

Development Committee

Wednesday, 4th December, 2002

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) SUB-COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillors Crowe, McCarthy, Ó Broin, O'Donnell, O'Reilly, Rodgers and E. Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. M.T. McGivern, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Dr. E. Jackson, Economic Development Manager;
Mr. J. Goodall, Senior Committee Administrator; and
Mr. H. Downey, Committee Administrator.

Chairing of Meeting

In the absence of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, the Sub-Committee agreed that Councillor Ó Broin take the Chair.

(Councillor Ó Broin in the Chair.)

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from the Chairman (Councillor M. Browne).

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th November, which had been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Local Economic Development Plan 2002–2005

The Head of Economic Initiatives submitted a report in relation to the redrafted Local Economic Development Plan 2002-2005. A copy of the report, with the exception of the appendix referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

“Purpose of Report

To present Members with the redrafted submission of the Local Economic Development Programme.

Background

Members will be aware of their endorsement at the meeting of sub-committee on 3rd October, 2001, of a framework strategy which was submitted to the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for funding under the Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity Supporting Business Competitiveness (ERDF) Measure 1.4 Local Economic Development Programme.

Members will further recall that at the meeting of sub-committee on 10th April, 2002, it was noted that this application had been successful resulting in a sum of £5,494,365 being made available to Council over the period 1st April, 2001 to 31st December, 2005. On the basis of match funding by Council, this represents an amount of just under £11m to be used towards the promotion of economic development within Belfast.

The formal documentation presented the planned programme of activities under the following themes:

- * Business Start Programme
- * Business Development
- * Belfast: An outward and forward looking City
- * Urban Renewal
- * Driving Economic Change
- * Managing the LED Programme

Financial allocations, made towards each of themes, were calculated on the basis of alignment to programme criteria, patterns of existing activity, and projections as to likely future priorities. The thematic allocations determined by DETI, were as follows:

Programme	Total Eligible Cost	ERDF	BCC
Promoting Entrepreneurship	2,934,000	1,467,000	1,467,000
Belfast: Outward and Forward Looking	3,500,000	1,750,000	1,750,000
Driving Economic Change	875,000	437,500	437,500

Programme	Total Eligible Cost	ERDF	BCC
Urban Renewal	2,329,730	1,164,865	1,164,865
Managing the LED	1,350,000	675,000	675,000
	10,988,730	5,494,365	5,494,365

It was agreed at the meeting of Sub-Committee on 10th April, 2002 that the Department would redraft the submission to ensure that it is a more accessible user friendly document which highlights the on-going work of the unit and present it to Committee for consideration at a special meeting to be held on 30th May, 2002.

At the meeting of 30th May, it was agreed further that the redrafted submission should be brought to the attention of Members, beyond those of the Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee, by way of a round of Party Briefings. The substantive text of this report thus reflects the views of Members from all Parties as expressed during the course of those Party Briefings. In the context of this redrafted report, the LED Programme is prefaced by an introductory section that sets in context the evolution of Local Economic Development since legislative change in 1992 enabled councils to engage in activities to promote the economic development of their District.

Background

Members will be aware that under the Northern Ireland Structural Funds Plan 1994-1999 District Councils received European Union funding under the Local Economic Development (LED) measure.

That funding gave considerable impetus to the work of District Councils in the arena of Economic Development, following earlier legislative amendments in regard to Council powers under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) NI Order 1992.

In 1993, Council established an Economic Development Unit and soon after, there followed the launch of Council's first Economic Development Strategy for the period 1994 – 1999. Match funding from Europe was made available to Councils under the NI

Structural Funds Plan under the Local Economic Development (LED) measure and injected yet further impetus to this emerging area of activity.

Within Belfast, the Council identified three priority themes, under which priority areas were identified and actions proposed. Those themes were:

- (i) Inward Investment (information technology);
- (ii) Business Development;
- (iii) Community Economic Development

Two concurrent action plans set out programmes, targets and costs for the period 1995-1997 and 1997-1999.

1999 - 2001

By 1999, a changed political environment had given rise to a dramatic economic upturn. Coupled with a changed operational environment, including the setting up of a Development Department within City Council and the launch of the 'Renaissance City' Strategy, a realignment of the work of the Economic Development Unit was considered necessary to provide a sharper focus within a regeneration framework that emphasised the inter-relatedness of economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection.

Furthermore, at regional level, an overarching political commitment to New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) and Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) initiatives provided an additional policy backdrop against which the economic development function was cast.

At that time, Economic Development Sub-Committee adopted three principal objectives:

- (i) To ensure that Council plays a leading role in the promotion of Economic Development.
- (ii) To ensure that the opportunities afforded by economic growth are accessible to all the citizens of Belfast;
- (iii) To develop 'best practice' under the operational themes of business development; inward investment; education and training; and urban renewal, through which a demonstration effect can be achieved.

In so doing, Sub-Committee sought to build on the best of the past - with a continuing focus on the promotion of the indigenous business sector as well as rejuvenating efforts to secure inward investment; and to contribute to creating the conditions necessary for future economic growth, through the promotion of strategic alliances in the areas of education and employability.

Current Position

Under the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme, District Councils were invited to submit Programmes that should contribute to the Priority of Economic Growth and Competitiveness. The Local Economic Development (LED) measure aims to encourage local economic development through a locally-based District Council-led approach which complements the work DETI's main development agencies.

Under the Measure, Belfast City Council can anticipate a sum of some £5,494,365m during the period 1st April, 2001–31st December, 2005. Councils will be expected to match the allocation. In other words, a combined amount of some £11m is to be made available to the promotion of economic development.

As a Transitional Objective 1 Programme, funding under the BSP Programme must follow a digressive profile, that is, most funding is available in the early years of the Programme but declines steadily over its life. The introduction of a digressive profile was introduced by the Commission and agreed at the Berlin Summit of March 1999. It represents a significant departure from the spending patterns acceptable under the previous rounds of funding and presents councils with a significant challenge over the period of the Programme.

In effect, 46% of total allocation (£2,527,408) is to be committed to approved programmes before 31 December 2001 and spent before 31 December 2003; thereafter, the profile declines to 19%, 18%, 11% and 6% in successive years.

Consequently, if this digressive profile is to be met, Council will be required to exceed the current level of expenditure of around 2 pence in the pound of rateable income for the initial period of 2003/05. Thereafter, the digressive profile reduces to a level within the current threshold and diminishes significantly thereafter, over the duration of the Programme. Should Council fail to meet the requirements of the digressive profile, unspent monies would be clawed back by the EU. Clearly, therefore, it is imperative that Council maximises this last funding opportunity through the EU, by exercising a degree of flexibility with regard to expenditure levels derived from rateable income in the first two years of operation.

LED Programme Criteria

Programmes should address one or more of the following criteria:

- To help drive forward economic change and stimulate sustainable economic development;
- To contribute to greatly improved infrastructure leading to economic growth and competitiveness;
- To enhance long-term economic prospects for the area.

Council's Role

An explicit aim under the inaugural economic development strategy was to establish Council's role 'as a central and credible player in the regeneration of the city'.

Council's role as civic leader is now firmly established. So too is the role of the Economic Development Sub-Committee and in pursuit of its objectives, the LED Programme offers the potential for the adoption by Council of a pro-active, dynamic approach to the shaping and delivery of economic development within the City.

Thus, Sub-Committee's role may be defined as:

- * To reinforce its position as a major driver of economic development in the city;
- * To promote a partnership approach to ensure the effective targeting of resources through a needs-led, evidence-based approach;
- * To promote best-practice drawing on international benchmarking;
- * In conjunction with 'strategic allies' at city, sub-regional and regional levels, to contribute to the creation of conditions within which economic growth can occur.

Wider Policy Context: 'Strategic Fit'

The current review of strategy takes place against a backdrop of substantive political and administrative change.

In addition to structural change, cognisance also needs to be taken of developments in urban policy at European and national levels in giving impetus to particular trends and in setting new standards with regard to best practice. Furthermore, at regional level, an overarching political commitment to New Targeting Social Need (NTSN) and Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) form an additional policy backdrop against which economic development programmes are cast.

It is imperative, consequently, that any local economic development strategy takes cognisance of, and is aligned to, European, national, regional and sub-regional policy objectives.

In that regard, it would be suggested that the current submission clearly defines the role of the pre-eminent local authority of the region as a body that is capable of making a unique but complementary contribution, alongside and in conjunction with a range of stakeholders, including central government bodies, to the economic development of the city of Belfast and the wider region.

It may be suggested that the strategy takes cognisance of, and is aligned to, the following policy frameworks:

- European Framework for Sustainable Urban Development, with an emphasis on the inter-dependent relationship of economic development, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.
- National strategies for urban regeneration, as promoted through the Urban Task Force Report and the subsequent White Paper on Urban Regeneration.
- Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government and the priority themes, particularly as relating to Investing in Skills; Securing a Competitive Economy; and Developing North/South, East/West and International Relations.
- Regional Strategic Framework for N.I., which aims to build on the distinctive and complementary roles of the component urban centres within the Belfast Metropolitan Area to create a strong city complex capable of competing in the league of European cities. Amongst a range of interventions, the spatial strategy development places particular emphasis on enhancing the role of the city of Belfast with regard to its international image; tackling areas of disadvantage; maintaining the role of the city centre as the primary retail and office location of the region; strengthening the regional gateways; and improving transport in the Belfast Metropolitan Area.

- The vision of Strategy 2010 of a fast growing, competitive, innovative, knowledge-based economy where there are plentiful opportunities and a population equipped to grasp them places emphasis on enterprise, knowledge and innovation. It recognises also the role of local authorities in the promotion of local economic development. The related oversight mechanism, the Economic Development Forum, has formulated a number of Medium Term Strategic Priorities. Local government's role thus continues to evolve in this regard.
- NI Small Business Strategy is likely to place particular emphasis on the complementary functional relationship between Invest Northern Ireland and local authorities in achieving higher business birth rates.
- Unlocking Creativity recognizes the significance of the relationship between education, business and culture. It is anticipated that the core themes of Access, Progression, Enterprise, Consultation and Dissemination will be delivered through a creative framework and an action agenda, which will directly involve local authorities. Within Belfast, particular emphasis will be placed on maximising the economic impact of substantive initiatives under the creative industries umbrella.
- The creation of a Local Strategy Partnership in Belfast, to oversee the distribution of Peace II monies, will place particular emphasis on the development of the social economy and promoting locally based Human Resource, Training and Development strategies. The development of an Integrated local Strategy will ensure optimal effectiveness at local level.

Underscoring all of the above is an emerging trend, consistent with the principles laid down in Local Government Act 2000, towards the enhanced recognition of local authorities in regard to co-ordinating delivery at a local level. Those principles relate specifically to the duty on local authorities in England and Wales to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their community.

Whilst the duty does not apply to Northern Ireland, the model provided therein offers a useful template, through which the relationship and functional roles and responsibilities applicable to both central and local government may be defined.

Inevitably, other policy and wider initiatives will emerge over the course of the Programme, which are likely to draw on the resources of Council. It is vital, consequently, that flexibility and adaptability remain important organisational attributes, but that any resultant activities remain aligned to the overarching objectives of the Programme.

Finally, in addition to the requirement to take cognisance of any overarching policy framework, it is vital also that any strategy addresses effectively local need and that its formulation should be informed by a process of consultation. In that regard, Belfast City Council initiated an extensive process of consultation around its future role and proposed areas of developmental activities in advance of the submission of the current document. That process placed particular emphasis on engaging initially with the community and voluntary sectors and led to the publication of the 'Building Sustainable Prosperity' report in 1999.

Subsequently, that initial process has been augmented with further consultation with key stakeholders from other sectors, including central government bodies and agencies.

The current submission builds on a substantive foundation of policy and practice that enjoys widespread endorsement by relevant stakeholders at appropriate levels.

The LED Programme: 'Sustaining Competitive Advantage'

The redrafted LED Programme is based on six principle themes; each of which is regarded as making a vital contribution towards 'Sustaining Competitive Advantage'.

- * Increasing Investability
- * Creating Clusters
- * Promoting Entrepreneurship
- * Driving Economic Change
- * Fostering Neighbourhood Renewal
- * Outward and Forward Looking Region

An overview of the rationale underpinning each of the themes is presented below, along with key objectives, priority areas and target indicators. A summary of aims, objectives and targets/projects are attached as Appendix I to this report.

Local Economic Development Plan 2002-05

Introduction

At the frontier of change there is fear as well as hope, opportunity and risk. Belfast's Local Economic Development Plan 2002-2005 straddles a seminal period for the City. It greets the real city in all its diversity and disorder with a vision that harnesses the collective power of people and place.

Having already played a critical role in the positive transformation from a depressed and declining urban centre, into a modern progressive, asset-rich international City, Belfast City Council cannot afford to be complacent. The unpredictable pace of change coupled with the ever – pervading global dynamic sets the backdrop for the new Local Economic Development Plan.

This time though, the manuscript must be different: it must build on the raw material of contemporary society, recognise the fluctuations and shifts in economic structure and tap into the irregular heartbeat of micro and macro business in the private sector.

Within our Economic Development Plan, three key concepts provide a frame of reference through which we can promote integration and sustain innovation.

Our Orientation

1. **Holistic Interaction – A new dialogue of public, private and civic energies that networks with economic intelligence.**
 - **Belfast City Council will be closely attuned to the economic rhythm of its City, of its metropolitan hinterland and of its wider region. Having the architecture of a sound robust and intelligent network in place is the only way of establishing a firm foundation from which to grow the economy. Parallel tracking of the performance of 2 national economies and global trends and patterns will provide the overall context and benchmark data for comparative analysis. The City will have an enviable record in directing and shaping its local economy as well as responding to or counterbalancing national or global economic cycles.**
2. **New Panoramas – Lifting the City to a higher altitude by providing regional leadership, motivation and stakeholder engagement.**

- Belfast must claim its place as the core city of the region in which it is located and consequently rise to the challenge as the economic driver of the region. Vibrant cities are the solution, not the cause of economic and social ills. This means that Belfast City cannot be introverted, focusing only on development needs within its boundary. Nor does it mean that Belfast as a City can be exclusively centred on securing an international profile through global networking and city to city engagement. The lesson is of course that Belfast must strike a balance between city development and its role in regional development.
3. Joining Up the Disconnected City – harnessing neighbourhood renewal and area based initiatives as transforming forces. Re-excavating local spaces where innovation, change and new competitive advantages emerge.
- The role of City Council will shift from being an agent of urban regeneration to driving urban entrepreneurialism. More innovative and creative solutions are required, tailor-made to local economic needs which are in contrast to parachuted – in national initiatives. We will recast the ‘urban regeneration’ agenda as the ‘renewing cities’ agenda.

Competitive Advantage – the ultimate goal

Creating and sustaining competitive advantage is the single most important challenge for Belfast to grasp and pursue. This is the central tenet of our Local Economic Development Plan. The evidence from successful economies around the world is that specialization in a region creates the high value-added products that bring new wealth. Council must continuously research, assess and select the target sectors best fitted to the strengths of our local environment. Presently these comprise biotechnology, health and life sciences, environmental industries and creative industries.

The maintenance of competitive advantage is a fast-moving target and is where leading edge cities make or break their name. Belfast must not slavishly copy that which is perceived as leading edge as to do so is foolhardy and short-term. Rather than climbing aboard the bandwagon, Belfast must carve out its own path by carefully analysing and defining the rationale for the development of our own unique portfolio.

Belfast will measure its economic competitiveness and seek to unpack its critical components.

Economic competitiveness and social inclusion are not the most natural soulmates. Active measures will be taken by Belfast City Council to forge this bond and ensure that economic success does not leave in its wake persistent polarisation.

Competitiveness and economic growth do not simply 'trickle down' to the areas most in need of investment and regeneration; in fact economic success can in fact exacerbate differentials. Council will formulate programmes to link all sections of the community and all neighbourhoods within the city to the benefits of economic growth.

In order to achieve competitive advantage, Belfast's Local Economic Development Plan must focus on the following key areas;

1. Creating city and regional leadership through a shared vision, co-ordination and funding. (Increasing Investability)
2. Focusing regional resources through regional clusters. (Creating Clusters)
3. Supporting local entrepreneurs with help for start-up businesses, to promote innovation and back winning ideas. (Promoting Entrepreneurship)
4. Bringing education and business together by setting up regional policy networks, promoting local employability and ensuring lifelong learning. (Driving Economic Change)
5. Fostering neighbourhood renewal through intervention at community level and growing a culture that can adapt to market changes. (Fostering Neighbourhood Renewal)
6. Building national and international links to develop new markets and to exploit inward and outward investment opportunities. (Outward and Forward Looking Region)

The Original Starting Point

The 'basic building block' of economic development is private sector enterprise: this includes indigenous companies and foreign direct investment; small and medium-sized businesses including sole entrepreneurs; large scale corporations; manufacturing, service, technological, retail-orientated organisations: the unifying trait is of course the motivation of profit maximisation and their implicit role as wealth creators within the economy.

The fundamental role of Belfast City Council in promoting Economic Development must be to actively engage with, know, understand, support and develop private sector enterprise as without in-depth and meaningful interaction other strands of economic development support are non-effective leading to

- investing in training and skills development in the absence of job opportunities
- intermediate labour market initiatives (like Gems) collapsing in the absence of employer support
- areas of deprivation prepared for investment which does not materialise
- recycling of public sector monies with a zero sum conclusion
- ever declining business birth-rates and increasing deaths
- increased local economic dependency on contracting narrow economic base
- investment in costly infrastructure without net economic benefits in short, medium and long term
- irrelevant and ineffective policy
- social and environmental initiatives bereft of economic sense

Building integral links with the existing wealth creators in the local economy is therefore paramount as is facilitating new investment across the variable scales of activity. Behind this fundamental approach to economic development lies the critical role of 'increasing the investability' of the local environment.

Using 'the basic building block' of economic development Council will focus upon creating competitive advantage. Under each of the 6 key areas of competitive advantage identified above, Council will ensure policy and practice are razor sharp.

An outline of objectives and priority areas under each of these 6 areas now follows.

1. Increasing Investability

Creating city and regional leadership through a shared vision, co-ordination and funding

Objectives

- * To create the conditions that encourage investment, commercial, retail and economic activity;
- * To establish an effective economic intelligence network;
- * To create city-wide strategic partnerships;
- * To develop an interactive and responsive communication system between the private sector and Council.

Belfast City Council must be flexible and adaptable in responding to its companies, businesses and enterprises: being cognizant of the volatility of business and sectoral planning cycles, Council as an economic development agent must adjust, empathize and sensitize its policy and decision-making processes and timeframes to work in harmony with the producers and wealth distributors of our economy. For example inside the IT and telecommunications industry, planning cycles have recently reduced to 3 months maximum in many cases. This is due to the global downtown and the collapse of the dot.com industry.

Building and sustaining success in the city requires also quality physical reconstruction of the City. We need to examine future requirements in terms of infrastructure and planning and the creation of conditions within which future economic growth will occur.

Priority Areas

- Creation of Public/Private Interactive Network

Belfast City Council requires a direct, tangible and porous interface with the private sector. This will ensure elected representatives are fully informed of business experience in the City and able to respond in a timely manner to needs or opportunities identified.

Belfast City Council will develop a tentacle – based approach into and within the business community of the City and beyond. Belfast City Council will negotiate and continually re-clarify the optimum progressive relationships between Council and the private sector. The diversity of the

private sector will be recognised and their needs responded to. The Council will support and regularly interact with its key companies across a range of sectors export markets, home bases, employee sizes, turnover and geographical locations within the City.

Using both formal and informal networks Council and the private sector will together plan how to increase 'investability' in areas of deprivation and the city and its region overall. Timely, opportune and iterative communication between elected representatives and businesses is the pre requisite to ensuring Council has a rapid response mechanism in support of locally – influenced determinants of economic health.

- To create an active network between Belfast City Council and the private sector.

<i>Target:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To create an active network between Belfast City Council and the private sector</i>• <i>To establish the Belfast Economic Development Forum, comprising the key business support agencies in the City.</i>
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- Citywide Strategic Partnership

Belfast City Council as Civic Leaders will lead collaborative work with regard to the formation of the Citywide Strategic Partnership to ensure greater integration at a strategic planning level leading to improved service delivery and targeting of resources at an operational level.

Target: Continued liaison with Local Strategy Partnership, to ensure complementarity rather than duplication

- City Marketing

There are 3 important strands of city marketing which must be coordinated to create a coherent brand for Belfast. These strands include Investment, Tourism and Citizen Marketing. Integrated approaches across these areas are essential to move Belfast forward as an exciting product.

Belfast City Council will maintain its level of international marketing activities from hosting and coordinating trade missions, civic and fact-finding visits to promoting the city as an investment location through media and international events. The marketing focus is to sell Belfast as a global location and gateway to Europe.

Target:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To co-ordinate an integrated approach to City marketing</i>• <i>To ensure investment marketing delivers an economic return for the City</i>
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- **Economic Intelligence**

Belfast City Council will underpin the renewal agenda by providing an enhanced research and analytical facility which seeks to track, monitor and evaluate the performance of the economy. Belfast will become 'smarter' in the way it works as a City developing capacity to understand and respond effectively to local needs.

Target:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To create two fixed-term research posts for period 2003-2005</i>• <i>To publish Annual State of the City report and other pertinent economic intelligence data on regular basis</i>
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- **Brownfield Development**

As Belfast continues the structured transition from an industrial to an information based society, there is a legacy of under-used abandoned property and land. Brownfield development is a component part of physical regeneration in the City in which City Council will play a leading part.

One of these potential projects is the North Foreshore which is the largest undeveloped brownfield site in the Central Belfast Area. The site covers approximately 150 hectares. The site's scale and lack of development offer a unique opportunity to create and implement a masterplan to complement the ongoing economic development and regeneration of Belfast.

Target: *To determine the future of the development of North Foreshore site and to maximise economic benefit of such development*

- **Transportation Policy**

The Council in its role as elected Civic Leader for the City has developed a transport policy to ensure that the City continues to develop and prosper in a sustainable manner and avoids the potential problems that unconstrained traffic growth can bring.

Belfast City Council will also promote mobility in terms of public transport provision from areas of need to areas of employment; as well as encouraging individuals to travel beyond their immediate neighbourhood.

Target: To implement Belfast City Council Transport Policy

- **Shopmobility**

Belfast City Council is committed to the development of the City Centre and will actively work to ensure it is accessible for all citizens. Shopmobility is an initiative whereby people with limited mobility are assisted to shop and use the social, commercial, cultural and artistic facilities of the city. This commitment reflects the aims of Belfast City Council's transport policy to encourage integrated sustainable access throughout the City and its view to promote better quality pedestrianisation access surrounding City Hall.

Target: To provide financial and other support to Shopmobility so as to promote accessibility to City Centre

2. Creating Clusters

Focusing regional resources through regional clusters

Objectives

- * To create business clusters capable of adding new wealth to the economy.
- * To support the creation of business alliances.
- * To capitalise on new growth sectors by creating economic conditions conducive to success.

It is without question that innovation and knowledge – based activities will be central to future economic growth and competitiveness of the City and its region. This will encompass both technology based clusters and creative and media sectors. The potential for positive restructuring of traditional sectors such as textiles and engineering with the injection of new technology must also be actively supported with the region.

Priority Areas

- Sectoral Alliances

It is important that Belfast City Council identifies and selectively supports the most appropriate sectors and sub-sectors, responding to a comprehensive analysis of what is required and what can be locally sustained. Considering sectoral alliance initiatives and support of clustering marks a return to strengthening the 'local' component of 'local economic development' and is indicative of a needs-led evidence-based approach.

Working through industry-led initiatives and other development agency support, Belfast City Council will devise a tailor-made suite of programmes in which to invest. Such programmes will be cognizant of the current economic structure, profile and outlook of each sector within Belfast and the region, and will be based on informed assessments over the optimum form of intervention that City Council should make.

Target: To develop at least 3 sectoral programmes, in conjunction with industry-led initiatives

- Creative Industries

Given the growth of the creative industries sector in recent years, Belfast will ensure a supportive flourishing business environment within the City to allow this fledgling sector to develop. The establishment of creative clusters, relevant business mentoring and support and the design of appropriate infrastructure will be essential components.

Target: To launch and implement a Belfast Creative Industries Initiative, commencing 2003

- Environmental Initiatives

The challenge of seeking comprehensive waste management solutions is immense for Belfast City Council. The emergence of business and investment opportunities in the field of environmental industries represents an important economic development initiative for Belfast which City Council can lead.

Target: To create and implement a major Environmental Industries Initiative

3) Promoting Entrepreneurship

Supporting local entrepreneurs with help for start-up businesses, to promote innovation and back winning ideas

Objectives

- * To promote a business-friendly environment and an entrepreneurial culture within the city;
- * To act as a catalyst for enterprise, innovation and creativity;
- * To recognise and celebrate business success.

A vigorous enterprise culture is central to Belfast and the region's economic success and SMEs are major potential growth engines of the economy.

The goal of strengthening the economy is the cornerstone of Strategy 2010, of DETI and its agencies. Belfast City Council has a vital role to play in fostering business competitiveness and sustainability through locally based activities that fit within complementary regional, local and area-based strategies.

Council's role in promoting Belfast as a business friendly environment has been instrumental in nurturing a more entrepreneurial culture within the City.

Priority Areas

- Business Start Programme

The Business Start Programme is managed through a regional network of local enterprise agencies on behalf of District Councils and Invest Northern Ireland. It offers a comprehensive package of training and support for those

thinking about setting up in business, ensuring that they are prepared for the practicalities of self-employment and thus enhancing the business survival rate in Northern Ireland.

Within Belfast, the Programme is being managed by East Belfast Development Agency, in conjunction with other Local Enterprise Agencies, and seeks to see established a target of 620 businesses by 2004, creating in excess of 700 permanent full-time jobs.

Target: To create 620 businesses, creating 700 jobs by December 2004

- **First Stop Shop**

The First Stop Shop is Council's window on the world for small businesses. With its city centre location, the Shop is well placed to offer a first point of contact, providing an information, advisory and signposting service to both new and existing businesses. The Shop is a key component of the business support infrastructure in Belfast and works closely with a range of other partners including the Local Enterprise Agencies and Invest Northern Ireland. Building on its core business the Shop will develop its role as an anchor for small businesses and their development offering first class support attuned to their needs.

Target: To provide continued financial and advisory support for the project 2003-2006

To engage the Board of the First Stop Shop with Members in the promotion of enterprise

- **Access to Public Sector Purchasing**

Belfast City Council is one of a number of public bodies whose purchasing activities represent a real opportunity for local companies to do business. Building on a successful pilot exercise, Belfast City Council will promote a programme for local companies, introducing them to the procedures involved in tendering for work from the public sector and giving them tips to enhance their chances of winning business arising from these opportunities.

Target: To develop four targeted procurement initiatives to businesses in Belfast

- **Investment Belfast Ltd**

Belfast City Council's international investment arm-Investment Belfast has completed its first three years of operation. An internal strategic review and independent, external evaluation, will shape the future direction of the company and act as a springboard for further ground-breaking activity over the next three years.

The company will directly support City Council in business development by working with indigenous and inward investors and delivering programmes on Council's behalf.

Target: To promote financial and advisory support to the project 2003-2006

To engage the Board of Investment Belfast Limited with members, in the delivery of Local Economic Development Priority Areas

- **Business Incubation Facility**

Infrastructural development, such as business incubation facilities could act as a means of encouraging and stimulating new business formation and development. Belfast City Council will assess the opportunities to support new technology-driven businesses and develop a tailor-made programme. Specific emphasis will be placed by Committee on addressing gaps in current provision, particularly with regard to provision of medium-sized units (circa. 5,000-15,000ft²).

Target: To ensure provision of adequate space for medium-sized Belfast companies through the development of major initiatives

- **Business Development Programme**

A Business Development Programme to support the development of business skills as a basis for maximising their potential, stimulating growth and fostering competitiveness will be created. Such a programme could be targeted at areas characterised by high levels of deprivation and correspondingly low patterns of entrepreneurial activity.

Target: To develop a specific programme of support targeted at businesses in NTSN areas

- Investor Aftercare

As civic leaders for Belfast, the Council will spearhead a new, dynamic aftercare programme for indigenous and new investors in the city. This will ensure that a healthy two-way relationship is fostered and ensure that every effort is taken to encourage continued sustainable investment and to provide a first point of contact for investors.

Target: To initiate an ongoing Investor Aftercare Programme by April 2003

- World Trade Centre

Belfast has a tremendous opportunity to join the prestigious World Trade Centre network by helping to anchor this facility as a further regenerative flagship for the City Council will work with private sector partners and other public agencies to advance the realisation of this ambition for Belfast.

Target: To make operational a World Trade Centre for Belfast

4 Driving Economic Change

Bringing education and business together by setting up regional policy networks, promoting local employability and ensuring lifelong learning

Objectives

- * To drive forward economic change and stimulate economic growth
- * To bring jobs to people and people to jobs
- * To promote Belfast as a learning City

Despite radical reductions elsewhere with regard to unemployment levels, the patterns associated with long-term unemployment in Belfast remain stubbornly resistant to change.

The persistence of long-term unemployment in particular areas thus indicates that mainstream interventions have largely failed. It is imperative, therefore, that targeted interventions at community level be operationalised in an attempt to break through the long standing cycle of unemployment.

Initiatives in the field of education remain central to any long-term economic strategy. Clearly, though, across the spectrum of educational intervention, Council's role is that of an enabler. Education and Economic Growth are interdependent. Currently within the Belfast City Council area there exists an imperative, consequently, to make more systematic linkages at strategic and operational levels between service providers, individuals and economic organisations with a view to maximising accessibility to lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens.

Priority Areas

- Learning City Forum

Belfast: A Learning City Forum is a key example of these developing strategic linkages, where key stakeholders come together to promote Belfast as a learning city. A city that will foster creative lifelong learning that inspires and enables each individual to reach the best that is within them, for their benefit and the benefit of the wider community.

Target: To provide financial and advisory support to the project 2003-2005

- University Links

Belfast is privileged to have a variety of excellent educational facilities which cater for a wide range of interests, skills and abilities. It is home to two world class Universities; the Queen's University and University of Ulster and exciting plans are well underway for the development of the Springvale Campus in the West of the City. These institutions are continually looking for ways to improve their standards and facilities as well as promoting research, development and innovation to ensure that skills are developed to meet the present and future requirements of a knowledge based society.

Target: To establish working relationships with both Universities as demonstrated by joint projects that promote research, innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Enhancing Employability

Training Programmes such as Gems represents a means of building bridges between economic progress and

individuals who experience disadvantage in the field of employment. The key purpose of such Training Programmes is;

- To provide an effective network of employment support
- To provide one to one mentoring support
- To be proactive in designing innovative outreach personal development programmes

Target: To replicate Local Employability Initiatives such as GEMS in other areas of the City.

- Skills Demand and Supply

Ensuring Belfast is skilled up to meet the demands of the new knowledge intensive technology-led economy is a pre requisite for success. Council will continuously map, monitor and assess the skill base required to equip existing and potential investors with capacity for growth. Linking educational and training establishments with sectoral alliances and companies will facilitate a more intelligent, accurate and responsive relationship between supply and demand.

Target: To establish and maintain a database through which regular analysis of Skills Demand and Supply may be produced

- Social Economy

Complementary working with Belfast's Local Strategic Partnership will ensure Council supports the creation of a Social Economy Programme for the City. The potential of the Social Economy must be mapped and tapped as a crucial part of connecting people to opportunity.

Target: To initiate one major social economy project, in conjunction with partner organisations (Local Strategy Partnership; Invest NI)

5 Fostering Neighbourhood Renewal

Fostering neighbourhood renewal through intervention at community level and growing a culture that can adapt to market changes

Objectives

- * To integrate neighbourhood renewal with city-wide regeneration
- * To promote social cohesion through area-based initiatives
- * To ensure equity and opportunity for all communities in urban renewal

Concentrated deprivation and social exclusion is a persistent problem within certain pockets of the City. Long term programmes of investment centred around prioritised neighbourhoods are required to effect positive change. Council must also ensure that the improvement of local people's well-being is at the heart of neighbourhood renewal.

Priority Areas

- Independent Retailers

The lifeblood of many communities is the localised business network which connects, supports and sustains its population. Having faced a large-scale restructuring of the retail industry, independent retailers continue to be under threat from global forces. A programme of support will be put in place to assist independent retailers define their competitive advantages and utilise these effectively.

Target: To develop pilot retail initiatives, in conjunction with the Arterial Routes initiative

- Arterial Routes

Council is committed to the development of the Arterial Routes Programme and is working in partnership with the Area Partnership Boards, Belfast Regeneration Office and Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The programme seeks to maintain and enhance the vitality of the main arterial routes of the City through its adoption of a one-city strategic approach which links centre and periphery.

Target: To implement, in conjunction with partner organisations, the Arterial Routes Programme

- **Area Partnership Boards**

Within Belfast there are 5 Area Partnership Boards covering the areas of North, South, East, West and Shankill which exist to coordinate local development. Linking area-based initiatives with city-wide regeneration is an integral component of creating sustainable neighbourhoods. Supporting Area Partnership Boards as coordinators of the local development agenda underpins this goal.

Target To establish Service Level Agreements with each of the five Area Partnership Boards;

To develop an annual programme of work with each Area Partnership Board

6. **Outward & Forward Looking Region**

Building national and international links to develop new markets and to exploit inward and outward investment opportunities

Objectives

- * To use Council's civic influence to open doors for businesses
- * To promote Belfast as a dynamic competitive International City
- * To showcase best practice in Belfast through European and International Networks

Priority Areas

- **European Relations**

Active participation in Europe provides Belfast with the opportunity to shape and influence policy particularly the urban agenda and to derive benefit from funding opportunities as well as sharing learning experiences across regions within Europe.

Initiatives in which Council are already engaged but which will be expanded and built upon include;

- Eurocities

- Quartiers En Crise
- Cities of the Isles

Target:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To participate in relevant networks and Committees pertaining to Economic Development</i>• <i>To maximise drawdown of EU funding</i>• <i>To actively influence the EU Urban Policy agenda.</i>
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- **International Relations**

Networking with cities and regions on a global scale is an important facet of competitive cities. Belfast already has a strong foundation on which to build urban strategic alliances. Initiatives in which Council are currently engaged but which will be expanded and built upon include:-

- Atlantic Rim Initiative
- Friends of Belfast
- China / Hefei

Target:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To secure new and additional investment through each of the initiatives</i>• <i>To benchmark Belfast against international best practice</i>• <i>To implement resultant strategies</i>
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Managing the LED Programme

Belfast City Council's LED strategy represents a large-scale development programme for the City whilst operating within clearly defined modes of operation as detailed by the European Commission through the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Each programme requires detailed preparation, selection, appraisal and all within a robust monitoring system. In order to manage a programme of this size it is essential to have an Economic Development Unit properly resourced in terms of professional staff with clearly defined roles.

The DETI in their 'Notes for Guidance', July 2001 agrees that Councils may include in their Action Plan, as a separate programme, salaries and related costs associated with coordinating, implementing and monitoring programmes approved under the LED.

Furthermore, the European Commission requires that adequate publicity be given to all activities attracting LED financial support. In addition Councils will be expected to comply with the strategy for information and publicity to be developed by the Community Structural Funds Monitoring Committee.

It is of equal importance that a proper marketing campaign be implemented alongside projects to highlight the effectiveness of LED at a local, regional and international level.

Proposed Optimal Resourcing Levels

Following assessment of the submission by DETI and independent consultants, it has been recommended that the effective management and control of the Programme should be operationalised as follows:

- Employment of Economic Development Manager
- Employment of 4 x Economic Development Officers to oversee LED (i.e. existing permanent posts)
- Employment of 1 European Officer to ensure linkages between LED and other European programmes (fixed-term basis, for duration of LED Programme)
- Employment of 2 Research Officers to ensure that the LED programme is based upon sound analytical findings, providing an input into the future development of the city (fixed-term basis, for duration of LED Programme)
- Employment of Creative Industries officer
- Employment of support staff to assist in the implementation of the LED programme (existing Economic Development Assistant post)

To those ends, the EU are prepared to fund 50% of staffing costs, for those posts directly relating to the delivery of the LED Programme. Primary responsibilities of such posts relate to:

- A detailed preparation programme for all funded LED programmes

- Implementation programme for the LED programme
- Robust monitoring system for LED projects in accordance with EU regulations
- Vigorous marketing campaign for LED programme

Launch of LED Programme

Subject to Members' endorsement of the content, it is the intention of Committee, as agreed at the meeting of 10th April, 2002, to organise an official launch of the Programme. Such a high profile event is likely to attract significant media attention to the work of Sub-Committee and thus affords a unique opportunity for Members to signal their collective intent to play a proactive role, alongside the private sector and educational and research institutions, in leading Belfast through the transition from a declining, traditional economy to a private-sector led, knowledge-based economy, thereby ensuring competitive advantage within a global context.

Recommendations

Members are asked;

- (i) to note the contents of the report
- (ii) to endorse the proposed LED Programme 'Sustaining Competitive Advantage'
- (iii) to approve expenditure levels that exceed the current level of 2p product of rateable income, so as to maximise the drawdown of EU funding, and to meet the particular demands of the digressive profile;
- (iv) to endorse the proposed staffing levels as outlined in the report, towards which the EU is prepared to contribute 50%, so as to ensure compliance with European regulations governing the proper management and marketing of the programme."

During discussion, a Member referred to the proposed staff increases contained within the report and expressed concern in respect of the adverse impact which this would have on the District Rate. He suggested that the matter be researched further to ensure that the recruitment of the staff could be justified. A further Member put forward the view that the Council should continue to expand its lead role in accessing European funding and, should the required staffing not be in place, it could result in funding opportunities being lost.

The Director of Development outlined the difficulties caused by existing staffing shortages and the effect this was having on the Department in carrying out its role. She stated that, over the four year period of the Plan, the proposed staffing measures would have no impact on the current level of the District Rate. In addition, should the implementation of the proposals be delayed further, the Council might be deprived of the opportunity to avail of matched funding. The Head of Economic Initiatives stated that the proposals had been assessed and verified by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the independent consultants, PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor O'Donnell,
Seconded by Councillor McCarthy,

That the Sub-Committee adopts the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Crowe,

That the Sub-Committee defers consideration of the Local Economic Development Plan to enable the matter to be considered by each of the Party Groupings on the Council.

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

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor O'Donnell and seconded by Councillor McCarthy was thereupon put to the meeting, when four Members voted for and two against and it was accordingly declared carried.

(The Deputy Chairman (Councillor E. Smyth) in the Chair.)

Friends of Belfast Five Year Strategy

The Sub-Committee considered a report in relation to the proposed Friends of Belfast Strategy for the period 2003-2006. A copy of the report, with the exception of Appendix 1, is set out hereunder:

"Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to present to Members the proposed Friends of Belfast strategy for the period 2003-2006.

Background

Members will be aware that the Friends of Belfast network represents a social capital network that seeks to tap in to economic, civic and political goodwill, particularly apparent in North America, and to convert contingent opportunities into substantive economic benefits for the city of Belfast.

Since its inception in 1998, the network has consistently generated a substantive two-way exchange of trade mission and civic delegation visits. In total, some 70 inward trade mission and fact-finding visits to Belfast have occurred under the auspices of the network, demonstrating its capacity as a marketing instrument through which Belfast has repositioned itself as an investment location within the global economy.

Similarly, the outward flow of trade mission activity has witnessed highly successful visits to Boston (1998), Boston and Pittsburgh (2000), Boston (2001), netting an estimated £5m in trade for local companies.

Inevitably, reflecting the influence of the network's mentor, John Cullinane, a Boston entrepreneur, much of the early focus in terms of developmental activity has centred on Boston. But as the confidence of the city's businesses increased, against a background of improving economic and political circumstances, coupled with the broader requirements of Council, the capacity of the network to act as a key instrument through which relationships, beyond the economic, can usefully be exploited has come to be recognized.

As a result, some two years ago, Sub-Committee agreed that necessary preliminary work should be undertaken with regard to a proposed expansion of the network to a number of other cities that offered, potentially, substantive benefits to Belfast. In that regard, the cities of New York and Denver were identified as offering civic, economic, cultural tourism and broader city regeneration opportunities. Critically also, though, they offered an internal structure of support through a city-specific network of political leaders, business leaders and academics who were keen to promote and facilitate a range of sectoral-based activities. The net result of such activities has led to the recruitment of some 350 leading individuals centred around the cities of Boston, Pittsburgh, New York and Denver.

It is imperative now that the network progresses to a more sophisticated level of strategic influence and operational effectiveness. To date, activities have tended to be characterised by general scoping and market-testing approaches. Henceforth, if value for money is to be rigorously tested, a more systematic and co-ordinated approach toward delivery should be adopted.

Towards those ends, a strategic framework for city-specific activities is proposed to target and fully exploit the economic and wider potential that is apparent. Thus, for example, New York offers a focus for financial services and creative industries initiatives; Pittsburgh offers expertise on Cultural Tourism; Denver on Environmental Industries. Underpinning all such operational activity will be a concerted effort, through use of the website and a targeted communication strategy, to generate positive news stories from Belfast which place emphasis on its assets as an investment location and as a centre of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Capacity to Deliver

Under existing arrangements, responsibility for functional arrangements in support of the wide range of inward and outward visits has rested primarily with an Economic Development Officer, in conjunction with an external consultant, within a broad-ranging job description that includes responsibility for Council's European brief.

It would appear both opportune and necessary, given the review of the Department's European resources, and the dramatically increased workload arising from the expansion of the network, that consideration be given to the deployment on a full-time basis of an Officer to the Friends of Belfast network.

A preliminary review of the activities undertaken to date (see Appendix I) gives an indication of the range and scope of related activities. It provides also an indication of the potential, within a context of expansion, that dedicated resourcing should realise.

To that end also, and in taking cognisance of the evaluation of Investment Belfast Ltd, there would appear to be considerable merit in utilising Investment Belfast Ltd to deliver core elements of the commercial, organisational and marketing elements of a revised Friends of Belfast Strategy, as an integral element of Investment Belfast Ltd's operational plan. Such an approach, would be entirely consistent with wider efforts to rationalise and make more consistent the approach promoted through Council's companies towards marketing the city.

Furthermore, feedback from Head Friends and co-chairs indicates a strong preference for a local presence to animate at a city level events, communications and networks, so as to translate goodwill into practical initiatives. Such a local presence would be invaluable also in regard to the organisation of trade mission and civic visits.

Measuring Success

It is important that a framework for the evaluation of the initiative be devised, so as to determine the value for money provided by the network and related activities.

Pending the approval by Sub-Committee to advance the initiative as proposed, a framework for evaluation, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative indicators, would be devised in conjunction with our partners in each city.

Costs

Under the Local Economic Development Programme an annual commitment of £50,000 has been approved towards the promotion of the Friends of Belfast network. That amount was based on existing levels of activity with regard to the hosting of inward trade missions and civic delegations as well as to the organisation of outward trade missions and civic delegations. In addition, the services of an American advisor were required to provide necessary additional support to officers in regard to the expansion of the Friends of Belfast network and the recruitment of Head Friends and Co-Chairs. Associated costs over the past three years have varied, peaking at a level of some £18,000.

Environmental Implications

None.

Development Strategy Reference

- 4.4 To promote Belfast as the first choice for sustainable inward investment by exploiting external links established under the Friends of Belfast initiative.

Budget

£50,000 per annum for the period 2003-2006.

Recommendations

The Friends of Belfast network has been instrumental in repositioning Belfast within a global economy as an investment location and as a centre of entrepreneurship and innovation. Substantive economic benefits have been accrued, in conjunction with Invest Northern Ireland and Investment Belfast Ltd, through the creation of jobs and investments secured by local companies. Undoubtedly, though, there exists substantive untapped potential. The recent expansion of the network to New York and Denver, together with its consolidation in Boston and Pittsburgh, affords an unprecedented opportunity for Belfast to capitalise on the economic, political and civic goodwill that comprises an intangible but critical, element of competitive advantage.

The Friends of Belfast network offers Belfast the institutional capacity through which it can learn, adapt to change and 'stay ahead of the game' – attributes that characterise those regions that remain economically most successful in the face of the vicissitudes of volatile international markets. Following the necessary preliminary activity, initiated since 1998, Council is now well placed to fully exploit the network's potential across a range of economic development, cultural tourism and urban regeneration agendas.

Towards those ends, it is recommended that members:

- (i) Endorse the Strategic Framework for activity, as presented in Appendix II to this report;
- (ii) Approve related expenditure up to a level of £50,000 per annum throughout the period 2003-2006, subject to approved annual performance reports;
- (iii) Agree to the full-time deployment of an Economic Development Officer in support of the Friends of Belfast network.
- (iv) Agree in principle to the appointment of a local animator in each of the targeted cities, to assist Head Friends and Co-Chairs to organise, facilitate and report to Council on related activities. Detailed costs and the procurement of such local assistance will be brought to Committee in advance, though it is anticipated that in total, costs would not exceed £30,000.

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendations.

Appendix II

Friends of Belfast Five-Year Framework Strategy

Key Themes

1. International Alliances

Objective: to build and develop an active network of contacts between cities at civic, corporate and sectoral levels.

Key Performance Indicators

- To establish and maintain four/five Friends of Belfast 'Think Tank' chapters in four/five cities in North America
- To establish a range of active links with universities and educational establishments in each city
- To hold an annual conference of the Chapters
- To develop World Trade Centre Linkages

2. Public Policy

Objective: To contribute to and influence public policy in the critical areas of urban regeneration, economic development and cultural tourism

Key Performance Indicators

- Examine US models in practice and, where appropriate, apply best practice to Belfast

3. Driving Economic Change

Objective: To use the influence and expertise of Friends to open doors for business, and to create business and investment opportunities

Key Performance Indicators

- Co-ordination with Invest NI
- Improving air and sea access to Belfast from North America
- Aggressively target sectors to develop Trade Mission activity in each of the 5 cities

- Study the development of Business Investment Districts (BIDS) and transfer learning to Belfast

4. Showcasing Belfast as a Prime Investment Location

Objective: To create a positive international perception of Belfast as an investment opportunity

Key Performance Indicators

- Showcase Belfast through hosting visiting investment delegations
- Development of Sister Cities Linkages
- Promote a positive media campaign in each city

5. Promoting Belfast Culture and market the experience it has to offer

Objective: Raise awareness of Belfast as a cultural destination and improve the image of the city

Key Performance Indicators

- Showcase Belfast as a business and leisure destination
- Cultural product development
- Linkages and exchanges
- Cultural and heritage quarters development
- Benchmarking and sharing of best practice

BOSTON

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
International Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To facilitate political engagement by creating opportunities for meetings at city to city level• Actively work with Boston World Trade Centre to assist Belfast City Council in establishing a World Trade Centre in Belfast• Develop links with Harvard University and Boston College• Attendance at Ireland Fund Dinners

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
Public Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build specific links with Harvard Design School and the Boston Artery Tunnel Business Committee to develop Belfast's capacity in City Masterplanning • Utilise city of Boston's experience in Public Policy areas related to economic development and regeneration
Driving Economic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine and investigate Inner City 100 Index to run a pilot in Belfast • Develop links with Invest NI incubator • Seek to improve air/sea access from North America to Belfast • Reinvigorate relationship with the Boston Redevelopment Authority in terms of economic development and urban regeneration • Hold NI conflict resolution/dividend conference in conjunction with a Trade Mission (environmental industries) 2003 and in process showcase Belfast
Showcasing Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake preparatory work and promotion for investment • Work proactively to create a strong network of journalists and media contacts
Culture & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer the Boston Model on product packaging to Belfast • Facilitate marketing activity between the Visitor & Convention Bureau re: culture and tourism products

DENVER

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
International Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish formal links with the World Trade Centre • To pursue contacts in biomedical sector • To facilitate political engagement by creating opportunities for meetings at city to city level • To develop links with educational establishments
Public Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer good practice on environmental planning and waste disposal • Transfer of masterplanning experience from mixed use integrated developments
Driving Economic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate 2 way trade mission activity beginning 2003, focused on biomedical and environmental sectors • Link with proposed Invest NI incubator in NYC
Showcasing Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake preparatory work and promotion for investment • Work proactively to create a strong network of journalists and media contacts
Culture & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the Lower Downtown cultural quarter model and how it can be applied to the development of cultural quarters in Belfast • Street Art – explore how street art is used to enhance specific areas of a city including more unusual forms of street art & how this can be applied to Belfast • Develop media and marketing links with the press and Denver Visitor & Convention Bureau

NEW YORK

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
International Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at Ireland Fund Dinners • To establish formal relations with the World Trade Centre • To establish relations with Fordham University, New York University, Columbia University and other educational establishments • To facilitate political engagement by creating opportunities for meetings at city to city level (Mayor to Mayor)
Public Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop programme on New York experience of community involvement in city developments • Study the Lower Manhattan Development process and assess learning for Belfast situation
Driving Economic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of BID's experience to Belfast • Creative Industries (textile, multi media, fashion, financial) • Links with INI incubator • Targeted marketing opportunities with leading financial services companies
Showcasing Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop sister cities links • Hold Belfast in New York week – cultural assets showcase • Work proactively to create a strong network of journalists and media contacts

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
Culture & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an arts project • Liaise with NYC & Company to examine cultural product development and the transfer of the New York model to Belfast (culture fest, restaurant week, tourism week, city pass, etc) • Develop media links in respect of cultural tourism • Support a formal alliance to proceed with Titanic Collection Project (Peter Neill) • Develop links and cultural exchanges between cultural institutions and organisations in New York and Belfast • Inform Tourism Ireland Limited of cultural tourism initiatives

PITTSBURGH

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
International Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate political engagement by creating opportunities for meetings at city to city level • To establish formal links with the World Trade Centre • To establish educational links with the University of Pittsburgh and other educational establishments
Public Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer best practice in river front development City Centre management and management of cultural quarters

Theme	Key Performance Indicators
Driving Economic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate 2 way trade missions in conjunction with the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance and the Ireland Institute of Pittsburgh (Life & Health Sciences) • The development of a programme with the Manchester Craftsmans Guild • To establish active links with the Riverfront Task Force • Develop city centre management links
Showcasing Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake preparatory work and promotion for investment • Work proactively to create a strong network of journalists and media contacts
Culture & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop links with the Pittsburgh and the proposed Belfast Cultural Quarters • Continue to identify cultural entrepreneurs and organisations that can assist in the development of cultural tourism as a tool for regeneration • Cultural entrepreneurs • Examine the feasibility of young artists and cultural exchanges • Develop links between Belfast Arts College and relevant arts organisations in Pittsburgh • Explore linkages and cultural exchanges through the Greater Pittsburgh Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Office of Cultural Tourism • Sports tourism – Curtis Cup Golf competition links between Belfast and Pittsburgh

Resourcing

1. Human Resources

To date the Friends of Belfast initiative has been managed by an Economic Development Officer. However in order to expand and develop the initiative the following combination would be regarded as an optimal arrangement;

- Friends of Belfast Officer
- Local City Liaison Officer
- Advisor to Friends of Belfast overall
- Head Friend and Co-chairs leading the initiative in each city

2. Partners

Key partners at operational level will include;

- Head Friends
- Investment Belfast Limited
- Invest Northern Ireland
- Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
- World Trade Center Association
- Co-chairs
- Education establishments

Marketing & Communications

To date marketing and communications has been restricted to use of the Friends of Belfast website, mailshots and regular correspondence. It is imperative that Belfast is marketed on a more systematic basis, and the following initiatives are proposed;

- Website – interaction
- Mailshots
- FOB certificates
- Photo opportunities
- Annual meeting (rotated)
- Head Friends Communication
- Ireland Fund Dinner attendance (Heads to host)
- Quarterly Friends breakfasts
- Regular emailing
- Database
- Media strategy and positive media stories
- Host regular educational visits for key FOB

Monitoring and Evaluation

Pending the approval by Sub-Committee to advance the initiative as proposed, a framework for evaluation, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative indicators, would be devised in conjunction with our partners in each city.

- Regular relations
- Strategic review meetings
- Annual review
- Co-chair meeting
- Performance against specified targets

Further Expansion

Previously, the Friends of Belfast Strategy proposed expansion to a total of six cities, on the basis of two per annum throughout the three-year period 2000-2003. Members may wish to consider the relative merits of further expansion, bearing in mind the implications in terms of resources – both financial and human – weighed against the potential substantive benefits to be derived from city to city relationships.

General feedback to date tends towards the identification of a further one city on the west coast of America, which would be regarded as opening up vital ‘added-value’ strategic, geographical and sectoral opportunities. Key tasks thus include;

- Identify options for 5th city (Seattle/Chicago/San Francisco?)
- Establish rationale based on industry strengths, sectoral/geog significance/strength of Irish community/receptiveness”

After discussion, the Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the foregoing report.

Belfast Learning City Forum

The Sub-Committee deferred consideration of the matter to enable details to be provided in respect of external funding towards the Belfast Learning City Forum’s project.

Workforce Training Services Limited

The Economic Development Manager informed the Members that Workforce Training Services Limited, a specialist training service for young people in North and West Belfast, had submitted a request for a financial contribution towards the costs of

providing office furniture within two workshops upon the completion of the construction of its new premises. The service had been in operation since 1978 and employed currently thirty members of staff and provided training for approximately 350 young people between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. He stated that training was provided under the auspices of the Job Skills, New Deal and Core Gateway Programmes. The Economic Development Manager stated that planning approval had been granted for the construction of new accommodation on its existing site on the Springfield Road at a cost of £1,880,000 and, in respect of which, there was a current shortfall of £350,000.

During discussion, a Member stated that supplies of surplus office furniture were available to organisations which provided training and he suggested that Workforce Training Services Limited might avail of this service. A further Member suggested that funding should only be made available when the construction of the premises was complete.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Crowe,

That the Sub-Committee agrees that the request for funding of £7,000 towards the cost of providing office furniture at the premises of Workforce Training Services Limited be rejected.

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

Belfast Electronic Software Testing Project

The Sub-Committee deferred consideration of a report in relation to a reduction in the number of participants on the Belfast Electronic Software Testing Project to enable further information to be obtained in relation to a reciprocal reduction in the funding of the project.

Flax Trust – Initiative 2002 Project

The Sub-Committee was advised that the Flax Trust had extended an invitation to the Members to undertake a visit to view the innovative work which was being carried out at Brookfield Mill.

The Sub-Committee agreed that a site visit in this regard be undertaken on a date to be agreed in conjunction with the Chairman (Councillor M. Browne).

Under-Funding of University Research

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Sub-Committee that a request had been received from Vice-Chancellors of the University of Ulster and Queen's University, Belfast seeking an endorsement of their submission in response to the Department of Finance and Personnel's draft budget proposals. In their statement,

concern had been expressed that the draft budget proposals did not allocate funding towards university research in Northern Ireland. The Vice-Chancellors had highlighted the fact that Northern Ireland's economic growth had been restricted as a result of its public sector-reliant economic base and that senior figures in industry and commerce had recognised the need to invest in research. The statement had highlighted also the disparity which existed between the resources allocated to research in Northern Ireland as opposed to the rest of United Kingdom. This was exemplified by the fact that Government funding for research in Northern Ireland had decreased by 20% between 1992 and 2001 whereas resources allocated to universities in Great Britain had increased by 23% during that period.

After discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed to endorse the comments of the Vice-Chancellors of the two Universities and agreed further that a brief submission in this regard be forwarded to the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Chairman