

# Development Committee

Wednesday, 7th August, 2002

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

Members present: Councillor M. Browne (Chairman); and  
Councillors Crowe, Cush, Hutchinson, McCarthy,  
Newton, O'Donnell and Rodgers.

In attendance: Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;  
Dr. E. Jackson, Economic Development Manager; and  
Mr. J. Goodall, Committee Administrator.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Ó Broin and E. Smyth.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12th June, which had been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Friends of Belfast**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted the undernoted report in respect of the progress which had been achieved to date in expanding the Friends of Belfast initiative:

#### **“Purpose of Report**

**To advise Members of progress with respect to the Friends of Belfast initiative.**

#### **Background**

**Members will be aware that the Friends of Belfast initiative was first 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. It is a social capital organisation which fosters networking and partnerships with individuals of significant standing in professional sectors, who are prepared to promote business opportunities and investment links between Belfast and North America. To date, John Cullinane, founder of Friends of Belfast from the city of Boston has led the initiative in North America on behalf of Belfast City Council, enlisting the active**

support of key political and business figures. He has been supported by Belfast City Council's US consultant Dr Frank Costello.

Members will recall the approval of a Friends of Belfast strategy at their meeting of 2nd August, 2000. Within this strategy Belfast City Council agreed to consolidate the network in the existing cities of Boston and Pittsburgh and to further extend the network to other geographical areas of North America, by applying the same model as has been developed successfully in Boston. It was further agreed at Economic Development Sub-Committee on 8th May, 2002, to expand the initiative into six US cities at a rate of two per year until 2003. The six cities were to be chosen for their sectoral strengths and the latter's compatibility with those of the Belfast economy.

During the last three months, extensive progress has been made with respect to the Friends of Belfast initiative.

From 17th–26th May, 2002, Belfast City Council launched the initiative in the cities of New York and Denver and held a re-launch in the city of Pittsburgh. These events were hosted by the Chairperson of the Development Committee, senior officers and the Lord Mayor (in the case of Denver city). This resulted in a substantial boost to the network which has now reached a Membership of 347.

In addition, a Head Friend has been established in each city to lead the network and co-ordinate it on a sectoral basis. These Head Friends include John V Connorton, Wall Street lawyer in New York; Jim Lyons, attorney from Denver and former special Economic Advisor to President Bill Clinton; and finally Ted McConnell, partner with the Pittsburgh based law firm Kirkpatrick and Lockhart, who hosted the breakfast in Pittsburgh.

A number of co-chairs have been identified and have agreed to actively commit to the Friends of Belfast initiative in the 4 main cities. They were selected for their sectoral experience, professional and civic influence and reputation. Consolidation of the model has taken place in Boston with the facilitation of regular working breakfast meetings hosted by John Cullinane.

Since the successful Friends of Belfast visit to the United States in May of this year, interest in the initiative has grown and contact is made on a regular basis with Belfast City Council.

A new dynamic and interactive website went live at the end of May with special live bulletins, webcam and map functions. It is located at [www.friendsofbelfast.org](http://www.friendsofbelfast.org).

As Members will be aware, as part of the Friends of Belfast development strategy a number of educational visits take place to Belfast each year. Indeed three of these have taken place this year and have been reported to Members.

It should be noted that each of the individual Friends of Belfast covered flight and accommodation costs personally. The purpose of the visits was to update Friends on the Belfast product and to make them fully aware of the political, economic, social and infrastructure developments, thereby equipping them to be better, more informed ambassadors for our city.

A number of further developments are anticipated with respect to the Friends of Belfast initiative in the near future. These include:

- (i) An educational visit to take place in Autumn 2002.
- (ii) A visit from the four Head Friends, John Cullinane, John Connorton, Ted McConnell and Jim Lyons in Autumn 2002 for a strategic planning meeting on Belfast to advance the initiative.
- (iii) Hosting of a New York play entitled '911' which will star actors Susan Sarandon and Bill Murray at the Waterfront Hall. This play will be brought to Belfast for one show on 2nd September following a Dublin run and was initiated by New York Friends of Belfast.
- (iv) A potential Trade Mission to the City of Denver in conjunction with strategic partners Investment Belfast Ltd and Invest NI.

#### Strategy Development

Following the US visit officers are preparing a draft strategy for Friends of Belfast to assist in consolidating the network and actively implement a series of initiatives in a structured and systematic manner. The final draft will be brought to Committee in due course.

#### Environmental Implications

None.

#### Development Strategy Reference

- 4.1 Creating prosperity to develop existing and new links through the Friends of Belfast initiative.

#### Budget Implications

£7,500.

### **Recommendations**

**In order to advance these developments and to ensure progress with respect to the Friends of Belfast initiative, Members are requested to approve the following recommendations:**

- (i) To agree a budget of £5,000 to host a strategic meeting and cover costs of the travel and accommodation of the four Head Friends of Belfast in late Autumn 2002.**
- (ii) To agree a budget of £2,500 to help promote the Friends of Belfast 911 play at the Waterfront Hall on 2nd September, 2002 and provide an after show reception at City Hall for distinguished guests and cast of the play.**

### **Decision Required**

**To approve the foregoing recommendations.”**

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that the play entitled “911” would be staged in the NTL Studio and its stars were offering their services free of charge. In reply to a question from a Member in relation to the lack of available time to organise the staging of the play, she responded by pointing out that information had been obtained during the meeting indicating that it was being postponed until November or February. In reply to a further question, she stated that representatives of the Friends of Belfast initiative would normally meet the costs associated with visits to the City but, as the meeting referred to within the report was in respect of strategic planning, that would not be the case on this occasion.

After further discussion, during which the Head of Economic Initiatives indicated that the invited guests to the staging of the play would represent all those sectors with links to the United States, the Sub-Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report on the basis that representatives of the Belfast Fire Brigade would also be invited to the play.

### **China Visit**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th January, it had agreed to accept an invitation to visit the City of Hefei in September and had authorised the participation in the visit of the Lord Mayor and the Chairman of the Sub-Committee (or their nominees), together with an appropriate officer. This decision had been amended by the Council, at its meeting on 4th February, to provide that the Deputy Chairman of the Sub-Committee (or his nominee) be also authorised to attend.

With a view to maximising the impact of the visit, officers had sought to encourage local companies with business dealings in China to accompany the Members at their own expense or with the support of Investment Northern Ireland. In addition, meetings were planned with the China Unit at the Queen’s University of Belfast and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce/Welfare Association.

The Sub-Committee was advised that further correspondence had been received from the City of Hefei requesting that the Council plan a visit to coincide with a Hi-Tech Project and Investment Matching Fair that would be taking place from 8th till 10th November.

Accordingly, the Head of Economic Initiatives recommended that the visit of the Council's delegation be re-arranged to take place to coincide with the Trade Fair in November, subject to a further report outlining the detailed budget implications being submitted to a future meeting.

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Enhancing the Council's Linkages with the Private Sector**

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining proposals to enhance interaction with the private sector within the Council's area of control and seeking endorsement of the implementation of an action plan to achieve this objective.

She reminded the Sub-Committee that the Council's Development Strategy had as one of its key objectives, the establishment of the Council as the voice for economic growth within the City and the Department's Local Economic Development Plan committed it to improving the interface between the Council and the private sector.

In order to gain an enhanced understanding of the scale, nature and composition of the private sector within the City, the Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 12th June, had approved the compilation of a data base of all businesses within the City. This resource would enable the Council to target its support more precisely and to identify development needs more accurately.

The Head of Economic Initiatives stated that there would be benefits to be gained from face-to-face meetings with targeted companies in that these would serve to raise the profile of the Department and the work in which it was engaged and would help to identify areas in which companies could benefit from a closer working relationship with the Council. She reviewed the methods by which the project would be initiated and stated that twenty companies had been identified as potential participants in the meetings. These would consist of small and large businesses and be drawn from across a range of sectors located in all areas of the City. In addition they would be a mixture of locally-owned companies and businesses which would have international parent companies. It was envisaged that the meetings would be attended by director-level representatives of each of the companies, with the Council being represented by the Head of Economic Initiatives, the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Sub-Committee, as appropriate, and relevant staff from the Economic Initiatives Section. Initial meetings with representatives of the companies would be completed by October and, subsequent to this stage, it was planned to invite the consultees to a breakfast meeting to provide an update on the progress achieved and to indicate as to how the Sub-Committee intended to build upon the initiative. The Members were advised that there was no pre-defined idea as to the structure which any future interactions with the private sector might take and it was pointed out also that the work of Investment Belfast Limited would be of critical importance in enhancing the Council's linkages with the private sector.

After discussion, during which the need to develop internally expertise in developing such links was highlighted, the Sub-Committee agreed to endorse the approach being adopted in making contact with the private sector. It was agreed further that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Sub-Committee be involved in the meetings, as appropriate, with their attendance at such being considered as an approved duty, and that the services of Investment Belfast Limited in a supporting role be engaged. In addition, the Sub-Committee authorised the allocation of an amount of up to £2,000 towards the costs associated with the provision of hospitality at the meeting with the key private sector representatives as a culmination to the exercise.

**British Urban Regeneration Association/International  
Economic Development Council Conference in Belfast**

The Sub-Committee was advised that the above-mentioned conference would be taking place in Belfast on 10th and 11th October and that the organisers had requested that the Council provide funding to sponsor the event and to cover the costs of the associated conference dinner.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that the British Urban Regeneration Association had been formed in 1990 to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, experience and information for those working on regeneration issues and that it drew its membership from the public, private and community sectors. The International Economic Development Council was based in Washington and was the key body for economic professionals working in the United States. Both organisations had joined forces to disseminate information and experience on urban regeneration and economic development and, to this end, had developed a programme of activities which included conferences, study visits, an accredited training programme and a secondment database for individuals seeking experience from abroad.

London and Belfast had been chosen as the venues for the first United Kingdom Conference of the new programme and the event, with the theme "Financing Regeneration", would start in London on 7th and 8th October and conclude in Belfast on 10th and 11th October. It was anticipated that it would attract a minimum of 100 attendees, composed of economic development professionals from the United States, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The Belfast portion of the conference would be held in the King's Hall and the programme would include masterclasses from key regeneration experts, plenary sessions and smaller breakout sessions on issues such as financing small and medium enterprises in deprived areas and community networks in the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, there would be a number of study visits to key regeneration sites in the City as well as a number of networking events for delegates. The Head of Economic Initiatives outlined the benefits which would accrue to the City and reported that the organisers had sought a sponsorship contribution of £6,000 and had requested that the Council host the conference dinner at a suitable venue. They had requested also that the delegates be afforded the opportunity to meet with key politicians, the Lord Mayor and representatives of the Sub-Committee. In addition, they were seeking support from the Council in organising study visits to key regeneration sites within the City.

The Head of Economic Initiatives recommended that the Sub-Committee grant approval to the provision of sponsorship in the sum of £6,000 in respect of the event and the allocation of a further amount of £3,000 towards the conference dinner.

The Head of Economic Initiatives responded to a question from a Member by pointing out that the conference dinner would be held in the City Hall and, where possible, the delegates would be staying in hotels within the City.

After further discussion, during which it was agreed that the benefit to be obtained from sponsoring such events would need to be determined, the Sub-Committee agreed to provide sponsorship in the sum of £5,000 in respect of the event and to provide a further amount of £3,000 towards the cost of the conference dinner, on the basis that it be held in the City Hall and, as far as was possible, all delegates be accommodated in hotels within the City.

#### **Governor of New Jersey**

The Sub-Committee was reminded that the Development Department organised, on a regular basis, visits from delegations from the United States, Europe and China. The Council's input into these visits was to provide civic hospitality and to arrange appropriate economic development itineraries for the dignitaries and delegates. The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that, at the end of June, a request had been received from the Governor of New Jersey and the American Consulate General's office in Belfast for the Council to provide civic hospitality to welcome the Governor of New Jersey to the City on Wednesday, 17th July. The delegation of thirty-five persons, led by Governor McCreevy, had visited Belfast on that date as part of an eight-day programme which had included visits to Banbridge, Newry and Dublin.

The timing of the visit did not allow for authority to be obtained in advance from the Sub-Committee for the small dinner reception which had been provided and hosted by the Chairman. Sixty-five guests had attended the event and had been welcomed by the Lord Mayor prior to the reception. During the evening, it had been announced that the Queen's University of Belfast, the University of Ulster and the Stephens Institute of New Jersey had signed a Memorandum of Understanding which committed the three partners to work together for mutual benefit and exchange.

The Head of Economic Initiatives sought approval in retrospect for the provision of the hospitality, the final figures for which had not yet been determined but were anticipated not to exceed £2,500.

The Sub-Committee granted the approval sought.

#### **Investment Belfast Limited**

The Sub-Committee considered a report which had been compiled by the Head of Economic Initiatives seeking approval for project funding for Investment Belfast Limited. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendices referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

**“Purpose of Report**

To seek Members’ approval for project funding for Investment Belfast Ltd.

**Background**

Members will be aware of their agreement on 8th May to provide core running costs for Investment Belfast Ltd up to a maximum of £250,000 for the period 1st April, 2002, to 31st March, 2003.

The decision was taken in line with an earlier decision on 4th October, 2000 to support the core costs of the company for the period of the current Development Strategy which is due to end 31st March, 2003. Funding will be based on actual costs.

Members will be aware also of Committee’s consideration of a further funding request on 12th June, 2002, for project costs for Investment Belfast Ltd for the period 1st April, 2002 to 31st March, 2003. At that time, a decision on the request was deferred pending provision of more detailed information regarding contributions from the private sector towards individual projects.

The amount requested, £50,000, has been identified against specific Investment Belfast Ltd initiatives, all of which are outlined in Appendix I of this report. From the table Members will notice that for the current year it is anticipated that a total of £322,500 will be spent on project delivery, 15% of which (£50,000) is requested from Belfast City Council.

At the meeting held on 12th June, 2002, Members also requested specific additional information relating to two areas of Investment Belfast Ltd activity: the MIPIM property event; and Medevol.

**MIPIM**

A copy of the evaluation with respect to Belfast attendance at MIPIM 2002 is attached as Appendix II of this report. The total cost of the stand, brochure and marketing reception is £57,000, which is covered by the public and private partners on the stand. Belfast City Council as one of the partners, through the Development Committee contributes £6,900 towards this event.

Notable outputs of the 2002 MIPIM event include;

- (i) 104 visitors to the Belfast stand
- (ii) 4 requests for information on Belfast property portfolio for investment purposes
- (iii) Distribution of 295 Belfast promotional brochures.



## **Medevol**

Secondly, with respect to Medevol, Medevol is the clinical trials marketing company established by Investment Belfast Ltd to secure more Phase III trials to be carried out on behalf of global pharma companies in Belfast. This will both increase revenue into the Health sector and also build linkages between our leading clinicians and global pharmaceutical companies. The budget for the year is £150k. An investment of £100k has been secured from Invest NI and a further £25k is required to be raised from the private sector. This leaves a balance of £25k requested from Belfast City Council. It would be hoped that sufficient revenue would be generated by the company in 2002/3 to cover its costs in the following year. It must be emphasised however that should the company prove unsuccessful then operations will cease.

### **Environmental Implications**

None.

### **Development Strategy Reference**

#### **Creating Prosperity**

- 4.2 Through Investment Belfast Ltd, to create investment and employment opportunities.
- 5.1 Through Investment Belfast Ltd to promote Belfast as an ideal location to live, play, invest and do business.

### **Resource Implications**

£50,000.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members approve the request for a total of £50,000 project costs for Investment Belfast Ltd.

### **Decision Required**

To approve the foregoing recommendation.”

After discussion, during which the Economic Development Manager responded to a number of questions from the Members, the Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the report.

### **Shopmobility Belfast**

The Sub-Committee was advised that a request for funding in the sum of £20,000 in respect of the running and the expansion costs of its services in the City during the period from 2002 till 2003 had been received from the Shopmobility Belfast. The Economic Development Manager outlined the history of the initiative and the services which it provided for persons of limited mobility. It was pointed out that the ongoing development of Shopmobility had been part of the Council's Economic Development Strategy since 1995 and, to date, the organisation had received £82,000 towards the costs associated with the rental of the City-centre premises, marketing and promotion materials and the purchase of a Mobility Unit and minibus to provide the service in various areas throughout the City.

The Sub-Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 2nd August, 2000 it had considered a request for a contribution of £60,000 towards Shopmobility Belfast's running and development costs during the period 2000–2003. It had been agreed at that time that the first year's funding of £20,000 be granted pending an evaluation of the project to address outputs and future sustainability in advance of further funding being provided. An evaluation of the project had been undertaken in 2001 and it had highlighted that Shopmobility had well established management and administrative systems, particularly for management accounting, and that the project had enjoyed consistent annual growth in service delivery since its formation. Overall, the operating costs of the project represented value for money with the relative contribution of the Council per user hour being approximately £3.20. No other provision for this service existed within the City and it provided access to a disadvantaged group of people with disabilities. Accordingly, the Economic Development Manager recommended that the Sub-Committee agree to fund the ongoing development costs of the project for the period 2002 till 2003 in the sum of £20,000.

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation of the Economic Development Manager.

### **Belfast Learning City Forum**

The Sub-Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the establishment of the Belfast Learning City Forum and seeking approval for the Economic Development Manager to hold a position of Director:

#### **“Purpose of Report**

**To inform Members of the establishment of a constituted body to be known as ‘Belfast Learning City Forum’ and to seek approval for the Economic Development Manager to hold a position as Director of Belfast Learning City Forum.**

#### **Background**

**Belfast City Council established the Learning City Forum as part of the Development Strategy 2000–2003, to specifically address the area of lifelong learning in the City and in particular to promote Belfast as a Learning City.**

The Forum consists of representatives drawn from Belfast City Council, providers of further and higher education, voluntary organizations, Government Bodies, Community Groups and Trades Unions. The aim is to work collaboratively to promote Belfast as a Learning City and to maximise accessibility of lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens.

The Learning City Forum developed a short term action plan which was agreed by Belfast City Council Economic Development Sub-Committee at its meeting of Wednesday 5th January, 2000. This action plan is nearing completion and has made significant progress.

Since the Forum's formation in 1999, a number of high profile successes have been achieved. These include:

\* Example of Best Practice:

Belfast has been cited as an example of a best practice Learning City, in a document commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment. The report which was launched in London in September 2000 profiles case studies of learning cities in the United Kingdom (and indeed 2 international European cities). This is a significant recognition of the progress Belfast has made as a Learning City, in a relatively short period of time. The underlying message which is illustrated in the document, is that Belfast has been very successful in planning the initiative and gaining representation from all key educational players in the City. A solid base is therefore in place to realise many of the visions for learning in this City.

\* Adult Learners Week 12th-18th May, 2001

A 16 pages events guide was delivered throughout the Greater Belfast area profiling a range of learning activities throughout the week.

\* Learning Festival

This festival profiled a series of innovative events throughout the City in an attempt to encourage more people to return to learning.

\* Learndirect

A sub-group comprising representatives from Belfast City Council, Belfast Education & Library Board, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education and Workers Education Association rolled out the Learndirect initiative in Belfast. Nine centres have been selected across the city.

The work undertaken so far has been appropriate for an informal partnership. A Medium to Long Term Strategy was developed by the Forum in June 2001, to inform and develop themes for the promotion, development and enhancement of accessibility to learning in Belfast.

Under the strategy is 2 main themes:

- (i) Collaborative interventions by providers,
- (ii) Marketing and Promotion of Belfast as a Learning City.

The strategy is indicative of the energy amongst Forum Members and profiles a range of large scale projects.

Belfast Learning City Forum Project Officer

Within a context of early successes and demonstrated effect, based on collaborative effort and utilising the resources of its members, the Forum identified the need for a dedicated human resource, to channel and act as a conduit for a more effective delivery of the Forum strategy.

A number of lead organisations, namely, Belfast City Council, Belfast Regeneration Office, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education and the Workers Education Association have come together in partnership under the Forum to fund and manage a dedicated human resource. This collaborative venture reinforces the ethos behind the Learning City Forum; moreover, it should enhance considerably the tangible outputs of the Forum.

Objectives of Belfast Learning City Forum Project Officer

- To co-ordinate and facilitate the development and management of the Learning City Forum.

- To develop and implement a strategy for the Learning City Forum.
- To monitor, evaluate and communicate the ongoing development of the Learning City Partnership and its strategy.
- To profile and market Belfast as a Learning City.
- To develop partnerships and collaboration to maximise current resources in lifelong learning in the City.

#### **Management of Belfast Learning City Forum Project Officer**

To effectively manage the Learning City Forum Project Officer between the key funding agencies, it was decided that a constituted body be established with a working board of Directors representing the lead agencies, to be called 'Belfast Learning City Forum'. The agencies to be represented on this Forum are:

1. Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
2. Workers Education Association
3. Belfast City Council

The Learning City Project Officer will be managed directly by the Board of Directors, and housed at Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education in the new Springvale Educational Village, Springfield Road. It is regarded as vital to Council's interests that it is represented in a formal capacity on the Board of Directors

#### **Finance**

Belfast City Council at its meeting of 31st October, 2000, agreed to fund the Belfast Learning City Forum Project Officer for 2 years to the amount of £32,000. Belfast Regeneration Office and Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education provided similar amounts, thus enabling the initiative to be piloted over a three year period. It was also agreed that a framework for the evaluation and management of the initiative would be established with regular reports on the progress achieved being submitted to future meetings.

#### **Timescale for Implementation of the Project and Directorship**

Period March 2002 - March 2005

**Liaison with the Learning City Forum Project Officer**

An economic development officer of Belfast City Council liaises with the project officer of the Learning City Forum on a regular basis to provide guidance relating to Belfast City Council targets for Learning in the City, and to receive regular project updates.

**Environmental Implications**

None.

**Development Strategy Reference**

- 3.1 To ensure that Belfast retains its key role as a centre for education and learning for Northern Ireland
- play a leading role in the development of the Learning City Forum.

**Budget**

None.

**Recommendation**

To approve the position of Economic Development Manager as a working director of Belfast Learning City Forum to March 2005 in line with the period of Belfast City Council funding.

**Decision Required**

To approve the foregoing recommendation.”

The Economic Development Manager responded to a question from a Member by pointing out that, whilst the Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 31st October, 2000 had agreed to fund the Forum for two years in the sum of £32,000 with the Belfast Regeneration Office and the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education providing similar amounts, these monies had not yet been utilised and there would not be a further request for funding in respect of the cost of employing the Project Manager.

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

**Review of Belfast Entrepreneurship Week**

The Sub-Committee considered a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, outlining the activities of the Belfast Entrepreneurship Week which had been held from 27th till 31st May.

The Economic Development Manager reviewed the programme contents, supplied the details of the key partners involved in the project and assessed the success of the event.

He reported that the cities of Dublin, Liverpool and Cardiff were planning to organise Entrepreneurship Days in September, using the branding developed by Belfast, and it was anticipated that representatives from the Council would be invited to attend these events. Following the success of the Barcelona and Belfast initiatives, Eurocities had received agreement from the European Commission that it would make available financial support for projects during the forthcoming year and that it would undertake extensive publicity of the initiative and of individual City's events at a European Union level. He stressed that this development would raise significantly the profile of the events.

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed, in principle, to explore opportunities for similar entrepreneurship activities during the forthcoming year.

Chairman