

Development Committee

Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT) SUB-COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor C. McGimpsey (Chairman); and
Councillors M. Browne, McCarthy, Newton, O'Reilly
and Rodgers.

In attendance: Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Ms. S. Watson, Economic Development Manager; and
Miss L. Hillick, Committee Administrator.

(The Deputy Chairman, Councillor McCarthy, in the Chair.)

Apology

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 5th and 10th May, which had been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Ms. L. Trimble

The Deputy Chairman (Councillor McCarthy), on behalf of the Sub-Committee, welcomed to the meeting Ms. L. Trimble, who had been appointed recently to the post of Economic Development Officer.

Creative Industries Programme

The Sub-Committee considered a report in relation to the progress which had been achieved in respect of the Council's Creative Industries initiative. A copy of the report, with the exception of Appendix 1 referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

"Purpose of Report

To update Members on progress on work on the creative industries and to request support for a programme of initial activities to support the growth of the sector.

Background

The Creative Industries of Belfast dominate the sector in Northern Ireland and has a large share of the total enterprises and of total employment compared to the profile for the sector across NI.

Currently there are over 875 creative enterprises in the Belfast area, employing a total of 17,000 staff and contributing over £300 million to the local economy. These industries are growing at more than twice the rate of the economy as a whole. Given this growth potential both in terms of revenue and jobs and their impact on quality of life, Creative Industries in Belfast are fundamental to local, regional and economic development.

Members will be aware that Council intervention in the creative industries is identified as a Priority action area in the Council's Local Economic Development Plan 2002–2006, 'Sustaining Competitive Advantage' and Belfast's 'Capital City' agenda 2003-2006. The intervention of Belfast City Council in the creative industries will enable industry, wealth, employment and quality of life to grow, thus enhancing the image of the city as one of creative excellence, forward thinking, innovative and vibrant.

Members will be aware that, at the Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee of 10th April, 2002, a report confirming plans to bring together a programme of activities to support the creative industries in Belfast was agreed by Committee.

Since that date, officers have been working with key organisations in the city responsible for creative industries and related issues and have identified key areas for Belfast City Council intervention in this field. Three key areas of intervention have been identified:

- Business development and growth

Covering issues such as increased start up and growth initiatives for target companies.

- Capability development – 'Creative Talent.'

Covering issues such as supply and demand, training services and facilities, increased liaison between university and industry, mentoring approaches, retraining and attracting indigenous talent.

- Infrastructure development – 'Creative Clusters.'

Covering issues such as incubation and all aspects of physical and cyber networking and clustering.

Belfast City Council's Role in the Creative Industries

Members will be aware that, at the Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee of 3rd March, 2004, approval was given to the creative industries update and to the Council's response to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's consultation document, 'Unlocking Creativity: A Creative Region.'

Belfast City Council has made significant progress in developing and supporting this high growth industry in Belfast through a number of initiatives and actions (these are attached as Appendix I) reinforcing Belfast City Council's role in the Creative Industries. A summary of actions are outlined below.

- Appointment of Creative Industries Officer
- Deliver Craft and Design Sales Programme
- Developed the THIMBLE – Textile Networking Group
- Digital Media Business Development Programme developed
- Creative Industries Mapping Document and Research undertaken
- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Creative Industries policy response document submitted
- Implementation of Creative Industries projects in Local Partnership Board's Service Level Agreements
- Developed Creative Industries links with other Council units and initiatives such as Culture and Arts, Friends of Belfast and World Trade Centre.
- Developed creative partnerships and networks (For example DCAL, Invest NI, Momentum)
- Membership of Creative Industries Steering Groups.
- Creative Industries Advisory Group.
- Creative Industries Plan.

The initial work carried out by Council has reinforced the fact that the Creative Industries are a dominant sector in Belfast and compared to the profile for the sector across Northern Ireland, the creative enterprises in Belfast are not only larger in terms of employment and turnover, but are more integrated into the wider economy and more concentrated within the city.

In order to consolidate and move on in supporting the sector a programme of initiatives has been identified under the themes of Business Development and Growth, Capability Development and Infrastructure and Clustering. These initiatives are summarised below and are presented for Members' consideration in Appendix II.

Creative Industries Programme Summary.

**Theme 1: Business Development and Growth –
'Creative Economy.'**

- **E-Business Programme.** To identify and support an E-business programme for 10 SME's in the Creative Industries to enhance and improve their business through the strategic use of the internet, e-commerce, e-mail, e- newsletters, websites and intranets.

**Total Cost: £35,000
Project to go to Tender.**

Film and Television Business Development Programme.

To support a Business Development Programme for 15 SME's working in the Film and Television Industry to improve their business skills and secure finance for company and project development. The programme will cover areas such as pitching funding & application processes, film financing, film budgeting/scheduling, company start up and copyright.

**Total Cost: £40,000
Potential Partners: Invest NI, DCAL
Delivery Agent: Northern Ireland Film and Television
Commission**

Craft and Design Sales Programme

Following on from a pilot Craft and Design programme led by Belfast City Council, which gained 18 new customers for the participants and represented a 360% in the baseline number, it is recommended support be given for a second sales programme for 10 Craft and Design companies to grow their business by developing sales with new customers in new target markets. The programme will help develop sales for products and services in new geographical markets; engage companies in meetings with new customers for products and services; secure appointments with new customers and markets and deliver a series of effective sales presentations.

**Total Cost: £20,000
Delivery Agent: TEDI Sales and Marketing – 'Fastrack'
programme**

Creative Industries Web Portal

To provide a one stop information resource for the development of the creative industries in Belfast and act as a virtual support mechanism to enhance creativity, economic competitiveness, networking, employment and international collaboration.

Total Cost: £15,000
Project to go to Tender.

Research and collation of Economic intelligence relating to the Creative Industries.

Ongoing research and mapping on Belfast's creative sector. A definitive database of companies working in Belfast's creative sector will be collated and used as a tool for promotion, project recruitment, research, networking and signposting.

Total Cost: None

Establish a Creative Industries Advisory Group

To establish an advisory group of 8 representatives from both public and private sector, to help drive and shape the future of the sector in Belfast and contribute to Belfast City Council's aims and objectives.

Total Cost: None

Theme 2: Capability Development – 'Creative Talent.'

Creative Industries LINK initiative

To support a company development programme specifically designed for the creative industries sector, to provide 20 SME's within the sector, accredited management and business skills that will assist them to improve the effectiveness of their organisations. Topics covered include: Performance management, People management, Change management, Strategy, Communication, Leadership and Project Management.

The Link Initiative has been accredited by the Management Institute at the University of Ulster and on completion participants will attain the Certificate in Management Practice.

Total Cost: £50,000
Potential Partners: Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Delivery Agents: Arts & Business University of Ulster

Creative Industries 'Profit and Entrepreneurship' Conference.

The one-day conference will be held in W5 at the Odyssey Complex in Belfast on 10 November 2004 and will bring together over 140 delegates from the creative sector to focus on the links between the processes of thinking and working creatively with profit and entrepreneurship.

Eight conference workshops will further reflect and demonstrate the importance of Lifelong Learning and enterprise and will be led by 8 guest entrepreneurs working in the creative sector.

Total Cost: £10,000 (Event cost is £20,000 – DCAL to provide match funding)

Potential Partners: Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

Delivery Agents: WEA, Ormeau Business Park, Arts & Business, Dimex

Creative Industries Showcase

To work with the Arts Committee by developing a creative 'Showcasing' event under the concept of 'Creative Belfast.' The showcase itself, will link closely with the Committee's restructuring of the Arts Awards and will increase the scale and significance of the event with additional Creative Industries categories being introduced (for example fashion, publishing and broadcast). The showcase will promote (locally, nationally, and internationally) the wealth and breadth of the creative and artistic talent in Belfast City and will provide showcase participants the opportunity to work nationally and internationally at networking events.

Total Cost: To be determined

Partners: Arts Committee. Friends of Belfast initiative.

Delivery Agents: Belfast City Council

Theme 3: Infrastructure and Clustering – 'Creative Clusters.'

Creative Business Incubation and hubs.

To identify and support 10 new and existing SME's in the creative industries sector in the Belfast city region through the provision of a business incubation process that includes an array of business development services and property locations throughout the city.

This project will act as a catalyst for entrepreneurial activity with particular emphasis on growth potential opportunities throughout the city and will focus on Creative Businesses that have a clearly defined product portfolio; identifiable market or markets; a viable business model; a desire to target export markets and a willingness to participate fully in the incubation process. Key projects currently being considered include the Cathedral Quarter and the Brookfield Mill 'Ignite' Project.

Total Cost: To be Determined.
Potential Partners: To be determined

Creative Industries Launch

It is recommended that Members consider support for the proposed activities and it is further recommended that members consider support for a launch of Belfast City Council's Creative Industries programme to a maximum of £5,000 in order to establish the Belfast City Council contribution to the development of the creative industries in the city and the development of the Creative Industries Plan.

It is anticipated that additional initiatives will be presented to Committee in due course.

Environmental Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

3.1 Leaving a Legacy

LED Plan Reference

To support and develop business growth and competitiveness

To capitalise on new growth sectors by creating economic conditions conducive to success.

Budgetary Implications

- (i) To support a Creative Industries programme to a maximum of £175,000
- (ii) To approve a launch of the Creative Industries Programme to a maximum of £5,000

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members;

- (i) Endorse the contents of the report
- (ii) Agree to support a Creative Industries Programme to a maximum of £175,000
- (iii) Agree to support a launch of the Creative Industries Programme to a maximum of £5,000

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendations.

Appendix II

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ACTION PLAN

A - Business Development and Growth – Creative Economy

Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Delivery of an E-Business Programme.	10 Companies Recruited.	10 Companies trained in e-business solutions. Improved internal communication and efficiency. Improved external communication and efficiency. 10% Increase in sales and revenue. Increased Profile for participating businesses.	June 2004 – September 2005	£35,000

Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Delivery of a Film and Television Business Development Programme.	15 Companies Recruited	<p>15 Companies trained in managing creative Ideas, funding & Application processes, Company start up and Legal & copyright for film.</p> <p>10% Increase in funding secured.</p> <p>10% Increase in employment.</p> <p>Increased Profile for participating businesses.</p>	January 2005 – December 2005	£40,000
Delivery of Craft and Design Sales Programme	10 Companies Recruited	<p>10 companies participating</p> <p>Identification of new sales opportunities.</p> <p>Comprehensive meeting programme arranged for companies, involving at least nine clients.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and understanding of buying requirements of potential customers.</p> <p>10% increase in sales.</p>	September 2005 – September 2006	£20,000

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Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Establishment of a Creative Industries Web Portal	150 Companies Registered.	<p>150 companies accessing and sharing information.</p> <p>Posting of potential vacancies and opportunities for work.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and understanding of commercial opportunities and networks in the creative arena.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and links to export market opportunities.</p> <p>Increased marketing opportunities and promotion.</p> <p>Increased sales and finance secured.</p> <p>Minimum of 150 web hits per month.</p> <p>10% Increase in sales</p> <p>www.creativebelfast.com</p>	June 2004 – September 2005	£15,000
Research and collation of Economic intelligence relating to the	Ongoing information gathering on Belfast's	Compilation of creative industries database.	June 2004 – September 2006	None

Creative Industries	Creative sector			
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Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Establish a Creative Industries Advisory Group	8 Members recruited	<p>Identification of key partners.</p> <p>Advisory Group established.</p> <p>Increased knowledge on sectoral needs.</p> <p>Increased knowledge and links contributing to the development of future projects.</p>	June 2004 – September 2006	None

B - Capability Development – ‘Creative Talent.’

Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Delivery of Creative Industries LINK initiative	20 Companies Recruited.	<p>20 Companies attain a Certificate in Management Practice.</p> <p>10% Reduction in cost base</p> <p>10% Increase in sales and revenue.</p> <p>Increased Profile for participating businesses.</p>	June 2004 – September 2005	£50,000
Delivery of a Creative Industries ‘Profit and Entrepreneurship’ Conference.	100 companies in attendance	<p>Increased understanding of raising finance and securing funding.</p> <p>Increased awareness on risks and opportunities</p>	November 2004	£10,000

		<p>associated with creative business start-up.</p> <p>100 delegates signposted to start- up, entrepreneurship and funding initiatives.</p>		
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Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Delivery of Creative Industries Showcase	15 Companies Showcased.	15 companies participating Identification of new sales opportunities. Comprehensive meeting programme arranged. New investment opportunities identified.	September 2005 – September 2006	To be determined

C - Infrastructure and Clustering – ‘Creative Clusters.’

Actions	Targets	Outputs	Timescale	Budget
Support and provision for Creative Business Incubation and hubs.	2 Incubation and hub projects supported.	Incubation units occupied. 10 creative – start-up businesses facilitated.	June 2004 – September 2006	To be determined”

After discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Investment Belfast Limited

The Sub-Committee agreed to defer until its monthly meeting in August consideration of a report in respect of various issues in connection with Investment Belfast Limited to enable Members to give due consideration to the matter.

Start a Business Programme

The Economic Development Manager advised the Sub-Committee that the Northern Ireland Start a Business Programme, formerly known as the Business Start Programme, was a key initiative for supporting business starts within Northern Ireland.

The Programme was co-funded by Local Authorities throughout the Province and Invest Northern Ireland and offered a range of training, mentoring and grant support.

She explained that the cost of each business start was approximately £2,000, £1,300 of which was donated by Invest Northern Ireland, £350 by Local Authorities and £350 by the European Union. The Programme had had a significant impact on the economic growth and promotion of entrepreneurial activity within the City and approximately 4,600 new businesses had been created throughout the Province since the Programme's launch in September, 2001.

The Economic Development Manager reminded the Sub-Committee that, at its meeting on 3rd December, 2003, it had agreed to support an estimated increase in the achievement targets associated with the Programme from 620 to 770 new business starts, up until August, 2004. She advised the Sub-Committee that, up until March, 2004, approximately 625 new businesses had been created within the Belfast City Council area equating to the creation of 1,000 jobs. The total funding allocation from Belfast City Council had been £437,500 and the Programme was due to end in August, 2004.

The Sub-Committee was informed that Invest Northern Ireland had approached Local Authorities throughout the Province to provide a further financial commitment to facilitate a new Programme commencing in September, 2004 and, given the nature of funding which was drawn down through the European Union, Local Authorities could provide a commitment only up until 2006. She requested, therefore, that the Sub-Committee consider the undernoted range of options:

(i) Fully Fund the Programme as suggested
by Invest Northern Ireland

Financial commitment from Councils to fund the programme for the period 1 September 2004 to 31 March 2006. The total financial commitment for this period is £372,050 based on Belfast City Council funding £350 from the local council and £350 from the EU (under the District Councils' LED measure in the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme) i.e £700 per case. This is based on 532 additional new business starts.

(ii) Partially fund the Programme

This option is to maintain the £350 contribution as at the moment per case but to leave INI to find the remaining BSP matched funding from 'other than' council's own existing allocation (ie INI bring an additional £350 of BSP funding per case to the party). The total financial commitment for this period is £186,025 from the local council

(iii) Use resources for an Enterprise Awareness Campaign

As well as funding the Start a Business programme, Belfast City Council can fund and organise a continuous marketing campaign to support the 'Go For It' campaign on an on-going basis. This will be co-ordinated with Belfast First Stop Shop, Invest NI and the Local Enterprise Agencies. The total financial commitment for this option is £100,000

The Economic Development Manager reported that the Economic Development Unit was liaising currently with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the European Union Programmes Branch, which administered the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme fund, with a view to discussing the viement of funds between programmes in order to support the funding required for the Start a Business Programme. Accordingly, she recommended that the Sub-Committee agree to provide funding in respect of options (ii) and (iii) as set out above.

After discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed to provide funding in respect of option (ii) and agreed, in principle, to provide funding in respect of option (iii), subject to a further report in relation thereto being submitted to a future meeting.

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

The Economic Development Manager advised the Sub-Committee that the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor was the largest single study of entrepreneurial activity in the world with forty countries and twelve United Kingdom regions having participated in 2003. The monitor focused on how much entrepreneurial activity was taking place throughout the world and the reasons for differences and explored the links between entrepreneurial activity and economic growth. She pointed out that research was now in its fifth year and that the data gathered covered the following areas:

- Total entrepreneurial activity by age, gender, income levels, employment status, sector, groups of countries or country, region and locality, as well as the opportunities associated with and necessity of entrepreneurship;
- Attitudes towards entrepreneurship by the same classifications which included fear of failure, skills, knowing entrepreneurs and seeing good opportunities;
- Analysis of entrepreneurial behaviour by types of businesses;
- Analysis of start-up financing, including business angel activity, bank finance and formal venture capital;
- Analysis of the specific characteristics of technology-based firms;
- Analysis of family firms; and
- Analysis of social entrepreneurial activity.

The Economic Development Manager reported that Invest Northern Ireland participated currently in the survey but that the sample size was broken down on a regional basis rather than at a District Council level. The organisation had therefore approached the Council to consider funding a Belfast specific sample which could provide a clear insight into the specific areas where action was required to address the barriers which hindered the efforts of Belfast to become an entrepreneurial City.

Accordingly, she recommended, as the information gathered could be utilised as part of a future Entrepreneurship Policy for the Council, that the Sub-Committee authorise the Council's participation in the 2004 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and approve expenditure in the sum of £10,700 in connection therewith.

After discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed to adopt the recommendation.

Friends of Belfast Action Plan 2004/2005

The Sub-Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Action Plan associated with the Friends of Belfast initiative 2004/2005:

"Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present to Members the Action Plan for the Friends of Belfast initiative for the period 2004-2005 and to seek funding approval for this initiative.

Background

Members will be aware that the Friends of Belfast is a social capital network of key individuals from a wide range of sectors in the US, including financial services, technology, defence, law, academia and local, state and national government, who have an interest in the work of Belfast City Council and have committed to use their influence and sectoral expertise to facilitate introductions in order to pursue opportunities in the areas of business, culture, tourism, academia and civic leadership.

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 seventy inward trade missions and fact-finding visits to Belfast have occurred under the auspices of the network. Similarly, the outward flow of trade mission activity has witnessed highly successful visits to Boston in 1998, Boston and Pittsburgh in 2000 and Boston in 2001, netting an estimated £5m in trade for local companies.

Currently the network has a total of 394 members and has chapters in four cities: Boston, New York City, Denver and Pittsburgh. The majority of the members are in the Boston area (31.7%), followed by New York (19.8%), Denver (15.7%) and Pittsburgh (11.2%).

Friends of Belfast Three Year Strategy 2003-6

Members will recall their decision to approve the Friends of Belfast Three Year Strategy 2003-6 at the Economic Development Sub-Committee of 4th December, 2002.

The strategy comprised the following themes:

1. International Alliances

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

2. Public Policy

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

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

4. Showcasing Belfast as a Prime Investment Location

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

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

Action Plan 2004-2005

Members will be aware that the outputs for the period 2003-2004 were presented at the meeting of the Economic Development Sub-Committee on Wednesday 3rd March, 2004. Key outputs included:

- * An autumn showcase visit to New York and Boston with a delegation including Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, Investment Belfast, Laganside Corporation and the University of Ulster, accompanied by the Editor of a local newspaper. The visit resulted in an article featuring the city in the Conde Nast magazine; interest from a global investment bank in short-listing the city for a software development investment and favourable media coverage of the visit.

- * Inward visits were received from Pittsburgh, the Greater Seattle Trade Alliance and from Governor Baldacci of Maine.
- * The engagement of US based consultants to strengthen and expand the Friends of Belfast network.
- * The appointment of an International Relations Officer to fully service the Friends of Belfast network.

Following queries raised by elected Members over the effectiveness of the network, an in-depth internal review of the network has been conducted as a means of identifying the best way forward for Friends of Belfast. This involved consultation internally with a range of units within the Development Department as well as external organisations such as Investment Belfast Ltd, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Invest N.I. Consultation was also undertaken with the Head Friends and Co-Chairs of the Friends of Belfast network.

A range of strengths and weaknesses of the Friends of Belfast initiative were identified: the goodwill and commitment of the key individuals involved in the network were identified as strengths, however weaknesses mentioned were the lack of communication to Members, lack of detailed briefings to the head chairs, infrequent city visits with a lack of follow-up, with the result that the Council was at risk of being perceived as yet another Northern Ireland organisation visiting a US city with few tangible outcomes as a result.

To this end, a re-organisation of the Friends of Belfast has been recommended as the key to the success of this initiative and the Action Plan as contained in Appendix I is reflective of this.

There are a number of key priorities that must be consolidated in order to build on the strengths of the network.

Key Priorities

1. Structure of Network and Expansion

It is suggested that the members of the network are internally categorised by their specific industry sector based on the sector clustering model which would enable Belfast City Council to target specific areas for specific initiatives. It is also suggested that the members are internally classified under three headings encompassing:

- * VIPs: decision makers senior level
- * Senior: manager or junior level executives
- * Government/civic: Belfast City Council officer counterparts sharing best practices

This would enable the different types of members to receive targeted information and allow Belfast City Council to ensure that the correct type and level of information is being delivered to the members.

The expansion of the network would then take two forms: leading industry executives are identified in particular cities and approached to become Co-Chair/Friends of Belfast City Advisory Group and senior level executive membership is grown organically through the promotion of Council initiatives based on existing business plans.

2. Focus of Initiative

Whilst it is strongly recognised that given the current economic climate, foreign direct investment can no longer be a priority, it is suggested that the Friends of Belfast initiative should broaden its focus to the promotion of Belfast in the areas of culture, arts, tourism, education, civic exchange of best practices, in addition to developing business and trade links for Belfast based companies with an overall general message of promoting economic development in the city.

3. Communication

Communication to members and the promotion of the work of the network to Belfast based organisations and companies are key requirements to the success of the network. It is suggested that regular, targeted communication is directed at each member of the network and also at a local audience, specifically:

Monthly e-bulletin: incorporate information from existing newsletters outlining key Council initiatives in the areas of:

- Business news highlighting for example, key contracts won by Belfast based companies, a listing of Belfast based companies seeking partnerships in specific sectoral areas and new office openings in the US by local companies;
- Culture & Arts promoting, for example, key cultural festivals within the city;

- Tourism: promoting reasons to visit Belfast and providing members discounted rates/packages for visiting events in the city;
- City news outlining any new developments within the city, for example, new property or urban development initiatives and details of any large tendering opportunities;
- Friends of Belfast work: details of any upcoming Friends of Belfast or Belfast related events;
- Innovation: in the areas of science/technology and also business.

Website: a revised and continually updated website in order to highlight the purpose and aims of the network; key news from Belfast; how to become a member and the incentives for joining; and contact details for the International Relations Officer.

Head Friend/Co-Chair Briefings: initial and subsequent regular or annual briefings are imperative in order to inform the Head Friends and Co-Chairs on the Council's aims, strategy and specific initiatives for the next year while also presenting the current 'Belfast sales pitch' to ensure that these senior executives are well-briefed, can promote the city on the Council's behalf and encourage their peers to join the network and consider doing business in the city.

4. Structured Visit Programme

Feedback from the Friends of Belfast consultation process identified the need for systematic and structured visits four times per annum. It is suggested that these can link into other visits from organizations such as IBL, BVCB and Invest N.I., thereby providing a more co-ordinated and cohesive approach.

Suggested themes for visits include:

- Tourism: participating in the BVCB tourism related industry events to promote Belfast;
- Business: participating in the Investment Belfast annual visit to promote areas of investment in the city;
- Civic visit: representing Belfast in larger scale regional event, for example, organised by the Northern Ireland Bureau;

- Head Friend/Co-Chair Annual Briefing: this could take the form of a visit which would include meetings with civic counterparts in US cities in order to share best practices in, for example, the areas of environmental science parks, urban development, economic development;
- Specific sector events: promoting specific growth sectors in the city, for example, a Creative Industries Showcase event. This could form part of the Civic visit or Head Friend Visit

5. Follow Up

Significant follow up is required to service the members of the network, contacts made through the network, stakeholders on the Belfast side and companies or organisations being promoted through the network. Currently there is a dedicated officer in place, however this resource may not be sufficient to sustain the level of communication, follow up and servicing required to maintain a successful and valuable network. It is therefore essential to use city based contacts to ensure that follow up is undertaken.

6. Relationships at a Local Level

To ensure the success of the network and the relevance of its work to Belfast based organisations, there are several key organisations or departments, whose commitment and input is essential.

A local advisory group could be formed to provide a forum for providing the International Relations Officer with ideas, guidance or advice on the promotion of Belfast using the Friends of Belfast network.

These would include:

Belfast City Council

- * Economic Development Sub-Committee Representatives
- * Belfast City Council's Internal Departments
- * Belfast City Council's Arms' Length Companies

External Organisations

It is suggested that in taking a lead on a co-ordinated and cohesive approach to marketing the city, the Council engages other external organisations:

- * Invest Northern Ireland
- * Local Business
- * Media
- * Education Sector: Universities, BIFHE, Schools/BELB

To this end, given that the priorities above are considered a pre-requisite to the network, an action plan has been developed to ensure the maximising of these priorities. Members are asked to give consideration to the activities contained within the plan that are generic to each city in order to reinvigorate the network.

Proposed Action

A detailed action plan is attached as Appendix I to this report.

Environmental Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

To foster and maintain international alliances.

LED Plan Reference

To promote Belfast as a dynamic and competitive international city.

Budgetary Implications

£75 000

Recommendation

- (i) Note the contents of the report.
- (ii) Give approval to the restructuring of the network.
- (iii) Approve the funding in the sum of £75,000 for the implementation of the Action Plan for the period 2004-2005.

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendations.

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Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee,
Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004

**Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee,
Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004**

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Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee,
Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004

**Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee,
Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004**

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**Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee,
Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004**

**Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee,
Wednesday, 2nd June, 2004**

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During discussion, a Member suggested that it would prove beneficial if the Sub-Committee were to receive a regular update in relation to the progress of the initiative and the benefits which were being derived from it.

After further discussion, during which the Head of Economic Initiatives provided information in relation to the successes associated with the initiative, the Sub-Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations contained within the foregoing report. In addition, the Sub-Committee agreed that regular reports in relation to the progress associated with the Action Plan be submitted for its consideration.

Visit to Belfast by Hefei Delegation

The Economic Development Manager reminded the Sub-Committee that, at its meeting on 3rd March, it had agreed to provide funding in the sum of £6,000 in relation to a proposed visit to Belfast during a week in June, 2004, by a delegation from Hefei, China. In addition, at its meeting on 7th April, the Sub-Committee had approved an additional £17,500 towards the funding of a Business Seminar as part of a programme of events being held in the City in June in connection with China Week.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the delegation had advised the Council that the trip had had to be postponed due to the fact that the Mayor of Hefei had been requested by the Chinese authorities to visit the United States during the week which had been proposed for the visit to Belfast. The delegation had proposed to rearrange their visit for later in the year but had advised the Council that their Mayor was unavailable to travel later in 2004 and had suggested that the delegation postpone their visit until 2005 or, alternatively, that the Council undertake a visit at the end of October to Hefei which would coincide with that City's Annual Hi-Tech Fair. However, the Economic Development Unit had indicated, due to the short timescales involved, that it would not be feasible to organise a visit to the Hefei at this late stage.

She pointed out that work had been progressing to facilitate the visit of the Hefei delegation, including the organisation of a Business Seminar, which was due to take place in the Europa Hotel on 16th June, and, given that the work in this regard had already been commenced, she suggested that the Business Seminar should proceed. In addition, she highlighted that the Chinese Dragon Boat Race would be taking place on 14th June and the Chinese Martial Arts Wushu Association Grading Ceremony would be held also during that week.

The Economic Development Manager explained that the purpose of the Business Seminar was to raise awareness among Belfast-based companies of the opportunities available to them in China and she outlined for the information of the Members the proposed programme associated with the event. She recommended, therefore, that the Sub-Committee affirm its decision of 7th April to host the Business Seminar on 16th June.

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Trip to Belfast by Representatives of
Peshawar City District Government, Pakistan**

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, in relation to a visit to Belfast by a delegation from Peshawar, Pakistan during the period from 10th till 14th May, 2004.

Northern Ireland Local Economic Development Network

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Sub-Committee that the Northern Ireland Local Economic Development Network brought together senior personnel from those Local Authorities working within the Economic Development Sector for the purposes of liaising on strategic issues which affected the development of their respective Districts. The network consisted of a small executive of senior Development and Economic Development officers comprising representatives of the sub-regional groups and met on a six-weekly basis.

She pointed out that, whilst plans were at an early stage, it was intended that Development personnel from Local Authorities would meet approximately three times per year to participate in a seminar programme which would be focused on key strategic issues affecting economic development. The Council had hosted the first of these meetings during May, 2003, and it had focused on the implications of new legislation providing Local Authorities with the power to hold and acquire land.

A second meeting, which had been organised by Derry City Council during April, 2004, had focused on the future of European Union Structural Funds, particularly the funding stream which currently permitted Local Authorities to co-finance economic development measures. Given the implications for the economic development work of Local Authorities, the Network had identified the need to engage in a strategic and concerted effort to lobby those organisations whose decisions would have a direct impact on such funding allocations. In addition, there were a range of policy and operational issues which would impact directly on the work of Local Authority Development Officers in the coming years which would require collaborative work to produce a concerted and co-ordinated approach. In the light of this, each sub-regional grouping, including Belfast, had been asked to consider making a contribution of £10,000 in order that a programme of work could be drawn up to allocate funding to appropriate measures with a view to:

- Raising the profile of the Network;
- Allowing the Network to prepare collaborative responses on key policy and operational issues;
- Gathering information on the range of work carried out by Local Authorities under previous Local Economic Development programmes;
- Lobbying to secure optimum funding under any review of European Union Structural Fund programmes; and
- Organising collaborative events to promote the work of the Network and raise the profile of key issues impacting on Local Authority Development Departments.

Accordingly, the Head of Economic Initiatives recommended, due to the benefits to be derived from the Council's participation on the Network, that the Sub-Committee agree to allocate a sum of £10,000 towards the organisation's programme of work.

The Sub-Committee adopted the recommendation.

Further Education Means Business

The Sub-Committee considered a report in respect of a proposed Council response to the "Further Education Means Business" consultation document. A copy of the report, with the exception of Appendix 1 referred to therein, is set out hereunder:

"Purpose of Report

To advise Members' of the recently published consultation document **Further Education Means Business** and to request approval to submit a response.

Background

The **Further Education Means Business Consultation Document** was launched by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in March 2004 and its purpose is to make policy proposals for the future development of a strategy for the statutory further education sector in Northern Ireland. The review relates solely to the 16 Further Education colleges for which DEL has statutory responsibility.

The proposals emerge from a review undertaken by DEL in response to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning's Study of Education and Training for industry which was published in September 2001. The review also took into account the work of the Review of Post-Primary Education as well as the strategic priorities of the Economic Development Forum, DETI's Regional Innovation Strategy and DEL's Essential Skills Strategy.

Government funds the statutory further education sector for both economic and social reasons. In 2003/04 the total recurrent and capital funding made available to the 16 Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland will be just over £176 million. The sector made provision in 2001/02 for some 120,000 vocational and some 75,000 non-vocational enrolments. The Further Education sector contributes significantly to the economy through the qualifications and skills which its learners achieve, the majority of college enrolments are for courses leading to recognised vocational qualifications.

The sector does face a number of challenges

- **Over 20% of the adult population have weaknesses in literacy or numeracy.**
- **Employers report significant skills problems, especially shortages of technicians and associate professionals.**
- **Too many in the workforce have poor qualifications and a significant proportion of the unemployed have no qualifications at all.**
- **The sector has to deal with those who have gained little or few qualifications while at school.**

Given the aforementioned areas that have been highlighted. The DEL strategy will concentrate on the following areas:

The Further Education sector will be supported by the following three strategic objectives:

- (i) A key driver of local, sub-regional and regional economic development**
- (ii) An active agent of social cohesion**
- (iii) A major promoter of lifelong learning.**

The primary objective will be economic development which will be provided through the following:

- **Sharper focus on basic skills and high level technical skills.**
- **A qualifications based curriculum which is clearly related to economic requirements.**
- **Clear progression routes to higher level skills for students.**
- **Working more closely with schools to ensure that those between 14-19 have access to vocational experience.**

- Developing enterprise as a central element of further education.
- Working actively with other agencies and local employers to provide technical and business management support, assistance with product development and bespoke training.
- Engaging with training and employability to widen entry into employment.

Delivery Mechanism

The outcomes of the strategy review suggests that the incorporation of the colleges should be retained but that the model should be strengthened to promote collaboration more than competition. The strategy will be implemented through a regional delivery plan with consequential college development plans. The colleges will work to deliver the plan and be judged on how effectively and efficiently they perform using agreed performance indicators.

Central to the implementation of this strategy will be through improved interfaces with other educational, social and economic bodies. The key interfaces are with employers, schools, universities, training organisations and voluntary and community bodies. It is anticipated that it will take between 2-3 years to implement this strategy.

A copy of the Executive Summary of Further Education Means Business is contained within Appendix I of this report. Full copies of the report are available to Members on request. The proposed response for Member consideration is contained within Appendix II of this report. The deadline for submissions to DEL is 30th June, 2004.

Environmental Implications

None.

Budgetary Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

To enhance the competitiveness of the City.

LED Strategy Reference

To promote Belfast as a Learning City.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members;

- (i) Note the contents of the foregoing report.
- (ii) Agree to the consultation response to be submitted to DEL.

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendation.

Appendix 2

Belfast City Council

**Response to Further Education
Means Business Consultation**

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recently published FE Means Business Consultation document.

Belfast City Council is the elected voice of the people – the channel through which the views and best interests of its citizens are represented. The Council provides a range of important services that ensure the city functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The Corporate Plan for 2003-2006 sets out four main objectives that aim to realise the vision for a better Belfast:

- Providing Civic Leadership – working with others to ensure that co-ordinated solutions are developed in response to the challenges facing the city.
- Improving the quality of life now and for future generations – creating a cleaner, more attractive, safer and healthier city, with a strong economy.
- Delivering Best Services – providing the high quality, value for money services that people need, when and where they need them.
- Promoting good relations – promoting fair treatment, understanding and respect for people of all cultures.

The Development Committee and Department as well as its three Sub-Committees of Economic Development, Tourism and Promotion and Arts deliver the Development element of the Corporate Plan and works with key stakeholders in the City to effect a more holistic and co-ordinated approach to regeneration in the City.

The Local Economic Development Plan 'Sustaining Competitive Advantage' has a key objective to bring education and business together through partnerships, encourage lifelong learning and promote Belfast as a learning city. Belfast: A Learning City Forum is a key example of this partnership development, where key stakeholders come together to promote Belfast as a learning city. City Council has been instrumental in driving this forward in order to ensure that Belfast becomes a city that fosters creative lifelong learning and that inspires and enables each individual to reach their best through learning for their benefit and the benefit of the wider community.

Belfast City Council Response

Belfast City Council very much welcomes the fact that further education will become more in tune with the needs of the local economy and will be providing a workforce ready to meet the demands of the 21st century economy. Belfast City Council also welcomes the focus on the key strategic objectives of:

- Economic Development
- Social Cohesion
- Lifelong Learning

Whilst this strategy has clearly targeted the area of economic development it does not go into as much detail into the other two critical areas of importance. In particular, concentrated deprivation and social inclusion is a persistent problem within Belfast and focus needs to be placed on area-based activities that will enhance the well-being of quality of life of those living there. This is an area that needs to be further developed.

Lifelong Learning is another critical element that needs to be further developed in order to balance the strategy. There needs to be further emphasis on the concept of learning for learning's sake and its contribution and development to individuals of all ages. Not every person who chooses to enter into learning will progress onto the 'job' ladder e.g. older people may not choose learning as a means of acquiring employment, but nevertheless they want to learn new skills. This needs to be factored into the strategy also.

Skills

A key priority for Belfast City Council through its Capital City Agenda and Local Economic Development Plan is to ensure that Belfast is skilled up to meet the demands of the rapidly changing economy. Linking educational and training establishments with sectoral alliances and companies will facilitate a more intelligent and responsive relationship between supply and demand. To this end Belfast City Council is very supportive of the plans that DEL has to provide a sharper focus on basic skills and high technical skills. This will be further enhanced by the establishment of a qualifications based curriculum which is clearly related to economic requirements.

Vocational Experience

The provision of more vocational qualifications of persons aged between 14-19 is a welcome contribution to this strategy and the development of key relationships with schools and the Education and Library Boards is critical to the development of this area.

Enterprise Development

Enterprise Development is a critical component of further education. A vigorous enterprise culture is central to Belfast and the region's economic success. SME's are major potential growth engines of the economy and critical to reinforcing the competitiveness of the region. Belfast City Council has a vital role to play in promoting business growth and fostering business competitiveness and sustainability through locally based activities that fit within complementary regional, local and area-based strategies, including a range of business development and organisation initiatives.

Through the Belfast First Stop Shop we are supporting a wide range of Enterprise Awareness Activities in partnerships with Schools Colleges of Further Education as well as small businesses. Belfast continues to experience a low business birth rate and co-operation is required with a range of partner organisation to promote and invigorate the entrepreneurial culture.

Work with other Agencies

Working actively with other agencies and local employers will be a key component to the successful implementation of the 'FE means business strategy'. This will lead to a greater integration at a strategic planning level leading to improved delivery and targeting of resources in a holistic and integrated fashion. Working with the business community is a vital component of this in order to provide comprehensive support mechanisms to address

problems and enhance competitiveness. If we are to encourage private sector investment in Belfast then we must ensure that employers have access to the right skills base. Belfast City Council would welcome the opportunity to work actively with both DEL and the FE colleges with respect to this.

However, given the range of networks and fora currently in place to engage with the private sector, it would be essential to go through existing provision rather than developing new partnership arrangements. Belfast City Council has a range of partnership arrangements in place that could contribute to this including the Business Leader Forum, Competitive Belfast Forum and the Learning City Forum.

Delivery Mechanism

The strategy suggests that implementation should be through a Regional Development Plan with consequential development plans which is welcomed in terms of providing a more co-ordinated approach. However, there does appear to be a lack of detail in terms of how this strategy will be implemented. Implementation is key to the success of this strategy and should therefore have more detail contained within the consultation document. Belfast City Council would also welcome further opportunities to consult on how it can contribute to the implementation of this important strategy.”

After discussion, the Sub-Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and approved the comments contained within Appendix 2 as the Council’s response to the consultation document.

West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces

The Sub-Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to participation on the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces Employment Services Board:

“Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update on the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces and to ask for Committee’s opinion on officer representation on the Employment Services Board.

Background

Members will be aware that at the Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee meeting on 4th February, 2004 it was agreed that regular updates would be received regarding the initiatives emanating from the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Force Reports.

At this time a new joint working group had been established to develop an action plan and prioritise areas of spend for initiatives in the Task Force areas. The Joint Working Group comprises a Task Force Liaison Group and representatives from the City Councils and Local Strategy Partnerships in Belfast and Lisburn and the Inter-Departmental Working Group. The action plan that was developed by this group formed the basis of the Integrated Development Fund submission.

A total of £50 million has been earmarked for the fund over 2003-04 and 2004-05. The balance of this will come from a variety of sources including local and central government, European funds and the private sector.

The £30 million IDF bid was submitted to Government Minister, Ian Pearson on 5th May, 2004 and is based around the following key areas;

- Education
- Employability
- Job Creation and Enterprise Development
- Social Economy
- Arterial Routes
- Cultural promotion and tourism in the Greater Shankill area
- Gaeltacht Quarter

A full list of projects is contained within Appendix I.

Employment Services Board

One of the key recommendations emanating from the Task Force reports was the establishment of an Employment Services Board to address employment and employability issues and interventions in Task Force areas.

The Board was incorporated in January 2004 and was launched on 29th March, 2004. Members will be aware that the Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee meeting of 5th November, 2003, approval was given to seek Councillor representation on this Board. Councillors McAuley and H. Smyth are representatives on the Board but this is due to representation

of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Area Partnership Boards respectively. Formal notification received from the Director of the Employment Services Board has stated that the Board is content with the representation of the two Councillors. The Board feels that the inclusion of additional Members would be unnecessary and would possibly create an imbalance in the representation on the Board as a whole.

In addition to Councillor representation, the Board has also requested for Council Officer representation on this Board. To this end, Members are asked to consider the request for the Economic Development Manager to be represented on the Board. Regular update reports will be presented to the Sub-Committee in due course regarding the process of this initiative.

Environmental Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

4.3 To promote dynamic precincts and neighbourhoods.

LED Plan Reference

To promote social cohesion through area based initiatives.

Budgetary Implications

None.

Recommendation

Members are asked to;

- (i) Note the contents of the foregoing report.
- (ii) Endorse the participation of the Economic Development Manager on the Employment Services Board.

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendations.

Appendix 1

West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces

IDF Submission

Theme	Project	IDF bid £
Special Project	Task Force Education Initiative	15,850,000
Employability	Workforce Employment Dev. Centre	1,252,000
	Employment Services Bd.	195,600
Education and Training	Whiterock Children's Centre	380,000
	Workforce Buddies	135,000
Entrepreneurship, Enterprise and Training	Enterprise Units; Lanark Way	110,670
	Conway Mill (Business Units)	737,500
	Enterprise Council	200,000
Social Economy	Ex-Prisoner Hostel	475,000
	Suffolk Social Economy	450,000
	Social Economy Fund	1,000,000
Infrastructure and Planning	Colin Gateway	3,500,000
	Arterial Routes: Shankill & Falls	4,063,750
Unique Issues	Gaeltacht Quarter	1,390,000
	Spectrum Centre	315,000
	The Wall Project	340,000
	Shankill Tourism Centre	160,900
Total		30,555,420"

After discussion, during which it was noted that Councillor McAuley and Councillor H. Smyth participated on the Employment Services Board as representatives of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Area Partnership Boards, the Sub-Committee agreed that the Director of the Employment Services Board be notified that the Sub-Committee wished to be represented on that Board by a nominee from each of the four Party Groupings on the Council not represented by Councillor McAuley and Councillor H. Smyth.

Export Development Programme

The Sub-Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Export Development Programme:

“Purpose of the Report

To present to Members an export development proposal aimed at helping Belfast companies enhance their profitability and competitiveness in Cyprus and to request funding approval for this proposal.

Background

Cyprus is one of the new accession countries that entered the European Union on May 1st 2004 and is a divided country that has many similar trading and political issues to that of Northern Ireland. Over the years the Cyprus economy has gradually developed into a modern economy, with dynamic services, industrial and agricultural sectors and an advanced physical and social infrastructure. It will be a contributor to the European Union as opposed to a beneficiary as it has a very strong economy and a well developed industrial base.

In terms of business development and growth Belfast City Council has been proactively developing relationships with its European counterparts over the past number of years. Council has already been active in a number of European Networks which have provided the City with the opportunity to shape and influence policy, benefit from funding opportunities and share learning experiences across regions within Europe. Over the past year it has become involved in the delivery of a range of Export Development Programmes including:

- The European Outlook Programme which provided 10 companies the opportunity to undertake a trade mission to the Netherlands to explore potential business opportunities in the area**

- The Product Transfer Programme which is providing 5 companies with the opportunity to look at knowledge and technology transfer opportunities throughout Europe
- The Accession States Programme which is providing 10 companies with the opportunity to develop an export marketing programme with the potential of undertaking a trade visit on completion

In addition to this, the Economic Development Committee supported a very successful seminar on 'Doing Business in the European Union' which was attended by nearly 80 companies.

Exposing indigenous businesses to export markets is a key component of sustaining competitive advantage. Belfast enjoys a strategically important location within the European Union which provides a gateway to a vast market of almost 400 million customers. This will provide Northern Ireland businesses with new opportunities for exporting and making links. Such linkages will boost the potential for trade, jobs and prosperity.

The Economic Development Unit is therefore continuing to explore the potential of export development to the Accession States (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and the Slovak Republic) and will provide frequent updates to the Economic Development Sub-Committee in due course.

A proposal has recently been submitted by Lestas Consulting regarding a trade delegation to Cyprus. The company wish to involve companies from Belfast who have had some involvement with exports in the past and wish to investigate the opportunities presenting themselves in a new accession country.

Proposal

Over the last year the Cyprus Commission has appointed an individual to represent Northern Ireland. Nicholas Lestas of Lestas Consulting has been working with the EU Commission Office in Belfast to examine appropriate opportunities that may exist between the two regions. On this basis Lestas Consulting are intending to take a structured trade mission of approximately 8 Belfast companies to Cyprus in October 2004. Lestas Consulting are visiting Nicosia from 16th to 24th June 2004 in order to develop the Cypriot side of the mission, that is, securing venues, organising seminars, investigating the practical aspects of the visit in October and re-establishing relevant economic links with their existing contacts. On their return from Nicosia in June, Lestas Consulting intend to start recruiting the 8 Belfast companies immediately.

In relation to recruitment, Belfast City Council will handle this process in terms of advertising, using Council business lists in order to comply with the equality agenda and to ensure transparency. The recruitment process will therefore be seen as a Belfast City Council initiative with Lestas Consulting as the expert consultants implementing the programme and the Cyprus links for the mission. The consultants' intention is to work with the companies here in Northern Ireland during June to September to develop links, talk to potential trading partners in Cyprus and prepare them for the trade mission during the summer. In particular Lestas Consulting will work with each company in advance of the trip to prepare for the visit. This will be done by:

- Setting their objectives and reasons for visiting
- Identifying types of companies within their channel of distribution they would wish to visit
- Establishing if they are looking for products to buy or customers to sell to
- Examining the options of strategic alliances or direct trade
- Preparing them in terms of presentations and documents they will require

From this position the consultants will trawl their contacts in Cyprus to arrange meaningful meetings. It is hoped that initial contact will be made in August and September by telephone or video conferencing in order to 'warm' the contact and ensure the future meeting is relevant.

Whilst in Cyprus, each company will have a series of meetings specific to their organisation and identified needs. In addition, the programme hopes to set up a few collective seminars on how to do business in Cyprus. This may involve information on finance and practical aspects related to cultural differences and trading practices. Lestas Consulting will also look to develop a few contacts for each business in terms of business organisations that may be able to help them develop their trade relationships.

On returning to Northern Ireland the programme deliverer's will complete an evaluation questionnaire to identify results and ensure programme objectives were met.

The benefits to each company will be identified in advance and documented in a baseline questionnaire at initial meetings with the consultants. The type of benefits will include:

- Increased trade in a new European market**
- Increased trade links, turnover and ultimately profits**
- Sourcing new products to sell in other parts of Europe and Northern Ireland**
- Developing strategic alliances and partnerships**
- Working in new markets**
- Gathering practical and commercial research on products and services**
- Developing new ideas and R&D opportunities**
- Getting a better understanding of the competition**
- Generally increasing awareness of other ways of doing business**

The benefits to Belfast City Council will include:

- Publicity in Belfast regarding involvement with a new member state. The consultant's associate company TARA Communications will be responsible for publicity in the city. Belfast City Council will feature in all aspects of this promotion as the key sponsor and will have the opportunity to make relevant comments in support of its European perspective and links. Council expects to get full promotion with radio, television, newspapers and business magazines as we believe this event is innovative, topical and timely.**
- Publicity in Cyprus – discussions have already begun with key television networks, radio and newspapers in Cyprus to publicise the developing relationships between Cyprus and Northern Ireland. Belfast will feature as the key sponsor.**
- Assisting 8 local Belfast businesses in their efforts to develop trade links in Europe, thus satisfying the objectives of the Belfast City Council's Local Economic Development Plan: 2002-2006 with a view to developing local businesses.**

Given the above information, the following outputs will be set:

- 8 Belfast companies recruited during June – September 2004
- 1 trade mission to Cyprus towards the end of October 2004
- Increased understanding of potential economic links with Cyprus
- New investment opportunities identified

The key industries of most interest are IT & Telecommunications, Pharmaceuticals, Medical Product Provision, Tourism, Banking and Catering.

The cost for each company would be in the region of £1,200 (including accommodation and flights which would be booked collectively based on the discounted rates already secured by the consultants). Belfast City Council would sponsor each company to the value of £800 leaving a cost to the business of £400 to undertake the trade mission. The costs are solely geared towards covering expenses as Lestas Consulting do not intend to factor in any costs for their time as they believe there is future potential in supporting this project in the initial stages.

Belfast City Council will play a key role in identifying the companies who will be involved in the programme.

A contribution will also be requested from the private sector companies in order to take part and increase commitment to the programme.

Environmental Implications

None.

Capital City Strategy Reference

To drive the economic growth of Belfast.

LED Plan Reference

Outward and Forward Looking Region

Budget Implications

£6,400.

Recommendation

It is recommended that members:

- (i) Note the contents of the report**
- (ii) Approve the budgetary implications as outlined above**

Decision Required

To approve the foregoing recommendations”

The Sub-Committee discussed the level of funding which was being requested and, after discussion, agreed to provide funding equivalent to 50% of the total costs of the visit and that the organisers be requested to consider inviting an Elected Member to participate on the visit.

Chairman