

Development Committee

Monday, 30th April, 2007

SPECIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCausland (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Kirkpatrick); and
Councillors M. Browne, Convery, Ekin, Hartley,
and Newton.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Humphrey and McGimpsey.

Belfast City Centre Action Plan

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 21st March, it had considered a report regarding the City Centre Action Plan and, although it had taken a number of decisions in connection with issues which arose from the Plan, the Committee had not agreed the content of the Action Plan itself. She advised the Members that a copy of the Action Plan was available for inspection on the Members' Portal.

She pointed out that the Plan would provide a baseline reference for the work which the Council was committed to undertaking in Belfast City centre. This would enable the development in future years of a more coherent and focused Action Plan based on an annual cycle of target-setting and review and evaluation. The Plan referred only to activities undertaken by the Council and did not include work which was carried out by other agencies. The Director indicated that, having established a baseline, the Council would be in a stronger position to take responsibility in future years for managing the work which would be required within the City centre. She requested that the Committee endorse the contents of the Belfast City Centre Action Plan and agree that the Council embark on a process of obtaining agreement on the Plan from other stakeholders.

During discussion in the matter, concern was expressed at the length of time it had taken for the Action Plan to be completed, and the Director of Development was asked if she could ensure that operational activities within the Action Plan which were the responsibility of other Council Departments would be undertaken as outlined.

In response, the Director explained the controls which would be put in place to ensure that the activities outlined in the Plan were completed satisfactorily. She pointed out that work was ongoing in several Departments on cross-cutting issues, such as the Strategic Neighbourhood Action Plan and Community Planning, which was being undertaken under the leadership of the Development Department and where such controls were necessary in order to ensure that the objectives were achieved.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed the contents of the City Centre Action Plan and the associated operational activities which would be implemented by Council Departments. The Committee agreed further that officers from the Council should discuss the contents of the Action Plan with those organisations which were responsible for various issues involving the City centre.

Belfast City Centre Management

The Director of Development informed the Members that the Chief Executive of Belfast City Centre Management had been appointed recently to a position in Liverpool and that representatives from the Company had indicated that they were keen to advertise for a replacement as soon as possible. She pointed out that, since the Council had agreed to provide financial assistance to the Company until March 2008 only, it would be better for the organisation to be managed in a caretaker fashion by a City Council employee or possibly through the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau rather than by a new Chief Executive appointed by Belfast City Centre Management.

The Committee expressed the opinion that Belfast City Centre Management should be managed until 31st March, 2008 in a caretaker capacity by a Council employee or through the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, or a hybrid of both.

Chairman