

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd January, 2009

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor D. Dodds (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Browne); and
Councillors Attwood, W. Browne, Convery, Crozier,
Kirkpatrick, Lavery, Maginness, C. Maskey,
P. Maskey, McCann, Newton, Rodway and Smyth.

Also attended: Councillor McCarthy.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Adamson, M. Browne and Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 12th and 16th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 5th January, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group" which, at the request of Councillor Rodgers, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 12th December under the heading "Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group". A copy of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

"Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

'Purpose of the Report

To provide supplemental advice to the Committee in relation to how the Council might undertake a campaign in support of the provision of a new regional hospital for children and women on the site of the Royal Group of Hospitals.

Relevant Background Information

The Committee, at its meeting of 21 November, considered a report submitted by the Director of Legal Services in relation to the question of support for the proposed new regional hospital for children and women. Following a suggestion by a Member that the Council should incur expenditure of an appropriate amount in relation to mounting its own campaign in support of the proposed hospital, and following the contribution of a number of other Members to the discussion, the Director of Legal Services pointed out that any proposal of such a nature could lawfully be implemented by the Council pursuant to the special expenditure powers set out in Section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. However, he also pointed out that this would be in the context of cross party support for the proposal and he noted that the advice from Counsel had referred to the restriction in the 1972 Act which precludes the use of Section 115 for “party political publicity campaigns”.

Key Issues

It would appear from the general thrust of the discussion at the meeting of the Committee on 21 November, and from a number of subsequent discussions with various individual Members, that a certain amount of support exists across the parties for the proposal to mount some form of campaign in support of the proposed hospital. However, that support does appear to be qualified to the extent that any expenditure to be incurred should be of a reasonably modest nature and on the basis that any resolution by the Council in support of the proposal should attract support on a cross party basis.

If Members are minded to support a cross party resolution that the Council should incur expenditure of a reasonably modest nature in pursuance of a campaign to support the provision of a new regional hospital for women and children on the site of the Royal Group of Hospitals, then such a proposal is legally tenable subject to the following

- 1. the resolution attracts cross party support*
- 2. the Council agrees the level of expenditure to be incurred, which it is suggested might be in the region of £15-20,000*

3. ***the resolution to incur that expenditure be on the basis that, in accordance with the provisions of Section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, the Council considers that the expenditure shall be in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to the Council, its district, and the inhabitants of its district – and that the expenditure to be incurred is considered to be commensurate with the direct benefit to be so achieved.***

If the Committee is desirous of proceeding on this basis, and passes a resolution in the appropriate wording, then it is suggested that, for the purpose of taking the matter forward, a Working Group be established comprising of nominated Members from each of the Party Groups for the purpose of agreeing how the approved expenditure should be applied in relation to the proposed campaign of support.

The Committee should also decide if it would be appropriate that the Working Group, if established, should also liaise, for information purposes, with the Royal Maternity Hospital Liaison Group, which the Committee will recall it received a presentation from at its meeting of 22 August 2008.

Recommendations

It is a matter for the Committee, having considered the foregoing advice, to decide whether it wishes the Council to now undertake its own campaign in support of the proposed hospital, subject to the conditions which have been suggested by the Director of Legal Services.'

Following a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that:

- (a) *expenditure, up to a maximum of £20,000, in respect of the above-mentioned campaign be approved under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefit so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made;*
- (b) *a fixed-term Working Group, comprising one Member from each of the Political Parties represented on the Council, be appointed to consider the most appropriate means of taking forward the campaign; and*

- (c) *a report on the recommendations of the Working Group in this regard be submitted in due course for the consideration of the Committee.”*

The Committee was advised that Councillor Rodgers, at whose request the minute had been taken back for further consideration, was unable to be in attendance at the meeting. The Head of Committee and Members' Services reminded the Members that Councillor Rodgers had indicated at the meeting of the Council that he wished the minute to be taken back to the Committee to enable it to give consideration to the submission of a request to the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to meet with an All-Party Deputation from the Council to discuss the issue prior to any expenditure on the project being committed.

A Member pointed out that if the Committee were minded to affirm its decision then the Working Group could be established with the seeking of a meeting with the Minister to be the first item of business to be attended to.

The Committee agreed to affirm its decision of 12th December and agreed also that when the Working Group had been established the first item of business to be dealt with would be to seek a meeting with the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Finance

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2009/2010

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th January, it had been advised that a District Rate increase of approximately 8.59% for 2009/10 would be required to meet the Council's Estimated Expenditure. The Committee had agreed that further work on the Estimates of Expenditure for the 2009/10 financial year was necessary and directed that:

- (i) the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Services examine the overall Council estimates and discuss with Department Heads the need to identify further cost savings with a view to submitting a report to the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 23rd January;
- (ii) briefings be held for each of the Party Groupings on the Council in relation to the Revenue Estimates 2009/2010;
- (iii) a revised efficiency programme be developed in the context of a three-year financial planning cycle and that a report thereon be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- (iv) Council officers continue to work with the Land and Property Services agency and the Minister of Finance and Personnel to seek to improve the position in relation to the Estimated Penny Product and the development of a Service Level Agreement between the Council and the Agency;

- (v) a report on measures which could be introduced in order to support local businesses and ratepayers be submitted to the Committee in due course; and
- (vi) a report be prepared on the key communication issues.

The Director of Corporate Services reported that following an examination of the Departmental Budgets an overall reduction in the Revenue Estimates of £1,042,560 had been identified. The reductions for each Committee were as follows:

Committee	£
• Strategic Policy and Resources	362,560
• Development	310,000
• Parks and Leisure	200,000
• Health and Environmental Services	170,000

The impact of the aforementioned reductions in expenditure would reduce the District Rate increase to 7.63% which, when merged with the Regional Rate, would result in an overall increase of 3.15% to the domestic ratepayer.

The Director reported further that on 19th January, 2009 the Minister of Finance and Personnel had announced a package of measures worth up to £8 million to assist Local Authorities in dealing with the impact of the current economic situation. For the Council, the package totalled £1.44 million, of which £419,000 impacted directly on the Estimated Penny Product 2009/10. In addition, the Council would no longer have to pay a 3% contribution towards the cost of administering Housing Benefit, which would benefit the Estimated Penny Product by £226,658. Further, the impact on the Council payments from landlords had been reduced by £192,749.

The overall effect of those measures on the rates position for 2009/10 was that the required increase in the District Rate would be 7.16%, which was the equivalent of a 2.96% increase to the domestic ratepayer when the Regional Rate element had been included. For the average household in Belfast this would result in a rates rise of £24.06 per annum or 46 pence per week. The proposed increase was just below the current rate of inflation and compared favourably to the average Council Tax bill increase in England of 3.5%. The Director of Corporate Services indicated that, if the Committee were minded to approve the Estimates of Income and Expenditure, the overall net expenditure for the Council would amount to £121,719,530. After deducting the General Grant and the Estimated Credit Balance, an amount of £115,072,620 would be required to be met by way of the District Rate. Based on an estimated product of a Penny Rate amounting to £4,840,100, it would be necessary to determine a Domestic Rate of 0.272p and a Business Rate of 23.7748p to meet the Council's Estimated Expenditure.

The Director stated that if the Committee approved the District Rate at the level which had been outlined, then the Council would have reduced its base budget by £6.7 million over the previous four years. The Council had now reached the point where any additional reductions in expenditure in the short-term could be made only by stopping or deferring projects, initiatives or events or by reducing the level of service delivery. In addition, there was a higher degree of risk attached to next year's budget because of the uncertainty in predicting the Council's level of income from fees and charges for the following year. If the predicted income levels were not achieved then there would be a need to find in-year savings to cover the deficit.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed to note the progress which had been achieved in relation to the production of the Revenue Estimates for the 2009/2010 Financial Year but considered that further work on the Estimates of Expenditure was necessary and directed that officers re-examine the Departmental Estimates of Expenditure in order to attempt to identify further possible saving in non-essential work/services and that a report thereon be submitted to the meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 6th February. It was agreed also that a special meeting of the Council be held on 12th February to consider the setting of the District Rate 2009/2010.

Authority to Seek Tenders –
I.T. Security Measures

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of tendering exercises and delegated authority to the Director of Corporate Services, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to accept the most advantageous tenders in respect of the following I.T. security measures:

- (i) a combined Data Encryption/Device Control Solution at a cost of approximately £65,000;
- (ii) a Security Log Analyser tool, the cost of which was £30,000; and
- (iii) a Single Sign On solution, for the sum of approximately £70,000.

The Committee noted that the tenders would be evaluated using pre-determined criteria.

Modernisation and Improvement

Review of Public Administration - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report which provided an undate in relation to the Review of Public Administration:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The Review of Public Administration (RPA) process is now entering into the critical stage of implementation whereby primary legislation is being drafted, implementation structures established and active consideration being given**

to the transitional arrangements to be put in place to support local government reform within Northern Ireland together with ongoing transfer of functions issues.

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 The size of the challenge ahead cannot be underestimated and ensuring appropriate structures are put in place to manage the RPA change process is crucial. At this stage, some of the potential risks which could result from the Council not effectively managing the RPA transition process could include:

- i)** Misalignment between outworking of the legislative and policy changes emerging from the RPA and the Council's own improvement agenda
- ii)** Lack of coherence to our engagement with transferring departments leading to a loss of impact and credibility
- iii)** Transferring functions are under-resourced and inefficient at stage of transfer
- iv)** Lack of a cohesive political and executive engagement and commitment to the transition and change process

2.2 Inevitably, the level of RPA related activity will grow in intensity and scope throughout the transitional period and its management and delivery must be adequately resourced and co-ordinated. A balance must be maintained between ensuring the effective management of the change process and delivering business as usual.

2.3 The level of resources committed to managing the RPA change process must be proportionate to the task in hand. The resources required will be two-fold. The Council will need to take forward its internal preparation and changes required to support an effective RPA transition as well as ensuring that it engages within the delivery structures established to take forward the RPA.

2.4 AN ORGANISATION FIT TO LEAD AND SERVE

2.4.1 If the Council is to demonstrate that it is an organisation 'fit to lead and serve'; it needs to get its own house in order and clearly define its desired outcomes from the RPA. Consideration must be given to the necessary changes to

existing Council structures and processes to ensure that the transition and integration of new functions is managed and the implications and opportunities arising from the published RPA proposals align with the emerging corporate priorities.

2.4.2 The Council needs now to focus its consideration on implementation related matters and in dissecting and examining those issues of greatest impact, chunking and prioritising activity as appropriate. Examples of key areas of significance include:

- 1) *Policy and legislation development*: effectively engaging within the policy development structures established and ensuring that the best interests of Belfast and the wider local government sector is taken into consideration.
- 2) *Transitional Process*: ensuring that appropriate internal and external mechanisms are put in place to support the effective and efficient transition to the new Council arrangements post RPA.
- 3) *Transfer of Functions*: process of active discussion with transferring departments to work through the practicalities attached to the transfer of functions from central to local government.
- 4) *Change readiness*: ensuring the Council is prepared for the RPA transition process and the integration of the new functions into the organisation.
- 5) *Engagement*: with the Executive, Strategic Leadership Board, Regional Transitional Coordination Group, other Transition Committees, NICS etc, from a coherent and consistent BCC position that is regularly refreshed and communicated as circumstances dictate.

2.4.3 One key issue which needs to be urgently addressed is how the organisation effectively takes forward its internal consideration, within an overall agreed framework, around the transfer of functions and the associated impact on organisational structures, and ensures that the evolving internal thinking informs the policy and legislation programme.

2.5 TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

- 2.5.1** At a recent meeting of the Regional Transitional Coordination Group on 15th December, 2008 a discussion paper had been submitted which set out the key proposals for the transfer of functions from central to local government. The paper comprised of a suite of position papers prepared by each of the transferring Departments (e.g., DOE, DCAL, DARD, DRD, DSD and DETI) which sought to flesh out the proposed list of functions likely to transfer to local government and the associated estimated resources.
- 2.5.2** Subsequently, a detailed briefing paper and associated 'Issues Log' in regards to the transfer of function proposals (referred to above) has been compiled, in liaison with Council Departments.
- 2.5.3** There are clearly detailed technical issues surrounding all of the transferring functions and importantly the integration with wider local government service delivery, financial and political systems. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for constructive engagement between central and local government officials to ensure that there is greater clarity of the functions transferring and appropriate consideration is given to the operational and technical issues attached to the transferring functions and their assimilation into councils. We need to now consider the appropriateness of the transferring functions and the potential implications for the Council including, for example, the transfer of under-resourced and inefficient functions; transfer of long-term financial and public liabilities; transfer of funding burden from the regional to district rate.
- 2.5.4** This engagement needs to be co-ordinated. Otherwise there is a risk that different parts of the organisation would engage with transferring departments on an individual basis with no clear direction as to the overall corporate position. There are major risks attached to adopting a fragmented approach to dealing with the transfer of functions e.g. mixed messages being conveyed from the organisation; no connection or alignment with planning, policy and financial frameworks under development; absence of a holistic approach; impact on image and creditability of the Council. It is important that we adopt a coherent and informed approach to how we engage and clearly demonstrate that we are a confident and assured partner in government.

A series of Technical Sub-Groups comprising of officials from transferring Departments and Local Government will be established under the auspices of the Regional Transitional Coordination Group, to consider in detail the operational and technical issues attached to the transferring functions. As this is clearly an important strand of work, the Council will ensure, as is reasonably possible, that those officers with the appropriate expertise and skills set are engaged within the Technical Sub-Groups. Appropriate internal mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that cross departmental consideration is given to transfer of function issues and political engagement in the process is maintained.

2.6 BCC TRANSITION COMMITTEE

- 2.6.1 As agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 14th November 2008, and endorsed by Council at its meeting on 1st December 2008, a letter has been sent to the Environment Minister, Sammy Wilson and relevant Central Government officials outlining the proposition that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be designated as the Council's RPA Transitional Committee, that the Committee comprises of 20 elected Members appointed on the basis of proportionality using D'Hondt and that an additional monthly meeting of the Committee has been designated for the purpose of RPA transition and associated change management issues.
- 2.6.2 The primary role of the Transition Committee is to take the key decisions necessary to ensure a coherent and co-ordinated approach to the RPA Transition Process. Detailed Guidance issued by the Environment Minister on the establishment of Transition Committee has previously been circulated.
- 2.6.3 A £150,000 per annum transitional funding package has been made available by the DoE to each Transition Committee to assist the transition (change) management process including staffing, consultancy support etc. Each Elected Member on the Council's Transition Committee is to be paid an allowance of £2,700 (£54,000 in total) per annum from this transitional fund. This payment would be allocated within Belfast City Council on the same basis as the allocation of Special Responsibility allowances. The details of the funding package are outlined in the DoE Circular LG19/08.

2.7 BCC TRANSITION MANAGEMENT TEAM

2.7.1 It is equally as important that a dedicated transition (change) management structure be established to support the Transition Committee in taking forward RPA transitional issues. In the Guidance referred to above (para. 2.6.2) it is stipulated that a Transition Management Team should be established which would have responsibility for transitional planning at the local level and should consist of Senior Officials from both Local Government and relevant transferring departments.

2.7.2 In terms of the internal arrangements, it is recommended that the Chief Officers' Management Team be designated as the Council's Transitional Management Team with a minimum of one COMT meeting per month allocated solely for RPA transition and change management related issues.

2.7.4 In terms of decision-making and reporting mechanisms, the Chief Officers' Transition Management Team would act as the initial forum to discuss emerging proposals and to troubleshoot any issues/areas of concern in regards to the RPA. Emerging briefings, reports and/or draft corporate positions would be submitted to the Council's Transition Committee (i.e. Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) for consideration. This would enable the political process to be kept updated on emerging issues and political direction sought.

2.8 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT STRUCTURES

2.8.1 In order to support the work of the Transition Committee and Transition Management Team, appropriate support structures will be put in place with necessary resources made available, drawing on the experience and expertise within the organisation, to enable due diligence consideration to be given to RPA transitional related matters.

3.0 NEXT STEPS

3.1 At this stage the short-term milestones in the process are as follows:

- i) formalise the role of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as the Council's Transition Committee;

- ii) establishment of the internal Transition Management Team;
- iii) establishment of necessary support structures;
- iv) a project plan and risk analysis to be prepared within 1 month of the Transitional Management Team being established and to be updated every 2 months.

4.0 Resource Implications

Whilst there is clearly Human Resource and financial implications attached the Council's ongoing involvement and management of the RPA change process, it is difficult to quantify at this stage.

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) note the contents of this report; and
- b) agree that the Council's Chief Officers' Management Team be designated as the Transition Management Team"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Democratic Services and Governance

Extension of Current Council Term - Appointments Procedures

The Head of Committee and Members' Services submitted the undernoted report in relation to the appointments procedures resulting from the extension of the current Council Term:

"Purpose of Report

To consider the impact of the two year extension of the current Council term on the arrangements for the nomination of Members to outside bodies, the appointment of Committee membership and the appointment of Chairmen/Deputy Chairmen posts and to agree appropriate protocols for these appointments during the additional two years of the Council term.

Relevant Background Information

The Minister with responsibility for Local Government has agreed, in order to accommodate the Review of Public Administration process and the transfer of additional powers to Local Councils, to extend the current Council term until 2011 at which time elections will be held to the eleven new Local Authorities. Accordingly, it will be necessary to consider the impact of the additional two years on the Council's arrangements for appointments to outside bodies and the protocols relating to the appointment of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees.

Decisions Required

Nominations and Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Council, at its Annual Meeting held on 26th May, 2005, in accordance with its policy in this regard, nominated Members to represent the Council on a number of outside bodies. These nominations were made for the period to end on the date of the Local Government Elections to be held in 2009. These appointments were made on the basis of proportionality using the d'Hondt system to generate a hierarchy of choices based on Party Group strengths at that time.

There were more than ninety appointments made by the Party Groups and agreed by the Council in 2005. I would suggest that to review these appointments for the additional two years of the Council term would have little benefit and would merely cause unnecessary disruption and confusion for the outside bodies concerned. Accordingly, I would recommend that the Committee amend the decision of the Council of 26th May, 2005 to reflect that the period of appointment of Members will be until the date of the next Local Government Elections, anticipated to be held in May, 2011.

Committee Appointments to Outside Bodies

From time to time Committees have made appointments of Members to outside bodies and these are also often stipulated to be for the period to end on the date of the Local Government Elections to be held in June, 2009. It seems reasonable that any decisions of Committee couched in these terms should also be accepted now as extending to the revised date of the Elections in 2011.

Appointment of Committees and Chairmen/Deputy Chairmen

In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 and the provisions made in Standing Orders, the Council agrees Committee membership and appoints

Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees at the annual meeting each year. These appointments are made on the basis of proportionality and are reviewed annually.

There is no need, during the two additional years, to review or amend the mechanisms used for the making of appointments to Committees or for the appointment of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees. The principles of proportionality will apply and decisions will be reached on the basis of Party strengths. However, there is an issue in relation to the appointment of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen which will require consideration:-

Standing Order 42 states that:

'No political group shall hold the same post for more than two years in a four year term and groups must make their selections on the basis of this principle provided that a group shall not be required to select a post of Deputy Chairman if a post of Chairman is available and provided that a group may select the same post if no other post is available to it.'

Since the Council term has been extended to six years, subject to formal confirmation, this restriction of no more than two year appointments will have to be set aside so that the principles of proportionality can be applied.

A supplemental arrangement to deal with the additional two years will be necessary. I would suggest that it would be fair and equitable for the Council to agree by resolution that during 2009/10 and 2010/11 each Party Group would be limited to the holding of a post for no more than one year of the additional two years of this Council term. This would effectively permit an unrestricted choice for each Party Group in relation to the posts of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen for 2009/2010. However, subject to there being an alternative choice available, a Party Group could not hold the same posts in 2010/2011. This arrangement will apply only in the special circumstances of the current extension to the Council term and thereafter the conditions of Standing Order 42 (f) would apply at all times.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

the decision of the Council of 26th May, 2005 in relation to the nomination and appointment of Members to outside bodies be amended to extend the period of appointment of such Members until the date of the next Local Government Elections anticipated to be held in May, 2011;

any remaining decisions made by the Committees to appoint Members to outside bodies in which it has been stipulated that the appointments should end on the date of the Local Government Elections to be held in June, 2009 be amended in a like manner; and

in relation to the appointment of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees during the additional years of this Council term from June, 2009 until May, 2011, the conditions of Standing Order 42 (f) be set aside by resolution of Council and that the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen appointed under the proportionality arrangements be permitted to hold their posts for no more than one year of the additional two years of the extended Council term.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Invitations to Attend the 2009 Somme Pilgrimage and a Journey of Remembering

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Somme Association enquiring if the Council would wish to be represented on the 2009 Pilgrimage to the Somme, France from 28th June till 2nd July, 2009. The Pilgrimage, to mark the 93rd Anniversary of the Battle, would follow the route taken by the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions during their service in the First World War. Services of Commemoration would be held at both Thiepval and Guillemont, in addition to attendance at the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres.

In addition, an invitation to attend “A Journey of Remembering” to Flanders from 6th till 8th March to hold a ceremony to honour Irish people who had lost their lives in the War had been received from the Project Director of that organisation. The visit would include a Remembrance Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres, based on the Last Post Ceremony which had been held at the Monument every evening at 8.00 p.m. since 1927, but would involve only people from both the North and South of Ireland. The following day an Inter-denominational Service would take place in the local Cathedral and Irish Clergy from all the main churches would officiate.

In previous years on the Anniversary of the Battle, the Committee had authorised the attendance on the Somme tour of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council. Members who had attended had found the event informative and worthwhile in that several of the ceremonial occasions had been attended by many other dignitaries and officials, which afforded an opportunity for contacts to be made and relations to be developed on a range of topics and for the profile and image of Belfast to be promoted.

In October, 2007, the Committee had approved the attendance of an All-Party Deputation at a Pathfinding Conference in Ypres, which had been organised by the Journey of Remembering organisation and, whilst those who had attended had found the event worthwhile, it had been felt that it had duplicated the event which had been held by the Somme Association.

It was pointed out that the Somme Pilgrimage Tour coincided with the Council's own Somme Remembrance Ceremony as well as the monthly meeting of the Council on 1st July and, accordingly, Members who attended the Pilgrimage would be unable to be in attendance at those events.

The Committee agreed, given the fact that the Council held its own Somme Remembrance Service, that Services are held nationwide on Remembrance Sunday to remember all those who had suffered and died in conflict in the service of their country, that Members normally attended the Somme Pilgrimage to recognise the sacrifice of the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions and in view of the current economic downturn and the associated financial implications, to approve attendance on the Somme Tour only of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council and the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and authorised 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:

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Sister Cities Belfast Conference Committee	Sister Cities International Conference 30th July, 2009 Approximately 700 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception and canapes	It is estimated that 600 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	The provision of hospitality in the form of wines, soft drinks and canapes. Approximate cost £7,000 Approximate budget remaining £150,990
Society for Research into Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida	53rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Research into Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida 24th June, 2009 Approximately 120 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	It is estimated that 120 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	The provision of hospitality in the form of wines and soft drinks. Approximate cost £480 Approximate budget remaining £150,510

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	The Ulster Hall Re-opening – Gala Concert 6th March, 2009 Approximately 200 attending	The provision of civic hospitality in the form of a finger buffet reception.	This event aims to celebrate the re-opening of the Ulster Hall. The Gala Reopening of the venue, its sensitive refurbishment and rededication to its historical role demonstrates the Council's commitment to the regeneration of Belfast. This event meets the Council's Corporate Strategic Objective of Providing Civic Leadership.	The provision of civic hospitality in the form of a finger buffet reception. Approximate cost £3,000 Approximate budget remaining £147,510
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals	North/South Joint Library Conference Dinner 30th April, 2009 Approximately 100 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a civic dinner.	Belfast City Council has a close working relationship with the Institute through the Belfast Education and Library Board. This relationship has contributed to the educational development of our children and young people and others through life long learning. This event meets the Council's Corporate Strategic Objective of Providing Civic Leadership.	The provision of hospitality in the form of a civic dinner. Approximate cost £3,500 Approximate budget remaining £144,010

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Councillors' Christmas Card

The Committee was reminded that prior to the introduction of the Council's revised governance arrangements in 2007 the decision regarding the design of the Christmas card provided for use by Members had been taken by the former Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee. Following the abolition of the Sub-Committees new arrangements were implemented to allow a suitable Christmas card to be chosen.

In 2007, the Party Group Leaders had been consulted on the design of the Christmas card and agreement had been reached on a choice of card. In 2008, the Council had produced a Corporate Christmas card and again, following consultation with the Party Group Leaders and taking account of the savings to be achieved by the Council in adopting that Corporate approach, it had been decided that the Corporate Christmas card would be provided for use by the Members.

At the Council meetings on 1st December and 5th January, a Member had expressed disappointment at the greetings message contained in the Corporate card and it had been agreed that the greetings message on future cards should read "Happy Christmas". It had been agreed further that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking the Committee's view on how the form of the Christmas card should be determined in future.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided, noted the decision of the Council in respect of the greetings message to be included in future cards and agreed that the present procedure for the approval of the design of the card, which involved the Head of Committee and Members' Services consulting with the Group Leaders, be continued for the selection of the Christmas card for 2009.

Human Resources

Standing Order 55 - Employment of Relatives

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

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 members of staff who were related to existing officers of the Council.

The Committee noted the appointments.

Absence Management - Third Quarter 2008/09

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

The Committee was advised that absenteeism for the period from October till December, 2008 was showing an average of 3.09 days lost per employee, which represented a decrease of 0.67 days per employee for the same period in the previous year, when the figure had been 3.76 days. This meant that the Council was on target to meet its 2 day target reduction by 2010/11 as it had achieved a reduction of 2.5 days for the year to date. It was pointed out that 68.05% of staff had had no absence during quarter 3, with the number of staff with long-term sickness absence having reduced from 7.63% at the same time last year to 5.01%.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Recruitment of Head of Human Resources

The Committee was reminded that the post of Head of Human Resources was being filled currently on a temporary basis pending a Review of the Centre of the organisation. A report on the aforementioned Review would be submitted to the Committee in February. The report would not be making any recommendation which would change the nature of the post of Head of Human Resources or its present position within the Corporate Services Department. However, it might have a number of Human Resource implications and would require effective implementation. In addition, the Council needed to ensure that the significant Human Resources issues associated with the Review of Public Administration were managed effectively. Therefore, it was considered prudent to proceed to fill permanently the post of Head of Human Resources at this stage.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that it had been agreed previously by the former Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee that the selection panel for such a post should comprise the Chair, two other Elected Members, the Chief Executive and one Director, with Community balance being provided across the Elected Members and gender balance being provided across the Panel. A non-voting Local Government Staff Commission professional assessor/observer should also be in attendance.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that:

- (i) the process to fill the post of Head of Human Resources on a permanent basis be initiated;
- (ii) the Chairman (Councillor D. Dodds), the Deputy Chairman (Councillor McCann) and Councillor Long, subject to confirmation of their availability, be appointed to act as the selection panel; and
- (iii) the Chairman be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services, to approve the recruitment plan and associated documentation.

Asset Management

arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Facilities – Community Consultation

(Mr. W. Francey, Director of Health and Environmental Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of the Report

To present for consideration recommended final draft documentation for use in the consultation with the Council’s ratepayers on the possible transfer of lands at the North Foreshore for an arc21 residual waste treatment facility.

Relevant Background Information

At its meeting in 19 September, 2008 the SP&R Committee considered options for consulting the local community on the possible transfer of land at the North Foreshore to arc21 for the purposes of building and operating a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility or an Energy from Waste (EFW) facility.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable the proposed consultation process to be validated by a professional consultancy service and recommended that the proposals for the community consultation be considered at a Special Meeting of the Council. In accordance with this decision, the Consultation Institute was commissioned to review the proposed consultation process and Northern Ireland Environment Link was commissioned to review the content and balance of the information leaflet.

At the Special Meeting on 30 October, the Council considered reports from the Consultation Institute and Northern Ireland Environment Link, together with revised information material and a revised draft questionnaire and cover letter. The following recommendations to consult and engage the Council's ratepayers were also considered and adopted:

- ‘1. A postal survey to be sent to all household and business addresses in Belfast. A copy of the proposed questionnaire and cover letter has been circulated (subject to possible changes highlighted through testing of the form as part of a focus group)
2. Results to be segmented by area and other geo-demographic data as appropriate
3. The postal survey to include the information sheet as amended to explain the proposal and the issues and terms used. A copy of the information sheet has been circulated (subject to possible changes highlighted through testing of the form as part of a pre-consultation focus group)
4. A series of appropriately segmented Focus Groups to identify and explore in detail local perceptions, views and concerns.
5. A dedicated information webpage be set up on the Council website where people can provide their views by email and get more information

6. A series of informal information roadshows (staffed by Council employees) to be held at various times and locations across the city to enable local people to drop in and get more information, ask questions and provide more detailed comment about the proposals. The range of locations will reflect the input of elected Members and other stakeholders.'

The Council also approved the commencement of a tender process for the appointment of consultants to undertake the consultation process and granted delegated authority to the Director of Health & Environmental Services to appoint an appropriate consultant subject to a maximum cost of £100,000. Following discussion, the Council also recommended that a further report in relation to any proposed changes to be made to the questionnaire and the information sheet, following the pre-consultation focus group meetings and further consultation with the Party Groupings, be submitted for consideration to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at the earliest opportunity.

In line with the recommendations to commence a tender process for the appointment of consultants and to develop the questionnaire and information sheet following meetings with the focus group and Party Groupings, the Waste Management Service engaged with the Party Groupings in order to develop the questionnaire and information sheet while also conducting a tender process using the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Framework. Unfortunately, no consultants responded to the Council's invitation. In the meantime, the Service convened a reference group of Members and a series of meetings were held during which the content of the questionnaire and information sheet was debated and amendments were made prior to the appointment of consultants.

Following the setback with the OGC Framework, the Service undertook a local procurement exercise and received two submissions which, after review and interview, resulted in the appointment of Social Market Research (SMR) just before Christmas.

Within the first two weeks of January, SMR convened three pre-consultation focus groups to consider the amended questionnaire and information sheet and a further meeting of the Members' reference group was held on 16 January when the feedback from these groups was considered by the Members. Following consideration of the issues raised by the pre-consultation focus groups and discussions with the Members a final recommended draft of the cover letter and the questionnaire and information sheet has been circulated.

Once approved by the Council, the draft questionnaire and information sheet will be printed and issued to all ratepayers within Belfast and a report will be presented to the SP&R Committee following receipt and analysis of the final results. Following discussions with SMR, it was recognised that the timescale for the roadshows could be condensed into a two week programme which would beneficially coincide with householders'/ratepayers' receipt of the postal questionnaire and information sheet if a tandem process was used whereby there were two events held per day (Mon-Fri) in separate locations across the city. These would be supplemented by an additional roadshow in a city centre location on the two Saturdays. These roadshows would be timed to coincide closely with when householders received the questionnaire and information sheet to maximise support and promote understanding.

Furthermore, considering the postal survey, SMR have recommended that the timetable for the receipt of responses be four weeks from the date of receipt of the questionnaire by householders/ratepayers. It is anticipated that all householders/ratepayers should have received their postal survey around 24 February.

Resource Implications

In line with the Special Council meeting, the consultancy SMR has been appointed within the budget allocated.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to approve the draft questionnaire and information sheet for public consultation, as appended.

The Committee is also requested to approve the consultation programme as outlined above.

Key to Abbreviations

- MBT – Mechanical Biological Treatment**
- EfW – Energy from Waste**
- SMR – Social Market Research**
- OGC – Office of Government Commerce”**

After discussion, during which several Members expressed the view that further work was required on the draft questionnaire and information sheet, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to further consultation being undertaken with Councillors from the North Belfast area on the content of the questionnaire and information sheet prior to the meeting of the Council scheduled to be held on 2nd February with any changes to the documentation being notified to the Members of the Council prior to the commencement of that meeting.

**City Hall - Council Meetings and
Re-opening Arrangements**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the holding of Council meetings in the City Hall and the re-opening arrangements:

“Relevant Background Information

Council agreed that the refurbishment work to City Hall would take place in two phases initially to accommodate a proposed 2009 election. Phase 1 was to include the availability of the main civic rooms ie the Council Chamber, Reception Room, Banqueting Hall, Great Hall, Rotunda and associated access and amenity in the form of stairway lift and restrooms. That target has now been achieved although access to the building will only be available from the front.

Phase 1 was completed on 19 November 2008 meaning the Council Chamber was available for the Council meeting from December 2008, although the Committee rooms and Party rooms will not be available until phase 2 in the Summer.

As phase 2 of the construction programme will be ongoing until Summer 2009 a number of temporary arrangements will need to be put in place for Members to hold Council meetings in City Hall from February onwards. Restrictions that will necessarily apply were presented to Members at the October meeting.

At that meeting the Committee agreed to forego a December return due to the Continental Market and to instead organise a site visit with a view to making a decision in January.

Key Information

The site visit duly took place on 11 December and those Members who attended, it is fair to say, were favourably impressed both in terms of the quality of the work and the progress that has been made. A separate visit was also arranged for the High Sheriff in December who was also happy with the project.

The restrictions on using the Council Chamber remain as presented in October and are outlined below:

The Civic Rooms – as stated the main rooms and access to them will be available from 19 November 2008. There will be heating and lighting, toilets available in the East entrance and lift and stair access.

What will not be available are any phone or data links and there will be no arts or artefacts displayed in the rooms.

Catering – Facilities Management can provide a cold buffet service as they do presently with the Reception Room made available for dining or if required hot food can made available. Alternatively, if Members wish, catering could be provided in CWB although that would mean Members having to walk around to the front of City Hall to access the building.

Car Parking – Car parking at City Hall will be limited with although the spaces can be made available at the East and Front entrances or by opening the front gates and parking on the driveway. The main alternative is to park in Adelaide Exchange and walk to City Hall although there is free on street parking in Linenhall Street etc from 6.00pm.

Please note the courtyard is the contractors compound and will be the last part of the contract to be completed.

Pre Council Party Meetings – this remains the most difficult issue although space can be made available for Party Groups to hold Pre Council meetings in the main civic rooms by partitioning some space eg in the Banqueting Room or Great Hall. Please note, however, any Party Groups who wish to meet in City Hall rooms will have fairly basic furniture such as round dining tables and stacking chairs.

The alternative to this ad hoc arrangement is to meet first in Adelaide Exchange and then transfer to City Hall for the Council meeting.

Timing – As any decision taken at this Committee must be ratified at the February Council the Members may consider it more appropriate to use City Hall following a natural break in the year such as Easter, however as stated the Chamber is available with the above restrictions whenever Members decide to move. The alternative is to wait until September when the building will be fully operational.

Reopening Plans – The contract date for completion of the works is August 2009 following which there will be a further period of decanting people back to the building.

We will of course endeavour to improve on this date but at the moment this is the most definite we can be.

The main public facilities will be usable from September onwards and a number of enquiries have been made both to Members and Officers as to the availability of City Hall for banqueting functions. No dates have as yet been agreed.

It is suggested that the first event should be a Council sponsored opening event and that City Hall should not be made available before that takes place. Once this date has been set bookings can then take place as normal.

Furthermore Members are asked to note that the Directors of Development, Improvement and Head of Communications are working with a range of Officers and outside organisations to develop a positive 2009 message for the City. Besides City Hall there are a number of major buildings opening eg Ulster Hall, Ulster Museum, Queens Library etc as well as some major events eg Tall Ships, Sister Cities etc which can boost confidence in the Belfast brand if properly packaged.

The opening event and/or series of events for City Hall would be part of this programme which it is intended to launch at the Ulster Hall opening on 6 March 2009 following agreement by Committee in February.

Members are asked to agree to these plans in principle subject to further details being brought to Committee in February.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Consider the date from which Council meetings should be held in the City Hall;
2. Consider their preference in terms of catering, ie City Hall or CWB or Adelaide Exchange;
3. Consider the preferred location for pre meetings;
4. Note proposed opening plans and agree the first event in City Hall is part of the opening arrangements;
5. Agree that a further report be brought to Committee on the suggested programme of events."

Several Members expressed the view that, whilst they recognised the desire of some Members to return to the building as soon as was practicable, it would be preferable to wait until the refurbishment work to the building had been completed and all facilities reinstated before the Council Chamber was brought back into use. The Members were anxious, however, to explore the possibility of having the contract completed at the earliest possible date.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed not to resume the holding of Council meetings in the City Hall at this stage but directed that discussions be held with the contractor to establish whether an earlier completion date would be possible in order to facilitate an early return to the building. The Committee agreed further that the first event to be held in the City Hall as part of the opening arrangements should be a Council-organised event, that the City Hall should not be made available for use by outside organisations until that event had taken place and that an appropriate programme of events to mark the re-opening be drawn up.

City Hall - Coffee Shop Facility

(Mr. G. Wright, Head of Facilities Management, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Coffee Shop facility in the City Hall:

“Relevant background information

Members will recall that, at its meeting of 12th December 2008, the Committee approved the provision of a coffee-shop facility in the City Hall located on the ground floor south-east corner of the building, together with an exhibition area and an enhanced merchandising space. However a number of Members expressed reservations about the proposed theming of the coffee-shop area.

This concern largely centred around the proposed theme – a close replica of one of the first-class cafeterias on the Titanic – and the principal reason given for this concern was that the theme did not adequately reflect the broader industrial, working-class history and culture of the city, and may consequently be of limited significance to the majority of local people. The Committee therefore instructed the relevant Officers to review the proposed theme and to report back with any viable alternatives.

Having reviewed the matter and consulted with a range of interested parties including Consarc, Good Relations, Councillor Conor Maskey (who had expressed particular concerns) and relevant BCC staff, it is proposed that the Titanic theme be replaced by a ‘Belfast Works’ theme which would highlight the city’s nineteenth and early twentieth century role in ship-building, linen & textile manufacture, engineering, tobacco production, rope-making and other heavy industries. Such a period theme also fits in well with the historic nature of the City Hall itself.

The coffee-shop area would be fitted out using period materials and fittings so far as possible, and these could be supplemented by additional items of art and artefacts on public display in the area. Some aspects of the Titanic story could also be addressed via the shipbuilding elements of the theme, and it is obviously important to retain this link if at all possible given the high degree of international recognition and interest in this topic.

The exhibition area adjacent to the coffee-shop can be used to cater for the many requests for exhibition space which the Council receives each year and which are currently accommodated in the Rotunda, marble, East entrance or other areas of the building, however in addition it is proposed that two or three standing exhibitions linked to the 'Belfast Works' theme would be developed and rotated periodically at times when no external exhibitions are being hosted.

It will also be necessary to review the stock of merchandising goods sold by the Council in the light of these proposed changes before the merchandising franchise comes into effect.

Key Issues

The key issue is whether or not the Committee regards the 'Belfast Works' theme as preferable to the Titanic theme and is happy to proceed on that basis, or would wish further work to be done on alternative themes (or does not wish to have a theme at all). In this context it should also be noted that time is increasingly of the essence if the necessary work is to be designed and completed to coincide with the re-opening of the City Hall later in 2009.

It should further be noted that if the 'Belfast Works' theme is adopted it may necessitate some additional modest expenditure on research and interior design. This is because whereas with the Titanic proposal photographs of the actual layout exist and can simply be re-created, the revised theme will need to be researched and subsequently designed to give the desired effect.

Resources Implications

Financial

It is unlikely that the 'Belfast Works' proposed theme will cost significantly less than the original Titanic theming (i.e. approx £40,000), and indeed there may be some modest additional research and interior design costs as outlined above.

Human Resources

There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

Asset & other implications

There are no direct asset implications arising from this report in terms of the fabric of the building or its systems and services.

Recommendations & Decisions

It is recommended that the Committee approve the theming of the City Hall coffee-shop on the basis of the 'Belfast Works' theme as set out above, together with the associated expenditure in respect of fitting-out, research and interior design."

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that the "Belfast Works" concept be made as wide-ranging as possible in order to include references to the past, present and future.

Estates Issues

New Lease at Duncrue Industrial Estate

The Committee was informed that Action Mental Health held from the Council a 99 year lease from 1st January, 1975 for a site measuring approximately 0.8 acres at Duncrue Industrial Estate, subject to a current rent of £10,000 per annum. The lease contained a seven-year rent review clause and the rent was due for review on 1st January, 2010. The lease contained also a clause restricting use of the premises to light or general industrial purposes. As part of the negotiations for the installation of a Northern Ireland Electricity cable to serve the North Foreshore, officers had agreed to grant Action Mental Health a new 125 year lease at a rent of £15,000 per annum reviewable every five years. The lease would allow for any reasonable commercial or industrial use.

The Committee granted approval for the new 125 year lease to Action Mental Health at Plot 30, Duncrue Industrial Estate on the terms outlined.

Land at Sliabh Dubh

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was notified that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 9th October, had agreed to the acquisition of a portion of land at Sliabh Dubh, off the Springfield Road, Belfast at nil capital cost and rent free for the purpose of providing a children's playground. The Committee noted also that the estimated cost of the playground would be £200,000 and the acquisition would be subject to the Council's Capital Projects Gateway process.

Land at Barnett Demesne

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was informed that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 15th January, had agreed to transfer to the Belfast Activity Centre a portion of land at Barnett Demesne close to Shaw's Bridge for the purposes of developing a Boat House.

It was reported that, since that meeting, further discussions had been held with representatives of Belfast Activity Centre and it had been proposed:

- (i) to enter into a Licence Agreement with the Belfast Activity Centre to allow the work on site to progress. The Licence would seek to protect the Council's interests in terms of any claims, reinstatement of the lands, duration of the construction works and the expected

quality of the finished building, as per the submitted plans. The Licence would run from the date the works commenced on site until the date of completion of the works, which was anticipated to be in March, 2009; and

- (ii) since the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure, which also owned a portion of the land on which the Boat House would be built, intended to grant to the Belfast Activity Centre a 21-year lease from the date the Boat House construction was completed, that the Council grant a 21-year lease to that Department which would run concurrently with its lease to the Centre. The Council's lease to the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure would define the extent of the land to be leased, would restrict use of the site, in accordance with the restrictions in the Council's title and the intended use of the premises, and would be subject to agreement on financial terms to be assessed by the Land and Property Services Agency acting between the parties.

It was pointed out that the land at that location had been acquired by the Council under the Will of the late William Barnett and it was likely that formal approval to any disposal would be required from the Charities Branch.

The Committee authorised the grant of a temporary Licence Agreement to the Belfast Activity Centre to enable construction works to progress at the aforementioned site and to the grant of a 21-year lease to the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure for an agreed site area on financial terms to be determined by the Land and Property Services Agency and subject to the incorporation of suitable terms and the completion of a legal agreement to be compiled by the Director of Legal Services.

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad – Live Sites Screen

(Mr. G. Copeland, Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In May and August 2008 Belfast City Council's Development Committee received details of plans for the Cultural Olympiad to be staged leading up to and during the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic games. As part of the original ethos, Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, mirrored the classical Greeks in maintaining that the purpose of the Olympic Games was to celebrate mind, body and spirit.

From this a Cultural Olympiad was established to include all cultural events of the Olympic Movement. This Olympiad is a period when artists from around the world showcase their work in the lead

up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Up until 1948 medals were awarded for sculpture, music, literature and art. The modern Cultural Olympiad will focus on the following themes:

- Bringing together culture and sport
- Encouraging audiences to take part
- Animating public spaces – through street theatre, public art, circus skills, live big screen sites
- Using culture and sport to raise issues of environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing
- Honouring and sharing the values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Encouraging collaborations and innovation between communities and cultural sectors
- Enhancing the learning, skills and personal development of young people by linking with education programmes

The key to this process has been the development of a series of 'live sites' which involve large LED screens being installed within public performance space across the United Kingdom. Belfast City Council's Development Committee received formal details on the costs for such a project in December 2008. This Committee agreed that this information should be referred to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for formal consideration.

Key Issues

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad - 'Live Sites' Public Screen

In August the Council received details on the 'Live Sites' public screens from LOCOG 2012. The proposal would see a permanent 25sq m screen, valued by the BBC and LOCOG 2012 at £500,000, positioned in the heart of the city centre. The initial proposal was for the screen to be located in Donegall Place, but this has been rejected by LOCOG on the basis that the screen would not be in position until after 2012 Olympics have been staged. Therefore LOCOG, along with DSD, are proposing that the screen be located within the grounds of City Hall – facing into the lawn on Donegall Square East. The concept would mean that the BBC, LOCOG 2012 and BCC would share broadcasting time on the screen which would operate approximately twelve hours a day, 365 days a year. The screen could also be utilised for major events including a number of London 2012 events. The key indicative costs of the proposal that BCC are asked to address are as follows.

- Planning permission and process as one off payment estimated at £6,000
- Operating costs (annually) including electricity and maintenance estimated at £20,000
- Annual programming and project co-ordination costs for the next four years of £50,000 per year

In total BCC would have an estimated one-off cost of £6,000 and £70,000 costs per year for the next four years. Should the Council agree to support this initiative BCC officers have agreement in principle from DSD, as part of their 'Streets Ahead' programme, to meet the installation costs of approximately £65,000 including the cost of a 1 m x 1 m control room in the basement of City Hall. For the four year period leading up to the 2012 Olympics the screen would be the property of LOCOG with a guaranteed link to the BBC's national public screens programme for BCC. After this period the screen would become the property of BCC with a similar link to the BBC's public broadcast network.

The installation of the screen would not only be subject to Council approval, but also requires an economic appraisal by DSD, planning approval and full legal agreement with all the relevant bodies.

Resource Implications

Financial

The Council funding would involve an estimated one-off cost of £6,000 and £70,000 costs per year for the next four years.

Recommendations

Members are requested to consider the issue of funding for the project as stated above, and if approved, also give:

- Approval for the utilisation of the City Hall grounds for the project
- Approval to access funding from DSD, which is subject to a full economic appraisal
- Approval to proceed with an application for planning consent to NI Planning Service

All the above items would be subject to legal agreements between all stakeholders that would be overseen by the Council's Legal Services Department.

Abbreviations

BCC	-	Belfast City Council
DCAL	-	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
LOCOG 2012	-	London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games 2012
DSD	-	Department of Social Development"

The Events Manager recommended, given the discussion which had occurred earlier in the meeting in relation to the Revenue Estimates and the setting of the District Rate, that the Committee agree not to proceed with the project and that the matter be referred back to the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure requesting that it seek funding from other sources and an alternative venue.

The Committee adopted the recommendation of the Events Manager.

World Wildlife Fund Earth Hour

The Committee considered a report regarding the participation of the Council in the 2009 World Wildlife Fund Earth Hour, a global awareness campaign which had taken place over the previous two years whereby individuals, businesses, companies, schools and iconic buildings had been invited to turn off their lights for a period of one hour on a designated day as a means of demonstrating support for tackling climate change. It was recommended that the Council extinguish the lights at the City Hall on 28th March, 2009 commencing at 8.30 p.m. for a period of one hour in order to provide support for the campaign.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Good Relations and Equality

Good Relations Partnership

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

The Committee approved the minutes of the Good Relations Partnership of 16th December, adopted the recommendation in relation to the funding for the Peace III Small Grants Scheme and approved also the decision in relation to the proposals for the exhibition space under the Shared Cultural Space Theme.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Belfast Flooding

(Ms. S. Wylie, Head of Environmental Health, attended in connection with these items.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the flooding which had occurred in Belfast during August, 2008:

“Relevant Background Information

The flooding emergency which took place in Belfast on 16 August 2008 has now been extensively reviewed using information obtained from the main responding organisations and from Belfast City Council elected members and staff who took part in the response to the event and recovery from it. The information was obtained using a series of structured focus group meetings and the main observations and recommendations have been summarised in the report which had been circulated.

The report sets out background information and a series of recommendations to provide information for both the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Health & Environmental Services Committee as well as other Members. The actions arising from the recommendations will be taken forward through the internal Belfast City Council Emergency Plan Working Group (and a specific flood sub-group) and also through the multi-agency Belfast Resilience Forum.

Key Issues

One of the main recommendations for the Council is to set up a Member group, representative of all party groupings to oversee implementation of the recommendations and engagement with other agencies over a defined period of time to ensure preventative measures are put in place to minimise the risk of future flooding in the City.

The Emergency Coordination Officer has initiated work to analyse flooding data from recent emergencies with a view to:

- mapping the main hotspots in the City;
- establishing likely causes and;
- identifying preventative measures that can be put in place

This work should be completed within the next 3 months.

A key issue arising from the August event was the availability and distribution of sandbags. With this in mind Rivers Agency has put forward a proposal to supply Belfast City Council and other councils with sandbags for storage at council depots near to communities at risk from flooding. This is a welcome proposal and the Emergency Coordination Officer is considering the implications for the Council on how storage and distribution can be facilitated.

Communities who are at risk from flooding in Belfast must be assured that Belfast City Council and other agencies have reviewed the findings from previous flooding events and have taken all possible action to prevent or reduce the impact of further flooding. The Environmental Health Service is also to produce information for householders on flooding prevention and recovery.

Communities must also be assured that Belfast City Council and other agencies have adequate arrangements in place to provide an efficient and effective response for any future flooding emergencies.

Resource Implications

Financial

Work can be accommodated within current budgets.

Human Resources

Demands on member's time to resource a multi agency flood group. Officer time can be accommodated within current workloads.

Asset and Other Implications

None

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note and endorse the findings of the attached Flooding Report: and
- Endorse the proposal to set up a Member group, with representation from all political parties, to oversee the implementation of the recommendations detailed in the attached flooding report and the work with other agencies to put in place prevention measures to mitigate the risk of future flooding.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Future Partnership Working with the New Health Structures

The Head of Environmental Health submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report in relation to the future partnership working with the new health structures:

“1. Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council's overall purpose is to improve quality of life now and for future generations. One of the greatest quality of life issues in the city is health and wellbeing in that there continues to be a significant difference between the health and life expectancy of those living in deprived areas and those living in more affluent areas. This 'health gap' and indeed the general health of the population in the City is worse than many other UK Cities. It is not something which can be addressed by the Health Service alone as its causes

relate to many other social, economic and environmental factors such as employment, education, housing, social inclusion, safe, clean and attractive neighbourhoods, access to leisure and recreation etc, as well as people's lifestyles.

The City Council has a key role to play in leading the City to address these issues and has included the development of a healthier City as one of its key priorities under the *Supporting People and Communities* theme of the corporate Plan. Its role can be divided into three aspects:

- Service delivery;
- Civic leadership; and
- Advocacy.

In terms of delivery, the Council currently provides a wide range of services within communities which impact or have the capacity to impact on people's health and wellbeing. These include leisure services, community services, environmental health, good relations, community safety, city development, parks and open spaces, services for children and young people and older people, economic development, regeneration, culture and arts, etc.

In terms of civic leadership, the Council has the democratic legitimacy to play a role in ensuring that health improvement is addressed in a co-ordinated way across the City by the many service providers involved. There is currently a significant opportunity for the Council to make an even greater contribution in this regard with the prospect of community planning under RPA and with the current reorganisation of health and social care structures in Northern Ireland. The new health structures will also see a greater role for local government through participation in the new Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Wellbeing (RAPHSW) and in local commissioning. For example, four local elected representatives will sit on the Belfast Local Commissioning Group for health from April 2009, making decisions about budgets, contracts and service finance. It is also planned that at a local level, the new RAPHSW will work in a joint team with local Councils and there is currently a proposal for Belfast to pilot such an initiative during the next financial year along with a number of other Councils.

The Council also has an increasing role in liaising with Government in relation to the health and wellbeing of communities. This role can involve giving advice, lobbying in relation to policy and responding to consultations. Recent examples have included debates on suicide, alcohol abuse, poverty etc. It is essential that the Council develops its capacity in order to deliver effectively in its new

and developing role. It is also likely that the Council's role in relation to health and wellbeing will be enhanced through the new power of wellbeing which is planned during the implementation of RPA.

Key Issues

The Minister for Health has now written to the Chief Executives of District Councils, inviting expressions of interest from those Councils that might wish to host an Agency/Council joint working pilot during 2009/2010.

The Minister has stated that local government has a major role to play in improving public health and reducing health inequalities and is proposing that a number of pilot arrangements should be put in place to test out joint working between local government, the Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Wellbeing and Local Commissioning. Early proposals suggest co-locating health and social care staff with local government staff to support local government in taking forward their future power of wellbeing and community planning role and in leadership of local inter-sectoral partnerships. The staff would also assist in developing local health improvement plans, programmes and projects to reflect local community need and would also support the Local Commissioning Group in developing commissioning plans which not only deal with health service provision but also measures to prevent ill health. These arrangements would be developed further and extended post 2011.

Should the Committee agree to host such a pilot it will be necessary to ensure that that Members are involved from the outset and that they are provided with the necessary information on a regular basis to aid decision making and policy development. A further report will be brought back at a later date to gain agreement on how this should be done.

Resource Implications

Financial

The proposed formation of a co-located joint team will be jointly resourced. Any resources required from Belfast City Council during the pilot will be resourced from within existing budgets through the re-alignment of existing posts.

Human Resources

Officers time and commitment

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to the Chief Executive lodging an expression of interest with the Chief Medical Officer to host a pilot joint local health and wellbeing team co-sponsored by the Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Wellbeing and the Council, starting in 2009/2010.

Abbreviations

RPA – Review of Public Administration

RAPHSW – Regional Agency for Public Health and Social Wellbeing”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman