

## Development Committee

Wednesday, 2nd August, 2000

### MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) SUB-COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor C. McGimpsey (Chairman); and  
Councillors Hartley, Hayes, Jones, McAuley,  
McDonnell and McKnight.

In attendance: Ms. M. T. McGivern, Director of Development;  
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;  
Dr. E. Jackson, Economic Development Manager;  
Ms. J. Jordan, Economic Development Officer;  
Ms. L. Leonard, Economic Development Officer;  
Ms. C. Linney, Economic Development Officer;  
Ms. C. Sinnerton, Economic Development Officer; and  
Mr. J. Goodall, Committee Administrator.

In the absence of the absence of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, it  
was

Resolved - That Councillor McKnight take the Chair.

(Councillor McKnight in the Chair.)

#### **Apology**

An apology for in ability to attend was reported from Councillor E. Smyth.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 7th June, which had been printed and circulated,  
were taken as read and signed as correct.

(The Chairman (Councillor C. McGimpsey) in the Chair.)

#### **D.T.I International Secondment Scheme**

The Sub-Committee considered further the minute of the Economic  
Development Sub-Committee of 7th June under the heading "D.T.I International  
Secondment Scheme", which had been taken back for further consideration at the  
request of Councillor Stoker at the Council meeting on 3rd July. An extract from the  
minutes in this regard is set out hereunder:

**"D. T. I. International Secondment Scheme**

*The Sub-Committee considered the undernoted report which had been prepared by the Economic Development Manager in respect of the D.T.I. International Secondment Scheme. A copy of the report is set out hereunder:*

**'Purpose of Report**

*To update Members with respect to the Department of Trade and Industry's International Secondment Scheme and a request for £10k funding towards a trade fair in connection with the scheme.*

**Background**

*Members will be aware that at the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting of Tuesday 29th February 2000, the Committee were informed of correspondence received from the Department of Trade and Industry regarding their International Secondment Scheme.*

**Details of the Scheme**

*The International Secondment Scheme enables United Kingdom businesses to place 'up-and-coming' managers with companies outside the United Kingdom in a learning framework for periods of 3-12 months. It supports both the secondee and their business with grants and also facilitates the dissemination of expertise gained to other businesses in the home economy on their return.*

*The objective of the scheme is to promote better practice in management for United Kingdom businesses through management secondments to best practice companies.*

*Whilst the scheme is open to all types of business, it is targeted at the technology and engineering sectors, family owned businesses, and the hotel and catering trade. It is not applicable to direct public sector employees or Members of Councils, but employees of non-profit making companies under the umbrella of public bodies are eligible to participate.*

**Experience to Date**

*In 1999, Ken Nelson, Chief Executive of LEDCOM, spent three months working in the York County Economic Development Board in North Carolina, USA. This secondment forged new contacts and partnerships not only with York County but also with a wider region of North and South Carolina, including the economic hub of Charlotte. A keen interest in developing partnerships with business*

*in Northern Ireland was recorded by the South Carolina, Department of Commerce, the Carolina's partnership and the North and South Carolina's section of the British/American Business Council. They were also committed to putting in place mechanisms for expanding trade and creating investment opportunities.*

#### **Proposed Trade Fair**

*The DTI have now proposed to hold a trade fair in Belfast in March 2001 in relation to the International Secondment Scheme. The concept of the trade fair is to provide a forum to learn from the experience gained during the DTI secondment and to exploit the opportunities for business and trade links with the Carolinas.*

*The aims of such a trade fair would be;*

- to enhance the quality of management of business and economic development in Northern Ireland;*
- to cement existing partnerships with North and South Carolina; and*
- to develop new partnerships for the mutual benefit of economic development in Northern Ireland and the Carolinas.*

*The DTI suggest that the territory for the trade fair should comprise the economic development areas covered by Belfast City Council and the District Council areas of Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, Moyle and Newtownabbey known collectively as 'CORE'. They suggest that such a territory/critical mass is needed to satisfy the aspirations of the economic development partners in North/South Carolina.*

*It is anticipated that the trade fair would span five days in March 2001 with 100-150 delegates attending from throughout the identified region, and the Carolinas.*

#### **Management Group**

*It is proposed that the planning and implementation of the trade fair would be managed by Ken Nelson of LEDCOM in conjunction with a Project Team comprising the following:*

- Ernie Browne, Department of Trade and Industry*
- Olive Hill, LEDU*
- Representative from Belfast City Council*
- Representative from CORE*
- Representative from IDB*

**Funding**

*A budget of £50,000 is proposed for the trade fair with contributions requested from the following:*

- *Belfast City Council      £10,000*
- *CORE                              £10,000*
- *LEDU                              £10,000*
- *IDB                                £10,000*
- *DTI                                £10,000*

**Partners**

*The Department of Trade and Enterprise has approached the following organisations in relation to financial input and support in kind for the proposed trade fair:-*

- *Belfast City Council*
- *LEDU*
- *IDB*
- *CORE*
- *IRTU*

*To date, Olive Hill from LEDU has been involved in an initial planning team for the proposed trade fair.*

*At present, the above listed organisations are further considering the proposal.*

**Belfast City Council Input**

*In summary, the Department of Trade and Industry have requested the following input from the Council in relation to the proposed trade fair:*

- *£10,000 funding*
- *participation and contribution to the Project Management Team*

**Economic Development Perspective**

*Members will be aware that Belfast City Council have developed and approved a Trade Mission Policy giving specific commitment to the geographical locations of Boston, Halifax and Portland, Maine. This Policy was adopted by the Economic Development Sub-Committee to provide a focus for future inward investment and avoid the dilution of efforts, resources, staffing and as a direct result outputs.*

*Indeed, the forthcoming Economic Development Action Plan will concentrate on strengthening links with each of these cities, focusing on the merit of securing in the short term achievements*

*via the Boston/ Pittsburgh Trade Mission and the Friends of Belfast networks, and then further consolidating those relationships alongside those in the Atlantic Rim Initiative.*

*It is evident from the proposal that the Department of Trade and Industry would like support from Belfast City Council. It would be important for Belfast City Council, however, to decide in the early stages if North/South Carolina is an appropriate target area before the matter is progressed any further.*

*Against the general backdrop of the Trade Mission Policy, Members might also wish to consider the additional benefits to Council to be derived from working in partnership with the DTI on a high profile initiative; and similarly of the benefits to be derived from collaboration with other regional 'strategic allies', including notably, the local authorities of Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, Moyle and Newtownabbey as well as potentially LEDU and IDB.*

**Recommendation**

*It is recommended that Members approve Belfast City Council participation on the Project Management Team and, if necessary, associated expenditure of up to £10,000.*

**Decision Required**

*To approve the foregoing recommendation.'*

*The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation contained in the foregoing report."*

Councillor Stoker voiced concern that, whilst CORE, which represented eight District Council areas, would be contributing £10,000 to the Scheme, the Council would be contributing the same amount. He suggested that, since some of the other District Councils had twinning arrangements already with cities in the Carolinas, they might obtain greater benefit from participation in the proposed trade fair and, accordingly, they should make a larger contribution to the costs involved.

The Economic Development Manager pointed out that the Department of Trade and Industry was keen to have the trade fair centred in Belfast and the influx of delegates would be of economic benefit to the City. He suggested also that the Council's contribution reflected the status of the City and the Council's role in providing civic leadership.

After further discussion in the matter, the Sub-Committee agreed that the Council participate in the Project Management Team and that funding of up to a maximum of £10,000 be made available with the condition attached that the trade fair be held in Belfast.

**Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre : The John Hewitt Pub**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th June, it had agreed to defer consideration of an application which had been submitted by the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre for funding under the Community Economic Development Flagship Projects in respect of The John Hewitt Pub to enable the Economic Development Manager to submit a report which would include, in chronological order, all minutes concerning the application and the Community Economic Development Flagship Projects.

The Economic Development Manager submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining the actions which had been taken subsequent to the receipt of the application. A copy of the report, with the omission of the Appendix referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

**“Purpose of Report**

**To consider a request for funding of an application which had been submitted by the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC) for funding under the Community Economic Development Flagship Projects in respect of The John Hewitt Pub.**

**Background**

**As part of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan (1997-1999), provision had been made for the implementation of four Community Economic Development Flagship Projects. A total of £1.2 million had been allocated for four projects, one each for the North, South, East and West of the City. Provision had been made for a budget of £300,000 for each project, incorporating Belfast City Council and ERDF funding.**

**At the Economic Development Sub Committee of 7th April, 2000 it had been agreed that none of the applications submitted under the Community Economic Development Flagship projects should proceed as potential projects for funding under this initiative. The John Hewitt Pub project did meet the criteria established by Belfast City Council, however failed to meet ERDF criteria. It was clearly noted in the terms of reference that was issued for the project that the funding for the projects would be match funded by ERDF. The Department of Economic Development expressed in writing that its key concern had been that funding would represent intervention and support in a sector where market forces should prevail.**

**Following this a number of projects were explored further, East Belfast Enterprise Agency, The Vine Centre Limited and Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre. East Belfast Enterprise Agency was submitted for funding under ESF and was agreed as a project for the East Belfast area, the Vine Centre secured funding under a different element of ERDF and was agreed as a project for the North**

Belfast area. The Department of Economic Development continued to inform the Economic Development Unit that the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre was not eligible for funding. However in December 1999 the Department of Economic Development overturned their original decision to allow the project to be assessed for funding under ERDF.

It is important to note that based on the original guidance of the Department of Economic Development Belfast City Council reallocated the Community Economic Development Flagships ERDF matched funding to existing projects within the 1997-1999 action plan and Belfast City Council monies to projects to be developed in South and West of the City.

It should also be noted that the BURC went ahead with the development of the pub which opened for trading on 16th December, 1999 under the knowledge that the project was not eligible for ERDF funding, as the reserve was officially lifted on 13th December, 1999.

The most recent legal perspective provided by the Assistant Director of Legal Services is that if BURC is simply pursuing the original application then there should be no particular difficulty insofar as the Council's statutory powers in relation to economic development is concerned. It is essentially a decision for the Sub-Committee now to take as to whether they feel the application for funding should be approved as an economic development project under the Flagships Projects.

A full synopsis of the development of the Community Economic Development Flagship Projects is attached in Appendix I, which members should have already received following a request for this information at the Economic Development Sub Committee of 7th June, 2000.

#### Recommendation Options

- i) To agree to fund the John Hewitt Pub as per the original application to the sum of £195,000 towards capital refurbishment and professional fees.
- ii) To agree not to fund the John Hewitt Pub.
- iii) To agree to fund the John Hewitt Pub to a lesser amount than requested within the original application.

#### Decision Required

To agree one of the foregoing recommendations.”

During discussion in the matter, a number of Members voiced concern that correspondence dated 30th November, 1999 from the Chairman (Councillor C. McGimpsey) to Mr. G. Loughran, Permanent Secretary in the Department of Economic Development, had indicated that the Council was supportive of the bid by the Belfast Unemployed Resources Centre although this decision had not been taken by the Sub-Committee. The Chairman (Councillor C. McGimpsey) pointed out that the application had met the criteria specified by the Council for the Community Economic Development Flagship Projects but had been refused on the basis that it had been considered not to have met the European Regional Development Fund criteria. He contended that it had been the view of the Sub-Committee that any application meeting the Council's criteria was to be supported.

In reply to a question from a Member, the Director of Development informed the Sub-Committee that all funding for Flagships Projects had now been expended and any further funding would be required to be met from the Department's current budget.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McKnight,  
Seconded by Councillor McAuley,

That the Sub-Committee agrees not to fund The John Hewitt Pub.

On a vote by show of hands four Members voted for the proposal and none against and it was accordingly declared carried.

### **Strategy 2010**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 2nd February, it had considered correspondence which had been received from the Committee Clerk to the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee indicating that the Committee had planned to undertake an inquiry into the economic proposals outlined in the Strategy 2010 Document. The Committee had planned also to hold a programme of public hearings scheduled to commence on 1st March, 2000 and had sought the views of all interested parties and individuals in the matter, with comments having to be submitted by 23rd February. After discussion, it had been agreed that the Sub-Committee make a formal, updated response to the Committee and, in view of the short-time scale available, that it be submitted to the Development Committee for approval at its meeting on 16th February. However, subsequent political developments following the lifting of the suspension on the workings of the Northern Ireland Assembly by the Secretary of State had resulted in the closing date for the submission of comments being amended till 21st June. Following discussions with the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee and the Director of Development, it was agreed that the submission be forwarded to the Assembly Committee. A copy of the response which, under the terms of reference, included an executive summary had previously been circulated to the Members.

The Economic Development Manager pointed out that, subsequent to the submission of the written response, the Council had been invited to submit oral evidence to the Assembly Committee at its meeting on 4th August. It had been pointed out that the delegation should be restricted to 3 - 4 participants and be comprised of



Members and officials with direct responsibility for the area under discussion. Following consultation with the Chairman (Councillor C. McGimpsey) and the Chief Executive, it had been suggested that the delegation comprise the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with the Director of Development and the Economic Development Manager. The Economic Development Manager pointed out that a full report on the attendance at the inquiry would be submitted to the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 6th September.

After discussion in the matter, it was agreed that the Council be represented at the meeting of the Assembly Committee by Councillors Jones and Stoker and that their attendance at the meeting be considered as an approved duty.

### **Friends of Belfast**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted the undernoted report, copies of which had previously been circulated, in relation to the proposed future development of the Friends of Belfast Initiative:

#### **“Purpose of Report**

**To advise Members with respect to the proposed future development of the Friends of Belfast Initiative.**

#### **Background**

**Members will be aware that Friends of Belfast is an initiative which fosters partnerships with key persons across all sectors, for the promotion of business opportunities and investment links with Belfast and North America. The initiative was launched in February 1998, under Belfast City Council’s Economic Development Strategy 1995-2000, in support of the Council’s continued commitment to attracting inward investment to the city.**

**At present there are some 160 key people throughout North America who have signed up as ‘Friends of Belfast’. Many members are senior executives from an array of sectors including industry, academia and government.**

**John Cullinane, Founder of Friends of Belfast, has led the initiative in North America, mainly in Massachusetts on behalf of Belfast City Council, enlisting the active support of key political and business figures. Members will recall that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee, the Director of Development, Officers and the Chief Executive of Investment Belfast Limited, met with John Cullinane in Boston in November 1999, as part of the advance visit to plan the Belfast Trade Mission 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to plan the way forward with the Friends of Belfast initiative.**

As a result, new promotional materials and an interactive website were developed and regular contact is made with Friends of Belfast members.

As reported at the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting on 7th June, 2000, a number of Friends of Belfast members assisted in the planning and co-ordination of the recent Belfast Trade Mission 2000. At this meeting, Members requested that a full report be brought to the August Committee meeting outlining the development to date of the Initiative, and how it can be strategically developed in the next year, including the targeting of further cities.

#### Developments to Date

As referred to earlier, new promotional materials have been developed to be used to target new Friends of Belfast. The packs (sample to be provided at Sub-Committee) which are pocket size, contain a 'facts and figures' booklet that provides a snapshot of information on the City of Belfast.

In addition, the pack contains a coat pin and a CD ROM promoting Belfast as a renaissance city. There is also a concise application form to be completed and returned by potential Friends of Belfast for consideration and approval by the Economic Development Sub-Committee. Upon acceptance, the new Friends can display the declaration and certificates (both a desk size and formal wall size certificate) to show his/her commitment to Belfast. Future Friends will be accepted on their merit to promote the city and assist the city in any business or investment initiatives, focusing on the new growth sectors.

On a bi-monthly basis, Friends will receive a postcard that will encourage them to log on to the Friends website at [www.friendsofbelfast.org](http://www.friendsofbelfast.org). The website will provide a background to the initiative and the latest news, in terms of business and investment activities and achievements in Belfast, or on the Atlantic Rim.

There will also be a section profiling Friends who have recently used his/her influence in support of Belfast.

#### Future Strategic Developments

In considering the future strategic development of the Initiative, it was felt that it would be important to look at the Boston Model, where most of the Friends of Belfast are centred and most active (53 Friends).

In consultation with Frank Costello who works closely with John Cullinane to promote and make use of the network, initial thinking has led to the proposal of the following development strategy.

It is recommended at the outset that any time, energy and resources expended on the Initiative should be targeted to the sectors identified and adopted within the Belfast City Council's Economic Development Strategy 2000-2003, and the Trade Mission Policy (i.e.) ICT, life and health sciences, environmental technologies, telecommunications, financial services, electronics and fibre optics.

This will therefore require targeting people to become Friends who are tied to these sectors and whose influence and expertise can be used to open doors and create business and investment opportunities. Such individuals can then be approached to assist the Council and Investment Belfast Limited, in any necessary follow-up work. Any contact with Friends of Belfast must be seen to be business and economic development focused, to gain maximum support.

The cities and contacts highlighted in this report have been selected on the strength of their sectoral specialisation in areas that coincide with Belfast City Council's targeted growth sectors. Consequently they appear to offer the greatest opportunities in terms of potential economic benefit.

### **Boston Model**

The Boston Model of the initiative has evolved in the last few years, due to Trade Missions to, and from Boston, when relationships between the two cities and the business sectors have strengthened and flourished.

As a direct result of the Boston Model and the network of Friends promoting Belfast, Liberty Mutual and Segue Software invested in Belfast in 1998 and 1999 creating 40 and 200 jobs respectively.

Key Friends such as Mary Clarke and John Cullinane were responsible for planning and co-ordinating excellent programmes for the software companies and medical sector representatives on the recent Belfast Trade Mission 2000. Mr. Joe Corcoran, also from Boston, has been proactive in relation to the real estate/property sector which can be further developed. Mr. Corcoran has been developing relationships with Laganside in recent months, particularly with respect to the Titanic Quarter.

These results have been achieved through contact with key Friends who provide access to potential new investment, handled on a person to person basis. Given the success of this effort in Boston during the Trade Mission with Mr. Cullinane and Ms. Clarke, it is felt that this 'Head Friends' approach has been market tested and can be used for other sectors and in other cities.

The Boston Model is built on strong friendships with key players who lead growth sector development in each city. This can be consolidated in the year 2000-2001 and developed further in New England, with Boston as the anchor to Connecticut and Rhode Island. These key players will be able to provide direction to and linkages with their counterparts in other targeted cities of North America.

In the immediate future, in terms of Boston, and on the fibre optics technology front, it is recommended that Olen Bielski (a current Friend) is approached to take up his offer to provide free testing for fibre optic companies in Belfast. Mr. Bielski is the Director of Business Development for CAFA - the Centre for Advance Fibre Optic Applications in Massachusetts.

#### Nova Scotia

Like Boston, relations between Belfast and Nova Scotia have gone from strength to strength, mainly due to the Atlantic Rim Initiative committing all the cities to develop business and investment opportunities.

There are 13 official Friends of Belfast in the Province of Nova Scotia. Belfast City Council and Investment Belfast Limited continue to work closely with the life and health sciences sector there, which is well advanced and specialised. A potential Head Friend to spearhead this ongoing collaboration is Dr. Fred Thompson of Novacorp, who facilitated Investment Belfast Limited's visit to Halifax in December 1999, to study clinical trials and continues to support Investment Belfast Limited in this work.

#### Pittsburgh

There are currently six Friends of Belfast in the Pittsburgh area whose expertise and influence need to be utilised. Given the time and investment in Pittsburgh to date in terms of Belfast City Council's facilitation of Trade Missions to Belfast and the recent Belfast Trade Mission 2000, it should be relatively easy to develop a strong satellite of Friends similar to that in Boston. Pittsburgh has emerged as a city whose sectoral base and indeed cultural base is very similar to Belfast.

Dan Gallagher, a prominent attorney agreed to serve as a Chairman of Friends of Belfast in Pittsburgh over two years ago. This was arranged through Sr. Michelle O'Leary from the Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh and Frank Costello. This role would be of similar nature to that of John Cullinane in Boston.

The key sectors in Pittsburgh are banking, hi-tech developments, life and health sciences, and fibre optics. Indeed Pittsburgh has a number of renowned high tech and health bodies, which were visited by the medical representatives and hi-tech companies from Belfast involved in the April Trade Mission.

It is felt that Mr. Gallagher's goodwill can be maximised to get an introduction to the major players on the bodies, and within the key sectors, with a view to seeking more access for Belfast companies as happens in Boston, with for example, the Massachusetts High Tech Council.

It is recommended that Peg McCormick be formally approached to work with Dan Gallagher to actively develop the Friends of Belfast network in Pittsburgh. Peg is a consultant who assisted Belfast City Council and Investment Belfast Limited in planning and co-ordinating the Pittsburgh side of the Belfast Trade Mission 2000.

#### New York

Although New York is the largest of the North American cities, there are currently only seven Friends based there. It's dominant sector is financial services, however New York is emerging as third (after California and Boston) on the high tech front with Manhattan fast becoming a major software development centre. In 1997, the then Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Alban Maginness attended a reception hosted by John Connaughton, the Wall Street Lawyer. It is recommended that both Mr. Connaughton and Mr. John Sharkey (who is well known in the telecommunications industry there) be engaged to spearhead the Friends of Belfast initiative in New York, as a fairly new territory. To add weight to this small network, key Belfast expatriates should be engaged to promote and drive the initiative. An obvious future Friend is Dennis Curran, formerly Head of IDA in New York and now Manager of the Pension Investment Fund for the Bank of Ireland in New York. In the past, Mr. Curran agreed in principle to be an Ambassador for Belfast. Given the size of the New York business community, it is important to engage men and women who can open the doors on the targeted sectors.

Members will recall a proposal at the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting of 7th June to appoint Mr. Alan Hevesi (Comptroller of New York City), Mr. Pat Doherty (his Personal Assistant) and Mr. Bill McGimpsey (a prominent Engineer) as Friends of Belfast.

It is recommended that Members re-consider this proposal given the influence of the individuals and the importance of developing the Friends of Belfast in New York.

San Francisco/ San José

To date Belfast City Council has made links with the California area through recent visits of the two Lord Mayors of 1997 and 1998, Councillor Alban Maginness and Councillor David Alderdice accompanied by the Chief Executive.

There are currently 2 formal Friends of Belfast in this area.

Both visits for the Council were organised by Mr. Patrick Goggins, a prominent attorney, who would be a very strong driving force for the Friends of Belfast initiative there. It is recommended that Belfast City Council takes advantage of the forthcoming visit from the Northern California World Affairs Council from 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> August, 2000, to promote the network and seek new applications. The visit of over 25 key opinion makers from a variety of sectors will be led by Mr. Wilford Welch, a well known Attorney and businessman in California with extensive West Coast contacts.

Toronto

The City of Toronto is well known for its vitality in the financial services and health care sectors.

Ted McConnell is one of two existing and original Friends of Belfast. He is the Canadian Government's representative on the International Fund for Ireland. He has offered several times to host a Belfast delegation to Toronto and to help set up appropriate links for the Council.

It is recommended that the strong natural link between Belfast and Toronto is effectively exploited and spearheaded by Mr. McConnell, who is personally well linked to Belfast expatriates in Toronto.

Denver

The obvious main contact for Belfast in Denver is Mr. Jim Lyons, Special Advisor to the President on Northern Ireland Economic Affairs. Mr. Lyons is the only existing formal Friend of Belfast from Denver. He will return to his city when he leaves the International Fund for Ireland and completes his Presidential support early 2001.

Given the extensive influence and expertise of Mr. Lyons, and the fact that Denver is fast becoming a preferred location for investment in America, it is appropriate to build a relationship and engage Mr. Lyons as soon as possible. This process could begin now, given Mr. Lyons's frequent visits to Belfast.

### **Conclusion**

In the short term, Belfast City Council will continue to consolidate the strong and active relationships established within the Friends of Belfast Network. Over the medium to long-term, beginning in 2001, Belfast City Council can seek to expand other cities as nuclei of the initiative, focusing on the growth sector industries and headed by contacts already made with senior level individuals as referred to throughout this report. These individuals are a starting point for establishing core groups in the proposed cities. To engage them, the targeted Head Friends could be invited to Belfast to experience the Belfast 'product' and examine how the economic development strategy is working on the ground, particularly in terms of business growth and investment.

### **Resources**

It is estimated that hosting an educational and awareness raising visit to Belfast for targeted Head Friends, would cost £5,000.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members approve the expansion of the Friends of Belfast Network through;

- i) the identification and engagement of Head Friends in each of the listed cities
- ii) the facilitation of an incoming visit in Autumn 2000 at a maximum cost of £5,000, to coincide with other major events such as the President's visit, where possible.
- iii) the aggressive pursuit of further Friends of Belfast in the sectors targeted by Belfast City Council and Investment Belfast Limited and consequently the development of sectoral networks.
- iv) the appointment of Mr. Hevesi, Mr. Doherty and Mr. McGimpsey as key Friends of Belfast in New York City.

### **Decision Required**

**To approve the foregoing recommendation."**

After discussion in the matter, during which the Economic Development Officer outlined the current activities being undertaken as part of the Friends of Belfast Initiative, it was

Moved by Councillor Hartley,  
Seconded by Councillor McKnight,

That the Sub-Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the proposal and none against and it was accordingly declared carried.

#### **Northern California World Affairs Council**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, seeking approval to facilitate and host a visit from the Northern California World Affairs Council, a civic lobbying group which advised and lobbied the Federal Administration of the White House, the United States State Department and the Congress on political and economic issues. It was fundamentally a decision-making group which wished to make its first fact-finding visit to Belfast as part of its annual overseas itinerary.

The Economic Development Manager reminded the Sub-Committee that civic links had been established in a number of ways with the State of California during recent years and, in 1997, the then Lord Mayor (Councillor Maginness) and the Chief Executive had visited San Jose to attend the State of the World Forum Conference. During their visit they had followed a parallel programme of meetings, accompanied by Industrial Development Board officials, during which they had met the Mayor of San Jose and various City officials. As a result, the Mayor had been appointed a Friend of Belfast in July, 1998 when, together with the American Leadership Forum of Silicon Valley, she had led a delegation of forty-five key representatives from both the public and private sectors of San Jose to Belfast. He pointed out also, given the renowned information, communications and technology sector in California, that this State could be considered by the Council as a target destination within the framework of the Friends of Belfast network and he proposed that the Sub-Committee approve the hosting of the incoming visit.

After discussion in the matter, during which the Economic Development Manager pointed out that all potential incoming delegations were encouraged by the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to stay in the City, the Sub-Committee agreed to approve the provision of a reception for a maximum of 150 persons on 29th August, and the holding of a morning information briefing for the delegates at the Belfast Waterfront Hall on 30th August. The Sub-Committee agreed also that the balance of funding remaining for the hosting of incoming delegations be contained within all future reports in this regard.

#### **Portland Maine Trade Mission**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated to the Members, in respect of a forthcoming Trade Mission from Portland Maine in September, 2000.

The Economic Development Manager pointed out that the Council had forged its first links with Portland Maine through the signing in November, 1998 of a Memorandum of Understanding with Senator George Mitchell. This two-way Trade Agreement had been further strengthened when the Mayor of Portland Maine had signed the Atlantic Rim Agreement, joining the four cities of Portland, Boston, Belfast and Halifax in a trade and cultural alliance. This Initiative was aimed at fostering business developments and trade opportunities at home and jointly, as appropriate, in third markets.



The Members were advised that, in order to build upon the civic and cultural links with the City and to explore potential investment opportunities within similar growth sectors, the City of Portland planned to lead a Trade Mission to Belfast from 24th till 28th September. The Mission, led by Mayor Mavodones, would involve up to fifteen companies from the hi-technology and biotechnology sectors and the focus of the Mission would be to explore business opportunities in Belfast and to explore the potential for joint alliances, outsourcing contracts, exchanges of experience and business deals.

The Economic Development Manager recommended that the Council provide meeting facilities and appropriate hospitality for the Trade Mission including a dinner or lunch in the City Hall for a maximum of 150 persons and that the Council co-ordinate a meeting of the four Atlantic Rim Partners during the visit to Belfast.

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendations of the Economic Development Manager subject to the use of the accommodation for the holding of meetings being approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

#### **United States Venture Capitalists**

The Sub-Committee considered a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, in relation to a forthcoming visit to the City by a group of American Venture Capitalists. The Sub-Committee was reminded of the visit to the City by a group of Venture Capital Fund Managers on 27th June. The Group had travelled as part of a larger group from the Irish Chambers of Commerce in the United States and the objectives of the visit had been to share their considerable experience in financing business growth from the use of Venture Funds and to generate sufficient interest in Belfast and Northern Ireland with a view to encouraging the visitors from the United States to explore the establishment of a Venture Capital Fund in Belfast. The Lord Mayor (Councillor Wilson) had hosted at short notice a working breakfast attended by the Managers and the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee, together with representatives from Investment Belfast Limited and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Each of the Corporate Financiers had expressed an interest in accessing the Belfast and Northern Ireland Investment Market in various sectors and the working breakfast had been followed by an informal seminar at the Belfast Waterfront Hall to provide a platform for discussion with local companies. In particular, Mr. Donald Caldwell from the Cross Atlantic Company had expressed a strong interest in establishing a Venture Capital Base in Belfast.

After discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed that Investment Belfast Limited be requested to correspond with the Chief Executive Officer of Cross Atlantic to issue a return invitation to encourage him to establish a company base in Belfast. The Sub-Committee agreed also to approve, in principle, further support for Venture Capital fact-finding initiatives which might be pursued by Investment Belfast Limited to increase the awareness and existence of a venture capital fund in Belfast.

**Boston Luncheon Group**

The Economic Development Manager advised the Sub-Committee that the Boston Luncheon Group was a network emanating from the Belfast Trade Mission 2000 which had been instigated by several of the participating technology companies and had been facilitated subsequently by Investment Belfast Limited. The main objective of the network was to share knowledge and to build experience, thus increasing the competitiveness of all hi-tech companies which become members of the Group. Its membership was drawn from the public and private sectors with technology companies at its core and the membership now comprised approximately seventy-five representatives from software companies, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry and family, legal, accountancy, public relations, recruitment, banking, corporate finance and patenting representatives. The meetings of the Group offered public body representatives a forum to meet the technology companies and to explain how they might take advantage of various public sector development programmes. The private sector had the opportunity to meet with hi-tech companies, assess their needs and explain the services which they could offer. The Luncheon Group intended to hold its October meeting in Belfast. He pointed out also that Investment Belfast Limited had secured sponsorship for the current calendar year from NTL to develop the network and to facilitate monthly meetings which were themed and led by guest speakers.

The Economic Development Manager, in view of the Council's commitment to support and develop the information and communication technology sector as one of the key knowledge-based growth industries identified in the Council's Trade Mission Policy, recommended that the Sub-Committee agree to support the meeting of the Luncheon Group on 26th October by granting the use of the City Hall and the provision of refreshments to accompany a lunch for a maximum of ninety people. He pointed out that the cost of the lunch would be met by NTL, the group sponsors.

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation of the Economic Development Manager subject to the use of the accommodation for this purpose being approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

**Shopmobility Belfast**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated to the Members, in relation to a request which had been received from Shopmobility Belfast for funding to assist the ongoing development costs of its services in Belfast. A copy of the report, with the omission of the Appendix referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

**"Purpose of Report**

**To advise Members of a request received from Shopmobility Belfast for funding to assist with the ongoing development costs of their services in Belfast.**

### Background

Shopmobility Belfast is an initiative whereby people with limited mobility are assisted to shop and use the social, commercial, cultural and artistic facilities of the city centre. This assistance is in the form of providing electrically powered and manual wheelchairs, scooters and provision of personal physical help where necessary. This is a free service with no membership fee which is available from two centres - Victoria Centre and Castlecourt. Parking facilities have been allocated to the scheme in Victoria Square and accessible buses/taxis also feed into the system. The scheme has been in operation for four years and has approximately 1500 members. The demand for Shopmobility's services in Belfast continues to grow dramatically each year. Statistics on the use of Shopmobility's services are attached for information in Appendix I.

The ongoing development of Shopmobility has been a part of Belfast City Council's Economic Development Strategy since 1995, under the theme Community Economic Development. To date they have received £42,000 towards the ongoing development costs of Shopmobility including; rental of city centre premises, marketing and promotional materials, and the purchase of a Mobility Unit and Minibus to provide the service in such areas as: Yorkgate, the Kennedy Centre, Belfast City Council amenities and for community group activities and events within the North, South, East and West of the City.

### Funding Request

Shopmobility has approached the Economic Development Unit for a further contribution of funding of £60,000 towards the running and expansion costs (salaries, rent, overheads, minibus and mobile unit) and expansion of the scooter scheme over 3 years, 2000-2003.

The total cost of running Shopmobility Belfast per annum is £110,000. Other funders include, 2000/2001, MBW (£48,000), Lankelly Foundation (£15,000), South & Eastern Health Trust (£5,000), Department of the Environment (£10,000), Eastern Health & Social Services (£10,000).

### Reasons to fund Shopmobility

Belfast City Council is committed to the development of the City Centre and actively works to ensure it is accessible for all citizens. Adherence to that principle assumes added significance for those whose mobility may be limited.

Belfast City Council has committed to the new Equality scheme in Belfast, and disability access to the City Centre's commercial, cultural and social facilities would be an integral part of this commitment.

The Urban Taskforce document which is hailed as the most up to date best practice in urban regeneration, states that connected and living cities should be an integral part of the lives of the people who inhabit them.

Belfast City Council has recently committed, as part of the Development Department's Strategy, to play a more proactive role in influencing transport policy. To that end, a study has been commissioned that will lead to the development of a transport policy, through which the Council will be enabled to adopt informed positions on the main transport issues affecting the City. Initiatives, such as Shopmobility, should be regarded in the context of this overarching policy framework.

Belfast City Council has funded Shopmobility since its early establishment as part of its commitment to the economic development of the city centre and the Council continues to be widely recognised in all Shopmobility promotional literature as a key supporter of this project.

#### Concerns

As part of Belfast City Council's commitment and remit for the promotion of economic development in the City, the Council aims to fund innovative projects through pump priming or for a limited period of time until a time of sustainability or project completion. It has not been a role for Council, given its limited remit for the promotion of economic development, to commit core funding to initiatives year on year.

Belfast City Council has been refused matching European funding for this project since it first committed funding in 1995, as it was not deemed an appropriate use of economic development funds by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, as it was deemed to be a social project.

#### Recommendation

To fund the project for the period 2000/2001 to the total of £20,000 towards the ongoing development costs, with the precondition that the future sustainability of the Shopmobility project is addressed, with a view to assessing the future role of City Council support.

#### Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendation."

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the report.

**Odyssey Trust**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, requesting that the Sub-Committee receive a presentation from the Recruitment Manager of the Odyssey Trust and seeking permission for the hosting of the launch of the Trust's recruitment and pre-recruitment training programme at the BT Studio in the Belfast Waterfront Hall.

The Economic Development Manager reminded the Members that the Odyssey Complex was Northern Ireland's Millennium Project and was located at Queen's Island in the centre of the City. The Project, which had been costed at £91 million, consisted of four themed areas, viz., The Arena; The Pavilion; The Education/Science Centre; and The IMAX Cinema. He pointed out that a total of six hundred jobs would be available on the site and the recruitment process would be formally launched in September, together with the pre-employment training programme. The aim of the request was to heighten the profile and maximise knowledge of job opportunities within local communities in Belfast. The Odyssey Trust was seeking to launch its career and employment opportunities package at the Belfast Waterfront Hall and had approached the Council for support in the form of funding of £1,300 to meet the costs of the hire of the Hall and the provision of hospitality.

The Members were also advised that the Chief Executive of the Odyssey Trust, together with the organisation's Recruitment Manager, was in attendance and the Economic Development Manager recommended that the Sub-Committee agree to receive a presentation from the representatives of the Trust, host the launch of the employment process in the BT Studio at the Waterfront Hall and authorise funding of up to a maximum of £1,300 to meet the costs associated with the launch.

During discussion in the matter, a number of Members pointed out that the Council's Policy and Resources Committee would be meeting with representatives of the Odyssey Trust in the near future and little value would be obtained from meeting the representatives who were in attendance. Further Members stated that they were unaware of the Trust taking the initiative in promoting through community groups throughout the City information on potential job opportunities at the Odyssey Complex.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McDonnell,  
Seconded by Councillor Jones,

That the Sub-Committee agrees to host the launch of the employment process in the BT Studios at the Belfast Waterfront Hall and authorises expenditure in association with the launch up to a maximum of £1,300.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Stoker,  
Seconded by Councillor Hayes,

That the Sub-Committee rejects the recommendations of the Head of Economic Initiatives in relation to receiving a presentation from the Recruitment Manager of the Odyssey Trust, hosting the launch of the employment process in the BT Studio at the Belfast Waterfront Hall and authorising expenditure of up to a maximum of £1,300 in association with the launch.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the amendment and two against and it was accordingly declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion, when five Members voted for it and two against and it was accordingly declared carried.

**Investment Belfast Limited**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 2nd February, it had requested a report on the attendance of Members of the Board of Investment Belfast Limited since its inaugural meeting on 24th October, 1997. The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining details of each Board Member's attendances at the twenty-three meetings of the Board which had been held to date.

The Members were reminded also that the Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 25th February, had requested a quarterly presentation from representatives of Investment Belfast Limited. The Economic Development Manager pointed out that a presentation on the strategic financial support for the Company under the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2000/2003 would be delivered by the Chief Executive and the Chairman of Investment Belfast Limited at the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 6th September.

After discussion in the matter, during which the Sub-Committee was reminded that Councillor Newton had been replaced on the Board by Councillor E. Smyth and that Councillor Ervine had been replaced by Councillor H. Smyth, the Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report.

**AIM Initiative**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 3rd May, it had agreed to hold a conference in the City Hall to launch the Advanced Informatics in Medicine Initiative, an organisation which aimed to investigate methods of integrating cutting-edge medical and scientific research. The investigation was being conducted by five separate research laboratories from the Queen's University of Belfast and was set to establish the University as a world centre of excellence in the field of informatics and medical imaging.

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining the contents of the conference programme and pointed out that as a follow-up to the event, Investment Belfast Limited planned to meet with one of the scientists involved in the Initiative together with its Business Advisor.

Noted.

### **Nova Scotia Trade Mission**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th April, it had agreed to host a Trade Mission from Nova Scotia which would be visiting the City during the period from 7th till 9th June.

The Members were advised that, due to a range of factors in Halifax, the delegation had been greatly reduced from a provisional twelve participants to one company, viz., Britech Information Systems. Given that considerable time had been invested making business appointments for the Company, it had been decided to proceed with the visit, although a reception to be hosted by the Economic Development Sub-Committee was cancelled. However, a small working dinner had been hosted by the Chairman (Councillor C. McGimpsey) on 8th June to welcome the Company's two representatives.

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining the programme of meetings which had been undertaken by the Company and advising of the Company's pursuit of possible links with two companies in the software development sector.

Noted.

### **City Business Club**

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining the progress which had been achieved in developing the City Business Club, an organisation which had been established to foster relationships with firms throughout the Belfast area and represent the collective interest of members by promoting, informing, supporting and improving the City Business Club network.

The Sub-Committee placed on record its appreciation of the efforts which had been made by Mr. K. Heaney, a student placement within the Section, in promoting the aims of the Club.

### **Economic Development Unit - Year End Performance Report**

The Sub-Committee noted the contents a report in respect of the performance of the Economic Development Unit during the year April, 1999 till March, 2000.