

## Development Committee

Wednesday, 21st March, 2007

### MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman);  
the High Sheriff (Councillor Kirkpatrick); and  
Councillors Convery, Ekin, Hartley, Humphrey,  
Kelly, Maginness, A. Maskey, P. Maskey,  
McGimpsey, Newton, Ní Chuilín, Smyth and Stoker.

In attendance: Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;  
Ms. S. Wylie, Head of Urban Development; and  
Mr. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

#### Apologies

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

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 14th and 21st February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, subject to the omission of that portion of the minute of 14th February under the heading "Heating and Ventilation of St. George's Market" which, at the request of Councillor D. Browne, had been taken back for further consideration.

#### Heating and Ventilation of St. George's Market

The Committee considered further the minute of 14th February under the heading "Heating and Ventilation of St. George's Market" which had been taken back by the Chairman at the Council meeting on 1st March at the request of Councillor D. Browne. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

*"The Director of Development informed the Committee that there was currently no provision to heat or cool the market hall, which resulted in it being uncomfortably cold during the winter and during the summer uncomfortably hot. Accordingly, tenders had been invited to provide heating and ventilation equipment at St. George's Market. She reported that, in response to a public advertisement, twenty-one firms had applied for inclusion on the Select List to undertake the project. She reported that these applications had been evaluated in accordance with Council's procurement procedures and the six companies which had achieved the highest points would be invited to submit tenders. She pointed out that, in order to expedite the installation of the ventilation system before the Summer period, it would be beneficial if authority could be delegated for the eventual acceptance of the tenders.*

*After discussion, the Committee agreed that tenders for the installation of a heating and ventilation system in St. George's Market be invited from those contractors on the Select List and agreed further to delegate authority to the Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to accept the most advantageous tender on the understanding that it was within the amount of £270,000 included for the project in the Capital Programme."*

The Committee was informed that the requirement for a heating and ventilation system had been identified after health and safety concerns were raised by market customers, traders, staff and the Council's Health and Environmental Services Department. Due to the glass roof on the market building, temperatures had reached in excess of 50 degrees centigrade during the summer and a number of elderly shoppers had collapsed due to heat exhaustion. Environmental Health Officers had expressed concern that food display fridges could not operate effectively in such high ambient temperatures. It was not possible, therefore, to maintain food temperature at or below 4 degrees centigrade, which was required by food safety legislation.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that the proposed system, in addition to providing ventilation, would also be capable of heating the building which would make it a much more attractive venue for organisers of events such as the Ulster Motorcycle Show and to shoppers visiting traditional winter events being held at the Market.

After discussion, during which Members noted the health and safety imperative for the installation of the system, the Committee approved the procurement, by way of a select list of contractors, of a heating and ventilation system for St. George's Market and agreed also to delegate authority to the Director of Development, in conjunction with the Chairman, to accept the most economically advantageous tender received within the agreed budget price.

#### **Arts Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Arts Sub-Committee of 28th February were approved and adopted.

#### **Economic Development Sub-Committee**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 28th February 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 14th March.

**Belfast City Centre Action Plan**

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the Council had taken a lead role in the establishment of Belfast City Centre Management in order to assist in the co-ordination of city centre development. However, it had become apparent that the development of the city centre required a much broader strategic approach and the Council would be required to act as a champion for city centre regeneration. She suggested that the Council pursue a coherent strategic agenda rather than respond to a number of ad-hoc initiatives from central government Departments and other partners who might have priorities which did not necessarily correspond to those of the City or its citizens. She suggested also that the Review of Public Administration had the potential to increase significantly the range of functions which the Council would undertake and thus enhance its ability to act more strategically within the field of city centre regeneration.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th November, 2005, it had agreed to initiate work to develop an inter-agency framework for the city centre which would take the lead in the promotion of a joined-up approach and co-ordinated strategy for all those organisations involved in the regeneration of the city centre.

She advised the Members that a City Centre Action Plan had been developed which presented a holistic approach to encourage people into the city centre, attract greater investment which would boost the economic performance of the city centre and advised on how the Council could meet the challenges presented by other cities. Accordingly, the Head of Economic Initiatives recommended that:

- (i) in order to enhance the Council's position in relation to city centre redevelopment, the Head of Economic Initiatives take responsibility for city centre redevelopment within the Council and be responsible for the production of an annual Belfast City Council Plan for the city centre;
- (ii) the Department embark on a process of "getting wider agreement" on city centre plans from other stakeholders; and
- (iii) given the anticipated increase in Council powers and functions as a result of the Review of Public Administration, an options appraisal for future management of city centre development be commissioned in order to assist the Committee plan for the future. The report produced in this regard would consider current arrangements, including the roles of the Belfast City Centre Management, the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and other organisations responsible for various aspects of city centre development.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that, in order to permit the Members to give due consideration to the City Centre Action Plan, to defer to a special meeting consideration of the Plan.

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**Estates Management Gasworks –  
Safety at the Water Feature**

The Committee deferred consideration of a report in respect of the health and safety issues raised in connection with the water feature at the Gasworks Site in order that further information be obtained from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents in regard to the partial filling of the water feature to the depth that would diminish its attractiveness for swimming.

**Estates Management Gasworks Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the progress of issues relevant to the Gasworks Estate:

**“Key Issues**

The purpose of this report is to update Development Committee on progress and other relevant issues at the Gasworks Estate.

**Klondyke Building**

The Developer (Comtec Developments Ltd) has agreed a 15 year Sub-Lease with Department of Finance and Personnel. Subsequent to a suspension of construction in January 2005 work on this 50,000 sq feet building recommenced in January 2006 and is now complete and fully occupied. At its meeting on 7 December 2005, Committee approved the basis of a penalty to be applied to the Developer for delay in completing the restoration of the Klondyke. Council will receive an annual equity rent of £76,000 backdated to <sup>t</sup> May 2006.

**Ormeau Gasworks Ltd – Meter House**

Work has been completed on restoration of the Listed Meter House with grant aid assistance from EHS and Laganside Corporation and now provides a unique exhibition space within the Gasworks. This work finally completes construction on Plots 1&2 leased to Ormeau Gasworks Ltd.

**Ormeau Gasworks Ltd – Plot 4**

Certificate of Practical Completion has now been issued in respect of an office development of approximately 21,000 sq feet.

**Ormeau Gasworks Ltd – Plot 6**

At its meeting on 15 June 2005, Committee approved design changes resulting in a revised building size of approximately 42,000 sq feet (gross) to be completed in June 2006.

While there has been some slippage in the construction programme the certificate of Practical Completion has now been issued.

#### Cusp Ltd – Plot 4

At its meeting on 18 October 2006, Committee approved permission for development of a second hotel within the Estate, by variation of the existing Lease, thereby replacing what is currently surface car parking. Cusp Ltd propose construction of a 172-bed Courtyard by Marriott hotel with associated bar/restaurant, dry gym (approximately 500sq feet) and small conference facility (4 rooms) totalling approximately 1,700 sq feet.

Initial meetings have been held with Developer to discuss the twin issues of replacement car parking provision displaced by the hotel development and payment of financial return to Council. However, little progress has been made to date.

#### Northern Fringe

Following presentation of the initial draft Masterplan to Councillors at Radisson SAS hotel on 11 May 2006 Consarc have now provided revised proposals. The revision addresses in particular the provision of car parking and improving the interface with the existing residential community through environmental improvements on land released from previous surface car parking solutions. Consarc have identified up to 43,000 sq feet of land along this important interface that could be used for green amenity areas or landscaping open space. In addition to vehicular access Consarc have also proposed the introduction of several pedestrian access points along the northern interface.

Once these revisions are incorporated into a final draft report it is proposed to make a formal presentation to the Committee in April 2007.

Committee approval to make a presentation is requested.

#### Gasworks Shuttle Bus

At its meeting on 15 February 2006, the Committee approved the operation of a free shuttle bus service in connection with the Gasworks for an initial 1 year period. This service commenced on 11 September 2006. Initial provision for bus stop signage has been made which can be augmented and made more permanent by creation of a lay-by should the initial period be extended.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into with Flexibus Ltd to provide this service and they provide a manual passenger count to Council on a quarterly basis.

The introduction of this service has been well received by occupiers within the Estate with usage approaching 60% of bus capacity equating to over 1,700 passengers over a one week period.

In addition to the bus service 12 cycle stands have been provided with cost jointly shared with DRD.

#### Visitors Car Park

At its meeting on 15 June 2005, the Committee were informed that work on the visitor's car park had commenced.

A Licence Agreement for a partnership operation of this facility was entered into with Inislyn Limited who also operate the adjacent hotel car park for an initial 2 year period with effect from 1 July 2005. Licensee has provided financial accounts for initial years operation which indicate a return of approximately £41,000 to BCC. The car park is extremely well used. The partnership arrangement works very well and it is proposed to extend at the end of the initial period of operation.

#### Wheel Clamping Services

The Committee approved the introduction of a clamping scheme at its meeting on 21 November 2001. The initial contract with Car Park Services (£24,900 per annum) has been regularly tendered/reviewed. It is proposed that the current contract with Car Park Services, revised in October 2005 (£14,040 per annum) will be tendered once again.

#### Resource Implications

##### Financial

With development on various Plots reaching Practical Completion there will not only be financial returns to Council provided under the Development Agreements but this will also result in reduced contributions from Council's towards cost of the annual service charge for the Estate. Current service charge is approximately £161,000 of which Council's contribution is expected to drop to approximately £20,000.

#### Recommendations

Committee is asked to note the various issues addressed in this report and to endorse the proposals made and general ongoing estate management arrangements entered into and agree to accept a presentation on the Northern Fringe Masterplan."

### **CUSP Limited Plot 4**

Several Members expressed concern at the delay in the negotiations with CUSP Limited in connection with the development of a second hotel at the Estate. The Head of Economic Initiatives outlined the main issues which had caused the delay, including the value of the lease and the return which the Council would receive and, secondly, the request from CUSP Limited for the provision, free of charge, of replacement car parking facilities. She pointed out that a further meeting with the Company was scheduled to be held before the end of the month and she undertook to submit to a future meeting a report on the outcome of that meeting.

### **Wheel Clamping Services**

Several Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of customer care being provided by Car Park Services Limited, the company which provided currently the wheel clamping services at the Gasworks Site. In addition, the Members suggested that, whilst the free flow of traffic was essential to the workings of the Gasworks Site, wheel clamping activities after 6.00 p.m. were inappropriate as parking at that time did not interfere with the conduct of business at the Gasworks Site.

In response, the Head of Economic Initiatives stated that the tender for the provision of Wheel Clamping Services was due to be reviewed and she undertook to include within the specification of the tender provisions to give effect to the Members' comments in this regard.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report and agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation in regard to the Northern Fringe Master Plan.

### **Laganside Update**

The Committee considered the contents of a letter which had been received from Mr. A. Shannon, Permanent Secretary, Department for Social Development, in relation to the transfer to the Council following the de-designation of the Laganside Corporation of functions undertaken currently by the Corporation.

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Committee that the correspondence had reiterated the Department's view that Laganside's functions should transfer to the Council in the long term and had accepted the premise that a due diligence process should be carried out prior to the development of a Service Delivery Agreement. In addition, the Department for Social Development had sought proposals as to how any anticipated income from Laganside Developments beyond 2007 should be utilised. Finally, the letter had underlined the need for work to begin in relation to the Department and the Council considering the transfer of regeneration assets and functions following the Review of Public Administration in 2009.

The Committee was informed that the Director of Development had written to the Department for Social Development in order to initiate discussions on moving the due diligence and Service Delivery Agreement process forward.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and noted also that a further report in respect of matters relating to the transfer issues would be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

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### **State of the City IV Update**

The Head of Urban Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 16th August, it had agreed that the Belfast State of the City IV 2007 Conference be held in the Waterfront Hall and that a budget in the sum of £25,000 be allocated in respect of the Conference.

She advised the Committee that the Conference would commence on Thursday, 19th April and would receive submissions from experts offering national and international perspectives on the role of the city, including Professor M. Parkinson C.B.E., Liverpool Jon Moore's University, a renowned expert in city competitiveness, Councillor S. Purcell, Leader of Glasgow City Council, who would share his experiences on the importance of leadership and community planning in Glasgow, Dr. T. Hunt, author of the "Rise and Fall of the Victorian City", who would present his views on the role that City leadership had played in the development of successful cities. The Head of urban Development pointed out that, in addition to the keynote speakers, there would be several workshop sessions with themes including community planning partnerships, making thematic partnerships work and strategic neighbourhood area partnerships.

After discussion, the Committee approved the attendance at the Conference of any Member of the Committee who so wished and authorised the payment of the appropriate allowances in connection therewith.

### **Estates Management – Markets Update**

The Committee considered a report in respect of various markets throughout the City.

### **Christmas Continental Market 2006**

The Committee was informed that a customer survey, conducted by Millward Brown Ulster, had indicated that approximately 538,500 people had visited the Belfast Christmas Continental Market during the period from 22nd November till 19th December and that almost six out of ten of those persons had travelled from outside of the City. The survey had revealed also that a total of £15.2 million had been spent and that 22% of those surveyed had indicated that they would not have visited Belfast if the Market had not been in place. The Committee was informed that 84% of the respondents had indicated that they would be visiting at least one additional activity whilst in the City and 99% of all persons had rated the event positively and would recommend it to their family and friends.

Noted.



### **Advertising and Public Relations Services**

The Committee was advised that, following discussions with the Head of Corporate Communications, the Markets Development Officer had identified a number of advertising and public relations services which could be provided internally. However, there remained a number of areas of advertising and public relations work which could not be supplied by the Council's Corporate Communications Section, including:

- (i) production of television and radio advertisements;
- (ii) procurement and daily management of television and radio airtime slots; and
- (iii) delivery of a programme of promotional events and competitions.

Accordingly, the Head of Economic Initiatives recommended the commencement of a tender process to identify and appoint a suitably qualified and experienced contractor to deliver the aforementioned services and that a budget of approximately £100,000 be allocated to the promotion of the Markets during the financial year 2006/2007.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Smithfield Markets**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd September, 1999, it had delegated authority to the Director of Development, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve the terms of future lettings, subject to those terms being reported retrospectively to the Committee.

Accordingly, the Head of Economic Initiatives reported that Unit 1, Smithfield Market had been let to Michael and Ruth Shanu for an initial period of six months and monthly thereafter at a monthly rent of £200.

The Committee noted the letting of Unit 1, Smithfield Market.

### **European Unit Progress**

The Head of Urban Development submitted the undernoted report of the work of the Department's European Unit, highlighting activities which the Unit had organised or facilitated:

#### **"Relevant Background Information**

**Members will be aware of monthly progress reports with respect to the work of the European Unit.**

This month's report will focus on:

- (i) Eurocities Annual Subscription request
- (ii) Urbact II Proposal Intent
- (iii) European Union 50 Celebrations Update
- (iv) European Union Trade Event Proposal
- (v) Bohemia – Czech Republic Study Visit Request

### Key Issues

(i) Eurocities Annual Subscription

Members will be aware that one of the most active and valuable areas of European engagement for the Council is through the Eurocities Network. Eurocities is a European Network of over 130 Metropolitan Member Cities covering a total population of over 100 million. Membership is open to democratically elected city governments, in cities with a minimum population of 250,000, cities who portray an international image and serve as an important regional centre. Belfast City Council's participation in the Network is outlined in Appendix 1.

Members are asked to approve the annual subscription fee for Membership of the Eurocities Network at a maximum cost of €15,057 (£10,228).

(ii) Urbact II

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council along with City Partners including the Arts Council Northern Ireland, the North and West Trust and Urban II have participated in 6 Urbact Programmes over the last 3 years. Belfast City Council specific input has been through engagement in an urban regeneration project known as Regenera and a Youth Project. The final meeting of the Regenera Project was held in Lyon 21 to 23 February 2007 when a Belfast Project known as 'Interaction Belfast' was showcased as best practice community intervention.

A copy of the final Regenera report which highlights many Belfast examples can be made available to Members either as a hard copy or by email.

The Youth Project also concluded in February 2007 with the launch in Belfast of a toolkit for youth participation in governance.

The Urbact I Programme is now at an end. The Urbact II Programme is agreed in principle which will create a new series of 2 year projects.

The European Unit is keen to take the lead on such a project, potentially engaging with up to 10 cities across Europe looking at in and outward flows of immigrants, how cities develop management policies for this, and how cities address housing, employment, health and education impacts.

Members are asked to approve in principle the intent to lead an Urbact III bid subject to further consideration as the project is developed.

(iii) **European Union 50 Celebrations Update**

Members will recall their decision of 17 January 2007 to support a celebratory programme of events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the European Union. This report provides Members with an update on project progress. It is proposed that a month long programme is held in the city to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the European Union and that celebrations coincide with Europe Day (9 May 07). An indicative calendar is outlined as Appendix 2 of this report.

**Programme Publicity**

Production of a DVD (which may be used across Council) has been commissioned which will trace the young people's experiences as they learn about other European cultures as well as their own. In addition the programme is being publicised in the Council's 'City Matters' magazine, European Commission web sites, The European 'Parliament Magazine' and a new school's publication 'Raring to Go'.

**Members' Involvement**

Members are invited to attend events and the Chair or nominee to address the business and migration seminars, the European Commission's reception, Play Day and to participate in a photo-shoot at Central Station.

(iv) **European Union Trade Event Proposal**

As part of the European Unit's annual activity a number of information events are held each year on European policy changes or funding opportunities.

Members are asked to approve that the European Unit hosts an European Trade Event in City Hall on 18 May 2007 from 7:30 am to 10:30 am.

The purpose of this event is to highlight practical tips on doing business in all 26 other European Union Member States and to share this valuable information with companies from across the Greater Belfast region. It is intended to facilitate the event in partnership with the Economic Development Unit, the Trade Attaches of the European Embassies in London and the Northern Ireland Honorary Consuls.

In order to attract the attendance of the business community and provide high quality information it is suggested to cover associated costs including use of City Hall, I.T. equipment, catering and one night's hotel accommodation for one representative of each Embassy.

Members are therefore asked to approve a maximum budget of £3,500 and involvement of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees at the event.

(v) **Bohemia – Czech Republic Study Visit Proposal**

Members will be aware of regular requests through the European Unit to facilitate study visits from across Europe, particularly to look at Belfast City Council best practice in urban and brownfield regeneration.

The unit has recently received a request to host 10 senior officers from the Czech Republic region of Bohemia from 16 to 20 April 2007.

The aim of the visit would be to learn about Belfast City Council's successful Capital City Strategy, brownfield and waterfront regeneration processes and the State of the City exercise

Members are asked to approve the visit and a maximum budget of £1,000 with involvement of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees in the visit.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

- (i) Eurocities Annual Subscription: €15,057 (£10,228) from the European Unit's budget 2007/2008.
- (ii) Urbact II none at this point in time
- (iii) European Union 50: £42,500 from within the European Unit 2007-2008 budget was approved 17 January 2007
- (iv) European Union Trade Event: £3,500 from 2007/2008 European Unit budget
- (v) Bohemian Study Visit: £1,000 from 2007/2008 European Unit budget

### Recommendations

Members are asked to approve

- (i) Annual Eurocities subscription of €15,057 (£10,228)
- (ii) Development of a Belfast City Council led Urbact II Programme Proposal
- (iii) European Union 50 Celebrations Programme Update and participation of all Committee Members at all events within proposed programme
- (iv) £3,500 to facilitate European Union Trade Event in City Hall on 18 May 2007 and attendance by the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees.
- (v) Bohemian Study Visit £1,000 to host visit and attendance of Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees."

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

### Giant's Park Update

The Committee was reminded that a Big Lottery Fund (BIG) Living Landmarks application in relation to the Giant's Park Project at the North Foreshore had been successful and that a 'Next Stage Plan' had been submitted to BIG on 29th September. The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that the Plan had set out the main items of work to be carried out in order to submit the Stage 2 Application prior to the closing date of 31st May. The Committee was advised that the Big Lottery Fund had indicated that approximately £140 million would be available to fund the Living Landmarks Project across the United Kingdom and that the Giant's Park was among the final twenty-three schemes which had been awarded development funding.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that the Project Consultation Process had been launched on 22nd February and media coverage to date had been very good with early feedback from the public consultation exercise being extremely positive and indicating that the overall public awareness of the development of Giant's Park was very high.

She outlined the seven key elements of the consultation progress which was in operation currently and indicated that, thus far, approximately 1,300 individuals had contributed their thoughts and ideas in respect of Giant's Park.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Estates Management –  
Balmoral Industrial Estate, Irrecoverable Debt**

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the Estates Management Unit was responsible for the collection of rents in respect of the Balmoral Industrial Estate. She reported that a company which had traded at the Industrial Estate had gone into liquidation, owing the Council £3,916.67. Procedures for the recovery of the outstanding debt had been implemented and to date £783.33 had been received leaving an outstanding balance of £3,133.34 and, despite further efforts having been made to recover the outstanding amount, it remained unpaid. Accordingly, the Head of Economic Initiatives sought the Committee's authority for the amount of £3,133.34 to be written off as an unrecoverable debt in accordance with Section K12 of the Council's Financial Regulations.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

**Estates Management –  
Landfill Gas Control, Duncrue Industrial Estate**

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Committee that Environmental Resources Management was the Company which provided the Council with specialist advice regarding the control of landfill gas at Duncrue Industrial Estate. In addition, the Company had designed and supervised the installation of the landfill gas control system at Dargan Crescent. This system was designed to protect certain buildings in the Industrial Estate against gas ingress which would give rise to potentially serious health and safety risks to the occupants and potential liability for the Council.

The Committee was advised that there were still significantly high and potentially dangerous levels of landfill gas in parts of the Industrial Estate at Dargan Crescent. Accordingly, Environmental Resources Management had produced proposals for a gas extraction system, comprising a number of gas wells located at strategic points across the Estate linked to a central combustion rig. Outline costs for the work had been estimated at approximately £241,000 plus engineering fees.

The Head of Economic Initiatives sought the Committee's approval to commence a tendering process in regard to the provision of a landfill gas extraction system, as designed by Environmental Resources Management, and requested further, owing to the health and safety aspects of the issue, that authority be delegated to the Director of Development, in conjunction with the Chairman, to accept the most economically advantageous tender received.

After discussion, the Committee granted the approvals sought, subject to the completion of form of contract to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services.

**Award of Tender for the Supply, Erection and Dismantling  
of Marquees for Council Events**

The Head of Urban Development informed the Committee that tenders had been invited by public advertisement and in the European Journal in respect of the supply, erection and dismantling of marquees at City Council events. She explained that the Procurement Unit co-ordinated purchasing for the Council as a whole and had entered into a co-ordinated contract which would ensure that the best price would be obtained by working from a central contract and that this would increase efficiencies in terms of reducing officer time spent on the procurement process.

The costs of the contract for the supply, erection and dismantling of marquees would be met from individual Departmental budgets and the contract would be awarded for a one year period, with an option to renew annually for a further two years thereafter at the discretion of the Council. She reported that one tender had been received from North Down Marquees Limited, 39 Ballynahinch Road, Carryduff, County Down, which had been evaluated against a pre-agreed criteria and, accordingly, she recommended the awarding of the contract on a call-off basis to North Down Marquees Limited.

The Committee noted the comments of the Head of Urban Development and adopted the recommendation, subject to the completion of form of contract to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services.

**Tendering Process for the  
Provision of Minibuses/Coach Hire Services**

The Sub-Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the tender process for the provision of minibuses and coach hire services and the procurement practices adopted by the Council:

**"Relevant Background Information**

**The Procurement Unit, currently located in the Development Department, is responsible for strategic procurement, providing advice and guidance to facilitate best practice procurement throughout the Council and managing the tender process in accordance with all legislative and quality management procedures. The remit of the Unit also includes carrying out research, co-ordinating the Council's procurement and providing procurement training for Council staff. At present the Procurement Unit does not have a veto on Council procurement activities although, as the Council's expert advisers, significant influence can be exercised.**

### Tender Process

Item 66A of the Council's Standing Orders requires that every contract deemed to exceed the statutory value of £30,000 be made subject to tender via public advertisement. Contracts over the threshold set by European Union Public Procurement Legislation are also advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The Council's approach to tender evaluation is carried out in line with best practice procurement. This evaluation assesses both quality and price. Tender documentation states a range of evaluation criteria to be used in the evaluation. The quality/cost ratio used is determined according to the type of project and takes into consideration factors such as the level of complexity of the project, the level of innovation and whether it is a new or a repeat contract.

The evaluation is carried out by a pre-determined panel of Council officers with technical and procurement knowledge and is validated at various stages of the process, agreed by the appropriate Head of Service and Director, and then approved by the relevant Committee.

The Development Committee of 16 April 2003 approved a pilot for advertising tenders using the Council's website. The objective of the pilot was to establish if advertising costs for press adverts could be reduced without adversely impacting on suppliers being able to access tender opportunities.

Subsequently, Development Committee of 18 February 2004 recommended that the Council's tender website be used for advertising all tenders and select lists as well as placing a smaller advert in the local press. It also recommended that all tenders should be advertised once per week (usually Friday) unless there is an operational justification for advertising on another day. It was reported that the pilot exercise had shown a reduction in advertising costs of approximately 44%. Since then, where appropriate, tenders are available electronically on the tenders' web-site. There have been 13,843 hits on this website over the last twelve months.

### Key Issues

#### Procurement and Efficiency Programme

The Council's Efficiency Programme agreed at Policy and Resources Committee on 17 November, 2006 includes Procurement savings. To bring about said efficiencies, a number of goods and services previously procured in an ad hoc way throughout the



Council were identified and recommendations made to subject them to a tendering process. Subsequently a number of contracts were put in place, including one for the hire of coach and minibus service (approved by Development Committee on 17 January 2007). Through the Better Business project the Procurement Unit is currently undertaking an analysis of spend to identify future opportunities for more strategic procurement across the Council and thereby achieve greater efficiencies through rationalisation of spend and identification of categories for co-ordinated contracts.

### Advertising of Tenders

Standing Orders specify the following regarding tender advertisement:

#### Standing Order 66 (a) (i) Open Tenders

‘At least ten days’ public notice must be given in more than one local newspaper circulating in the Council’s district and in any other newspapers or trade journals as the Chief Officer considers appropriate. The advertisement must state the nature and purpose of the contract, and indicate a date by which tenders must be received. Where appropriate, the advertisement of contracts must comply with requirements of European Community procurement legislation in regard to advertising in the Official Journal.’

Historically, Council procedure has been to advertise tenders in the Belfast Telegraph and on alternate weeks, on a rota system, in the Newsletter and the Irish News. Fifty two tenders/select lists have been advertised over the last twelve months costing £52,119.

The recent award of the coach hire contract has raised a number of issues which may require a review of some aspects of the procurement process including advertising, integration of processes across the Council and communication with stakeholders. The current restructuring programme will involve the Procurement Unit coming under the remit of the Core Improvement Team from April 2007 and this is perhaps an opportunity for such a review to be carried out. Members may wish to consider recommending this course of action to the Policy and Resources Committee.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

The purpose of putting in place more formal contracts for procurement of goods and services is to make efficiency savings.

### **Recommendations**

**Members are asked to note the report and decide if they wish to recommend a review of Procurement practices to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”**

Several Members expressed concern about the method by which the contract for the provision of minibus services had been let. In particular, they questioned the degree of advertising and communication which had been undertaken with the current service providers. Members expressed the view also that the method by which the tender had been let, whilst achieving some savings for the Council, could be viewed as having an adverse effect on smaller service providers who had provided previously an acceptable service to various units within the Council.

The Head of Urban Development explained that the contract had been let as part of the Council's efficiency programme. However, she pointed out that the contract was subject to review at the end of the first year of operation and the Procurement Unit would be carrying out a thorough review of the services which had been provided to the Council both in terms of delivery and value for money.

Several Members enquired as to whether or not, given the above-mentioned circumstances, it might be possible to rescind the contract and requested that legal advice in the matter be provided by the Director of Legal Services. In response, the Head of Urban Development indicated that the Director of Legal Services had advised that it would not be possible to rescind the contract until it had been reviewed after one year of operation.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report and agreed also that a further report outlining the legal position in regard to awarding of the contract be provided at a future meeting.

### **City Centre Bus Re-Routing**

The Head of Urban Development advised the Committee that a request had been received from the Department for Regional Development seeking permission to address the Committee in respect of the City Centre Transportation Studies and to outline its proposals for the implementation of a bus re-routing initiative.

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Department for Regional Development at a future meeting.

### **Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, Public Local Enquiry:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

**The Draft BMAP Public Local Inquiry is proposed to commence on 16 April 2007 and will take place in two stages: Stage 1 – Strategic and General Objections; and Stage 2 – Site specific objections.**

The Council submitted written statements for Stage 1 to the PAC on the 14 February 2007 and received an exchange of statements from Planning Service on 21 February 2007.

The Public Inquiry Draft Programme for Stage 1 was distributed at the 2 Pre-Inquiry meeting which took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> February. The programme only includes the objections which the objector has requested participation in the inquiry either through formal, informal or a combined hearing. The Draft Public Inquiry programme is attached with the Council involvement highlighted (Appendix 1).

### Key Issues

#### BMAP Public Inquiry Member Briefing

Following a meeting of the Planning and Transport Political Working Group in January 2007, it was decided that workshops to provide members with an opportunity to discuss Councils objections to BMAP in detail and how they will be processed through the BMAP public inquiry process would be beneficial.

The workshops have been scheduled for the 29 March 2007 12pm – 4pm & 30 March 2007 10am – 2pm, in the 4 Floor Conference Room, Cecil Ward Building. The workshops will cover BMAP objections on an issue and area wide basis. Information packs will also be made available in the Members Library containing the full Public Inquiry timetable, copies of the Council's written submissions, a copy of Planning Service submission, received through exchange of evidence on the 21 February and relevant statutory consultations.

#### Public Inquiry – Resources for Stage 2

The PAC released the Draft programme for Stage 1 objections to be heard at the inquiry. The programme for Stage 2 participation in the inquiry has not yet been published by the PAC. However the Stage 2 written submissions must be submitted by the published deadline of the 23 August 2007. The Council will again require external support, in the form of specialist consultant advice, for a number of Stage 2 representations.

The Council has 77 representations which have been classified as Stage 2 or 'Site Specific' issues. Whilst the approach to the Stage 2 Inquiry has yet to be finalised it is anticipated that approximately 65 of the representations will be taken forward on the basis of written submission with the remaining 12 representations involving participation at the inquiry.

The resources required for the engagement of external consultant support to assist with the written submissions and participation at the Stage 2 Inquiry is estimated at £40,000. This budget has been estimated from the work on Stage 1 and is subject to final confirmation of the inquiry process and the estimated time requirements for attendance at the PAC designated sessions.

#### **Resource Implications**

##### **Financial**

The costs of £40,000 for commissioning consultant support to address Stage 2 issues as part of the Public Inquiry process.

#### **Recommendations**

Members are requested to:

- Endorse the attendance of members at the BMAP Public Inquiry workshops as an approved duty
- approve the £40,000 budget as the resources necessary to engage specialist support to ensure the preparation for and participation at the Second Stage of the BMAP Public Inquiry process.”

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

#### **George Best Belfast City Airport**

The Committee agreed to accept an invitation from Mr. Brian Ambrose to visit the George Best Belfast City Airport in relation to the development of a future strategic relationship between the Airport and the Council. In addition, given the cross-cutting aspects of the current and future development of the Airport, it was agreed that the invitation be extended to all Members of the Council.

#### **Nominations of the Nomadic Trust**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th September, it had agreed that to be represented on the Nomadic Trust by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman. The Committee Administrator pointed out that the Deputy Chairman was unable to fulfil the position and he recommended that, in order to ensure that the Committee was properly represented, the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman each be permitted to appoint a nominee.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.