- Welcoming the continued proposal for local government to secure a local economic development programme

- Welcoming the proposed European Council delivery on tourism initiatives
- Encouraging DFT to embrace the Commissioner's recommendations as per Appendix 1 that Belfast City Council is able to ring fence funding for the Urban Regeneration of the most deprived areas of inner East and South Belfast to reflect the previous Urban I and II programmes for West and North Belfast
- Encouraging DFP to include the new European instruments to support SMES through alternative funding. Support such as venture capital, business loans and business angel programmes under the new Jeremie programme
- Seeking actual detail on what will be funded under the ESF programme and how DEL will give assurances that activities funded will be additional to their mainstream strategy
- Requesting detail on how Councils will access ESF funding as this is not apparent in the draft document
- Supporting the measure to continue transational activity within the mainstream ESF/ERDF Programme as was permitted through the previous equal programme which funded the Council led WINS Project.

Resource Implications

Financial

It is unclear to date how much Belfast City Council will be able to bid for within the £324million ERDF/ESF Programme 2007-2013. However this will become clear as DFP finalises the Operational Programme and agree on delivery mechanisms across local government and the two departments DEL and DETI. Members should be aware that the Council will be required to provide 25% match funding and that this must be built into Council budget estimates for the years 2007-2013. More detail will be reported to Members as it becomes clear.

Human Resources

The Council will be required to deliver the ERDF/ESF Programme and implications with respect to economic development and tourism staff resources will need to be considered once budget allocations and competitive bids systems become clear.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note and agree the content of the Council's submission to DFP in respect of the draft European Competitiveness and Employment Programme (ERDF/ESF) for 2007-2013 with a view to maintaining close discussions with government departments as the programme is finalised.

Key to Abbreviations

- DFP - Department of Finance & Personnel
- DEL - Department of Employment & Learning
- DETI - Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment"

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman