

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd August, 2008

## MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Dodds (Chairman); and  
Councillors Adamson, Attwood, M. Browne, W. Browne,  
Convery, Crozier, Kirkpatrick, Lavery, A. Maskey,  
C. Maskey, P. Maskey, McCann, Newton, Rodway,  
Smyth and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillor Mullaghan.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Improvement;  
Mr. T. Salmon, Director of Corporate Services;  
Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and Members'  
Services; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator.

### Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Long.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 6th, 13th and 20th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.

### Filming of Proceedings

The Head of Committee and Members' Services reported that a request had been received from the Ulster Television broadcasting company seeking permission to film part of the proceedings to use as background shots for a news item on the proposed homecoming parade and civic reception to mark the military's return from their tour of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan which the Committee would be considering later in the meeting.

The Committee acceded to the request and the representatives of the broadcasting company were admitted to the meeting.

**Cross-Cutting Issues**

**Presentation - Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group**

(Ms. D. Murtagh, Principal Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, had passed unanimously the following Notice of Motion:

“Belfast City Council calls on the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Northern Ireland Executive to make the completion of the new regional hospital for children and women, on the site of the Royal Group of Hospitals, a matter of top priority in the next comprehensive spending review.

The Council calls on the Minister of Health and the Executive to secure the resources now for clearing the site, which is an essential first step in progressing the new hospital for children and women.

The Council agrees to work in partnership with the Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group to lobby the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly to secure the capital funds necessary to build the new regional hospital for children and women.”

The Head of Committee and Members’ Services reported that copies of the Motion had been forwarded to both the Assembly and the Minister for Health. A response had been received from the Minister for Health in which he had indicated that his Department had not received adequate funding in the current budget allocation for the new regional hospital. However, he had commissioned a review of Capital Priorities over the next 10 years. Also, a revised business case for the new hospital, which would include phased options for the proposed development, including the possibility of advanced site clearance and enabling works, was being developed by the Belfast Trust in the context of the Review. Only when the business case had been submitted and scrutinised could a decision on the funding and timing of the project be taken.

In addition, a response had been received from the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service in which he had stated that it would be inappropriate to engage the Executive in a matter in which the responsible Minister himself had yet to determine the way forward and might himself wish to bring to the attention of the Executive in due course.

The Head of Committee and Members’ Services reminded the Members that, prior to the meeting of the Council, the Committee, at its meeting on 20th June, had agreed to hold an informal meeting or briefing session to enable representations of the Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group to brief the Members on the situation with regard to the new regional hospital. The final part of the Motion had committed the Council to work in partnership with that group but, rather than hold a special meeting, the Chairman of the Committee had felt that it would be more appropriate for the group to make a short presentation at the Committee’s monthly meeting.

The Committee agreed to receive a short presentation from representatives of the Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group and, accordingly, Ms. M. McClean and Ms. J. Poots, representing the Group, were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Ms. McClean outlined the background to the decision to establish a new purpose-built regional hospital for children and women on the Royal site. She stated that there was a need for the Group to bring the issue into the public domain in order to gain support for the proposal and ensure that the Minister fulfilled his obligation to build the new hospital.

Ms. Poots outlined the history of maternity hospital provision, the current needs and the facilities which would be provided in the new Hospital. She indicated that the short-term aim of the Group was to secure, by late Autumn 2008, a commitment from both the Minister for Health and the Northern Ireland Executive to prioritise in the Infrastructure Budget 2008-2011 funding of up to £30 million which would be required to clear the site at the Royal Hospital complex. In addition, the Group was seeking political, financial and practical support for the campaign. In the longer term it was seeking to secure from the Minister and the Executive a commitment to source the funding and commence the building works at the start of the next Comprehensive Spending Review, which was scheduled for 2011.

The deputation then answered a number of questions, thanked the Members for receiving them and retired from the meeting.

During discussion in the matter, the Chairman (Councillor D. Dodds) pointed out that the Committee would be considering later in the meeting a request from Mr. William McKee, Chief Executive Officer, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, seeking permission to address the Committee on health issues and she suggested that the question of the business case for the new Regional Hospital could be raised at that time.

The Committee agreed to the Chairman's suggestion and agreed also that ways in which the Council could support the campaign either financially or otherwise be investigated and that a report thereon be submitted for the Committee's consideration in due course.

#### **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust – Request to make a Presentation**

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from Mr. William McKee, Chief Executive Officer, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, seeking permission to address the Committee on health issues. The Trust was commencing a formal consultation process on how it delivered health and social care to the people of Belfast. It had already forwarded to Elected Members its proposed plans for service delivery and felt that a meeting with the Committee would provide an opportunity to discuss the Trust's proposals in more depth.

The Committee agreed that a special meeting, to which all Members of the Council would be invited, be held for this purpose. In addition, the Committee agreed that Mr. McKee be advised that the Committee would wish to be provided at the meeting with an update on the preparation of the business case and an indicative timetable for the new Regional Hospital.

## **Emergency Planning**

### **August, 2008 Flooding Update**

The Chief Executive advised Members that, following notification from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service that it was responding to a number of reports of flooding to dwellings and roads across the City, the Council's Emergency Team had been assembled at 4.30 p.m. on Saturday, 16th August in order to help coordinate the response to the flooding in support of the emergency services. He tabled for the information of the Members a report providing an update on the actions which had been undertaken by Council staff and the relevant agencies during and after the flooding.

He stated that the response to the flooding had identified the need for more coherent working between the agencies involved and that the Emergency Planning Team would be preparing a report which would review the reasons for and the response to the flooding and a report thereon would be submitted to the Committee for consideration in due course.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and, while recognising that improvements to emergency responses were always necessary, commended the work of the Emergency Planning Team and all those Council officers and agencies who had been involved in assisting the victims of the flooding.

## **Corporate Plan and Performance Management**

### **Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Forward Work Plan for the Committee for the period August till December, 2008:

#### **"Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to present a forward work plan for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the period August – December 2008.**

#### **Relevant Background Information**

**The key issues section below summarises the key areas of committee activity over this period. Appendix One provides a detailed work plan for the committee for the period August – December 2008.**

#### **Key Issues**

**The key work areas for the coming months for the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee are outlined below. It should be noted that this represents a heavy workload for the Committee which might necessitate the holding of a special Strategic Policy & Resources Committee meeting each month in addition to the**

regular meeting in order for the Committee to fully discuss and address major corporate issues e.g. the setting of the 2009/2010 budgets. Authority to hold these additional special meetings (as necessary) is requested subject to date agreement with the Chairman of the Committee.

**Key areas of work – August 2008 – December 2008**

***August 2008***

**Finance – Update report on the rates and draft Council responses to 2 consultation documents on rates issues will be provided by the Director of Corporate Services. An update report on the Arc 21 Residual Waste Treatment facilities will be provided by the Director of Improvement**

**Human Resources – Update report on the attendance figures for the 1st quarter of 08/09**

**Asset Management – Update reports on the future use of the City Hall and addressing the needs of short-term accommodation will be presented by the Director of Improvement**

***September 2008***

**RPA - Update report on the RPA process**

**Corporate Plan – Members will be updated on the outcome of the Equality Screening process of the Corporate Plan. A report on the organisational consequences of the Corporate Plan will also be presented**

**Financial Planning 09/10– detailed report on the financial planning cycle for 09/10 to be presented which links to corporate and business planning in order to ensure Council priorities are properly resourced will be presented by the Director of Corporate Services**

**Efficiency Proposals for 09/10 – Members will be requested to agree a draft efficiency programme for the financial year 2009/10**

**Governance – An update report on the development of the overall Governance Framework of the Council in terms of decision making, audit and the statement of internal control**

**Accountability Framework – Members have been presented with outline frameworks for each of the key elements of the committee's work. A report on the Accountability Framework which will underpin the delivery of the Corporate plan will be presented to Members**

Human Resources - reports on the control of employee numbers and the Appraisal Scheme for the Chief Officers and Heads of Service will be presented. The Appraisal Scheme is linked to the Accountability Framework which will also be presented to Members at this meeting

Rates – Special Meeting - on the issue of rates with the Chief Executive of Land and Property Services in attendance

*October 2008*

Corporate Plan – Report on how the Council will move towards area and thematic working on a more consistent basis and how the programme management and accountability arrangements for the main programmes and projects will be handled

Finance – the Director of Corporate Services will present to Committee reports on the affordability of corporate priorities versus ongoing business as usual and the impact of corporate priorities on the core budgets

Information Management –Strategic information management is central to the Council's Improvement Agenda. The Director of Corporate Services will present a draft Information Management Strategy and proposed work plan for 2009/2011

Governance – Members requested a review of the Council's new governance arrangements including working groups in May. The results of this review will be presented for Members attention. A report containing proposals for how Committee decisions on the new modern.gov system will be tracked will also be presented to Members

City Investment Strategy - Titanic Signature Project – Special Meeting - the results of the due-diligence report on the Titanic signature Project will be presented to Members

*November/December 2008*

Finance – the Director of Corporate Services will update the Committee on the mid year financial position and notify the Committee of the revised budgets and rates income

**Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to agree:

1. the forward work plan for August– December 2008 outlined above and detailed in Appendix 1

2. the holding (if necessary) of a special Strategic Policy & Resources Committee meeting each month during the period September 08 – December 08 to address major corporate issues. Dates for these specials will be agreed with the Chairman of the Committee.

STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
WORK PLAN AUGUST – DECEMBER 2008

Appendix One

<b>August 2008</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Report</b>
Strategic planning & Performance Management	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee Work Plan Aug 08 – Dec 08
Finance	Update report on the rates and draft Council responses to 2 consultation documents on rates issues
	Arc 21 Residual Waste Treatment Facilities – Update
Assets	Future use of City Hall Short term accommodation
HR	Ex-Offenders Scheme Attendance – 1st Quarter 08/09

<b>September 2008</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Report</b>
RPA	Update report
Strategic Planning & Performance Management	Corporate Plan – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update on outcome of equality screening</li> <li>▪ Organisational consequences of Corporate Plan</li> </ul> Accountability Framework
Finance	Financial Planning 2009/10 Efficiency proposals 2009/10
Governance	Update on Decision Making Framework
HR	CO & HoS (Sen Mgrs) Appraisal Scheme Control of employee numbers

<b>October 2008</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Report</b>
Strategic Planning & Performance Management	Corporate Plan – Report on how the Council will move towards area and thematic working on a more consistent basis and the programme management and accountability arrangements for the main programmes and projects in the Corporate Plan

<b>October 2008 (continued)</b>	
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Core Budgets &amp; Corporate Priorities Affordability = ± BAU/Corporate Schemes</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Overall review of new governance arrangements including working groups Proposals for content of quarterly reports on tracking of committee decisions (through modern.gov)</b>
<b>Information Management</b>	<b>Draft Information Strategy and proposed work plan for 2009/2011</b>
<b>City Investment</b>	<b>Titanic Signature Project – Results of due-diligence report</b>

<b>November/December 2008</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Report</b>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Update on mid year financial position and revised budgets and rates income”</b>

A Member stated that concern had been expressed at the meeting of the Development Committee at the length of time which it was taking to implement the Strategic Neighbourhood Action Plans and sought assurances that the report to be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on Local Area Working would not unduly delay this process.

The Chief Executive indicated that the Committee had agreed to commission a report on the resource, service delivery and implementation consequences of Local Area Working in the context of the roll out of the Corporate Plan and that this report would serve to inform the implementation timetable.

The Committee agreed that an update report on the issue should be submitted to the Committee, adopted the recommendations and approved the Forward Work Plan for the period up to December, 2008.

### **Democratic Services and Governance**

#### **National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region) Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting and the Local Authority Members' Association Annual Winter Seminar**

The Committee was advised that the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region) would be holding its Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting in Newry on 12th and 13th September. The keynote address at the conference would be made by the Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment. The conference theme was “2009 and Beyond” and a significant number of key politicians and decision-makers directly involved with the implementation of the Review of Public Administration were expected to attend. The cost of attendance would be approximately £297 per delegate.



In addition, the Local Authority Members' Association was holding in Castlebar, County Mayo on 28th and 29th November its Annual Winter Seminar. The programme was relevant to all Members serving in Local Government across the island of Ireland. The approximate cost of attendance for each delegate was approximately £465.

The Council had been represented at both events in previous years. Those Members who had attended had found that each of the events had provided a valuable opportunity to increase their awareness of Members' issues and to discuss with other Councils issues of mutual interest and concern.

The Committee agreed to authorise the attendance at the National Association of Councillors Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting and the Local Authority Members' Association Annual Winter Seminar of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region), the Head of Committee and Members' Services (or their nominees) and a representative of each of the other Party Groupings on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members and approved the payment of the appropriate travelling and subsistence allowances in connection therewith.

#### **Requests for the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee was advised that the undernoted requests for the provision of hospitality had been received:

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
The Law Society of Northern Ireland	The Law Society of Northern Ireland Council Dinner  26th September, 2008  Approximately 300 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	This event seeks to provide an opportunity for representatives from the judiciary, business, voluntary and community sectors to come together to acknowledge the achievements of the society. The event aims to highlight best practice and to develop relations with key stakeholders.  This event meets the Council's Corporate Strategic Objective of Improving Quality of Life, Now and for Future Generations	The provision of hospitality in the form of wines and soft drinks.  Approximate cost £1,200  Approximate budget remaining £ 176,120

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Templemore Amateur Swimming Club	Reception to mark the 25th Anniversary of Templemore Amateur Swimming Club  1st November, 2008  Approximately 150 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks and finger buffet reception	This event seeks to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Templemore Amateur Swimming Club and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city.	The provision of hospitality in the form of a soft drinks and finger buffet reception  Approximate cost £1,500  Approximate budget remaining £ 174,620
The Egyptian Society of Northern Ireland	'Lets Celebrate Together' Dinner  3rd October, 2008  Approximately 100 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	This event seeks to showcase the Egyptian community in Belfast to a range of ethnic minority groups and the local community. The event will include the performance of traditional Egyptian dance and music along with a presentation on Egyptian Culture.  This event meets the Council's Corporate Strategic Objective of Improving Quality of Life, Now and for Future Generations and Promoting Good Relations	The provision of hospitality in the form of wines and soft drinks.  Approximate cost £400  Approximate budget remaining £ 174,220

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Homecoming Parade and Civic Reception to mark the Military's return from their Tour of Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan**

The Committee was advised that a number of Members had suggested that a homecoming parade followed by a civic reception should be held in the City to mark the Royal Irish Regiment's return from their tour of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. The homecoming parade and civic reception for the Royal Irish Regiment would aim to recognise the roles, responsibilities and sacrifices of the Regiment and their families during the recent tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Head of Committee and Members' Services reported that, following lengthy discussions with Senior Officers from the Royal Irish Regiment and Military Headquarters, which had responsibility for the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and the Army, it was clear that there was a preference to have one parade and civic reception for all three services of the military. Due to the logistical restraints and the need to

recognise all those who had been involved in the tours in Iraq and Afghanistan it was felt that the holding of a parade and civic reception in honour of the sacrifice made by the three services would be the most appropriate way of acknowledging all those involved.

Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee approve the provision of a civic reception on 2nd November, 2008 following a parade within the City organised by Military Headquarters to mark the Military's return from their tour of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Moved by Councillor Rodway,  
Seconded by Councillor Stoker,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation.

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

### **Review of the Civic Forum**

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association indicating that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister was undertaking a review of the Civic Forum. The Forum was a consultative mechanism and had been established under Section 56 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which required the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, with the approval of the Assembly, to make arrangements for obtaining views on social, economic and cultural issues. The membership of the Forum was comprised of ten sectors of civic society, including the business, trade union and voluntary sectors.

The Committee agreed that responses to the Review of the Civic Forum be left to the individual Political Parties.

### **Finance**

(Mrs. H. Loudon, Head of Financial Services, attended in connection with these items.)

### **Minutes of the Meeting of Audit Panel**

In considering the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel held on 5th August, the Committee's attention was drawn to the decision of the Panel under the heading "Staff Travel Policy". An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

#### **"Staff Travel Policy**

*The Panel considered the undernoted report:*

#### **'Relevant Background Information**

***A report was tabled at the 11 March 2008 meeting of the Audit Panel advising Members that a taskforce group had been established to Review the Approval and Control Processes and Travel Policy with the following objectives:***

### Objectives

1. *To review current approval and control processes and the travel policy*
2. *To identify improvements to both processes and policy which matches the new financial systems, takes account of the human resources strategy and workforce development plan's needs and which provides for continuous improvement*
3. *To ensure that the new processes enable improved access to information which enables improved on-going scrutiny of value for money and greater accountability, both internally and externally.*

*A progress report was tabled at a meeting of the Audit Panel on 13 May 2008. The Audit Panel requested that the proposed policy be tabled for approval at this meeting.*

### Current Position

*Members of the Audit Panel will be aware that Belfast is by far the largest Council in Northern Ireland. In order to provide quality, value for money services to the ratepayers of the city employees need to have their knowledge and skills developed to help build organisational capacity. Training and developing staff is also important in motivating employees and in retaining their knowledge and skills in the organisation.*

*Included within the Council's workforce development plan are the key themes of leadership development, skills development and organisational development. These reflect the key workforce development themes at a national level.*

*Frequently employees need to look outside Northern Ireland to access these improved skills and knowledge. This is done by going on study visits to similar sized Councils in Great Britain, attending training courses, conferences and seminars which are not available in Northern Ireland. These new skills and knowledge can be transferred to other employees in the Council which may reduce the need for other staff to attend an event.*

*Employees also travel outside Northern Ireland to promote the city as an excellent place to invest in and to attract tourism. There is evidence to support the substantial economic returns for the city in engaging in this type of activity.*

*The Council has successfully attracted in excess of £8million in European funding to support a number of initiatives which would not otherwise benefited the city. It is mandatory in most European funded projects to attend meetings in Europe and to have European partners to compliment the work of an initiative. The travel costs to Europe and the cost of any employees attached to a project are partly funded by the programme.*

*There is a risk associated with being too restrictive with staff travel with employees not attending relevant conferences, study visits, etc with the result that “best practice” knowledge and new skills are lost to the Council with the associated risk of ratepayers not receiving innovative quality services.*

*The Council currently has an authorisation process for staff attending events and many services also require employees to detail a business case to support their application and a post evaluation report on completion of the event. These procedures were examined and good practice identified for inclusion in the proposed draft Policy for Staff Attending Events, which is attached.*

*In summary it has addressed the following issues:*

- 1. The scope covered by the policy, including what is excluded from the policy.*
- 2. The principles that must be adhered to for employees attending events. This includes a mandatory business case to support an application and a post evaluation of the benefits.*
- 3. The arrangement for travel which are set out in a Travel Protocol.*
- 4. The need to capture multiple invitations to conferences, seminars, etc which are routinely received by the Council.*
- 5. The approval process and the signing off by senior management.*
- 6. The arrangements for the payment of subsistence.*
- 7. The annual publication of staff attendance at events and a policy detailing what will be included.*

8. *The reporting arrangements to the Audit Panel and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and to the Chief Officers Management Team.*

**Resource Implications**

*None in the context of this report.*

**Recommendation**

*The Audit Panel is requested to recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the Policy for Staff Attending Events and the associated appendices.*

**Key to Abbreviations**

*None*

**Documents Attached**

*Draft Policy for Staff Attending Events and associated appendices.*

**DRAFT POLICY FOR STAFF ATTENDING EVENTS**

*Belfast City Council employees will, from time to time, need to attend events such as training courses, conferences, study visits, etc., in order to discharge their duties. This could result in an employee being absent from normal working and may involve travel and other costs.*

*We have developed this policy to support the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Accounting Manual relating to employees attending events. It has been developed to ensure that approval and control processes are robust and that attendance at such events provides value for money for the rate payers of Belfast.*

**1.1 Scope**

*This approval and control process is for all events which senior management have to approve and addresses the need to ensure consistency between types of events covered in this policy with the categories of events specified on the application form. This will include attendance at:-*

- *Conferences as a speaker representing the Council or a delegate.*
- *Study visits.*

- *Personal/professional development events (excluding part-time study)*
- *Service and operational visits*
- *Research, study and best practice visits*
- *Promotion of the City events and Trade Fairs*
- *Best in Class award ceremonies*
- *Meetings of professional bodies and groups where payments are paid by BCC even where it is refunded partly or in full by the body to the Council.*
- *Other bodies with which the Council is undertaking work and is directly chargeable by the Council to the customer.*

**Exclusions from this process are:-**

- *Business development days (away days) as they will be subject to a separate policy and application form.*
- *Attendance at residential courses as part of a part-time study course which will be approved through the part time study application process.*
- *Attendance at meetings of professional bodies and groups where the full attendance cost is paid directly by the body concerned or reimbursed directly to the attendee. Approval to attend such events must be requested as a business absence for employees who use the clockwise system.*
- *Attendance at conferences/courses/study visits and meetings which have no cost to the Council. Approval to attend such events must be requested as a business absence for employees who use the clockwise system.*
- *Attendance at a corporate meeting or training course organised by another Council Department. (If there is a charge from an external source e.g. venue, speaker, etc then a purchase order must be raised through the SAP system in advance of the event).*

**2.0 Principles**

- 2.1** *Attendance at all events must be supported by a business case detailing the benefits to the employee, to the Council and in providing services to the public.*
- 2.2** *A post evaluation form for every event must be completed.*

- 2.3 *Attendance at events will normally be by one person. If more than one person is attending this must also be justified in the business case.*
- 2.4 *If an employee is attending an event as a speaker representing the Council any fee earned must be repaid to the Council. If payment is in the form of a gift the Gifts/Hospitality Policy must be complied with. Any potential conflict of interest must be registered.*
- 2.5 *Personal development/professional development events must be linked to the employee's job and will normally be part of the employees Personal Development Plan (PDP) and/or a professional body's requirement for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). An employee who is a member of professional body which has CPD requirements must ensure that these are incorporated into his/her PDP.*
- 2.6 *Attendance at award ceremonies must be restricted to three employees. In instances where more than one project is shortlisted in the same award scheme and more than three employees are required to attend the Director of Corporate Services will exercise discretion in deciding if sending additional employees is appropriate.*
- 2.7 *Any event which is also to be attended by a Councillor must have Committee approval prior to the event.*
- 3.0 **Travel Arrangements**
- 3.1 *Travel to an event must conform with the current Travel Protocol which can be found at Appendix 1.*
- 4.0 **Capture of Multiple Invitations to Events**
- 4.1 *Multiple invitations to conferences, seminars, etc., are received within the Council regularly.*
- 4.2 *A Protocol will be developed to set out how the Council will deal with this issue.*
- 5.0 **Approval Process**
- 5.1 *All attendances at events, including those approved by Committee, must be approved in advance of the event by the Head of Service (or appropriate senior manager), or their nominee and the Chief Officer (or nominee).*



- 5.2 *All requests to attend events must be accompanied by a business case detailing the benefits to the employee, the Council and in providing services to the public.*
- 5.3 *Where there are multiple requests to attend an event Heads of Service (or appropriate senior manager), or their nominee, and Chief Officers (or nominee) must satisfy themselves that a sound business case exists to approve the attendance of more than one person.*
- 5.4 *A post event evaluation form must be completed for each event and signed off by the senior manager who approved the attendance at the event.*
- 5.5 *The Director of Corporate Services will approve attendances for Chief Officers for events held within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.*
- 5.6 *The Chief Executive will sign the approval form for attendances by Chief Officers for events held outside the United Kingdom and Ireland.*
- 5.7 *The Director of Corporate Services will sign the approval form for all events to be attended by the Chief Executive*
- 5.8 *Financial Services will be responsible for maintaining the data base for all requests for attending events, in monitoring compliance with the policy and in providing information to assist in corporate management.*
- 6.0 **Subsistence**
- 6.1 *Subsistence is payable on eligible expenditure incurred in the course of attending events on behalf of the Council. Details on the arrangements for payments are covered in Appendix 3.*
- 7.0 **Publication**
- 7.1 *Information on events attended by staff will be published on an annual basis by 30 June of each year under the Council's Publication Scheme. The first year of publication will relate to events attended during 2008/9 i.e. the first date for publication will be 30 June 2009.*

7.2 *A policy detailing the arrangements for the publication of information is attached at Appendix 4.*

8.0 **Reporting Arrangements**

8.1 *COMT will receive an analysis report on the information held in the database every three months.*

8.2 *A quarterly report will be provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee via the Audit Panel.*

9.0 **Guidelines**

9.1 *The application of this Policy is supported by Guidelines.*

10.00 **Effective Date**

10.1 *The effective date of this policy is 1 October 2008.*

**APPENDIX 1**

**Draft Travel Protocol for Employees**

*Belfast City Council employees will, from time to time, need to travel to attend events in order to carry out Council business. As a consequence they may have to travel away from Council locations.*

*This travel protocol has been developed to support the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Accounting Manual regarding staff travel in relation to attending events. It has been developed to ensure that arrangements for travel are robust and consistent across the Council and that the cost of travel provides value for money for Belfast rate payers.*

1.0 **Scope**

- *This protocol applies to all employees of Belfast City Council. The travel protocol for Members' is covered by Regulations made by the government.*
- *It applies to travel relating to events as specified in the Policy for Staff Attending Events.*
- *It does NOT apply to travel which is part of normal day-to-day operational work e.g. from the place of work to carry out maintenance, inspections, etc.*
- *It does NOT apply to travel from the employee's home to their place of work.*

**2.0 Principles**

- 2.1 *Approval for travel to attend events will be through the revised application form. This approval process includes permission to travel on Council business as detailed on the revised application form. Details on how to seek such approvals are in the Policy for Staff Attending Events and in the guidelines for completion of the revised application form.***
- 2.2 *Approval to attend an event with the associated travel must be completed in advance of the event.***
- 2.3 *In certain instances approval by Committee is needed. This must also be obtained in advance.***
- 2.4 *Employees must use the most economical method of travel considering the cost of travel, journey start and end times, subsistence costs, potential savings in officer time and the business needs.***
- 2.5 *Account must be taken of the particular needs which may arise from an employee's medical condition. Management should obtain advice on this from the Council's Occupational Health Service.***
- 2.6 *When employees are travelling with Members to the same event the travel class, etc., for the employee and Member will be the same.***
- 2.7 *Employees must not gain any personal and private advantage from business travel. Any rewards for example points, vouchers, air miles, free travel, etc., should be used solely against future business travel wherever possible and not for private use.***
- 2.8 *Travel and accommodation should be booked and paid for directly by the Council in most instances. The exception to this is when these costs are paid directly by an outside body.***
- 2.9 *The payment of overtime or time off in lieu must comply with the relevant Council's policy and guideline on such matters.***
- 2.10 *All travel should reflect the Council's Policy on Environmental Responsibility.***
- 2.11 *When travel arrangements do not meet this protocol the Director of Corporate Services must be consulted in advance of arrangements being made so that approval may be given.***

**3.0 The Council's Travel Contract**

**3.1 *The Council's travel contract should be used to book travel and accommodation. The cost effectiveness of other options may be considered if there is a clear business case for making savings. Booking with Council's contracted travel agent provides assistance and support that non-contract options do not provide and this should be considered as part of the overall cost. Consideration must be given to the total cost which includes the cost of an employee's time in sourcing suitable carriers and hotels.***

**4.0 Travelling by Air**

**4.1 *The most economical level of ticket must be booked, taking into consideration the requirement of principles 2.4 and 2.5 above.***

**4.2 *Tickets booked must not allow for more than two changes. It may be more cost effective to re-purchase a second ticket rather than allow for time changes when booking. For example it may be cheaper to book with a budget airline and have to re-purchase a ticket than to book a flexible ticket through another airline.***

**4.3 *The lowest available class of ticket must be booked.***

**4.4 *Where an outward long-haul flight (for example in excess of 3 hours flying time) is needed and employees are expected to start working within a few hours of arrival a return business class (or equivalent) ticket may be booked.***

**4.5 *Business lounge access may be purchased if available when there is a "stopover" of more than one hour and the class of travel booked does not include access to an airport business lounge. The Council's contracted travel agency can advise on this.***

**5.0 Travelling by Sea**

**5.1 *Travel by sea and onward by road or rail as opposed to air travel is only an option where the total cost provides a low-cost alternative or where medical opinion requires it. The total cost including the cost of travel, hotel costs, subsistence costs, and mileage, must be taken into account when assessing this option. Consideration must also be given to the potential savings in officer time and the business needs.***

- 5.2 *Where available boat reserved seating may be booked. Employees travelling overnight are entitled to book an overnight cabin which must be on a “single occupancy” basis.*
- 6.0 **Travelling by Land**
- 6.1 *The most appropriate method of travelling by land must be used taking into consideration the overall cost, potential savings in employee time and the business case.*
- 6.2 *An employee’s own private car may be used if it provides a low cost option. Motor mileage will be claimed under the Council’s arrangements for subsistence. An allowance is paid if an employee carries colleagues on business. This may be significantly cheaper than public transport or hire car charges.*
- 6.3 *A vehicle may be hired provided it is a value for money alternative. This may be appropriate if a number of employees are travelling together or where public transport is unavailable.*
- 6.4 *Rail travel must be at standard class unless the journey is greater than 2 hours. A first class ticket may be booked where employees are expected to start work on arrival or to work during the journey.*
- 6.5 *Where available rail reserved seating may be booked. Employees travelling overnight are entitled to book an overnight cabin which must be on a “single occupancy” basis.*
- 6.6 *Travel by Heathrow Express must be at standard class and only undertaken where it is the most appropriate means of travel considering cost, potential savings in employee time and the business case.*
- 6.7 *Employees are permitted to use a taxi for short journeys within towns and cities for example from hotels to conference venues or airports. They may also use taxis for longer journeys where no suitable public transport service is available. These costs are claimed retrospectively through the Council’s subsistence arrangements.*

**7.0 Overnight Stays**

**7.1 *Employees may travel to an event the previous evening when an event starts early in the working day or the employee anticipates that travel time or risk of delay would result in their arriving late for the start of the event, and if this reduces the value of attending the event to the employee and the Council.***

**7.2 *Employees are responsible for settling all accounts for incidental costs before leaving the accommodation. The Council will only meet the cost of the accommodation and any meals previously ordered from the accommodation supplier through the purchasing process.***

**8.0 Extending Stays Beyond an Event**

**8.1 *Employees are permitted to extend their stay beyond an event, either before or after. For absences during the working week this must be approved in advance by their line manager and in line with normal leave procedures.***

**8.2 *If the travel cost for the extended stay is greater than it would have been if the employee had returned at the end of the event then the employee will reimburse the Council for the additional cost (or pay for the additional cost directly to the carrier). If the travel cost is less for the extended stay the employee will not benefit from the lower cost.***

**8.3 *Any additional accommodation costs will be borne by the employee.***

**8.4 *Any other additional costs, for example additional car parking charges, will be paid by the employee.***

**9.0 Travelling with Partners**

**9.1 *A partner may accompany an employee provided they do not compromise the employee in carrying out Council business.***

**9.2 *The employee will be responsible for all additional costs associated with the partner's attendance. Evidence must be provided to the relevant business support staff that these additional costs have been paid. Ideally this should be prior to the commencement of the travel.***

9.3 *The approval of a senior manager must be obtained in advance of an employee arranging to be accompanied by a partner.*

10.0 **Subsistence**

10.1 *Subsistence is payable in arrears on eligible expenditure incurred in the course of attending events on behalf of the Council*

10.2 *In certain circumstances advance subsistence may be made available.*

10.3 *Details for the arrangements for all subsistence, including what is eligible, are covered in the Council's Subsistence Guidelines.*

11.0 **Insurance**

11.1 *Where an employee's own vehicle is to be used it is the employee's responsibility to make sure that there is a proper level of insurance. The Council will not meet any additional costs for insurance. Whilst the employee will wish to consult their own insurer general advice may be sought from the Council's Insurance Unit.*

11.2 *Whilst there is no need for employees to advise the Insurance Unit in advance of individual trips, anyone who has an existing medical condition and who intends to travel on Council business should advise the Insurance Unit. This information will be treated confidentially. Any employee intending to engage in dangerous sports as part of the official visit must inform the Insurance Unit in advance of the visit.*

11.3 *Details of the insurance cover provided to Council employees travelling on Council business is attached at Appendix A. This will be updated annually to employees on renewal of the insurance policy.*

12.0 **Miscellaneous**

12.1 *The cost of car parking at airports or stations can be recouped from the Council under the subsistence arrangements. Employees must minimise costs by using the most cost effective option available.*

- 12.2** *Employees are personally responsible for ensuring that their passport and any visa requirements are up to date to enable them to travel.*
- 12.3** *An employee who is refused permission to travel by a carrier, for whatever reason including invalid or missing documentation, will repay all costs arising to the Council.*
- 12.4** *Employees travelling outside the United Kingdom are responsible for exchanging sterling to the required foreign currency. The Council will meet the cost of one exchange transaction from sterling to another currency and one exchange back to sterling for the same visit. The value of the amount exchanged will not exceed the total amount of subsistence to which the employee would be eligible for the visit. Where the official business involves time in more than one foreign country (other than onward travel time) the Council will meet the exchange costs for each currency on the same basis.*
- 12.5** *The Council will not meet the cost of repairing a mechanical breakdown and/or vehicle recovery for an employee's own vehicle.*
- 12.6** *Any compensation offered by a carrier to an employee, for example, for delayed travel or over-booking, must be declared to their Department on return. Where the compensation involves a monetary payment or future concession on travel these must be paid over to the Council in full as they arise solely from the employee's official work. The employee will be eligible to recoup subsistence costs for the period of any delay in the normal manner.*

**13.0** **Effective Date**

- 13.1** *This protocol will be effective from 1 October 2008.*

**APPENDIX 2**

**Travel Insurance**

*All Council employees and Councillors are covered under the Council's Group Travel Insurance Policy in respect of official Council business and conferences.*



*The policy covers matters such as:*

- *Loss of baggage and personal items.*
- *Medical costs for treatment outside the UK.*
- *Cancellation costs if the person cannot travel due to illness, death of close relatives or other unforeseen circumstances.*
- *Personal liability insurance.*
- *Personal accident cover*

*The insurance applies in respect of trips outside of the Northern Ireland for visits worldwide.*

#### **Emergency Contact Information**

*Assistance is available in the event of a medical or other emergency whilst visiting another country from AIG Lifeline Plus. The telephone number is given on the insurer's emergency travel assistance card which is available from the Insurance Unit. It is strongly recommended that a card or copy of it is issued to each person travelling on Council business.*

*The policy number is 00158 11055 and this must be inserted on the card to validate it.*

*The travel insurance policy does not provide cover for:-*

- *Personal valuables such as jewellery and watches and personal money which should be insured by the member of staff under household insurance.*
- *Hazardous sports activities such as skiing, mountaineering, parachuting etc.*
- *Vehicle insurance for vehicles hired or borrowed.*

#### **Claims**

*In the event of a loss it is important that certain information is obtained by the person travelling to enable a claim to be made at a later stage. If baggage has been lost a report should be obtained from the carrier stating that the baggage has been lost or delayed. If flights have been delayed necessitating overnight accommodation please retain any receipts for emergency expenses and obtain a report from the carrier that the flight has been delayed.*

*For further information please contact – David Smith  
(Insurance Officer)*

*Financial Services Section  
Adelaide Exchange  
24 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8GD  
DDI 028 9027 0517 or Ext 6111  
smithd@belfastcity.gov.uk*

### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **Draft Subsistence Arrangements**

*Belfast City Council employees will, from time to time, need to travel to attend events in order to carry out Council business. As a consequence they may travel and incur expenses which are recoverable under our subsistence rules.*

*These subsistence guidelines have been developed to support the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Accounting Manual. They have been drafted to ensure that claims and payments for subsistence are consistent across the Council.*

#### **2.0 Scope**

- These arrangements apply to all employees of Belfast City Council. The subsistence arrangements for Members' are covered by Regulations made by the government.*
- They apply to food, beverages and incidental expenses which an employee incurs because of attending events as specified in the Policy for Staff Attending Events.*
- It will also include reimbursement for travel and accommodation incurred directly by the employee. Payment of travel and accommodation will normally be booked and paid for by the Council in advance.*

#### **2.0 Principles**

- 2.1 A full completed application form must be approved prior to attending the event. The Central Transaction Unit (CTU) must be in receipt of the form to enable subsistence to be paid.*

- 2.2 *Subsistence will be paid in arrears for events attended within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Advance subsistence will only be paid in exceptional circumstances.*
- 2.3 *Advance subsistence may be requested for events attended outside the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.*
- 2.4 *Subsistence should be claimed within two weeks of an event. Claims submitted more than three months after an event may not be paid.*
- 2.5 *Advance subsistence should be reconciled within two weeks of an event. Any money unspent should be refunded to the Council no later than two weeks after the event.*
- 2.6 *All claims for reimbursement must be accompanied by valid receipts and claimed on the Council's claim form.*
- 2.7 *Claims without receipts should rarely happen. Expenditure incurred where no receipt is available should be claimed using the "Lost or Unobtainable Receipt Voucher".*
- 2.8 *Subsistence should not be claimed for any meals booked by the Council, for example breakfast, nor should they be claimed if meal(s) are provided by the organisers of the event. If an employee is taking guests for a meal they need to complete a Small Scale Hospitality Form.*
- 2.9 *All claims for subsistence (advanced and retrospective reimbursement) must be made on the appropriate Council form and signed by the appropriate officer. (Currently E7/T2 which is being redrafted to simplify the claim and to improve processing.)*
- 2.10 *The maximum level of subsistence which can be claimed are reviewed annually and issued to all Departments by circular.*
- 2.11 *Claims for expenses outside these guidelines must be referred to the Director of Corporate Services so that approval may be given.*

**2.12** *The Director of Corporate Services will sign the subsistence claim forms for the Chief Executive and Directors.*

**2.13** *The Chief Executive will sign the subsistence claim form for the Director of Corporate Services.*

**3.0** **Eligible Expenditure**

*The following additional expenditure is eligible for reimbursement*

- *Fares paid for taxis, bus, tram, underground, metro, etc.*
- *Publications for Departmental use for example maps, guides, books.*
- *Photographic equipment for Departmental use for example memory cards, films, developing costs.*
- *Laundry and dry cleaning for trips lasting five days or more*
- *One personal phone call home per day of a reasonable length.*
- *All work related phone calls.*
- *The cost of stationery, fax, email, photocopying, internet usage, etc., which is work related.*
- *Parking at airports.*
- *Any other incidental cost which is directly related to the nature of the visit and the appropriate to the employee's job.*

**APPENDIX 4**

**Policy on Publication of Information Relating to Employee Travel**

*To demonstrate the Council's commitment to accountability and openness, and following consultation with the trade unions, we intend to publish annually information on payments made to, and on behalf of, employees in connection with expenditure incurred on travel on official business which is outside of day-to-day operational duties.*

*The information will be published within three months of the end of the preceding financial year. Before publication, employees will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information being published with their Department.*

***The published information will show each event and activity an employee attended and will include details of the:***

- ***Employee's job title***
- ***Employee's Council Department***
- ***Employee's staff number***
- ***Date(s) of the event or activity***
- ***City/town and country in which the event or activity took place***
- ***Description of the event or activity (for example conference name)***
- ***Category of the event or activity (categories to be defined by the organisation)***
- ***Amount paid on travel***
- ***Amount paid on mileage***
- ***Amount paid on accommodation***
- ***Amount paid on subsistence***
- ***Amount paid on fees (for example conference fees)***
- ***Total of any miscellaneous costs***
- ***Total cost in respect of an employee's participation in that particular event or activity***

***This policy will be applied from 1 April 2008 and be reviewed annually by the Records Management Unit and, if appropriate, be amended by the Chief Officers' Management Team to reflect best practice.'***

*The Head of Financial Services drew the Members' attention to various aspects of the proposed Policy and answered questions regarding it. She informed the Panel that a further Freedom of Information request had been received requesting information regarding travel which had been undertaken by Members and staff during the financial year 2007/2008 and that this information was currently being compiled. She informed the Panel further that six months after the Policy had been introduced the Audit, Governance and Risk Section would undertake an audit to ascertain how the new Policy was being complied with.*

*During discussion in the matter, the following points were made:*

- (i) no information had been provided regarding the number of occasions staff had travelled with Members to events and the associated costs;*
- (ii) it would be more beneficial if reports were submitted on a quarterly basis to the Committee responsible for the Departmental staff who had undertaken the travel, rather than the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;*

- (iii) the report made no reference of any intention to reduce the costs associated with staff travel;*
- (iv) the Policy should be amended to enable staff to recoup the costs associated with using ATM machines when abroad;*
- (v) information regarding the length of the event being attended should be included in the information to be published;*
- (vi) where possible personal development courses should be undertaken in Northern Ireland; and*
- (vii) where a member of staff was addressing a conference, who paid for the associated travel and accommodation costs and what approval processes were required to enable the employee to attend the conference.*

*In response to the above comments, the Head of Financial Services indicated that she would provide the Panel with information regarding the number of occasions staff had accompanied Councillors on trips and the costs associated therewith. She pointed out that when employees were addressing a conference they were required to submit the T1 travel form and that most personal development courses attended by staff were held within Northern Ireland.*

*Following further discussion, the Panel:*

- (i) indicated that it wished the costs associated with staff travel to be reduced;*
- (ii) agreed that reports on staff travel be submitted on a quarterly basis to the relevant Committee and the Audit Panel;*
- (iii) agreed that the information contained within Appendix 4 include the duration of the event being attended;*
- (iv) agreed that the Policy be amended to enable staff to recoup the charges incurred when ATM machines were used abroad; and*
- (v) recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the Staff Travel Policy as amended and the associated Appendices.”*

After discussion, during which the Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Financial Services answered a number of questions in relation to the application of the policy, the approval process for attending conferences and seminars and when Committee approval was required, the Committee adopted the recommendation of the Audit Panel.

### **Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 5th August were thereupon approved and adopted.

### **Freedom of Information Enquiry on Travel**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details on a Freedom of Information enquiry which had sought details of travel made outside Northern Ireland by Councillors and staff for the financial year 2007/2008.

### **Rates Finalisation 2007-08**

The Director of Corporate Services reminded the Members that the District Rate accounted for 74% of the Council's total income. It was therefore the most important source of income to support the Council's annual expenditure. In November, 2006 the Land and Property Services agency had provided the Council with an estimate of the amount which the rates would yield in the financial year 2007/08. On the basis of that information the Council had set a District Rate increase of 2.83%. On 9th July, 2008 the agency had informed the Council of the amount which the rates had actually yielded in 2007/08. The difference between the estimate and the actual rates yield was £4,128,553.40. This meant that the Council had been overpaid that amount for the period and would now have to return that sum to the Land and Property Services agency.

The Director of Corporate Services stated that he had written to the Chief Executive of Land and Property Services to express his disappointment at the actual rates figure and to request a detailed explanation for the scale of the claw-back and a re-assessment of the estimate provided to the Council for 2008/09. The agency had not as yet been able to provide a detailed analysis of the causes of the poor finalisation of the rate amount but the Council's own initial work had indicated that the key factors were:

- the model used by Land and Property Services to estimate rate income was not fit for purpose;
- Land and Property Services' performance in collecting rates was poor in areas such as debt collection and vacant properties; and
- changes to the rating policy had led to increased losses in rate income.

The Chief Executive of Land and Property Services had acknowledged receipt of the Director's letter and was preparing a response, though it was anticipated that this would not be received until early September.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that he was assessing currently the impact of the 2007/08 finalisation on the Council's 2008/09 budget, as well as inflationary and Departmental pressures. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to:

- (i) the holding of a meeting of the Party Group Leaders and the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September to discuss the implications of the 2007/08 rates finalisation and consider options to re-align the 2008/09 budget; and
- (ii) the holding of a special meeting in September to discuss the rates report which had been deferred from the June meeting, the impact of the 2007/08 rates finalisation on the 2008/09 budget and the Council's 2009/2010 rate setting process.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Rates Consultation Responses**

The Members were advised that this item had been withdrawn from the Agenda and would be resubmitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on 19th September.

Noted.

### **arc21 - Assets and Borrowing Policy**

The Committee was reminded that arc21 was a Local Government body which had been constituted in legislation and was governed by collective agreement to guide its operations. Belfast City Council was one of eleven District Councils which had signed the collective agreement that detailed five principles which were the foundation of the collaborative approach. These were the:

- Principle of Consensus;
- Principle of Limit of Delegation;
- Principle of Functional Responsibilities;
- Principle of Equitable Shared Funding; and
- Principle of Equal Committee Representation.

In line with the collective agreement and as one of the main funders of arc21, the Council had been consulted in respect of arc21's Asset and Borrowing Policy. Since having been established in 2004, arc21 had incurred only revenue expenditure, having received revenue funds from Member Councils to fund operational expenses and contractual obligations. As part of the ongoing development of the organisation, arc21 would soon become funded through Revenue **and** Capital sources of finance.

The Director submitted for the Committee's consideration a copy of arc21's policy which set out the proposed treatment of Capital Assets and their associated funding. The policy had been written in order to comply with Local Government Accounting Legislation, the Financial Reporting Standards, the Department of the Environment's Accounting Directives, the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and the Statement of Recommended Practice. In addition, guidance would be taken from the Prudential Code. He explained that as a local government body arc21 was subject to the rules and regulations established by the Department



of the Environment in relation to borrowing. Accordingly, arc21 was seeking the Council's endorsement of their Assets and Borrowing Policy and the Director indicated that he was content and recommended that such endorsement be given. He stated that all the other Member Councils had received similar requests and had been positive in their endorsement.

The Committee agreed to endorse the Assets and Borrowing Policy of arc21, a copy of which was available for inspection on the Council's intranet site.

### Human Resources

(Ms. J. Minne, Acting Head of Human Resources, attended in connection with these items.)

### Industrial Action - July 2008

The Committee was reminded that, having failed to agree on the 2008/09 National Joint Council Pay Conditions, the Trades Unions had during June, 2008 balloted their members on the taking of industrial action. Four Unions had voted in support of the taking of industrial action and, as a result, strike action had taken place on a national level on 16th and 17th July, 2008. The strike action had not applied to craft workers, who were employed under different terms and conditions, while UCATT had not balloted their members and the GMB had voted against strike action.

National figures had indicated that approximately 90,000 employees had been on strike on 16th July, representing around 8% of the Local Government workforce of 1.2 million. That figure had been slightly lower on 17th July. The overall figure for Northern Ireland had not as yet been confirmed, although some Councils had reported that up to 24% of staff had been on strike. Given that the level of trade union density in Northern Ireland was significantly higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it was unsurprising that the Northern Ireland figures for participation were likely to be higher than the national average. The breakdown of the number of Belfast City Council employees who had participated in the industrial action was as follows:

	<b>16th July</b>	<b>17th July</b>
<b>Monthly paid</b>	212	203
<b>Fortnightly paid</b>	528	516
<b>% of workforce</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>

The Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Services had met with the Party Group Leaders on 3rd July in order to discuss the contingencies to be put in place during the strike and this had ensured that disruption to the public had been minimised. A co-ordinated approach to communication with the Members, the media and the workforce had been planned, agreed and implemented. The impact on service delivery and key sites across the Council had been monitored on the days of action by a Central Information Control Group.

The Director of Corporate Services reported that the main areas affected by the industrial action had been Cleansing Services, Waste Management, Community Services and the Parks and Leisure Department. However, considerable efforts had been made to ensure that disruption to the public was minimised through media updates, leaflet drops to householders and public notices. A number of key events had progressed successfully on the days of the industrial action, including the Rose Trials event in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park and the Opera in the Park at Botanic Gardens.

The Director advised the Members that the National Employers Organisation, UNISON and Unite had announced that they would enter into further negotiations with the aim of securing an agreed employment package which would resolve the current dispute. The agreed talks had begun on Wednesday, 13th August and would continue until Friday, 22nd August. No dates had been planned for further industrial action and the Members would be provided with updates on progress.

After discussion, during which the Members expressed their disappointment that the children's summer schemes had not been exempted from industrial action, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

#### **Absence Management - First Quarter, 2008/09**

The Committee was advised that absenteeism for the period from April till June, 2008 was showing an average of 2.79 days lost per employee, which represented a decrease of 0.70 days per employee on the previous quarter. It represented also a decrease of 0.56 days per employee for the same period in the previous year, when the figure had been 3.35 days. This meant that the Council was on target to meet its 2 day target reduction by 2010/11. It was pointed out that 75.31% of staff had had no absence during quarter one, with the number of staff with long-term sickness absence having reduced from 6.85% at the same time last year to 5.29%.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

#### **Review of Corporate Health and Safety Management Arrangements**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **"Background Information**

At the COMT meeting on 27 May 2008 a paper was presented by the Director of Legal Services entitled 'Review of Health and Safety Management Arrangements and Review of the implications of the Corporate Manslaughter Act.' The purpose of this report was to bring Chief Officers up to date with:

- The Corporate Manslaughter Act 2007
- Progress on the ongoing Corporate Review of Health and Safety Management Arrangements (being undertaken by Audit, Governance and Risk Services)
- The Joint Insurance Working Group

At the above meeting COMT agreed that Mr Quigley would convene a meeting with Mr Salmon and Mr Francey when the report by Audit, Governance and Risk Services had been prepared. It was also agreed that, after this meeting, a further report would be submitted to COMT outlining the action that would be required to link the work being carried out by the Health and Safety Working Group (i.e. the group overseeing the corporate review / audit) and the Joint Insurance Working Group; the strategic positioning of the Workplace Health Unit and the resourcing necessary to ensure that the Council discharged adequately its responsibilities in this area.

The purpose of this report is therefore to provide an update to Committee on these issues and to make recommendations regarding how the issues arising can be taken forward.

It should also be noted that, during the course of the ongoing review, the Workplace Health Manager resigned from his post in the Council. This was formally noted by COMT on 9 June 2008.

#### **Key Issues**

##### **1. Corporate Review of Health and Safety Arrangements (AGRS audit)**

With regard to the Corporate Review of Health and Safety Arrangements, Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) has now completed this review. The key issues arising from the review are as follows:

- AGRS has provided 'amber' level assurance i.e. risks are controlled to an acceptable level but the system of controls could be enhanced.
- AGRS has confirmed that there are controls in place to address the key elements set out in the Health and Safety Management framework 'Managing Health and Safety: five steps to success' (HSG65)
- AGRS has identified that the control environment could be strengthened further by the implementation of improvements to the arrangements for the corporate management and reporting of health and safety and that such improvements could improve the provision of assurance to Committee and Chief Officers on health and safety.

**2. Meetings of Directors of Legal, Corporate and Health and Environmental Services and AGRS**

The Director of Legal Services convened meetings with the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Health and Environmental Services and representatives from AGRS on 21 July 2008 and 30 July 2008 to discuss:

- The findings / recommendations included in the audit report 'Corporate Review of Health and Safety Management Arrangements'
- The strategic positioning of the Workplace Health Unit, including how it related to the Joint Insurance Working Group and the risk management function
- The resourcing necessary to ensure that the Council discharged adequately its responsibilities in this area

The respective officers were in general agreement with the recommendations included in the report and began to discuss the practical issues associated with implementation. The officers agreed that:

- Clarification on the role and responsibilities of a new corporate health and safety manager, at a senior level, is required. It is anticipated that the new senior corporate health and safety manager will be an enhanced role that replaces the vacant post of Workplace Health Manager.
- A job description should be developed so that the proposed post of senior corporate health and safety manager can be recruited at the earliest opportunity.
- The appointment of the senior corporate health and safety manager is critical to the implementation of the majority of recommendations arising from the audit report on health and safety.
- The newly appointed senior corporate health and safety manager would report, in the first instance, to the Director of Corporate Services.
- The strategic positioning of the new post of senior corporate health and safety manager, the Workplace Health Unit and its relationship with other separate but related risk areas should ideally be aligned to the Councils review of the 'centre'.

- If the review of the 'centre' is not progressed in the near future then consideration should be given to appointing a consultant to recommend appropriate structures and reporting lines for the new post of senior corporate health and safety manager, Workplace Health Unit, Insurance and Risk Management activities.

#### Resource Implications

- Financial implications relating to structural changes will be met from existing resources.
- There would also be a financial cost should it be considered necessary to appoint a consultant to carry out a discrete piece of work as outlined above.

#### Recommendations

Committee is requested:

- To note the legislative change incorporated in the Corporate Manslaughter Act 2007 and the key issues arising from the review of Corporate Health and Safety arrangements.
- To establish a post of Senior Corporate Health and Safety Manager (grade to be determined through job evaluation).
- To delete the post of Workplace Health Manager (post recently vacated).
- To realign the work of the Insurance Unit and the Workplace Health Unit in line with the recommendations of the review of Corporate Health and Safety arrangements.

#### Key to Abbreviations

**AGRS** Audit, Governance and Risk Services  
**COMT** Chief Officers Management Team  
**HSG65** Successful Health and Safety Management, Author: Health and Safety Executive, Series Code HSG, Series Number 65"

During discussion in the matter, the Director of Corporate Services indicated that there was a need for the Council to establish such a post in order to co-ordinate all the different aspects of Health and Safety Management and provide a single point of accountability for those matters.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to a further report on the overall costs associated with the establishment of the post being submitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting on 19th September.

### **Work Experience for Ex-Offenders**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to work experience for ex-offenders to enable further information to be provided.

### **Standing Order 55 - Employment of Relatives**

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Order 55 and the authority delegated to him, the Director of Corporate Services had authorised the appointment of a number of persons who were related to existing officers of the Council.

The Committee noted the appointments.

### **Asset Management**

#### **Arrangements for the Remembrance Day Ceremony, 9th November, 2008**

The Committee was reminded that the Annual Remembrance Day Ceremony took place at the Cenotaph in the grounds of the City Hall in November of each year. The Head of Committee and Members' Services reminded the Committee that the Assembly Buildings, Church House had been used as a venue for the special meeting of the Council prior to the Somme Ceremony and for the provision of refreshments following the formal proceedings. As the City Hall would still be closed in November, it would again be necessary to decide on an alternative and appropriate venue. The arrangements for the Somme Ceremony had been well received by the Members and those who had taken part had commented on the success of the event. Accordingly, he suggested that the use of the Assembly Buildings would be appropriate on Remembrance Day also.

The Committee approved the use of the Assembly Buildings, Church House as the gathering point for the procession for the Remembrance Day Ceremony on 9th November and for the provision of tea/coffee and light refreshments following the formal proceedings.

### **Future Use of the City Hall**

The Council agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to the future use of the City Hall and agreed further that it be considered at the special meeting regarding the Rates Finalisation 2007/08 which had agreed earlier in the meeting.

### **Council Temporary Office Accommodation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to temporary office accommodation for Council staff:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

**From a range of accommodation options Members authorised the Director of Corporate Services to enter into negotiations in respect of a short-term solution to secure Grade B office accommodation in Harvester House arising from the impending demolition and redevelopment of Clarendon House where 130 Council staff are currently located in 15,854 sq feet.**

In order to satisfy Council's office space requirements it was estimated that approximately 20,000 sq feet was required to accommodate displacement from Clarendon House, relief of existing City centre office overcrowding (Clarendon House, Cecil Ward Building), and other temporary office occupations which terminate within the next couple of years (Linenhall Exchange, Scottish Amicable Building)

At its meeting on 20th June 2008 the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee were advised that provisional agreement had been reached in respect of Harvester House that met the short-term requirements of Council on the basis of a 5 year Lease reflecting the need for an element of upgrading and refurbishment.

Since issuing draft Heads of Agreement reflecting the deal agreed to by Members the Landlord's agents (Lisney) have now advised that their client (National Farmer's Union) have reneged on the undertaking and were no longer willing to proceed on the basis previously agreed. Now instead of a 5 year term NFU would require a 10 year commitment from Council to protect the 'investment value' of their premises.

Council do not have a requirement for additional second hand office accommodation for a period of the duration now sought by NFU and have advised Lisney that negotiations could only be concluded on the basis of the previous Strategic Policy & Resources Committee decision and for a 5 year term.

By virtue of a Notice to Determine Council are still required to vacate Clarendon House by 23rd November 2008. If relocation can be effected before the end of September 2008 Council can take the benefit of a £100,000 premium from the Landlord of Clarendon House to facilitate its early demolition.

A renewed trawl has been undertaken for suitable temporary replacement accommodation available to occupy on a short-term basis which provides approximately 20,000 sq feet of modern office space.

In order to meet the timescale for relocation of staff from Clarendon House that secures the premium offered by the Landlord the Director of Corporate Services has exercised his delegated authority, after prior consultation with the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, to give authority to Council Officers to commencement arrangements to take occupation of accommodation in 9 Lanyon Place.

### Key Issues

The original office accommodation search identified Harvester House as meeting both the space and short-term occupation criteria for Council. Subject to negotiations and at the request of Lisney this initial 2-3 year requirement was extended to a 5 year term as an acceptable duration for the Landlord - NFU.

Despite advancing negotiations through the agent for a number of months on the basis of a short-term let, never extending beyond 5 years, they were slow to confirm their client's further instructions in this matter after being informed of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee decision to approve leasing temporary space in Harvester House for a term of 5 years. Council officers were advised of the change in NFU's requirement for a longer term (minimum of 10 years) at the start of July 2008 and despite further requests to 'honour' earlier commitments which had been made Subject to Contract Lisney confirmed NFU's latest position which they had taken to protect the 'investment value' of Harvester House.

Limited accommodation options that suit Council's short-term requirements for good quality office space totalling approximately 20,000 sq feet currently exist in the City centre. Even previously available Fanum House is no longer an option as the owner now proposes to redevelop in the near future.

A fresh trawl of currently available options that suit the Council's timeframe has now revealed two new options in 9 Lanyon Place and Victoria House. Victoria House is new build and could not be made ready for occupation by the end of September which would mean foregoing the £100,000 made available from the Landlord of Clarendon House.

9 Lanyon Place offers a suitable amount of space to address Council's short-term office accommodation requirements with minimal adaptation or upgrade required (fully air conditioned and cabled with Cat5e computer wiring) which could feasibly be readied for occupation by the end of September 2008. This timescale could only be achieved if the necessary Council fit-out works were commenced by 11th August 2008 hence the delegated action.

Occupation in 9 Lanyon Place is available by way of assignment of an existing 17 year Lease which runs until 2020. However, with two break options in January 2012 and January 2017 this would give Council the flexibility to terminate occupation (upon 12 months notice) after a little over 3 years duration. This flexibility in duration fits well with current RPA programme.



The following table provides a comparison of the temporary office accommodation available to Council as compared to that currently occupied in Clarendon House.

Office	Total Occupational Cost	Comments
Clarendon House (15,854 sq ft)	£354,499	1 year left on Lease with additional accommodation required thereafter
Harvester House (20,524 sq ft)	£2,394,322	5 year term
9 Lanyon Place (23,326 sq ft)	£1,701,963	break option in Jan 12 (3.25yrs)
Victoria House (24,550 sq ft)	£2,785,860	5 year term

- Currently negotiations in respect of 9 Lanyon Place with the agents representing the current Leaseholder (Northbrook Technology) have secured an incentive to take an assignment of their Lease which equates to 1 years rent (£316,548) Therefore Council's rent and service charge commitment up to the first break option would be limited to approximately £1.7M

#### Resource Implications

##### Financial

- The occupational cost of 9 Lanyon Place is offset by the currently incurred occupational costs of Clarendon House and Callender Street premises which total £223,331 (rent & service charge but excluding rates)
- Financial contribution from owner of Clarendon House in recognition of early surrender of Council occupation and receipt of reverse premium in 9 Lanyon Place will assist in offsetting relocation to these alternative short-term premises.

##### Asset and Other Implications

- Relocation to a single office building of suitable location, size and specification is considered more cost effective rather than further split Council's temporary requirements over multiple premises that individually would require fitting-out and suitable data communications installed to each.

### Recommendations

Members are asked to note the delegated authority exercised by the Director of Corporate Services and to subsequently approve the leasing of replacement office accommodation for Clarendon House in 9 Lanyon Place subject to satisfactory legal provisions approved by the Director of Legal Services

### Key to Abbreviations

NFU – National Farmer’s Union  
RPA – Review of Public Administration”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### Tall Buildings in Belfast - Policy Position

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Relevant Background Information

##### *Purpose of Paper*

The purpose of this paper is to –

- update Members on the progress in relation to the issue of tall buildings and inform Members of the outcome of the meeting of the cross party delegation from the Council with the Environment Minister on the issue of tall buildings on 28 July 2008
- highlight the key issues that the Council would like to be addressed in the development of the new Tall Buildings Guidelines for Belfast which are being developed by the Department of the Environment
- seek agreement from Members to request a meeting between the consultants (*Urban Initiatives*) who have been engaged to help develop the new Tall Buildings Guidance for Belfast and a cross-party delegation from the Council

### Background

Members will recall that in April the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee considered a paper on the importance of tall buildings for Belfast and agreed to request a meeting with the Minister for the Environment to discuss the viability of tall buildings in Belfast as mechanisms to help attract investment into the city and to help grow the city’s rates base as long as they were linked to the right design criteria, were located in the right place and could also make developer contributions towards enhancing the city.

Subsequent to this request being submitted the previous Environment Minister (Arlene Foster) announced on 28 May that design guidelines on tall buildings in Belfast were to be produced. While this changed the initial focus of the meeting a cross party delegation from the Council met with the Environment Minister and representatives from the Planning Service on Monday 28th July.

*Update on meeting with the Minister and the development of the Tall Buildings Guidelines*

At the cross party meeting on the 28 July, the Environment Minister (Sammy Wilson) outlined that his Department would strongly welcome the Council's input into the development of the Tall Buildings Guidelines. It was acknowledged that the current lack of any framework was leading to speculative planning applications and that this was making it more difficult for the Planning Service to make decisions on tall buildings. He outlined that the Department had engaged consultants, Urban Initiatives, to help with this work and that they were meeting with the consultants that afternoon (Mon 28th July) to discuss the development of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on this area. No timetable is yet in place for the development of this Guidance but the Department is hoping for the Guidelines to be in place as soon as possible. It was confirmed that the Council would be formally involved in this process.

Key Issues

The Council welcomes the announcement from the Department that guidelines for tall buildings in Belfast are to be produced. Given the enhanced role which the Council will have in relation to planning matters as a result of the RPA, the Council looks forward to building a close and productive working relationship with the Department in relation to this area.

There are, however, a number of issues that may require further exploration in relation to tall buildings and the development of any new policy framework for these buildings. The locational issues previously highlighted by Committee, around the balance between the development potential and the protection of the City's built heritage and character, will be of particular importance in the formulation of policy.

*Role in contributing to the vision of Belfast*

Belfast City Council is ambitious for Belfast. This vision has been consistently expressed by Members and through work on key strategic areas such as the Corporate Plan, the Belfast Masterplan and the development of the new City Investment Strategy, the Council has become more directly engaged in shaping the future

development of Belfast. This has contributed to the growing recognition of our role as the custodian of the city's economic, social and physical well-being. This role will be further enhanced with the Council's enhanced responsibilities under the RPA which will see the Council leading the development of a community plan for Belfast. It will be essential that any policy is adopted for the strategic development of the city.

Key issues to be considered in the development of the guidelines –

- *Vision – It is important that the principles underlying any tall buildings policy and locational proposals should be related to the longer term aspirations for the development of Belfast. How will the guidelines ensure development contributes to the realisation of the Council's vision for Belfast*
- *Development of the Guidelines –What is the process for the development of the Guidelines? How will the Council be involved? What is the timescale for the development of the Guidelines?*

#### ***Harnessing the potential of tall buildings***

Tall buildings as flagship projects can act as major catalysts for regeneration in areas and the best locations for tall buildings is obviously an issue of great debate. For commercial reasons tall building development has tended to be concentrated in city centres and the Council would continue to support the development of tall buildings primarily within the city centre in order to promote economic growth. However tall buildings do not necessarily have to be in the traditional core city centre to be successful and there is increasing pressure for tall buildings to be built in other locations. This has been evidenced across the rest of the UK. In Belfast there is considerable scope for tall buildings to be located not just in the city centre but on a number of gateway or peripheral city centre sites. The dBMAP has already identified a number of gateway locations (Gamble Street, Great Victoria Street and Central Station) which could be suitable for tall building developments which could contribute to the regeneration and revitalisation of these areas. There are also a number of significant development sites across Belfast e.g. Titanic Quarter, Girdwood and the Council would seek assurances that all these types of sites will fall within the scope of any policy which is developed.

According to NISRA Belfast's population is predicted to continue to decline over the next 20 years. It has already been acknowledged that this will have a detrimental effect on the city's rates base and the Council has identified this as a strategic issue.

Looking at ways to increase the population, particularly of trying to bring people back into the city centre, is one way to reverse this decline. Building tall is not the only way to increase population density in cities but it is clear that tall buildings, particularly apartment blocks or mixed use developments, are a key way of helping to bring people back into the city centre and so helping to provide the intensification of activity and densification of people that help make cities thrive.

It is generally accepted that tall buildings work better when they are clustered. Clusters of tall buildings can be appropriate in the right places and guidance in other administrations sets out the importance of promoting the expansion of clusters of tall buildings. If appropriately planned, groups of tall buildings can offer the potential to manage their environmental impacts better than individual buildings.

Key issues to be considered in the development of the guidelines –

- *Location of tall buildings – The Council acknowledges the need for a balanced approach to development between the city centre and other city sites to ensure that the benefits are maximised for the city, taking account of the available Brownfield or under utilised land within the city, and harnessing the potential for such development to contribute to regeneration areas e.g. important gateway sites. However there also needs to be consideration of sites which fall outside the traditional core city centre*
- *Gateway sites – How will the policy consider tall buildings at key gateway sites across the city given the catalytic regeneration potential of these sites?*
- *Capacity - How will the guidelines ensure that a targeted/phased approach is taken to this issue to provide a degree of certainty and management?*
- *Approach - will the policy seek to prescribe areas for potential development or have criteria that will be applied generally across the city and wider BMAP area. Will it look at clusters as well as/or individual buildings?*

*Heritage and Design – conserving the heritage of Belfast and ensuring a high calibre of design*

The Council has acknowledged the need in its discussions to 'ensure that the city's built heritage is preserved'. Belfast has a very unique character - the setting of the city within Belfast Lough with clear views to the surrounding areas and the view corridors of prominent structures such as City Hall all contribute to the valuable unique character and image of Belfast. The introduction of tall structures, if inappropriately planned, has the potential to disrupt the built heritage of the city and undermine the experience offered to both residents and visitors.

However research has also shown that well designed tall buildings located in the right place can make positive contributions to cities. The Council has already acknowledged that 'there has to be quality thresholds for tall buildings to ensure that they are iconic'. Guidance in other areas evidences that tall buildings should be of excellent architectural quality and designed to take account of their impact on the immediate surroundings and the wider environment.

Key issues to be considered in the development of the guidelines –

- *Heritage - How the new tall buildings policy will ensure that Belfast's heritage is preserved and protected while balancing the aspirations for the continued regeneration of the city?*
- *Character – What approach will the guidelines take to those character areas not designated for conservation and those that contain important view corridors?*
- *How the new tall buildings policy will ensure that any tall buildings is of a high quality, iconic design and how it will be ensured that developers adhere to this?*

#### ***Planning Gain***

An excellent tall building should positively enhance its locality and share the benefits of the investment throughout the local area for example by helping to improve the public realm or securing additional open space. In other planning administrations these additional improvements or benefits are often secured through the use of planning obligations. The purpose of planning obligations is to mitigate the impact of a proposed new development.

Planning obligations can be applied to all developments (commercial and residential). They are particularly used in England for securing social/affordable housing and improving the public realm/environment. While securing the obligations is a complex process research has evidenced their value in ensuring that the full impacts of a development are addressed and that any necessary infrastructure is secured.

However the NI mechanism for planning agreements (Art. 40) has only been restrictively applied here, primarily in relation to transport infrastructure issues. The public sector here is missing a significant opportunity that is afforded to councils elsewhere due to the differences in the legal basis for planning obligations. This means that Belfast is missing out on a potentially invaluable source of funding which could be used to significantly improve infrastructure and the environment and public realm of the city. The Council has a very robust position on the need for planning gain which it has consistently conveyed (both in statutory consultation responses and discussions with the Planning Service and other government departments) and would take this opportunity to raise this issue again.

Key issues to be considered in the development of the guidelines –

- *Tall buildings offer the potential for a development premium that should be captured for the benefit of the local area and for the city as a whole. Will the new policy ensure that planning obligations can be sought from developers in order to enhance the local environment/public realm?*
- *For development proposals and planning applications which are likely to have significant implications in relation to both the physical development and planning gain it is proposed that the Council, as a statutory body, is engaged early in the process*

### *3-d model for the city*

In addition to the absence of an overarching policy framework for tall buildings an additional weakness in the current system is also the lack of any system (such as visual or digital models) which can provide detailed contextual information.

The Council, in its role as civic leader for the city, has started to look at developing a physical masterplan for Belfast through the procurement of a 3-d urban design framework. This type of approach has already been successfully used in other cities. Essentially this would mean that a virtual model of any proposed development can be uploaded onto a 3-d map of Belfast to enable the potential impact of any building and the cumulative impact of development to be assessed. This would help inform the decision-making and place-making process. Such a model could be placed in a city centre location and/or viewed over the internet.

Key issues to be considered:

- *A physical 3-d model of the city would significantly enhance the assessment of proposals and the cumulative impacts and co-ordinated access to information about proposals in a 3d form would better inform the decision making process. The Council would advocate that a partnership approach to the procurement of a 3-d model for Belfast is more fully explored*

### Recommendations

The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee is asked to -

- note the contents of this report
- agree the issues that the Council would like to be addressed in the development of the new Tall Buildings Guidelines for Belfast which are being developed by the Department of the Environment
- agree to request a meeting between the consultants (Urban Initiatives) who have been engaged to help develop the new Tall Buildings Guidance for Belfast and a cross-party delegation from the Council”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### Arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Facilities – Update on the Contract for the Transfer of Land at the North Foreshore

The Committee considered the undernoted report which provided an update on the contract for the transfer of land at the North Foreshore for Residual Waste Treatment Facilities:

#### “Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members in relation to the completion of a series of Party Group briefings and to inform the Committee of Arc 21’s timescale constraints concerning inclusion of sites in its site selection process.

#### Relevant Background Information

At its meeting on 25th January 2008 the Committee agreed to defer consideration of an update report on the contract for the transfer of land in relation to the Arc 21 residual waste treatment facilities to enable the Party Groupings to be provided with briefings in the matter. A copy of the deferred report is attached as appendix 1. That report had been written in the context of the



Committee's earlier decision, on 19th October 2007, to adopt a recommendation of the Health and Environmental Services Committee that approval be granted for the remaining area of the 40 acre south east corner of the North Foreshore site to be made available to Arc 21 for potential use for a Mechanical Biological Treatment facility (MBT) or an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility. It was also decided that the Director of Improvement and the Director of Legal Services be authorised to agree terms and a suitable legal agreement with Arc 21 to allow the site to be used for either of these facilities if selected as a preferred site.

Members will note that in the deferred report, as appended, it had been highlighted that Arc 21's site selection process had established a shortlist of sites on which it was interested in siting either an MBT or EfW plant. It had also been drawn to the Committee's attention that Arc 21 had written to the landowners, including the City Council, asking each party to commit to the sale of the particular lands identified, at a value assessed by the Land and Property Services Agency. In the case of Belfast, the Council had been asked to commit to entering into a contract for the sale of 'c.17 acres of land to Arc 21 for the sum of £850,000 per acre, for use by Arc 21 as the site of a residual waste treatment facility'.

The deferred report had also stated that the Director of Legal Services had qualified the commitment of the Council by making the letter of response subject to the following qualifications:

- (i) that no contractual relationship will be deemed to exist between the parties until such times that the formal contract for sale is made between the Council and Arc 21, and that the contract will address all issues that the Council will require to be dealt with in relation to the management of the North Foreshore site within which the land is situated, and also including agreement in relation to all terms of the lease by which the Council would propose to grant title to Arc 21; and
- (ii) that the terms of the letter are to be reported to the next meeting of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and that the letter is signed strictly subject to future political direction, specifically in relation to the issue of community gain.

Following the Committee's decision to defer consideration of the report submitted on 25th January arrangements were made to provide briefings to each of the Council's Party Groupings to provide greater detail in relation to Energy from Waste (incineration) facilities. These briefings were led by the Chief Executive and also included input from Arc 21. During the briefings a number of questions and issues were raised by individual

Members and when the briefings had been completed a supplementary briefing note containing additional information in relation to each of those issues was circulated to Party Group leaders and made available to all Council Members through the Members Services Unit. Among the matters dealt with in this supplementary briefing note were Arc 21's site selection process, the process by which the technology solution described in the Waste Management Plan was arrived at, the matters raised in the approval process for Dublin's Poolbeg incinerator, the extent and disposition of municipal waste incineration in the UK and the rest of Europe, additional information about health effects and the compatibility of incineration with recycling in a waste management solution. A summary report as presented to the Arc 21 Joint Committee was also included in the supplementary material.

During the briefings Members received a presentation highlighting the differences between common perceptions of incineration and its reality, the part to be played by EfW (incineration) in the overall Arc 21 Waste Plan, estimates of the costs to the Council of failure or delay in the provision of incineration facilities or having to use an alternative more remote location and some of the environmental and economic consequences of delay or failure in delivering the necessary infrastructure. Members were also issued with a series of 19 fact sheets, addressing a range of issues frequently raised in connection with Energy from Waste facilities.

A cross party delegation of Members also participated in a site visit to view modern EfW and MBT facilities in the Netherlands from 28th – 30th April.

#### Key Issues

Following the Committee's decision to defer consideration of a report to its meeting of 25th January 2008 concerning the transfer of land at the North Foreshore to Arc 21 for possible use for the siting of a residual waste treatment facility each Party Group received a briefing by Arc 21 and a team of Council Officers led by the Chief Executive. A presentation was given at each briefing and an information pack distributed. Additional written information on issues raised during the briefings was later circulated to Party Groups and a number of Members participated in a visit to modern EfW and MBT facilities in the Netherlands in April.

It had also been highlighted during the briefings that Arc 21 was anxious for an early decision from the Council in relation to the availability of the North Foreshore lands. In this regard Arc 21's Chief Executive, John Quinn, wrote to the Council's Chief Executive on 19th May 2008 clarifying the timescale constraints upon Arc 21

concerning the inclusion of sites in the Arc 21 site selection process. A copy of this letter is attached at appendix 2. As can be seen Arc 21's position is that its infrastructure delivery programme could accommodate a decision as late as September 2008 but that delay beyond that time could seriously prejudice delivery of the project and expose both Arc 21 and Belfast City Council to materially increased risk of substantial NILAS and EC non-compliance fines.

In light of the above it is intended that the matter of the transfer of the North Foreshore lands to Arc 21 as described will be placed before the Committee for decision at its meeting on 19th September 2008.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to note the contents of this update report and to provide guidance concerning any additional steps they would wish to have taken to inform their final decision in the matter at the September meeting.

### **Key to Abbreviations**

<b>EfW</b>	<b>Energy from Waste (incineration)</b>
<b>MBT</b>	<b>Mechanical Biological Treatment</b>
<b>NILAS</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme"</b>

During discussion in the matter, a Member pointed out that there was a need to undertake a consultation exercise with the local community regarding the disposal of the land and to determine whether or not it would be appropriate for an Energy from Waste incinerator to be located on the site.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Crozier,  
Seconded by Councillor Convery,

That, to enable the Council to take an informed decision regarding the disposal of part of the North Foreshore site to arc21, a consultation exercise be undertaken with the local community to establish whether or not it would be appropriate to locate an Energy from Waste incinerator at that location.

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

**Good Relations and Equality**

**Minutes of Good Relations Partnership**

(Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings of the Good Relations Partnership of 20th June and 15th August and adopted the recommendations of the Partnership, as undernoted, in relation to the following issue:

**St. Patrick's Day, 2009 - Small Grants Scheme  
and Waterfront Hall Concert**

- (i) the continuation, in future years, of the Small Grants Scheme for St. Patrick's Day events using the existing criteria and the increasing of the budget to an amount of £32,000;
- (ii) the organising of a concert in March, 2009, along the same format as in previous years, that is, in association with the BBC, with a balanced line-up, with the Council providing the venue and relevant technical requirements and the sum of £15,000 being made available towards the cost of guest artistes and small-scale hospitality; and
- (iii) the St. Patrick's Night concert forming part of the Council's main calendar of civic events and, accordingly, its organisation and future funding being managed directly by relevant staff in the Development Department.

Chairman