

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th June, 2010

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Crozier (Chairman); and
Councillors Adamson, Attwood, Austin, D. Browne,
M. Browne, W. Browne, Hartley, N. Kelly, Lavery,
McCann, McCarthy, Newton, O'Reilly, Robinson,
Rodgers and Stoker.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. C. Quigley, Town Solicitor;
Mrs. J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources;
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 Campbell and Hendron.

Transition Committee Business

Review of Public Administration Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware that the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots submitted a report to the Executive at its meeting on 27th May 2010, setting out proposals on the way forward for the RPA local government reform programme. It is understood that different views were expressed at the Executive meeting on 27th May and a discussion on the way forward was deferred to the Executive meeting on 10th June 2010.

1.2 Following the meeting the Minister for Local Government, Edwin Poots, has written to NILGA and Councils setting out the funding pressures that central government will be under over the coming years and indicating that if local government reform is to proceed the estimated cost of £118M would have to be met by local government. Council responses were been sought by 4th June to enable the Environment Minister to submit a revised paper for the Executive meeting on 10th June.

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 Councils have previously considered the issue of financing specific elements of the RPA reform programme and had agreed a number of high-level principles including, for example, the following:

- The Reform process should be cost neutral to the ratepayer.
- Where there is no benefit to Local Government, the cost must be borne by central government.
- Central government should fund activities where equity across the sector is required eg severance.
- The final programme costs and their apportionment between councils must be negotiated based on a robust and agreed business case.

2.2 NILGA recently arranged a meeting for representatives of all local authorities (including a number of Belfast City Council Members) to further discuss the issue of funding reform with a view to informing a NILGA response to be submitted to the Environment Minister on behalf of the local government sector. At the meeting there was acknowledgment that local authorities may be required to fund an element of the reform costs and that any consideration of funding would be based on the principles previously agreed. Subsequently, NILGA submitted a response to the Environment Minister.

2.3 Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 4th June, considered the Councils own response to the Minister and agreed, in summary, that it would be willing 'to explore with colleagues from central and local government how the costs of reform might be met'.

Outcome of NI Executive meeting

2.4 It is understood that different views were expressed at the Northern Ireland Executive meeting on 10th June, with a lengthy period of intensive discussions ending in deadlock and no decision taken on the way forward. It was agreed that a special Executive meeting would be held on Monday 14th June to attempt to agree a finalised way forward. Extensive discussions between parties are to continue over the weekend.

Next Steps

- 2.5 As agreed by the Committee, officers are currently examining what options are available to the Council in moving forward with the RPA and taking into account the recent decision taken by the NI Executive. It will be important to build upon the substantial work already undertaken to date by the council and ensuring that any potential beneficial opportunities in regards to, for example, collaboration, transferring functions etc are pursued. It would be the intention that a further report setting out detailed options for moving forward will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee in August.
- 2.6 It is suggested for the Committees consideration that a Strategic Planning Workshop be held for Members in August to consider the RPA and other pertinent issues relating to the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan for the period 2011 and beyond. At this stage there should be feedback from all the surveys currently underway (i.e. Members, citizens and staff).

3.0 Resource Implications

- There are potential implications attached to any commitment made by the Council to fund elements of the RPA reform programme, however, any financial commitment will be based on the development of a detailed business case which will remain subject to political consideration and endorsement.
- There will clearly be resource implications (in terms of officer time) attached to the Council's continued engagement and work on the key issues outlined within this report.

4.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and agree that a Strategic Planning Workshop would be scheduled for Members in August 2010"

The Chief Executive reminded the Members that the discussions in relation to the Review of Public Administration had concluded on Monday evening with the Northern Ireland Executive not having agreed on the way forward. Accordingly, the Environment Minister now intended to write to the Northern Ireland Office Minister recommending that it proceed with elections to twenty-six, and not eleven, Councils in 2011. The Chief Executive pointed out that discussions would continue to determine which elements of the reform process could be taken forward and a report in this regard would be submitted to the Committee for its consideration in August.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to the holding in August of a Strategic Planning Workshop for Members.

**Consultation on Proposals for a Roads
(Functions of District Councils) Bill**

The Town Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

1.0 RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The Council received correspondence, dated 29th April 2010, from the Chief Executive of Roads Service setting out proposals for the development of a Roads (Functions of District Councils) Bill. A copy of the consultation document, including the draft Bill, has been circulated. Comments on the draft Bill has been sought by 23rd July 2010.

1.2 The Bill is intended to enable the Department to transfer the following local roads functions to councils:-

- authorising local road race events;
- the issue of authorisations to enable vehicles to enter pedestrian zones;
- off-street car parks; and
- on and off-street parking enforcement

2.0 KEY ISSUES

2.1 The following provides a brief overview of the provisions as set out within the Bill and the proposed transfer of additional responsibilities to local government.

Clause 1: Parking Enforcement

2.2 Under Clause 1 and Schedule 1 of the Bill the Council will be given the power to carry out enforcement functions, presently exercised by the Department under the Traffic Management order 2005, in relation to parking and waiting contraventions. This will mean that councils will become responsible for on and off-street parking enforcement; traffic attendants and for the issuing and processing of Penalty Charge Notices.

- 2.3 It is intended that the Department would retain responsibility for type approval of prescribed parking and immobilisation devices; making regulations; to set the Penalty Charge Tariffs and the contraventions in respect of which a Penalty Charge is payable. Clarification is required as to who retains the income receipt from penalty charges and whether this will be used to off-set the costs incurred by councils for enforcement and necessary maintenance.

Clause 2: Transfer to councils of certain functions in relation to parking places

- 2.4 Under Clause 2, the majority of off-street car parks provided by the Department, and the land on which they are situated, would transfer to district councils. The Department would retain and continue to operate those off-street car parks used for 'park and ride' and 'park and share' schemes.

Clause 3: Functions of councils in relation to road races

- 2.5 The Bill will provide powers to district councils to authorise road races and to make the necessary road closure orders to facilitate them. The district council in whose area a race starts would be the council to make the necessary road closure order.
- 2.6 The Bill also provides for the future legislative responsibility for the Roads Races Order to transfer from DRD to DCAL which has policy responsibility for the central administration and promotion of sport in Northern Ireland.
- 2.7 Members should note that a separate Bill, the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, deals with a number of roads related issues including giving local councils the power to close roads for events. The Bill is currently at 2nd committee consideration stage within the NI Executive. This means that there will be two separate pieces of legislation which will be dealing with the ability of councils to close roads for holding events.

Clause 4: Pedestrian Zone Permits

- 2.8 The Bill will provide councils with the power to issue special authorisation permits allowing vehicles to enter pedestrian zones. The Department will retain the power to make extinguishment orders (i.e. designation of pedestrian zones).

BCC RESPONSE

- 2.9 Clearly this is a very important piece of legislation which has the potential to impact upon the future role and functionality of the Council. It represents a positive step in enabling the transfer of additional functions to councils and in creating strong and responsive local government. The proposals will enhance local government service delivery and the ability of the Council to make a real and lasting difference at the local level and, therefore, should be welcomed.
- 2.10 However, there are issues of detail (e.g. public liability and insurance implications for the Council) which are still to be worked out when the associated regulations and potential transfer scheme are drafted. The Council will strongly advocate the need for intensive dialogue and engagement with the Department in relation to the development of the detail as to how the Bill will be implemented and the content of any associated subordinate legislation.
- 2.11 A draft Council response is attached at Appendix 2 for Members consideration. In summary, the key points raised in the response include:
- concerns about the separation of linked legislative provisions (i.e. pertaining to the closure of roads for events) across two Bills as this will lead to confusion
 - consideration in relation to the potential public liability and insurance implications for councils resulting from the provisions set out within this Clause
 - advocacy of the need for an appropriate maintenance budget to transfer to councils alongside the transfer of responsibility for off-street car parking
 - seeking Council input into the designation of Park and Ride and on-street parking provisions which are comprised within the fabric of the roads otherwise maintained by the DRD
 - any policy retention by the Department to set the level of charges/tariffs would need to have a caveat in relation to the necessity for the function to cover reasonable operational costs of delivery
 - clarity is sought in relation to the ability of the Council to dispose of land used for parking places in addition to the specified powers to acquire land

Members will note that a recent press release published by the BBC News (23-03-2010) reported that in 2009 the cost of enforcement to the Department was £8million while income from fines and car parking charges accounted to £4+million.

3.0 Resource Implications

The potential resource impact of the Bill is still to be quantified.

4.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the forgoing report;
- (ii) consider the draft Council response attached at Annex 2; and
- (iii) agree that the draft response, subject to any amendments made by Members, be submitted to the DRD.

Appendix 2

DRD CONSULTATION PROPOSALS FOR A ROADS (FUNCTIONS OF DISTRICT COUNCILS) BILL

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL DRAFT RESPONSE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on proposals for a Roads (Functions of District Councils) Bill. This is a timely and much needed piece of legislation, which represents a positive step in enabling the transfer of additional functions to councils and in creating strong and responsive local government.

1.2 The Council seeks, through this response, to further enhance the effectiveness of this legislation for the benefit of its local people. In responding to the consultation document, the Council has a number of general comments to make in addition to detailed comments on some of the individual clauses set out within the proposed Bill.

2.0 General Comments

Scope of Functions to transfer

2.1 The Council has previously advocated the need for the full transfer to local government of the responsibility for the maintenance and development of local roads and is, therefore, disappointed in the agreed scope of functions proposed to transfer.

- 2.2 The Council is strongly of the view that roads are much more than engineering solutions and would welcome greater local flexibility being built into the system, within overarching principles, which ensures equality obligations are adhered to. This would allow for the management of difference at the local level. Local roads have the potential to impact on issues such as community safety, community relations, air equality and health, environmental improvement, neighbourhood renewal and economic development and, therefore, their prioritisation, planning and maintenance must be made within this wider social context.

Legislative Process

- 2.3 While the Council fully welcomes the Bill and the enhanced responsibilities it confers on councils, it is conscious that much of the detail around the outworking of this legislation will be set out within subordinate legislation. The Council would therefore advocate the need for the Department to consult with all interested parties (including councils) in the drafting phase of any subordinate legislation related to this Bill.
- 2.4 Due consideration will need to be given to the inter-relationship and operability between this Bill and other related legislation recently brought forward. The Council notes that certain powers being conferred to Councils in regards to the closure of roads for events, had been set out within the recent draft Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill and this should be referenced to provide clarity and certainty
- 2.5 The Council would suggest that it may be more appropriate to link some of the provisions set out within this draft Bill, particularly those pertaining to the ability of Councils to close roads for race events, as an amendment to the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.
- 2.6 The package of functions could make it more viable in terms of operational delivery and there would be greater certainty for client groups in relation to the organisational responsibilities. There could also be issues around the consistency in approaches to enforcement etc if the functions were fragmented across separate Bills.
- 2.7 It is important to note that the powers as set out within this Bill regarding the closure of roads for road race events brings with it potential significant public liability and associated assurance implications. Further information is required from the Department in terms of any associated public liability and insurance implications attached to the transferring functions.

Central Control and Oversight

- 2.8 There needs to be consistency in the degree of oversight exercised by the Department. The retention of final approval powers without guiding principles would leave de-facto control with the Department whilst shifting operational responsibility to the Councils. There needs to be greater clarity in terms of the necessary consultation arrangements and the actual responsibilities transferring. In many circumstances joint action will be necessary in relation to policy development and the implementation of the proposed provisions set out in the Bill. This approach, to be effective, needs to be based on partnership, with provision for arbitration, rather than retained control.
- 2.9 The issue of associated functions makes it difficult to be definitive at this uncertain stage of the RPA process. Outside of Belfast the desegregation of the functions on the current 26 Council model may prove to be impossible without some form of cooperation or shared service approach being agreed by the Councils as clusters.
- 2.10 Joint action across Councils and the Department will be required in relation to the development of policy for parking etc which has a significant impact on planning decisions and the shape of future developments.

3.0 Specific Comments

3.1 Clause 1

- The enforcement of parking and other restrictions is assumed to encompass potential resident parking areas. It would be useful if the Bill clarified the scope of the proposed powers and the relationship to other restrictions such as bus lanes.
- The Council notes that in a recent press release published by the BBC News (23-03-2010) it was reported that in 2009 the cost of enforcement to the Department was £8million while income from fines and car parking charges accounted to £4+million.
- Any retention by the Department of the powers to set the level of charges/tariffs and the offences would need to have a caveat in relation to the necessity for the function to cover reasonable operational costs of delivery.

- Further clarification and detail is required in terms of the Departments intentions regarding debt management and, in particular, debt recovery for outstanding debt at point of transfer.

3.2 Clause 2

- The proposed retention by the Department of Park and Ride or Park and Share sites should be reconsidered in so far as it relates to the current provision of such facilities within or adjacent to the town/ city centres. Park and Ride facilities within the urban centres should be integrated and managed as part of the parking portfolio to be transferred to councils. Whilst the retention of the control over facilities along the strategic highway network would be supported the management and operation of city / town centre facilities should take account of local considerations.
- As councils will become responsible for all aspects of the maintenance and operation of off-street car parks, an appropriate maintenance budget must transfer with this function.
- In relation to the on-street parking zones the proposed approach should encompass both the provision and removal of on-street spaces. As suggested above, the approach should reflect a partnership rather than the suggested Departmental control with the Council's options limited to a 'request' for provision.
- For clarity the provision of the Bill should be clear in relation to the Council being able to dispose of land used for parking places in addition to the specified powers to acquire land.
- The Council would note that any transfer of land & property from one body to another is now subject to compulsory first registration at the Lands Registry. It is understood that a large proportion of the car park sites held by DRD are currently unregistered, and it is also understood that transfer of ownership from one legal entity to another will require compulsory first registration at Lands Registry. The process of registration is a very detailed, time intensive (and

hence costly) process, particularly where there are complex title issues. The Council would request that all necessary land registrations are undertaken by the Department in advance of transfer, or the necessary subvention transferred to councils to enable them to undertake this activity.

3.3 Clause 3

- Consideration will need to be given to the inter-relationship and operability between the powers set out under this Clause (e.g. powers of Councils in regards to closure of roads for events) and those related provisions as set out in the recent Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.
- It may be more appropriate to link the changes to the current legislative proposals, particularly those pertaining to the ability of Councils to close roads for race events, as an amendment rather than through the separate Bill.
- Consideration will need to be given to the potential public liability and assurance implications for councils resulting from the provisions set out within this Clause.
- The proposed transfer of responsibility for the Road Races Order to DCAL could add to the confusion arising from the functional changes proposed and would appear to provide little added value given the necessity for the DRD to be involved in the associated processes for the diversion and management of traffic on the wider network.

3.4 Clause 4

- The provision in relation to extinguishment orders should be clarified in relation to the ability of a council to request such a provision. The Council would contend that the ability to implement such an order would be an important element of land assembly for planning and/or regeneration purposes.
- The proposed transfer of responsibility for the Road Races Order to DCAL could add to the confusion arising from the functional changes proposed and would appear to provide little added value given the necessity for the DRD to be involved in the associated processes for the diversion and management of traffic on the wider network.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

The consultation document states that ‘the content of the Bill does not give rise to any associated costs or savings on business, charities, social economic enterprises or the voluntary sector. Consequently the Department has not conducted a regulatory impact assessment’.

There was no reference to the potential impact upon the local government sector and, therefore, the Council would contend that a regulatory impact assessment may have been necessary and beneficial.”

After discussion, during which the Members expressed the view that they wished to see a more comprehensive approach taken to the issue of the Transfer of Roads functions to Local Government, including any potential resource implications and a greater provision for cyclists, the Committee approved the draft Response.

Democratic Services and Governance

Requests for use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality

The Committee was informed that the undernoted requests for the use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality had been received:

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
University of Ulster	University of Ulster – Business Improvement Alumni Conference Dinner 20th November, 2010 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council’s Key Theme of ‘City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together’ and ‘Better opportunities for success across the city’.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Queens Univeristy Belfast	International Conference on Photonic, Electronic and Atomic Collisions 28th July, 2011 Approximately 600 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award	Silver Award Presentation 19th November, 2010 Approximately 500 attending	The use of City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a Finger Buffet Reception	These awards aim to recognise the development of citizenship amongst young people and to acknowledge the newly found skills and talents which will enable them to develop and mature as individuals. The event meets the Council's Key Themes of 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a Finger Buffet Reception. Approximate cost £5,000

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Adoption UK	<p>Launch of DVD – ‘Thinking About Adopting’</p> <p>6th November, 2010</p> <p>Approximately 200 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.</p>	<p>This event, which will take place during National Adoption Week, will launch a DVD which will be used across Northern Ireland by the various Health Trusts to help potential parents with the difficulties faced when considering adoption. The event will also seek to raise the profile of National Adoption Week and will showcase the benefits of adoption to potential parents and children.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council’s Key Theme of ‘Better support for people and communities’ and in addition would contribute to the Council’s thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>
Relatives for Justice	<p>Inclusive recovery of memory of victims of our recent conflict</p> <p>22nd September, 2010</p> <p>Approximately 250 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall.</p>	<p>This event seeks to bring together individuals and families who have been hurt during the conflict to share memories and experiences and to aid healing and recovery.</p> <p>It involves the display of a quilt made up of squares contributed by families who have been affected by the conflict.</p> <p>It is cross-community in nature and as such would contribute to the Council’s key theme of providing better support for people and communities.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.</p> <p>Approximate cost £500.</p>

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Falls Youth Providers	Annual Youth Achievement Awards 28th June, 2010 200 attending	The use of City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits	<p>These awards aim to recognise the development of citizenship amongst young people and to acknowledge the newly found skills and talents which will enable them to develop and mature as individuals.</p> <p>The event meets the Council's Key Themes of 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits.</p> <p>Approximate cost £400</p>

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland – Annual Conference 2010

The Committee agreed that one Member from each of the Party Groupings on the Council, together with the Democratic Services Manager (or his nominee), be authorised to attend the Annual Conference of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland in Buncrana, County Donegal on 9th and 10th September, 2010 at a cost of £591 per delegate.

Mr. Liam Steele

The Chairman advised the Members that this would be the last meeting of the Committee at which Mr. Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services, would be in attendance before retiring from the Council at the end of July after 36 years of service. He thanked Mr. Steele for the contribution which he had made to the work of the Council.

Representatives of each of the Party Groups paid tribute to Mr. Steele for the exemplary manner in which he had fulfilled his duties during his many years of service.

Mr. Steele thanked the Members for their kind remarks.

Finance

Minutes of Meeting of Audit Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 7th June and adopted the recommendations in respect of the Financial Accounts 2009/2010; the updated Code of Governance; the Annual Governance statement for 2009/2010; and the proposed target absence figures for 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 to reduce the number of days of sickness absence to 11 days per full-time equivalent by March, 2011; and 10.75 days by March, 2012.

The Committee approved also the recommendations in relation to the work performed by Audit, Governance and Risk Services on the Annual Assurance Statement for 2009/2010; the Effectiveness of the Audit Panel; the Effectiveness of Internal Audit and the ongoing progress report.

Belfast City Council Financial Accounts 2009/2010

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to present to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee the Financial Accounts of the council for 2009/10.

The Financial Accounts are an important element of the council’s overall corporate governance framework as they provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council’s finances and its financial position.

The Financial Report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2010, as attached, have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: A Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 2009 and the Department of the Environment Accounts Direction, Circular LG 10/10 dated 23 April 2010.

I can confirm that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2010 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department of the Environment and in my opinion the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.

Key Issues

Council Net Expenditure

As previously reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19 March 2010 departmental expenditure forecast was £1.9m below budget for the year. This amount, however, was £0.5m short of the amount needed to cover the £2.4m contribution from reserves to the rate, agreed as part of the rates setting process for 2009/10. This, along with the need to increase the bad debt provision by £0.2m, has resulted in a reduction on the District Fund Balance of £746,914.

Reserves

The impact of this financial position on the reserves is summarised in Table 1 below. It shows that the credit balance on the District Fund Reserves has reduced to £4,602,602 which is approximately 2.33% of annual gross expenditure, or 2.91% of the net operating expenditure. A strategy on how to address the reserves position of the Council was agreed at the Strategic Policy & Resources meeting on 22 January 2010.

Table 1: Summary of Reserves Position

Opening Balance		£5.3m
Under Spend	£(1.9m)	
Contribution from Reserves	£2.4m	
Increase in Bad Debt Provision	<u>£0.2m</u>	
Reduction in Reserves		<u>£0.7m</u>
Closing Balance		<u>£4.6m</u>

District Fund £4,602,602

The District Fund Reserves can be used to supplement income and unexpected expenditure in future years.

City Investment Fund £8,804,256

The City Investment Fund has been created to give a clear demonstration of the Council's propensity to action and its wish to contribute to the vibrancy, prosperity, culture and attractiveness of the city.

Capital Receipts Reserve £860,000

These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets and which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure. This amount relates to the sale of land & buildings at Loop River which has been ring-fenced for the development of the capital scheme 'Loop River – New Facilities'.

Repairs and Renewals Fund £8,567,415

This fund was established under section 56 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 and has an approved limit of £22m and is to fund the closure of the landfill site.

Other Fund Balances and Reserves £579,910

This relates to the Election Reserve which has been set up to smooth the cost of running council elections.

Rates Claw-Back Reserve (£191,279)

This relates to the Minister for Finances decision to allow Local Authorities to defer the impact of the revaluation of MOD properties over a 4 year period, smoothing the impact on the District Fund Reserve.

Rates Income

Notification of a provisional Actual Penny Product has been received from the Land & Property Services Agency for the 2009-10 year. The indication would be of a positive outturn in the region of £238k.

At this stage we have not taken account of this figure in our annual accounts as these figures will not be finalised until the end of August. At that time we will make the necessary adjustments to the 2009/10 accounts.

Debt

The overall level of trade debtors has decreased steadily over the last 2-3 years, reducing from £10m at 31 March 2008, to £7.5m at 31 March 2009 to £5m at 31 March 2010. An analysis of trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, for the last two years is shown below:

	<i>31 March 2009</i>	<i>31 March 2010</i>
Less than three months	£4,618,824	£2,930,828
Three to six months	£443,417	£170,470
Six Months to one Year	£1,462,971	£336,984
More than one year	£1,009,115	£1,554,432
Total	£7,534,327	£4,992,714

However, we have increased the bad debt provision by £0.2m to allow for potential bad debt in estates rental income due to the current economic climate

Creditors

The council has a target of paying invoices within 30 days. During the year the council paid 53,126 invoices totalling £99,072,469.

The average time taken to pay creditor invoices was 28 days for the year ended 31 March 2010.

Whilst the Minister at the Department of Finance and Personnel has reduced the target for the payment of invoice for central government departments to 10 days this target is not mandatory for local government. However, the council endeavours to process invoices as quickly as possible and monitors these figures on a regular basis.

Resource Implications

Financial

None.

Human Resources

None.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

The committee is requested to approve the Council's financial accounts and report for the year ended 31 March 2010.

Key to Abbreviations

N/A”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Proposals for Financial Reporting

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

It was agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in April that work would be ongoing with Members on the development of new financial performance reports for implementation in 2010/11. As agreed, Party Group Briefings took place at the end of May and beginning of June. This report presents the proposed financial performance reports for Members' consideration.

Key Issues

A. Format of Reports

The proposed reports are based on best practice from other local authorities and are intended to give Members a rounded view of the council's finances along with proposals for improvement actions, where required. The key elements of the report pack are as follows:

Dashboard - A high-level summary of financial performance. The focus will be on the percentage year to date and the year end forecast variances. Each indicator will be colour coded to highlight to Members those which have exceeded the agreed tolerances.

Executive summary - this section will explain in narrative terms the performance and also any mitigating action required to improve the position.

The above two elements are intended to summarise the overall financial position for Members with a supporting narrative that aids understanding and makes recommendations for Members' consideration. They are intended to be stand alone and provide a sufficient overview for Members to assist decisionmaking.

The remaining elements below are intended to provide further information for Members, should this be required.

Year to date % variance- indicates the difference of the planned expenditure to the actual expenditure as a percentage variance. This will be from the start of the year to the end of the reporting quarter.

Forecast % variance - indicates the difference of the planned expenditure to the forecasted expenditure as a percentage variance. This will be the forecast to the end of the financial year.

Capital Programme - this will compare planned and actual capital expenditure for the year.

Reserves Position - this indicator shows the actual reserves balance against the planned reserves balance.

% of Creditors paid within 30 days - this indicator measures the percentage of creditor invoices that have been paid within the 30 day limit.

% of Debt collected within 30 days - this indicator measures the percentage of customer invoices that have been paid within the payment terms.

% of Debt over 90days old - this indicator measures the percentage of debt that is over 90days old.

Supplementary Information - this will include details of budgetary and forecasted variances for each Committee along with a cascaded analysis by department for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The analysis will also include details of non-departmental spend in areas such as the capital programme and the overall movement in reserves.

Following discussions with Members, the following key points should be emphasised:

- 1. This proposed reporting pack should be viewed as still under development and the style and information in reports will continue to evolve, as Members make further refinements over time. In addition, it is to be expected that budgets, forecasts and variances will be refined over time, as the quality of the information provided improves;**
- 2. Whilst a full quarterly bidding process for the reallocation of any monies identified as available in year is not proposed at this stage, this will be kept under review. In the meantime, advice will be provided to Members for their consideration on how any underspends identified in year could be used, if appropriate;**
- 3. The full reporting packs are proposed to be presented to Committees with a summary included in the Committee minutes to be reported to Council (rather than the full packs).**
- 4. Officers are currently considering a number of practical issues which need to be resolved in the development of the reports such as the treatment of internal charges, depreciation and assumed pay rises. A full explanation will be provided for Members with the first set of reports so that the impact of these issues is transparent and can be clearly assessed.**

B. Frequency of Reporting

It is proposed that the reporting packs are issued to Committees on a quarterly basis with a financial position update (not the full reporting pack) provided on a monthly basis to the Budget and Transformation Panel, if there are any significant issues to report. There may also need to be additional in year financial information provided to Committees in the winter period, as part of the rates setting process. The reports will therefore go through the Committee system as follows:

Quarter ended June	August Committees
Quarter ended September	November Committees
Quarter ended December	February Committees
Year end position	June Committees

C. Training for Members

It is recognised that training will need to be provided to Members, both on the specific BCC reporting packs and on financial management in general. The Council's Political Skills Indicator is based largely upon the 'Skills Framework for Elected Members', which was developed by the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DEA) for Local Authorities. It is proposed, therefore, that the financial training will be based upon the I&DEA model.

The I&DEA framework recognises that the financial skills of Elected Members within a Local Authority vary widely depending on factors such as their personal experience through outside commitments, their length of time as a Councillor, their specific governance role within the local authority or other public bodies. The purpose of the development of core competencies is therefore to provide a framework to enable Members to add to their own list of competencies through experience, gaining knowledge and training.

It is proposed that the financial training programme will be practical and relevant and will use external support in its development and delivery to ensure that the programme obtains external validation and incorporates best practice.

The initial financial training session, targeted for September 2010, will focus on the quarterly financial performance reports to members using the live data from the quarter ended June 2010. It will also cover the I&DEA Skills Framework and the specific financial management competencies developed by the Council to support the framework.

Further development of the programme is proposed to take place in discussion with Party Groups, the Budget and Transformation Panel and Members Services.

Resource Implications

An increased level of officer time will be needed to generate the reports and supporting narrative. The cost of the financial training can be met from within the existing generic training budget for Members.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- a) Members agree to the format of reports being developed in line with Appendix 1 and 2, copies of which have been circulated and the information set out in section A above;
- b) The reports are produced in line with the timelines in section B above; and
- c) The initial financial training session for Elected Members should take the form of an interactive briefing in September 2010 with external input, supported by Officers from the Finance and Resource Department.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the report for quarter ended on 30th June be submitted to the various Committees during September rather than August.

Payment of Invoices

During discussion on the previous item, the Committee discussed the issue of the necessity, particularly during the current economic climate, of the timely payment of invoices and agreed that a communication be issued indicating that, in these economically difficult times, the Council expected that those contractors used by the Council should adhere to a timely schedule for payments to their sub-contractors.

Publication of Employee Travel Costs 2009/2010

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 24th October, 2008, it had approved the Policy for Staff Attending Events. As part of that policy, it had been agreed that information relating to staff attending events and the associated travelling would be published on an annual basis. The information was due to be published annually by 30th June.

The analysis of staff travel for the year 2009/2010 and the comparison with previous years is outlined below:

Year	Cost*	No Visits	No Events
2005/2006	£312,942	1052	687
2006/2007	£299,381	971	645
2007/2008	£318,020	1081	695
2008/2009	£221,882	713	516
2009/2010	£157,073	570	433

*the cost of travel does not include the fees associated with attendance at training courses, seminars, conferences, etc.

The Director of Finance and Resources reported that the cost of travel had reduced by £64,809 (29.21%), the number of trips had reduced by 143 (20%) and the number of events by 83 (16%) over the same period in the previous year. The cost of travel was lower in 2009/10 than in any of the previous years. An analysis on the reasons for travel showed that the cost relating to employee training and development representing 41% (compared to 35% the previous year). The costs relating to improving our services was 43% and the percentage relating to Promoting Belfast represented 16% of the total spend. Travel within Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland had accounted for 58% of the total, whilst the percentage of travel to Europe represented 34% and the rest of the world was 8%.

The Committee noted the information provided and after a lengthy discussion agreed that a further report in relation to the appropriate mechanism for authorising travel by officers to locations outside the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Approval of Tenders

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of tendering exercises and delegated authority to the appropriate Directors, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to accept the most advantageous tenders received in respect of the following:

- (i) occupational health and employee counselling contracts. The contract to be awarded for a period of two years, with an option to renew for a further one year. The Committee agreed also to extend the current contracts for a maximum of six months;
- (ii) the creation of a select list and/or the submission of Tenders in respect of the supply of natural gas to Council-owned properties. The Committee approved also the conversion of The Cecil Ward Building from oil-fired central heating to natural gas on the terms outlined to the Members, that is, £30,000 less grant assistance of £13,000;

- (iii) the supply, fabrication, delivery and fitting of general metalwork at an annual cost of £200,000. The contract being for a one year period, with the option to renew for a further two years;
- (iv) the repair and maintenance of lifts at an annual cost of approximately £80,000. The contract to be awarded for a period of one year, with an option to renew for a further four years; and
- (v) the provision of Legionella and Risk Management Services, the annual cost of which was approximately £50,000, with the contract to be for a two year period and including an option to renew for a further one year.

Specified Research - Renewing the Routes Scheme

The Committee noted that the above-mentioned item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Asset Management

Governance of Major Projects

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In 2006 Council took the decision that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would become the main Committee for overall policy, resource allocation and performance to ensure implementation of Council policies and strategies. In essence the Committee is in control of finance, people and assets including major projects as well as associated key risks across the Council.

In November 2008, the Local Government Auditor noted that the Council had identified the governance of major projects such as Connswater Community Greenway, the new cemetery, Titanic Signature project, Velodrome, North Foreshore etc as a key risk for the organisation. Such projects run financial risks of millions of pounds, through various factors, such as ill-defined decision making processes and paths, an aggressively litigious procurement environment as well as the normal risks to physical projects such as time, cost and specification underperformance. The need for Council to work increasingly with a range of partners in delivering such projects only adds to the above risk and ultimately to the Councils reputation and credibility.

Leading property consultants Drivers Jonas were commissioned to provide best practice advice on governance and their findings and recommendations were incorporated into the Review of the Centre report to Committee in June 2009.

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the implementation of this review.

Key Issues

The review examined the current arrangements in the council for managing major projects. Major projects were defined at the outset as those projects which significantly affect the Council's budget, reputation and/or operation.

The key finding of the review were as follows:

- The current governance arrangements for major projects were fragmented across the council and this is due to the responsibility for projects resting across different departments and committees.
- The skills which the organisation need to bring together to make significant projects work currently sits across at least three departments.
- The role of the Strategic Policy and Resource Committee in relation to project governance needs to be clarified and strengthened.
- The officer with whom overall responsibility rests for a particular project is not always clear.
- There is a lack of coherence in dealing with external parties.
- New governance arrangements are needed to ensure the most effective use of limited resources.
- Clearer roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for major projects need to be established.

Drivers Jonas have made a number of recommendations which are in line with the recommended government best practice guidance which is known as, 'Office of Government Commerce Portfolio, Programme and Project Management best practice (P3O)'. The key recommendations of the review are as follows:

- The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee should have overall responsibility for the allocation of resources to major projects.
- COMT should provide officer oversight for all major projects.
- Every major project should have a named responsible officer as a client.

- The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, Chief Officers Management Team and responsible officers should be supported by a director who has the relevant project management skills to ensure delivery.
- This director should be supported by a team with project/programme management expertise.
- The team should be a source of good practice for all projects across the Council.
- The adoption of Gateway risk rating to identify and categorise major projects risk status.

The findings of the review were incorporated in the Review of the Centre which has addressed some of the recommendations with the setting up of the Property and Projects department.

Since the date of this report there has been a much stronger focus on strategic asset management, with the formation of a cross departmental Asset Management Group; increased compliance with revised Standing Orders resulting in a requirement for all property related matters being reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee; the use of the corporate landbank process; the ongoing development of a corporate Asset Management Strategy; a cross departmental Assets Realisation Team; and much more collaborative working both across departments and with external partners.

A key recommendation was to reinforce the role of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as the Councils 'Investment Decision Maker'.

The key functions of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in this respect are as detailed below:

*Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
(Investment Decision Maker)*

The role of Strategic Policy & Resources is as follows:

- To formulate and agree the 5 year rolling Capital Programme and City Investment Programme.
- Following recommendations from the Strategic Oversight Board (known as Chief Officers Management Team) Strategic Policy & Resources decides whether or not a proposed investment in a project should be made.

- **As the Investment Decision Maker Strategic Policy & Resources should be satisfied that:**
 - **There is a business need for the project**
 - **Success criteria have been defined**
 - **The business drivers and expected benefits have been established with stakeholders**
 - **All options (including PFI) for meeting the business needs have been evaluated, together with the risks and the consequences of their occurrence associated with each option**
 - **The risks are clearly defined together with their potential impact on the project in terms of quality, cost and time**
 - **The estimated cost is made up of the whole-life costs (including life-cycle costs) of the project, including allowances and base estimates**
 - **The estimated cost includes fees, in-house costs and financing costs**
 - **There is clear understanding of the key issues on which the business case and investment proposals are based**
 - **That it has been identified what effect the programme/project will have on the rates**
 - **An appropriate management structure (lines of accountability and delegated authority) is in place and named individuals have been appointed as Portfolio SRO and Project SRO**
 - **The project is likely to provide whole life value for money**
 - **The right skills are in place for delivery – or where gaps are in place**
 - **Adequate funding is available for initial capital expenditure and anticipated future operational expenditure.**

The Corporate Plan 2008- 2011 also focused strongly on thematic cross departmental working for the benefit of the city. This collaborative approach has been adopted with many of the major projects within the Council inc Grove Well Being Centre, Connswater, Girdwood Community Hub proposals etc.

It should be stressed at this point that many of the major projects the Council are involved in are, besides having huge risk and cost, multi faceted in terms of broader social and economic outcomes. They involve a range of Council departments as well as other partners from the private, public and community sectors and therefore need careful project management. Two examples of management structures for Titanic Signature Project and Connswater Community Greenway have been circulated in order to demonstrate the complexity involved.

A similar arrangement is now being put in place for the North Foreshore with a cross departmental officer group chaired by the Chief Executive and the North Foreshore resources and other surveyors being realigned into the Property and Projects Department as per the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision and Drivers Jonas recommendations.

The cross departmental officer group needs an equivalent Members group from which to seek and agree direction and given the varied Council interests in the North Foreshore a group led by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources together with the Chairs of Health and Environmental Services, Parks and Leisure and Development may be the best approach.

The Connswater Community Greenway has a political sub-group of East Belfast Councillors that meets informally for breakfast every two months and a similar communication forum on an all Party basis would be useful for the Titanic Signature Project.

To formally support the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in fulfilling its Investment Decision Maker role the Property and Projects department will operate a project portfolio office that involves all departments as required with final decision making going via Chief Officers Management Team to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee and where appropriate to other standing Committees eg Connswater Community Greenway reports also go to Parks and Leisure Committee, economic development and waste aspects of North Foreshore development also going to the Development Committee and Health and Environmental Services Committee respectively etc.

The portfolio office approach will ensure that core project management skills are applied at the outset and throughout any major project with involvement from departments and key advice on legal, finance, insurance etc as and when required.

The Property and Projects department will report regularly to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on progress, costs, variations and also in terms of follow up and lessons learned.

A schematic of the overall governance arrangements for major projects has been circulated.

Resource Implications

- There are no financial implications
- There are no HR implications as this is a reorganisation of existing roles.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to note the report, to agree to a Members North Foreshore Group as suggested and to consider an all Party Group to meet informally regarding Titanic Signature Project progress.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report, including the reassignment of the North Foreshore and the surveying resources into the Property and Projects Department and the role of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as the Council’s investment decision maker and its responsibility in allocating resources and providing direction to major projects. The Committee agreed also to the establishment of the Members’ groups as outlined in relation to the Governance of the North Foreshore and Titanic Signature Projects.

Update on Peace III Priority 2.1 Capital Bids for Shared Space

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the status of the Council’s four applications under Priority 2.1 ‘Creating Shared Public Spaces’ of the Peace III programme that were submitted to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on 13th November 2009.

Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that the Council agreed, at its meeting in November 2009, to submit 4 bids to the call for capital bids under Priority 2.1 'Creating Shared Public Spaces' of the Peace III programme. Under this measure SEUPB was seeking to support between 4-7 large strategic and iconic projects across the eligible Peace III programme area funded at between 1.5-10million Euros each. Their preference was to support five projects around €5 Million per project although additional money may be made available for significant projects. Projects will be funded at 100%. The main aim of this measure is to produce iconic structures that can be easily recognised as a Peace III project long after the programme ends in 2015.

Members should note there was a significant level of interest in this programme and that it was heavily over-subscribed. In total 31 applications were received by SEUPB under this call competing for approx. €29million. A brief description of the four bids that the Council submitted is outlined below.

The 4 bids which the Council submitted as lead partner were:

- *Girdwood Community Hub* – the development of an integrated community hub containing leisure, community, library and educational facilities in a shared space with an associated plan of shared space activities at Girdwood. This application was for £9.6million
- *Giant Park Sports Village at the North Foreshore with Crusaders and Newington* - to develop a shared community sports complex through a partnership between the Council and Crusaders and Newington Football Clubs, using sports and heritage to promote peace and reconciliation. This application was for £14.1million
- *Gasworks Bridge* – the development of a pedestrian and cycle bridge to improve connectivity between the city centre, Gasworks Business Park and the Lower Ravenhill and Ormeau Park. This application was for £9million
- *North Belfast Cultural Corridor* (Donegall St., Clifton St., Crumlin Rd.) - to improve the physical environment, in order to create an attractive, welcoming and shared public realm in an area uniquely rich in the city's built and cultural heritage. This application was for £8.9million

Assessment Process for Priority 2.1 Applications

Members are asked to note that all applications received by SEUPB under this call were assessed in line with their assessment criteria and process. Decisions on the applications are discussed and determined by the Priority 2.1 Steering Committee. The stages in this process are outlined below.

Stage 1 – Initial Assessment of projects – Following a basic eligibility check each bid received was scored against the following criteria –

- Capacity to be shared space and to build peace and reconciliation
- Capacity to transform local communities
- Capacity to be iconic and provide a lasting legacy to the Peace III programme
- Sustainable development and other cross-cutting themes including equality
- Capacity to implement and deliver within SEUPB timescales (including planning permission)
- Financial competence and long term sustainability

For a project to be successful it had to score at least 65% or more in relation to the above criteria. Applications greater than £500,000 applications will also be subject to a standard 'Green Book' economic appraisal. Only those projects deemed to score above the quality threshold (65%) will be forwarded for economic appraisal. Projects which did not meet the required threshold are rejected at this stage.

Stage 2 – Economic Appraisal Stage - If a project met the required scoring threshold above and was over £500,000 it proceeded to economic appraisal. At this stage SEUPB appoint independent consultants to carry out the appraisal on their behalf. The purpose of the economic appraisal stage is to test further the information in the application forms and to consider:

- the purpose of the project
- whether a need been established
- the specific objectives of the project

- whether measurable targets and quantifiable outputs are provided
- whether alternative options have been considered
- whether the project will provide added value
- whether the project would be scaled down or delayed without grant
- the anticipated benefits of the project and who are the primary beneficiaries.

An economic appraisal report is then prepared by the independent consultants and presented to the Steering Committee to make the final decision.

Applicants can also request a debrief session with SEUPB following the outcome of any stage in the process. Members are asked to note that there are review procedures in place for any applicant who wishes to appeal a decision of the Steering Committee at any stage. In this case of appealing a decision a request for a review of a decision must be made in writing within 28 days of the receipt of the letter of rejection or 14 days after the debriefing session has been held. Members are asked to note that the Review is an independent process through which the applicant has to demonstrate to the Panel that either –

- a. the outcome/decision by the Committee was unreasonable
or
- b. the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds cannot be considered.

Key Issues

An update on the current status of each individual project is given below. 3 of the applications – the Girdwood Community Hub, the Sports Village and the Gasworks Bridge were considered by the Steering Committee at their most recent meeting on 27th May. The North Belfast Cultural Corridor was considered at an earlier meeting of the Committee in March.

Girdwood Community Hub

As Members are aware the Girdwood Community Hub application was invited to progress to economic appraisal stage in January 2010. SEUPB appointed an external consultancy, Cogent Consulting, to carry out this appraisal. A wide team of officers from across the Council worked closely with Cogent Consulting between January and May to produce the required detailed supplementary information for the economic appraisal.

The Girdwood Community Hub application and supporting reports, including the economic appraisal, were presented to the Priority 2.1 Steering Committee at its meeting on 27th May. At this meeting it was noted that, although the Committee believed this proposal met some compelling priorities of the Peace programme, there were a number of uncertainties attached to the project which would have to be resolved before further consideration could be given to the project. Concerns which were raised included the lack of political agreement over the wider masterplan for the site, the uncertainty over housing and infrastructure issues and the fact that there were a number of comments from community representatives who felt they had not been fully consulted or engaged in the process.

In light of these concerns the Committee decided to defer consideration of the Hub proposal at this stage pending further information from the council including –

- an implementation timetable for the Community Hub and the wider site (including housing and infrastructure) within an agreed masterplan
- further evidence that there is full political and local PUL community support for the proposed project
- programming of the facility by strategic partners as part of the Shared Space Action Plan
- an Equality Impact Assessment for this element of the proposal incorporating further consultation as it was noted that the previous consultation was outdated

Members are aware that there are unresolved issues in relation to the masterplan for the wider Girdwood site and that this is currently with the Executive for consideration. However it is unlikely that there will be a decision on the masterplan in the short term. It should be noted that although community representatives were approached for their views on this proposal as part of the economic appraisal process there was no consultation undertaken with the local political representatives.

A debriefing session with SEUPB on this proposal is being arranged and Members will be updated on the outcome of this session at a later date if required.

Crusaders and Newington Sports Village at the North Foreshore

Members will also be aware that the Sports Village proposal was also invited to progress to economic appraisal stage in January. Cogent Consulting also carried out this appraisal. Following the meeting of the 2.1 Steering Committee on 27 May, the Council was informed that this bid had been rejected on the basis that it failed to meet the minimum scoring threshold. This project scored 48.25%.

Members are asked to note that a debriefing session on this proposal is taking place on the afternoon of the 18 June and the Council will be given the opportunity to seek further information on the reasons for this decision and will be taken through the economic appraisal and the scoring. Further information on the outcome of this will be provided to Committee at a later date if required. The Director of Property and Projects is attending this session along with representatives from Copius Consulting who helped Crusaders/Newington Football clubs and the Council in the preparation of this bid.

Gasworks Bridge

This application was also considered by the Steering Committee at its meeting on 27th May. The Council was informed that this project had also been rejected on the basis that it failed to meet the minimum scoring threshold outlined above after initial assessment. This project scored 38%. A debriefing session on this proposal is to be arranged when further information will be requested on the reasons why this proposal was rejected.

North Belfast Cultural Corridor (Donegall St., Clifton St., Crumlin Rd.)

The Council was notified on 2nd March 2010 that this project had been rejected by the Peace III Steering Committee on the basis that it failed to meet the required minimum scoring threshold outlined above after initial assessment as it scored 55.5%. Subsequently officers from the Council meet with the SEUPB Peace III staff for a debriefing session and to consider undertaking a formal appeal. Council officers were advised that SEUPB felt that the project was weak in terms of addressing peace and reconciliation at community level and that it was felt it was more a tourism and environmental project. SEUPB officers advised that on the basis of this, the project was unlikely to succeed at appeal.

Summary and points to note

A summary of the status of the Council's Peace III applications is outlined below for the convenience of Members –

<i>Proposed Project</i>	<i>SEUPB Decision</i>
Girdwood Community Hub	Deferred
Giant's Park Community Sports Village	Rejected
North Belfast Cultural Corridor	Rejected
Gasworks Bridge	Rejected

Members are asked note that there is a possibility in light of the above decisions that the Council will not receive any funding under this call. It is not known at this stage what other applications, if any, have been successful and if any of these are located in the Belfast City Council area.

Resource Implications

Financial

None at present

Human Resources

Additional officer time will be required to attend debriefing sessions and progress work on the Girdwood bid, if required.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the information in this report and to:

1. agree if they wish for further work to be carried out on the Girdwood proposal and the further information requested to be submitted
2. note that officers will arrange debriefing sessions on the Girdwood Community Hub and Gasworks Bridge proposals and will report back on the outcome of these sessions if the Committee wishes
3. in light of the timescales required for requesting a review of a decision (either within 28 days of the date of the letter of rejection or 14 days after the debriefing session) consider if they wish officers to formally appeal the decisions on the Gasworks and the Sports Village following the outcome of the debriefing sessions

4. note the advice from SEUPB that the North Belfast Cultural Corridor was unlikely to succeed in appeal.

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body”

After discussion, the Committee adopted recommendations 1 and 2 and agreed that authority be delegated to the Director of Property and Projects, following the de-briefing sessions by the Special European Unions Programmes Body on the applications submitted by the Council, to formally appeal any of the decisions if he felt it to be appropriate.

Connswater Community Greenway Update

The Committee was reminded that the Council, as part of the City Investment Strategy, had agreed to co-ordinate the acquisition of lands to enable the Connswater Community Greenway Programme to proceed. The Council would secure rights over the land needed for the Greenway and would be responsible for the management and maintenance of that land and any assets on it. The Greenway would have to be accessible for forty years to comply with the Big Lottery Fund letter of offer, although the intention was to secure rights for longer if possible.

It was reported that three areas of land had been identified as being required to help complete the Greenway route and associated landscaping:

- (i) the first was an area of 0.609 acres of land at Laburnum Playing Fields off the Knock dual carriageway and Council officers had agreed, subject to the approval of the Committee and CBM Developments Board, to purchase the land at a cost of £21,500 plus professional and legal fees and to take out a Licence from the company for a temporary path and associated temporary embankment to support the path. The proposal was for the path to remain in place until a proposed new road was constructed through the Laburnum site at which time the footpath adjacent to the new road would become the Greenway. The proposal for the new road required both the support of the Belfast Education and Library Board and full planning approval from the Department of the Environment and at this stage there was no certainty as to whether such approval would be forthcoming within the timeframe of the Greenway Project. The agreement would provide for the temporary route to remain in place for a minimum of forty years if the new road was not constructed/approved;
- (ii) an area of 0.036 acres of land at Loopland Court, which Council officers had agreed, subject to the Committee's approval, to acquire from the Deramore Property Group. There would be no cost to the Council in acquiring the land beyond the payment of reasonable expenses; and

- (iii) an area of 0.622 acres of land at Hollywood Arches. The land was owned by the Department for Regional Development and was held as part of the Road Protection Corridor for the Connsbank Link and Hollywood Bypass. The Department could not dispose of those lands while the proposal for the Connsbank Link and Hollywood Arches Bypass remained extant. However, Council officers had agreed to take out a five year licence from the Department to facilitate the construction of a public square as part of the Greenway. The Big Lottery and other funders had confirmed that they were content with that approach and could waive the usual requirement for a minimum 40 year term given the particular circumstances of that case. The transfer of land would require expenditure of legal fees only.

The Committee granted approval for the purchase of the three areas of land as outlined and noted that the design of the public square at Hollywood Arches had still not been finalised and would require further consultation.

Review of Rents on Parks Houses

The Committee agreed to defer until its meeting in August consideration of a report on the review of rents on parks houses.

Request for the Use of City Hall Grounds

Poster for Tomorrow

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from Poster for Tomorrow to exhibit within the grounds of the City Hall 100 posters marking World and European Day against the Death Penalty on 10th October. The posters would be selected from public competition submissions by a panel comprised of eminent local people and would be displayed within the grounds from 7th till 10th October. Belfast would be one of 100 cities across the world marking the event.

The posters would be displayed on trellis-type fencing positioned within the grounds. There would be no resource implications for the Council as the organisation would provide all of their own display materials. In addition, there would be no requirement for electrical power and the organisation would take out full indemnity insurance. Due to the nature of the subject, some of the posters might be sensitive in nature, although the Council did have the option of vetoing specific posters if it were deemed that they were controversial or offensive.

The Committee was advised that the death penalty was still supported by a number of countries, notably the United States of America and China, so the organisers' position would not have unqualified support. It was envisaged that the exhibition might receive significant media coverage. One of the criteria for use of the

City Hall grounds stated that the request should comply with the Council's Equality and Good Relations obligations. The application by Poster for Tomorrow had been discussed with the Council's Good Relations Manager who had recommended, given that the United Kingdom had abolished the death penalty, that the application be approved by the Committee.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor N. Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor McCarthy,

That the Committee agrees to accede to the request.

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

West Belfast Festival

The Committee was informed that the organisers of the West Belfast Festival had requested the use of the City Hall grounds on 7th August for a young people's music event. The intention of the event was to engage with numerous young people who already typically congregated in the City Hall grounds in the summer months and to provide facilities to present and promote music relevant to and suggested by those young people themselves. It was the view of the organisers that the target group of young people would normally have little or no interaction with West Belfast either geographically or culturally and, therefore, the event would essentially be an outreach activity to a group which was not otherwise catered for by the traditional Festival activities.

The event would take place between 1.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. and was likely to attract several hundred spectators. It would be promoted as a no alcohol event and the organisers intended to engage in significant outreach activities with the target group beforehand in that respect. The organisers would be operating the event in liaison with both Belfast City Centre Management and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In terms of the logistics of the event, the organisers would be providing their own stage truck and would require a single phase electricity supply. No access to the City Hall main building was required. The organisers had confirmed that all equipment and personnel would be clear of the grounds by 6.00 p.m. at the latest and they had given the required assurances in terms of the provision of security cover and indemnity insurance. The young people would be using the grounds in any event so it was not anticipated that there be any additional damage to the lawns and there were no events in the main building which could be adversely affected by the noise.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request, subject to the organisers providing the usual necessary assurances and to the Director of Property and Projects being satisfied as to the level of indemnity and other necessary safeguards and obligations being provided.

Good Relations and Equality

(Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with these items.)

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 11th June were approved and adopted.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Consultation - Meeting the Demands for Modern Public Library Service for the Greater Belfast Area

(Councillor Rodgers declared an interest in this item on so far as he was on the Board of Libraries Northern Ireland and left the meeting while this item was under discussion.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of the Report

To inform the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on the decisions made by the Board of Libraries NI on the consultation document ‘Meeting the demands for a Modern Public Library Service within Northern Ireland, Stage 1: Greater Belfast.

Relevant Background Information

Summary of the Proposals Consulted upon

Libraries NI was created in 2009 to take responsibility for the public libraries service across Northern Ireland. One of the first tasks that the new authority carried out was a strategic review of its library provision across the Province. The first phase included a review of the Greater Belfast area.

The review encompassed 32 libraries within the Greater Belfast area. Each of these libraries was examined under 4 criteria which were:

- fit for purpose;
- capable of delivering on the vision of Libraries NI;
- in the right location; and
- sustainability

Using these criteria it was contended that the following libraries were considered to be no longer viable: Andersonstown; Ballyhackamore; Ballymacarrett, Belvoir Park, Braniel, Cloughfern, Dunmurray, Gilnahirk, Ligoniel, Oldpark, Sandyrow, Tullycarnet, Whitewell, Woodstock.

Libraries that met the key criteria for future use and may have been recently refurbished and are well placed geographically to remain were Carryduff, Dundonald, Finaghy, Glengormley, Grove, Hollywood Arches, Rathcoole and Whiterock.

The review indicated that libraries that require new builds or major refurbishment were Ardoyne, Chichester, Cregagh, Falls Road, Lisburn Road, Newtownbreda, Ormeau and Shankill.

Libraries that required to be clustered to consolidate provision into a single viable entity were Suffolk and Colin Glen.

Members received a briefing from representatives from Libraries NI on Tuesday 16th March 2010 on the details of the proposals contained within the consultation document and the comments discussed at this meeting where included within the Council response.

Belfast City Council Response

The Council's response to the consultation was approved by the Committee at its meeting on Friday 19th March 2010 and was subsequently submitted to Libraries NI.

The response highlighted that the Council would be keen to explore the co-location of library services within Belfast City Council owned buildings. Particularly where Belfast City Council buildings are located in the proximity of libraries facing potential closure. The response also stressed the need for an assessment of the population needs of the areas where service withdrawal was proposed.

In summary, the factors which the council highlighted needed further consideration when making decisions on proposed closures included:

- Any plans for the closure of libraries should take into consideration access to public transport. The older population and those with physical disabilities would for example find distance to an alternative library a limiting issue.

- Libraries are regularly used as community spaces and local people use them as such. In particular, older people, younger people and migrant workers use libraries frequently.
- In some of the areas where closures are proposed the library may be the only community space available to residents.
- Some of the proposed closures are situated in areas of high deprivation, where a significant proportion of residents have no or low levels of qualifications.
- There is merit in considering what other community facilities exist within the area in order to look at relocation options if feasible.
- Proposed mobile services to replace existing service may not be suitable for older people or people with disabilities and this needs to be addressed.
- Libraries are an important meeting place for social and community activities many associated with life-long learning outcomes but also just places to drop in, attend thematic events, meet socially and are used by the local community in such a way.
- The Council is of the opinion that libraries, like council leisure facilities, should have opening hours which reflect customer demands, possibly including longer opening hours in the evenings and weekends. The Council would, for example, be supportive that the opening hours of the library at the Grove Well Being Centre Library could be extended in line with the opening hours of the leisure facilities at the centre.

Future of Belfast's Libraries

At its meeting on the 27th May 2010, the Libraries NI Board scrutinised the findings of the review and the public consultation process. The review encompassed 32 libraries in total, 19 of which are located in the Belfast City Council area. The board determined that of the 19 libraries in Belfast City:

- Finaghy, Grove, Holywood Arches and Whiterock meet the key criteria for future use and are well placed to provide 21st century library services.
- Plans should be taken forward, subject to the availability of funding, for capital investment in Ardoyne, Chichester, Falls Road, Lisburn Road, Ormeau and Shankill Libraries.

- **Ballyhackamore and Woodstock Libraries originally proposed for closure should remain open, in relation to Woodstock Library the situation should be reviewed in 2 years.**
- **Suffolk Library, originally proposed for amalgamation with Colin Glen Library, should remain open, pending investigation of further developments in the area**
- **The remaining libraries should close and alternative provision be made, particularly for those users who are unable to access an alternative static library. The libraries which will close are Andersonstown, Ballymacarrett, Ligoniel, Oldpark, Sandy Row and Whitewell.**

**The Board also decided that the following libraries within the Greater Belfast Area should also close:
Belvoir Park, Braniel, Dunmurry, Gilnahirk**

Key Issues

The Council in its response to the consultation document recommended the need for a more collaborative approach in the creation of estates strategies and the co-location of services in the future. The response commented that Libraries NI work closely with other statutory organisations, particularly the Council, to ensure that a collaborative partnership is adopted

Following the decisions made on the closures outlined above Libraries NI have advised that they are keen to continue to explore the feasibility of partnerships with other organisations, including Belfast City Council. Council officers will continue discussions with Libraries NI in relation to potential collaboration particularly where Belfast City Council buildings are located in the proximity of the library closures announced.

Recommendations

- 1. To note the decisions made by the Libraries NI Board**
- 2. Council officers to continue discussions with Libraries NI in relation to potential collaboration.”**

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee reiterated its opposition to the closure of any libraries in the City, expressed disappointment at the decision by the Board of Libraries Northern Ireland to close a number of libraries before exploring the feasibility of entering into partnership with other organisations to provide joint services or the relocation of libraries and expressed concern in relation to the impact which the closures

would have on those communities which would be affected. The Committee agreed also that the Council continue discussions with Libraries Northern Ireland in relation to potential collaboration, particularly where Council-owned buildings were located in the proximity of the libraries to be closed, and to attempt to develop proposals on how the Council could help minimise the impact of the closures through the development of partnerships with other organisations.

Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010-2020

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

This paper presents for consideration a draft response to the consultation exercise relating to the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010 – 2020. The production of the draft strategy has been overseen by representatives from DoE, Driver and Vehicle Licence Agency, DRD, Department of Education, Department of Employment and Learning, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, PSNI, Fire and Rescue Service and the Ambulance Service.

The draft strategy is based on detailed research and analysis of road safety statistics including views gathered in a pre-consultation engagement which involved input from the former Belfast Road Safety Committee (which comprised councillors, representatives of external organisations and individuals). The strategy seeks to involve all those who have a contribution to make, including Local Authorities, to explore ways to build capacity to reduce casualties at local level.

The document identifies 6 key challenges to be addressed over the lifetime of the strategy.

1. Continuing to reduce the numbers of road deaths and serious injuries.
2. Focusing specifically on improving safety on rural roads.
3. Working particularly to protect young drivers (age range 16-24) and motor cyclists).
4. Reducing inappropriate and illegal road user behaviour including speeding, drink and drug driving and careless and dangerous driving.
5. Improving our knowledge and involvement in solving road safety problems, and
6. Working with funding uncertainties.

Road Safety has been established as an important consideration in successive Programmes for Government. It is accepted that proposals impact on other government policies including improving health, the environment, sustainability and climate change and also local government and public sector reform. The document notes that future decisions will be impacted by a range of factors including devolved powers to local government, use of public transport, increase in walking/cycling and carbon constraints.

Key Issues

Based on the analysis of road safety statistics and a review of strategies in other locations, the consultation document presents over 170 proposed Action Measures which have been agreed by the statutory road safety partners. The measures are set to contribute to 4 key targets which are established against a baseline of 2004 – 2008 average figures.

1. To reduce the number of people killed in road collisions by at least 40%.
2. To reduce the number of people seriously injured in road collisions by at least 45%.
3. To reduce the number of children (aged 0-15) killed or seriously injured in road collisions by at least 55%, and
4. To reduce the number of young people (aged 16-24) killed or seriously injured in road collisions by at least 55%.

The 174 proposals contained within the draft strategy are listed under broad headings:

- (i) Road users
- (ii) Roads
- (iii) Vehicles
- (iv) Working with others

The main proposals under each heading are summarised below:

(i) Road Users

- (a) Audit road safety education services and resources.
- (b) Develop improved measures to influence young people's attitudes and behaviours.
- (c) Re-assess and improve the way novice drivers first learn to drive and consult on introducing a new system of Graduated Driver Licensing.
- (d) Extend the use of driver remedial courses and make greater use of them to address errant road user behaviour.

- (e) Introduce graduated penalties for certain offences.
- (f) Adopt the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) speed limit enforcement guidelines.
- (g) Focus on better retrieval and extrication of casualties based on collaborative working between the Fire and Rescue Service on both sides of the border and the community and voluntary sector.

(ii) Roads

- (a) Undertake a review of speed limits on upper tier rural roads.
- (b) Consider the applicability of urban speed reduction initiatives.
- (c) Assess the potential for wider introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas and other urban areas where there is a significant presence of vulnerable road users. (such as around schools)

(iii) Vehicles

- (a) Support National introduction of appropriate EU vehicle regulations.
- (b) Seek increasing opportunities to participate in trialling and piloting new systems within the UK research programme and supporting the future emphasis on advanced crash avoidance systems.

(iv) Working with others

- (a) Set up an Active Travel Forum, including a range of stakeholders, which will consider a broad strategic approach to active travel.
- (b) Set up a Motor Cycling Forum, including a range of stakeholders, which will consider an inclusive and strategic approach to motor cycling.
- (c) To work with Local Authorities to explore ways to build capacity to reduce casualties at a local level, identify local road safety issues and objectives and determine how we can work together to address local needs and priorities.

The timescale for the completion of the 2010-2020 strategy involves the completion of the consultation report (September 2010); draft strategy for consideration by Minister and Assembly (October 2010) and strategy launch (December 2010).

The attached draft response in Appendix 1 does not comment on each of the 174 Action Measures proposed. It is generally supportive of the direction and content of the report and makes specific reference to issues which are of greater relevance to Belfast City Council.

The draft response has been informed by comments received from relevant sections within the Council. It also takes account of discussion at a joint seminar convened by NILGA and the DoE to consider a general response on behalf of local government. A draft response from NILGA has been circulated for the information of the Members.

Resource Implications

N/A.

Recommendations

To agree the draft consultation response.

Decision Tracking

The official deadline for comments is 15 June, however an extension to the consultation deadline has been agreed with DoE. A copy of the Council response, including amendments if necessary, will be forwarded after Committee consideration and Council ratification.

Key to Abbreviations

ACPO Association of Chief Police Officers
DoE Department of the Environment (NI)
DRD Department for Regional Development
NILGA Northern Ireland Local Government Association
PSNI Police Service of Northern Ireland

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Draft BCC response to consultation.

Appendix 1

“Consultation on preparing a new Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010 – 2020

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the above document. Belfast City Council is fully supportive of the vision articulated in the strategy to ‘. . . make Northern Ireland’s roads as safe for all road users as anywhere in the world’.

The key challenges identified in the document are realistic and are supported by detailed evidence presented in the introductory sections of the report.

Our response highlights issues and actions that are particularly relevant to the urban nature of the Belfast City Council area. The response has been informed by the consultation seminar hosted jointly by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and yourselves. It is, however, forwarded separately from the collective views expressed in the NILGA submission.

General comments

1. Paragraph 5.3 of the report commits to working with any new local authorities, when the structure has been finalised, to explore ways to build capacity to reduce casualties at local level, identify local road safety issues and objectives and determine how we can work together to address local needs and priorities. Irrespective of agreement on new structures, Belfast City Council would wish to progress discussion on how road safety may be improved at both a city and at community level within the city. Belfast has the highest number of fatal and serious collisions amongst the existing 26 authorities. The Council is intending to pursue the development of a community planning approach to collectively develop and address key issues for the city. The issue of road safety would fit within this framework.
2. In relation to the comments above, the measures relating to 'lower level' Road Safety plans, allowing local government to link with and influence the overall government framework, are welcomed (Actions 115, 117). The report acknowledges links between deprivation and higher levels of accidents. The localised approach advocated is deemed beneficial to address specific community circumstances in Belfast.
3. The Council welcomes the inclusion of performance indicators and targets within the draft report. It is understood that a supporting Action Plan will be developed to add detailed specification to the proposed action measures. It is critical that the resource consequences of each measure are clearly articulated and sources of funding are identified. It should be noted that without the power of 'wellbeing' (to be given to councils as part of the RPA process) there is no legal vires for councils to incur expenditure on road safety. Additionally, Local Authorities are facing significant cost reductions.

4. Action Measure 119 outlines the need for better understanding and co-ordination of road safety roles and initiatives. Belfast City Council is strongly supportive of the need for clear lines of responsibility to be agreed and adhered to. Leadership of the Roads Safety strategy needs to be clear as does accountability for delivery of respective actions.

Specific comments

Safer Roads – Speed

5. Belfast City Council would wish to support pilot schemes regarding 20mph speed limits in residential and other urban areas and other urban speed reduction initiatives (Action 5, 10, 12). We would note, however, that air quality obligations residing with Local Authorities may be impacted by speed limits in urban locations. It is assumed that appropriate environmental assessment of the consequences of lower speeds and associated increases in vehicle emissions will be conducted.

Road Treatments (Marking)

6. Belfast City Council would wish to be consulted on pilot schemes to consider removal of pedestrian guard railings (Actions 23, 30) and would support measures to reduce illegal road side trading and advertising to reduce the risk of collisions caused by driver distraction.

Pedestrian/Walking

7. In addition to the measures outlined, Belfast City Council would wish to have more prominent reference made to accommodating people with disability, particularly those with visual impairment (Actions 37 – 39, 108 – 109).

Walking and Cycling

8. Belfast City Council is committed to promoting cycling as a means of sustainable travel in the City. We would seek reassurance that all available measures are put in place to enhance safety for cyclist road users. The Council endorses the proposal for the establishment of an Active Travel Forum and would seek to be represented on the forum. (Actions 40 – 41, 107, 153).

Working with Others

9. Belfast City Council welcomes the commitment to work with representatives and associations to promote and assure road safety. In particular we recognise the need to support migrants who comprise an increasing proportion of the local population. We would seek involvement in the ambition to work with sporting associations given Council's role in sports development. (Actions 113-114)

Vehicle Use

10. The proposal to develop measures to educate on legal and safety issues regarding vehicles not normally used on public roads is important. Belfast City Council is currently addressing the unlawful use of vehicles such as quads on Council open spaces. We would welcome the opportunity to have input to the development of this measure (Action 143)

Miscellaneous

11. A possible additional action in the Safer Vehicles section of the draft might make reference to new vehicle technologies. Belfast City Council is working with officials from DoE and DRD on a proposal to promote the use of electric powered vehicles. It is important that all road safety consequences of such vehicles are considered."

The Committee approved the draft response, subject to the Department being requested to include statistics on the number of accidents involving cyclists.

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

The 2008 DoENI State of the Environment Report highlights that road transportation is the 2nd largest source of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions within Northern Ireland, as well as being a key source of air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀) in urban areas. In 2004, Belfast City Council declared four air quality management areas across the city for predicted exceedences of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter health-based objectives

principally associated with road transport, as part of its statutory obligations prescribed under the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and Part III of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. Council subsequently published an Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast in 2006 and continues to work with partner organisations including the Department for Regional Development Roads Service and Translink, etc. in order to meet the air quality objectives in the respective compliance years.

In developing its 2008-2011 Corporate Plan, the Council committed to reduce the city's impact on climate change and improve air quality under the strategic theme of 'Better Care for Belfast's Environment - a clean, green city now and for the future'. Council also adopted primary performance indicators of '% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Council premises' and 'Number of monitored exceedences of EU and UK air quality standards within Belfast'.

On 16 April 2009, the then UK Secretaries of State for Transport and Business jointly announced the UK's Strategy for Ultra Low Carbon Vehicles. The document provides an overview of government's activities for the next 5 years in terms of research, demonstration and incentives for consumers and industry. The strategy includes a reference to £250m of consumer incentives designed to stimulate the take up of electric and plug-in-hybrid vehicles, scheduled to become commercially available across the UK from 2011 onwards.

Government has recognised however, that an electric vehicle charging infrastructure framework will have to be developed in advance of the introduction of monetary incentives to consumers. This is to be delivered via the Department for Transport (DfT) Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) 'Plugged-In Places Infrastructure Framework', which is designed to support the creation of a critical mass of vehicle recharging infrastructure in 3-6 lead cities or regions of the United Kingdom ahead of the introduction in January 2011 of a 'point of purchase' consumer incentive scheme offering up to £5,000 of the cost of eligible electric, plug-in hybrid and hydrogen cars. Government has stated that zero emission vehicles (ZEV) can help to improve the environment by reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and ambient air pollutants. Accordingly, DfT has made infrastructure framework funding of £30m available between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2013 to support up to 50% of eligible costs. Indicatively, funding will be spread equally over the three-year period.

The Department of Environment for Northern Ireland (DoENI) and Department for Regional Development (DRD) elected jointly to convene a Northern Ireland consortium in order to submit a regional bid to OLEV. DoENI approached the Council regarding participation in the bid and Chief Officers recommended that the Sustainable Development Manager should represent the Council on the consortium in order to help develop and submit an 'Expression of Interest' to OLEV.

Key Issues

In order to comply with the OLEV application schedule, the Northern Ireland consortium was required to submit an Expression of Interest by 1 June 2010. OLEV intends to shortlist Expressions of Interest by 30 June and then work with successful consortia to develop their final applications for submission by 30 September. The Northern Ireland consortium presently includes DoENI, DETI and DRD, along with Newry, Derry, Enniskillen, Omagh, Armagh and Belfast Councils, energy generators, the Utility Regulator, educational establishments, vehicle manufactures and recharging infrastructure companies. Sub-groups have been convened to develop technical, marketing, IT, public sector procurement and supply chain aspects of the bid.

The Northern Ireland consortium has submitted 3 recharging infrastructure scenarios to OLEV as part of its Expression of Interest:

- Belfast and Belfast-Dublin link (linking the North/South corridor to vehicle recharging projects installed already in Ireland) – overall project cost £1.3 million requiring consortium funding of £0.9 million.
- Belfast, Belfast-Dublin link, Newry and one other city – overall project cost £1.7 million requiring consortium funding of £1 million.
- Belfast, Belfast-Dublin link, Newry, Derry, Enniskillen, Armagh and Omagh - overall project cost £2.0 million requiring consortium funding of £1.3 million.

DoENI has indicated that it expects matched funding to be provided by central government and commercial consortium partners. The Director of Legal Services considered the Council's capacity to contribute financially towards the capital cost of the Northern Ireland bid and concluded that the Council has no legal vires to do so since it has no statutory function in relation to transport. He suggested however, that in extraordinary circumstances, the Council could seek sanction from DoENI to make a financial contribution towards the project.

At this time, DoENI has requested that Councils consider:-

- The purchase of electric vehicles for their fleets.
- The provision of sites and parking spaces for the location of electric vehicle charging points at sites owned by Councils.
- Engaging with local businesses to encourage the use of electric vehicles.
- The potential funding of non-capital costs, e.g. local research into the vehicle usage, project management and reporting costs.

Presently, the global electric vehicle market is in its infancy and therefore, the types of vehicles available are limited. Moreover, commercial electric vehicles typically carry a significant price premium, which would be unlikely to be completely offset by their lower running costs over the operational life of the vehicle. For example, diesel panel vans typically retail at around £20,000 whereas a comparable rechargeable variant can cost in excess of £60,000. Rechargeable cars are expected to cost from around £23,000 (inclusive of the government purchase incentive) when launched in 2012 / 2013, however, the Council operates relatively few cars. The Council does operate a number of smaller panel vans and consequently, there may be an opportunity to migrate towards rechargeable variants of these vehicles when they are launched in summer 2011, assuming that purchase or lease costs are not prohibitive.

Public electric vehicle charging points are typically of a bollard type construction; around 20 cm in diameter and 1.5m high. Wall mounted versions are also available for internal building use. They generally operate at 240 volts / 20 amps and access to the charging socket is controlled via a RFID chip issued to registered users. Electric vehicle recharging times are typically around 6-8 hours for a full charge providing a range of up to 100 miles however, public charging sites are designed principally to deliver a top-up charge. In order to ensure that availability of charging points is maximised, a dedicated parking space is generally provided for each charging point. Public charging points retail currently at around £5,000 per unit.

Resource Implications

Financial

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is advised that the Council may be invited to contribute financially towards the non-capital costs of the Northern Ireland consortium bid. Clearly this is something that the Council would need to consider carefully in the current financial climate. Members are advised therefore, that a further detailed report will be provided to the Committee should specific financial or other resource contributions be sought from the Council.

Human Resources

It is proposed that the Sustainable Development Manager will continue to represent the Council on the Northern Ireland consortium and associated working groups.

Asset and Other Implications

The Council may be invited to provide locations and dedicated parking spaces for the siting of electric vehicle charging infrastructure at its premises.

At this point, the Council is being asked to endorse submission of a Northern Ireland application to OLEV and to authorise the continued participation of the Sustainable Development Manager on the consortium in order to support project research and proposal development. It will be made clear to the lead government departments that endorsement does not commit the Council to any financial contribution. Members are advised that if the Northern Ireland consortium bid is successful in securing DfT / OLEV funding, it is anticipated that the project will commence from the 2011/2012 financial year.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

- Authorise the Council's continued participation in the Northern Ireland consortium via the Sustainable Development Manager;
- Agree to support an application by the consortium to DfT/OLEV;
- Authorises officers to continue to research the feasibility of purchasing zero emission rechargeable vehicles and providing charging points at Council owned sites

Decision Tracking

The Sustainable Development Manager will bring further reports back to the Committee if and as the project develops, particularly where there are resource implications for the Council.

Key to Abbreviations

DfT	- Department for Transport.
DoENI	- Department of Environment for Northern Ireland.
DRD	- Department for Regional Development.
DETI	- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.
OLEV	- Office for Low Emission Vehicles
RFID	- Radio frequency identification.
ZEV	- Zero emission vehicle.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman